

# A Message from the Executive Director



October 28, 2010

## We Must End the Culture of Hate

AVP mourns the loss of Mosey Alexander and Joseph Jefferson

In the past month, our communities have been shaken by the suicides, gay bashings and the targeting and torturing of people just because they are or have been perceived to be LGBTQ. AVP remains steadfast in our commitment to speaking out against hate violence in any form and in the past month we've had a lot to say. From our [response to the violence in Chelsea](#) and at the [Stonewall Inn](#) to the recent [horrifying anti-gay attacks in the Bronx](#), we have called for everyone to take a [strong stand against hate](#). AVP has been vigilant about [speaking out about recent suicides](#) including the [Rutgers University freshman Tyler Clementi](#).

This week, AVP learned of the suicides of two well-known and well-loved LGBTQ activists and friends, Mosey Alexander and Joseph Jefferson. Mosey worked with the Bronx Community Pride Center and the Global Action Project and is remembered as a tireless activist promoting health and safety awareness. Joseph worked with Gay Men of African Decent (GMAD) and was a founding member of the Young Men of Color Coalition in Brooklyn. He was a great advocate for LGBTQ youth and was dedicated to HIV prevention work with young gay men. Both reportedly took their lives because they could no longer live with the isolation created by hate and bias against LGBTQ people. Because of their deaths, we have lost two vibrant activists of color and leaders in the LGBTQ communities.

As I wrote in the recently published Advocate.com article, [Ending the Culture of Hate](#), at AVP we know that the culture of violence in which these tragic suicides and brutal hate crimes occur is not a new trend. In 2008 we had the most violent year for LGBTQ people since Matthew Shepard was murdered 10 years earlier. October 2009 was the most violent month of the year and the same month that President Obama signed the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act. During the latter half of 2009 and early 2010, a gay or transgender person was killed every month in Puerto Rico. And in the past few weeks and months we have seen increasingly severe violence such as the loss of our two colleagues.

Friends of Mosey have shared that she took her own life because she did not feel that she would be accepted as a lesbian in a culture where LGBTQ people are constantly under attack. Anti-LGBTQ rhetoric promotes the stigma and isolation that drives LGBTQ youths to take their own lives and encourages violence. Anti-LGBTQ hate speech is dangerous, it is ignorant and it is wrong.

So what is the solution? We must change the culture of hate. We have to demand immediate equality because we have been put on notice: It is, literally, deadly to wait. Our laws must not only protect LGBTQ people but also proclaim our equality and denounce those who would target us for discrimination and violence. And now, more than ever, we all need to stand up for those who can't and with those who can. Thank you for standing with AVP and ending the culture of hate – because it makes a difference.

Very truly yours,

Sharon Stapel  
Executive Director