

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Serving the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender,
Queer and HIV-affected Communities

August 21, 2012

Violence is violence and the culture that creates it is responsible.

There is a difference between denouncing violence and inciting violence – this seems obvious but this past week has shown us that the line between these two is slim. I do, and will continue to, denounce the shooting of the guard Leo Johnson at the Family Research Council offices last week. At the New York City Anti-Violence Project, we know that all violence is unacceptable and violence predicated on a disagreement in identity, beliefs or political positions is abhorrent. Our program, the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (NCAVP), joined with national LGBT groups last week in [denouncing the FRC shooting](#). We denounce violence because we know that violence has never effectively solved or resolved difference and never will.

And we know of what we speak: just about every week, we [release a statement about anti-LGBTQH violence](#) or murder because it happens everywhere, all the time. Every year NCAVP [releases two reports](#) about violence directed at lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and HIV-affected people because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Last year we saw the [highest murder rate of LGBTQH people ever](#). Our recommendations in the report call for community-based responses, responses across all fields of work and study and responses from our local and national institutional partners. We don't suggest that people who commit violence against LGBTQH people should be killed. Because that would be antithetical to what we do – and just plain wrong.

Yet, since the FRC shooting, the backlash from the right has been as violent as any I've seen. [Joe Jervis](#) posted two tweets today that called for his death – because he blogged and tweeted about the FRC shootings. Now, it's no secret that the right and the left (or whatever iteration of opposite sides of the issue you prefer) do not agree about whether LGBT people should be respected and afforded the same rights and responsibilities of others in this country. And I think it's time we examine the differences in the cultures we create in having that discussion.

I'm not going to suggest all LGBT folks are non-violent because that would be silly. However, if you look at the organized movement toward LGBT equality, there are no mainstream or even left of mainstream organizations who advocate that the murder of people who are opposed to LGBT equality is a viable solution to meeting our goal. Yet a quick scan of the internet shows that there are calls for LGBT people to be ["penned up,"](#) urges the [abduction of the children](#) of LGBT people, calls for the government to ["kill the gays."](#) Now the [FRC is suggesting](#) that the Southern Poverty Law Center's labeling of them as a hate group encouraged this shooting.

I would suggest that the culture that SPLC is creating is one aimed at denouncing hate and calling out the institutions that perpetrate that hate. I would further suggest that SPLC did not urge its constituency to pen anyone up, take their children or ask the government to murder them. Much of the culture that is created from the right, however, is predicated on violence

being the solution to “the homosexual” problem and inciting this violence. And we see that violence being carried out every day.

Shooting anyone associated with FCR is wrong. And so is creating a culture that would suggest that this violence is ever a solution to our differences.

Sharon Stapel is the executive director of the New York City Anti-Violence Project (www.avp.org) which runs the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs. AVP’s mission is to empower lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and HIV-affected communities and allies to end all forms of violence through organizing and education, and support survivors through counseling and advocacy.