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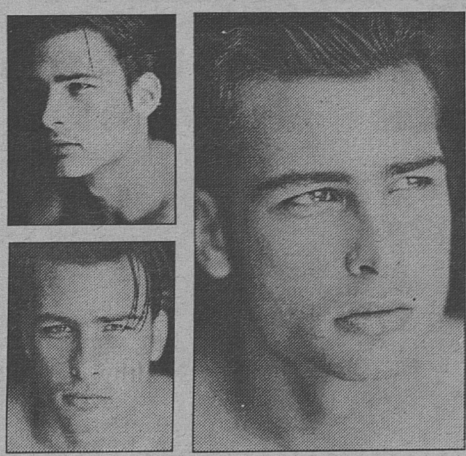
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# The Real Gay Agenda

BY RON BERNARD

My infant daughter was sleeping peacefully in her crib. I stood over her and thought about what fatherhood meant. Emotions stronger than any I'd ever experienced came over me. She depended on me to keep her safe. I allowed myself to think about what I'd do if anyone ever purposefully harmed her. I'd use any force necessary to protect my child. I would fight to protect her. I was capable of killing to save her life. My intellect was shocked by the raw emotion. Parenthood is primal. All animals have an overwhelming instinct to protect their children. Humans are no different.

Anti-gay groups talk about the "gay agenda" which paints homosexuals as a danger to children. The "gay agenda" claims that gays want to eliminate all age-of-consent laws so that gay men can have sex with boys of any age. It paints a picture of gay men threatening to rape the straight sons of America in the name of gay rights. Anti-gay groups play on the fears of every parent and try to lead parents to the conclusion that they must oppose any rights for gay people if they want to protect their children.

Our community will eventually succeed in gaining full equality, but we must challenge the lies that are being spread about the gay agenda. We need to reach out to parents and help them understand that it is anti-gay propaganda that is putting their children in danger. Promoting tolerance and acceptance for gays and lesbians can help keep their children safe. Whenever we are criticized for "recruiting" in the schools, we need to help our neighbors understand that we are saving lives. A study published in 1999 by the American Medical Association found that students who are gay, lesbian, bisexual or not sure of their sexual orientation are 3.41 times more likely to report a suicide attempt. The children most likely to attempt suicide are gay or lesbian students who grow up in families that brainwash their children into believing that gays and lesbians have no value. They are children who feel that they have failed their families. They have no one to turn to, no one to tell them that being gay is OK, and no one to tell them that they have every

reason in the world to live. I was one of those children who grew up in an anti-gay family. I thought that they were right and that I was wrong. I believed them even when I shouldn't have. It is easy for me to understand how a child trapped in those circumstances might consider killing themselves because they don't want to disappoint their parents. It is ironic that Outright Vermont may be saving the lives of the children of the people who attack them most loudly.

US. 5. Working to protect lesbian health by educating officials and lobbying for funding. 6. Electing fair-minded leaders by contributing over \$1,000,000 to deserving candidates, providing voter guides, and turning out the GLBT vote. 7. Igniting the grassroots by registering people to vote, training grassroots organizers, and educating people on the need to participate in the political process. 8. Supporting Statewide GLBT organizations with grants and

**We need to reach out to parents and help them understand that it is anti-gay propaganda that is putting their children in danger.**

Every parent will do everything they can do to keep their children safe. We need to educate parents that their children are more likely to survive if they hug them and tell them that all people deserve respect regardless of their sexual orientation. We need to educate parents that they are putting their children's lives in danger if they try to force their children to be straight when they are not. We need to let parents know that anti-gay groups talking about the "gay agenda" are the real danger to their children. My own parents would have never made anti-gay comments around me if they had known that I was gay.

We also need to help people understand what makes up the real gay agenda because the real gay agenda is a positive expression of the hopes and dreams of our people. The Human Rights Campaign ([www.hrc.org](http://www.hrc.org)) has published a gay agenda that is worth reading. The HRC's gay agenda is paraphrased below: 1. Ensuring fairness in the workplace by lobbying Congress on the Employee Nondiscrimination Act and working with business leaders to create fair workplace policies. 2. Protecting our community from hate violence by documenting hate incidents and organizing support among law enforcement and elected officials. 3. Helping fight HIV/AIDS by working for adequate funding and comprehensive medical coverage. 4. Protecting families from discrimination by working to ensure that same-sex and married couples receive equal treatment and working to change immigration laws so that loved ones can be reunited in the

technical assistance. 9. Opening hearts and minds across America by building support for GLBT issues.

My own personal gay agenda is that we should always have total equality in everything. Whenever anyone starts talking about how many rights gays and lesbians should or shouldn't have, it strikes a very primal chord inside me. How can any American argue that some Americans deserve more rights than others? Haven't they read the Declaration of Independence that says that this country was founded on the principle of equality? How can any American argue that their religion requires them to lobby the government to prevent me from getting rights that they enjoy?

Doesn't their religion teach them to love their neighbor as themselves? Aren't they violating the core of their own religion when they are trying to bash me? How can any American recite the Pledge of Allegiance if they don't believe in what it says? I've created a new Pledge of Allegiance for anti-gay people so that they can tell the truth when they recite the pledge.

I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the Republicans for which it stands, one nation, under George W. Bush, gays invisible, with liberty and justice for all straight people.

Being anti-gay is really being anti-American. The real gay agenda is nothing more than asking for the rights that we deserve because we are Americans.