

# Boston Civil Disobedience Task Force - VISION STATEMENT

Statement published by the Boston Civil Disobedience Task Force for Lesbian/Gay Rights.

## VISION STATEMENT

We are lesbians and gay men. We have been building our communities, affirming our sexuality, uncovering how vital we are to the world we live in. Silencing, stereotypes, distortions and lies will not stop us. We are out and we are outraged. We are not going back.

We gather October 13, 1987, at the Supreme Court in Washington, D.C. By its actions in Bowers v. Hardwick, the Court embraces a legacy of prejudice. The decision's immediate effects are obvious: having sex makes us criminals. What might be less obvious are its broader effects. This decision denies our humanity and subjects us to degradation, harassment, and violence. It hinders our struggle for basic civil rights, housing, health care, and employment. It makes it difficult, if not impossible, to retain custody of our children, and to provide foster and adoptive homes. By upholding repression against gay men and lesbians, the bigoted opinion of Justices White, Burger, Rehnquist, O'Connor, and Powell extends our country's most shameful legacy: its failure to support human dignity. This legacy includes the genocide of native peoples, slavery, denial of the vote to women and Blacks, segregation and back-alley abortions. At the same time, the struggle in this country to uphold human dignity has created a legacy of its own. In this tradition we are here to fight for our liberation.

The Supreme Court will not stop our loving, living, struggling, and coming out.

from page 4

Why I plan to march

I'm going to Washington because of the millions of lesbian and gay Americans who can't take the chance to go, who still pay the terrible price of the closet, of discrimination, of internalized homophobia. I want to be there for all the folks who can't be there.

I'm going to march because I know it will be fun; spirits will be high, the event will be colorful, there will be plenty of people to meet and get to know, and I know that we know how to have a good time.

I'm going to Washington because I know that one voice alone has so much less impact than hundreds of thousands together, I want the empowerment that comes from the strength of such numbers. I also know that there is only one way to build a crowd of that size - - one person at a time.

I'm going to Washington in October because I want to be a part of history.

To be lesbian or gay in some states today is to be labeled a criminal and risk arrest; to openly acknowledge that identity is to commit civil disobedience, which is the open breaking of unjust laws. We challenge any law that denies our humanity. We challenge any institution that contributes to that denial. We choose collective non-violent civil disobedience to demonstrate the anger and determination of our community.

Merely to step in protest onto the steps of this enormous structure is to commit civil disobedience. The significance of this small denial of our voice lies in its connection to the larger injustice. We act together so we cannot be defeated one by one. We act in the tradition of the labor movement, the suffragist movement, the civil rights movement, the women's movement, the anti-war movement, and in solidarity with Central Americans and Black South Africans fighting for self-determination. Through these movements we have learned that substantial gains come through prolonged and persistent direct action.

We take the power that emerges as we confront our fears, name the truth and claim the validity of our own lives. We call this non-violent action. The tradition of non-violence is marked by the strength of people who have acted with courage to defy those who would silence or destroy them, never compromising their own humanity or that of their adversaries. We refuse to be silent, isolated, or invisible. We can be threatened with violence but we will still be gay. We can be locked in jail but we will still be lesbian.

We are high-school students and grandmothers, rabbis and bikers, prisoners and activists, drag-queens and secretaries, softball players and church-goers. We are artists, mechanics, teachers, and unemployed. Our differences of race and physical ability, culture and politics, class and age bring together perspectives and experience that enrich our struggle for change.

Some of us are people with AIDS. The AIDS epidemic, while striking every part of society, has had a profound impact on the gay male community. As more of our friends are diagnosed, we see that this country's response to AIDS is shockingly inadequate. Testing takes priority over treatment, bigotry blocks funding, censorship prevents education, quarantine threatens caretaking. Because the disease has particularly affected Latinos, Blacks, and gay men, many in the U.S. have been content to sit by and let us die. Further, AIDS has been used to fuel the fires of homophobia, leading to even more harassment and gay-bashing. Yet, in response to hatred and tragedy, gay men and lesbians have led the way in confronting the crisis with intelligence and compassion. We care for the sick, grieve for the dying, fight for the living. In the face of bigotry and AIDS, gay men and

lesbians set an example of love and healing for all.

Lesbians and gay men have come together from distinct communities. Lesbians have often been unrecognized within the gay movement, just as all women have been excluded from full participation and acknowledgement in a society in which men are dominant. We affirm our passion and lust for each other. By our existence, we subvert the male claim to ownership of women and male definitions of female identity. We defy traditional perceptions of women as passive and asexual. We have been at the forefront of the women's movement and other movements for justice, sometimes at the expense of our own identity. We will continue to call attention to the interconnectedness of all issues, including our own, and celebrate our lesbianism. We have insisted that personal life is political. We know that confronting our own prejudices and being aware of how we treat each other is vital to our effectiveness and unity.

Lesbians and gay men stand together at the Supreme Court in non-violent civil disobedience because we demand the right to love peacefully, as we choose. The persecution of any group undermines the dignity and liberty of all, and especially puts other vulnerable groups in danger. We too are affected by rising racism and sexism. We realize that "none of us will be free until we are all free." Our liberation is intrinsically linked to the struggles against racism, sexism, and anti-semitism. Our freedom is linked to the rights of autonomy of indigenous peoples of every continent. For native Americans, Columbus Day memorialized the beginning of almost 500 years of destruction and genocide. We demand an end to all social, economic, judicial, and legal oppression of people of every race, age, gender, transgenderal orientation, ability, class, ethnicity, faith, political ideology, and sexual orientation. Lesbians and gay men have been part of all movements for justice. Now we call upon all of those fighting these injustices to join us in our struggle for love, life, and liberation.

For more information about the National March On Washington for Lesbian/Gay Rights contact:

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