

PSYCHOLOGISTS FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

PsySR Urges the American Psychological Association to Change Course and Not Hold Events at the Manchester Grand Hyatt

BACKGROUND

The 2010 annual convention of the American Psychological Association (APA) will be held in August in San Diego, California, and the Manchester Grand Hyatt has been designated as the convention's primary headquarters hotel.

Last year the hotel's owner Doug Manchester contributed \$125,000 to qualify Proposition 8 for the November 2008 ballot, an initiative that abolished the right of same-sex couples to marry in California. In response, a coalition of LGBT and labor groups instituted a boycott of the Manchester Grand Hyatt. This boycott has now entered its second year, and many organizations, in support of the boycott, have moved their scheduled meetings out of the hotel to other locations.

The APA in its vision statement aspires to serve as "an effective champion of the application of psychology to promote human rights, health, well being and dignity." Moreover, the APA's 2004 policy statement on sexual orientation and marriage includes a specific resolution that the association "shall take a leadership role in opposing all discrimination in legal benefits, rights, and privileges against same-sex couples."

The deeply destructive effects of prejudice, discrimination, and social stigma on unjustly marginalized members of society are well known. Less broadly recognized is the compelling empirical evidence documenting that (1) the institution of marriage offers social, psychological, and health benefits to couples, (2) lesbian and gay parents are as fit and capable as heterosexual parents, and (3) the children of same-sex couples and heterosexual couples are equally well-adjusted and psychologically healthy.

Nonetheless, *the APA's leadership has decided against supporting the boycott of the Manchester Grand Hyatt*, emphasizing the adverse financial consequences that such support would entail.

A CALL FOR CHANGE

Psychologists for Social Responsibility (PsySR) acknowledges the significant challenges the current situation poses for the APA and recognizes as well that the hotel contract was signed several years prior to the passage of Proposition 8. *Nevertheless, given the fundamental importance of equal rights and non-discrimination, PsySR calls upon APA's leadership to:*

- Relocate the APA's Board of Directors (BOD) and Council of Representatives (COR) meetings so that they are not held at the Manchester Grand Hyatt. BOD and COR members should not be forced to choose between their governance responsibilities and a personal or divisional commitment to support the boycott.

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- Relocate broader membership events to other venues. At the very least, this would be an important step in support of inclusivity. The APA should avoid imposing on convention attendees the unnecessary dilemma of whether to advance their professional development or honor the boycott of the Manchester Grand Hyatt.
- Discontinue current efforts aimed at persuading divisions to ignore the boycott and hold their events at the Manchester Grand Hyatt. Rather, divisions and members should be encouraged to act in accordance with their own core principles.
- Engage in aggressive, concerted, and strategic negotiations with the management of the Manchester Grand Hyatt and with the Global Hyatt Corporation in order to reduce or eliminate adverse financial consequences associated with member, divisional, or full organizational support for the boycott. In addition, legal experts should fully explore all grounds for canceling the contract (e.g., the hotel's failure to provide a quiet and non-controversial venue for the APA's meetings).
- Adopt a stance of greater transparency in regard to the hotel contract and the financial costs associated with particular options for supporting the boycott. For example, the APA has not made clear what costs it would incur if association meetings were moved to a different venue but all of the Manchester Grand Hyatt's hotel rooms were nonetheless filled during the convention. Without more information, divisions and members cannot make fully informed decisions about how best to balance competing considerations.

CONCLUSION

Since the passage of Proposition 8 in California, individuals and groups have expanded what amounts to an assault on equal rights for same-sex couples, most recently working to overturn a state law in Maine. At the same time, the FBI's latest annual report on hate crime statistics reveals over a 10% increase in crimes based on sexual orientation.

Within this context, the American Psychological Association's stance toward the ongoing boycott of the Manchester Grand Hyatt organized by LGBT and labor groups is especially troubling and disappointing. PsySR therefore calls upon the APA's leadership to stand firmly in support of equal rights and to immediately reconsider the course they have chosen to take for the 2010 convention in San Diego.

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