

editorial

Equality of the airwaves



Talk radio usually seems like hate radio when it comes to gays and lesbians. Hosts upbraid us about the "Gay Agenda" and the destruction of "traditional values," while callers vilify us as a "threat to the

family" and lament about our "deathstyle" choices.

In fact, I'm no longer shocked when a talk radio host or caller issues any sort of slanderous, bizarre or even violent proclamation about gays or lesbians.

Am I overreacting? Last month a radio show host on KBRT-AM in Costa Mesa, CA suggested that America follow the "Biblical" example of dealing with homosexuals by putting them to death. He urged listeners and callers to write to state legislators calling for laws that would impose such sentences. Anybody willing to bet their lunch money on whether or not some cretins mailed said letter? I didn't think so.

Thankfully, things are a bit more rational on the airwaves in this burg. While we certainly have Rush and his ilk blabbing their hot air-inflated heads off, blaming us for everything from the decline in education standards to the demilitarization of America, we also have a few dyed-in-the-wool liberals proudly supporting us.

One such supportive radio host, Liz Johnson, represents us "social progressives" on WTLT 1480-AM's *Both Sides* program. She spends her midday between 11:00am and 2:00pm sparring with conservative co-host Joe

Miller and fending off an amusing array of Confederate sons and evangelical daughters. It's every bit as interesting as it sounds.

Liz's liberal credentials would make Barney Frank proud: she's a former Mecklenburg County Democratic Party chair; she was co-founder of the Not Helms PAC; and Jesse himself put her on his top 10 list of political adversaries. With laurels like those to rest on, an activist could become pretty sedentary — not Liz.

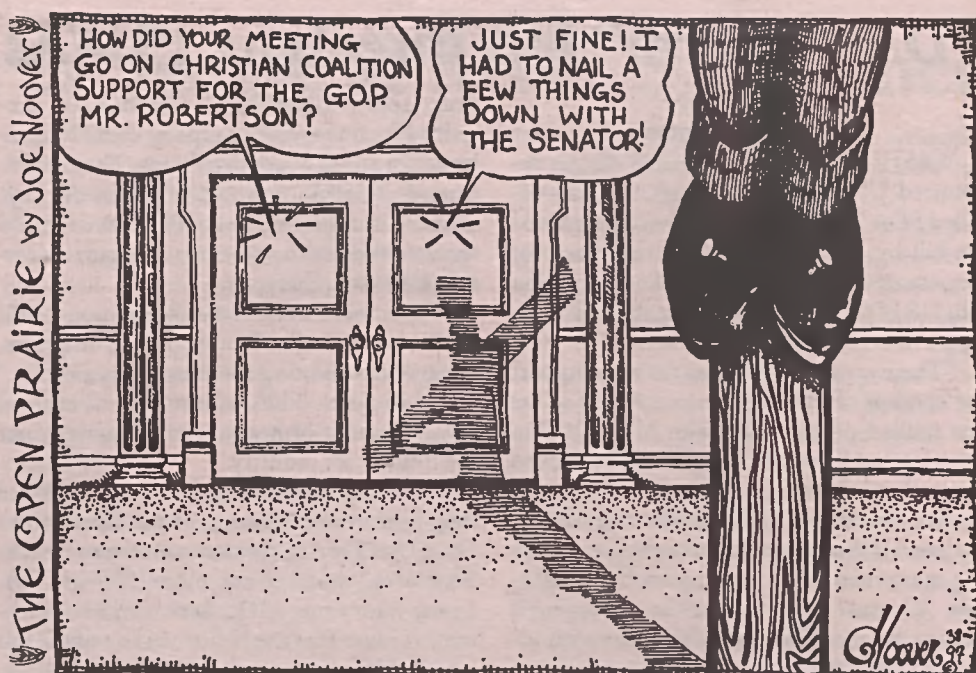
Starting next month, she's raising the gay ante on *Both Sides* by offering me a monthly segment — called Diversity Report — to discuss the political issues, social trends and assorted b.s. that our local gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community is dealing with. Her listeners are going to love this.

My first day on the show is scheduled for October 9 and I'll probably get on the air around 1:30pm. I hope to deliver my initial message with honesty, clarity and dignity, but who knows what will happen. After I start my little spiel about the need for Gay & Lesbian History Month, National Coming Out Day and events like OutCharlotte, the phones should be ringing off the hook.

It's important that the voices of the intolerant not be the only ones heard. We need to flex our collective muscles and demonstrate that there is a mobile and stalwart GLBT community monitoring the public airwaves. Listen to the show and call in. Help me fine tune my points or bring up some that I may be overlooking. If my thinking is as off-track as the right-wingers on certain things, tell me about that, too (please). This is your time as much as it is mine — or the bigots'. Let's use it powerfully. ▼

— David Stout

Diversity Report — Oct. 9
Topic: OutCharlotte '97
Both Sides with Liz Johnson and Joe Miller with Q-Notes editor David Stout
WTLT 1480-AM
Call-in: (704) 570-1480 or 1-888-455-4356



letters

AIDS hasn't gone away

I've known that it's been coming for over a year, but now I've actually heard the words, "So why worry about it, you just take a few pills and it goes away." Life with HIV in the post-protease inhibitor world.

My 22-year-old friend was voicing a sentiment that is growing within the gay community, especially among younger gay men. With new medications available to treat HIV, and with all the (often not quite accurate) attention being focused by the media, many are wanting to declare the AIDS epidemic at an end. In many cities, ads for "bareback" sex are appearing in the gay press and many more men are being inconsistent in condom use. Some have quit using them altogether. Don't throw them away yet. The epidemic is hardly over.

One can argue that the treatment of HIV has made great strides. A decade ago, there were no drugs, now there are several with many more in development. Life with HIV is becoming more hopeful. However, these drugs are not a cure. While they appear to combat HIV effectively, they do not kill it. HIV may hide in the lymph system and in organ tissue. A viral load may not be detectable, but HIV is still there and can be transmitted.

Also, we don't know the future of these drugs. What if they stop working? It's a little more complicated than just taking a few pills.

An undetectable viral load doesn't mean you're cured. It means the drugs are working to fight the HIV. You are still infected and you can still transmit the virus to someone else. The reverse is also true — you can still catch HIV.

The best weapon to fight HIV is still a condom — so, dig 'em out of the trash and do your part to help stop the killer.

— Michael Case
Health Educator, Metrolina AIDS Project

In a real world...

Mitchell County's Republican sheriff, Vernon Bishop, confessed in Superior Court on September 4 that in 1995 he ordered his depu-

ties to record the mobile phone conversations of an unnamed high school football coach. What was the coach's crime...was he a spy? Was he a Colombian drug lord? Was he plotting to overthrow our government? No, he was simply suspected of being a homosexual.

But we live in a nation supposedly ruled by laws. Among them is the constitutional principle that law enforcement cannot tap our phones without a court order. This is further reinforced by a federal law banning eavesdropping on cellular phone conversations. As an officer of the law, Sheriff Bishop surely had a court order, didn't he? No, he didn't.

Sheriff Bishop remembered 1992's controversy when Jim Hunt's campaign workers spied on Jim Gardner's phone conversations, didn't he? No, apparently he didn't.

And it is against North Carolina law to obstruct a police investigation. So, when a State Bureau of Investigation agent asked about his activities involving the coach, did he cooperate in explaining his actions? No, he didn't. Instead, the agent testified that the sheriff lied, telling him that an anonymous person had left the tape on his desk. Sheriff Bishop confessed to his lie in Mitchell County Superior Court.

What happens to a law officer who violates his oath of office to uphold the Constitution and the law? In Mitchell County, not much. District Attorney Tom Rusher gave him a "stern talking to." We can all sleep peacefully, knowing that all overzealous law officers have surely learned "the fear of God" from this tactic. Never again will North Carolinians need to fear the violation of their property or privacy by misguided or crooked cops. Welcome to Utopia!

But this is the real world. Libertarians say that in a real world, gay people, or those suspected of being gay, have the same protections under the Constitution as anyone else. Libertarians say that in a real world, law officers must be held liable for their violations of the law. At the very least, they should be removed from their positions and required to pay restitution.

Libertarians say that in a real world, Constitutions and laws are meaningless if they aren't honored by those sworn to uphold them. ▼

— Chris Cole
Chairman, Coming Out Libertarian!

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