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Letters to the editor and comments from Q-Notes Online. Web comments are not edited for grammar or punctuation.

HRC article: Missed points

Great piece on HRC and I thank you for the balanced points of view. Three quick points:

1. We do have a statewide LGBT political presence via Equality North Carolina PAC which is the direct outgrowth of North Carolina Senate Vote '90. When that campaign was over we said that it was important to have an ongoing presence in the state precisely because HRC doesn't do state lobbying work. Next year marks the 20th anniversary of NC Senate Vote '90 and plans are already underway for a year-long series of events to mark the occasion.

2. What I didn't see in the story about the annual HRC Carolina's Gala (that covers North Carolina and South Carolina) is how much money is raised each year that goes to Washington, DC and how much, if any, is given to North Carolina and South Carolina LGBT groups.

3. While I do surely appreciate the efforts of the HBCU program work that HRC does I'm also invested in the in-state, on the ground work of working with our eleven North Carolina HBCU's via the newly formed statewide North Carolina People Of Color LGBT & Allies Network that I'm honored to be coordinating on a volunteer basis. Interested folks can email me for more information, mandycarter@nc.rr.com. Subject line: NC POC LGBT Network.

— Mandy Carter, Durham, NC, Feb. 21, web

[Ed. Note: Carter is a former HRC Board of Directors and HRC staff member.]

HRC Gala not inclusive of S.C.

For those who attended the Gala, there was little to no mention of South Carolina during the gala program, much to the disappointment of state leaders from SC in attendance who have put blood, sweat, and tears into the work in our community with no acknowledgement from HRC. Elke Kennedy received mention for her important work on Hate Crimes but she isn't the only activist in SC and Sean's Last Wish is part of a network of extremely active SC organizations.

Joe Spilmonese mentioned the LGBT Center of Charlotte, but failed to mention the now 15 year old Harriet Hancock Community Center in Columbia or the well established Center Project of Myrtle Beach. Joe applauded Equality NC's work but failed to mention the existence of SC Equality or SC Pride, or our work to pass inclusive bills in 2008 including the City of Columbia Human Rights Ordinance which included Sexual Orientation AND Gender Identity.

Additionally, the greetings from politicians only included NC representatives while we know full well that Columbia's entire City Council and Mayor Bob Coble (who attended several past Gala events) would have sent Greetings, as well as the GLBT supportive Mayor Riley of Charleston. For a "Carolinas" gala, South Carolina was certainly treated like a forgotten black sheep of the family, but some day when SC has surprised the

national organizations with our renewed energy and strength, it won't be so easy to overlook our many and various accomplishments.

For examples of the work being done in SC, visit SCPride.org and download our 2008 Annual Report.

— Ryan C. Wilson, Columbia, SC, Feb. 23, web
[Ed. Note: Wilson is president of the SC Pride Movement and a former member of the HRC Carolinas Gala Committee.]

Not a South Carolina slight

While hearing and acknowledging the above desire for recognition at this particular event, this year's program was reasonably heavy on NC as both award winners were from NC and the keynote was an NC Senator.

As mentioned, the SC award winner from last year was mentioned this year by several program speakers. In years past, Columbia's Mayor was welcomed with applause, whoops, and hollers, by all when he came to the stage promoting Columbia as LGBT-friendly.

However, note that this year's welcome was shortened to be from Charlotte-Mecklenburg officials (county commissioners, city council members, Charlotte-Meck state reps, and Congressman Mel Watt whose district holds the convention center).

There are many other LGBT-friendly officials in NC and SC that weren't included in the video welcome. It wasn't a state issue; it was a host city issue, and there's nothing wrong with that. Other LGBT-friendly Congress members

and mayors from NC weren't in welcome video portion either. It was just a "host community" welcome with no nefarious intent.

SC can rightfully be proud at the quick progress happening with the hospital protections last year and organizing focusing on the SC legislature.

— appellation, Feb. 23, web

HRC's accomplishments?

Here's something I don't know about the Human Rights Campaign that I'd like to: what have they actually gotten done? As in, what specific legislation have they gotten passed, stopped from getting passed or otherwise done to further LGBT rights on a federal level?

In the time since they were founded, scores of state groups have gotten pro-LGBT state laws passed (some with an assist from the Task Force) and defeated anti-LGBT legislation. Lambda Legal, GLAD and the ACLU have won lawsuits that have established rights and struck down bad laws (e.g. Lawrence v. Texas). GLAAD has relentlessly defended against homophobia and transphobia in the media. GLSEN has passed state laws protecting LGBT students. I could keep going...

HRC raises more gay dollars than any of these orgs, supposedly to be our representatives in Washington. Well, they've got a fancy building in Washington. Have they gotten us any federal rights? Or anything?

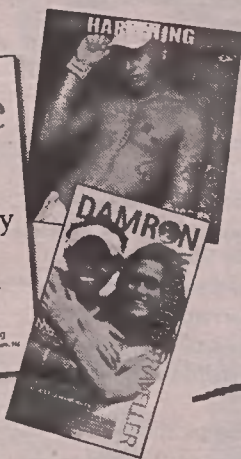
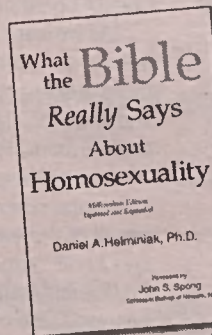
I'm still waiting for an answer.

— saguaroson, Feb. 24, web

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