

# Gay and Transgender Issues in the Workplace

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## Moscow's Gay Mayor?

Posted: 2 Oct 2010

Is it absurd to suggest that Yuri Luzhkov, the recently deposed Mayor of Moscow, is possibly a closeted homosexual? He called the planned gay parade there “satanic,” and has blocked every effort of gay people to gather in pride. Why is he so vocal on the issue, and what damage have his harangues had on the physical and emotional well-being of young gay people living there?

What about Andrew Shirvell, the assistant Attorney General of Michigan, who calls gay people “sick freaks,” and is so obsessed with making life miserable for the openly gay student body president at the University of Michigan that he has spent six months writing a blog about him? What are the chances that he, like so many other homophobic bullies, is actually a closeted homosexual who hates his attraction to other men, including the student body president?

Bishop Eddie Long is the anti-gay black preacher with a 25,000 member congregation, and he believes that “greed is good.” The odds are very high that he is a closeted homosexual. He’s been charged by four young men recently with sexual assault. An anti-gay bully and a closeted homosexual – in my experience, there seems to be a pattern.

Men who feel secure in their sexuality are not threatened by the sexuality of other men. Women, who are satisfied in their sexual needs, don’t care what other people do sexually. Corporate Human Resources professionals, and those leading efforts at Diversity and Inclusion, should be aware that the dog that barks the loudest usually is making up for its feelings of inadequacy. That’s why they’re generally the smallest dogs. “Yappers,” we call them in our neighborhood.

Well-known anti-gay yappers in the news today include the Rev. Fred Phelps, who pickets at funerals with “God Hates Fag” signs, and Tony Perkins, President of the hostile Family Research Council. Both of them seem way too personally preoccupied with the gay issue not to have their own sexuality scrutinized. Will they, one day, also be found to be the hypocrites that Ted Haggard, anti-gay evangelical preacher, and George Rekers, co-founder of the Family Research Council, have been exposed to be?

Whenever I speak on a college campus, I always assume that the student who most wants to challenge me with questions of “sickness” and “immorality” is most likely struggling with his homosexuality. The same is true in corporations. The most hostile people are generally the ones most in need of personal support in their coming-out process.

It wouldn’t surprise me to one day learn that the roommate of Tyler Clementi, who drove the Rutgers student to commit suicide this past week, came out of the closet himself. Why was Dharun Ravi so taken with his 18-year-old roommate’s kissing another man that he sent the video of the teenage petting across the campus on the Internet? Why was he yapping?

Most of us who are gay are well aware of the long history of self-hating homosexuals, or their spouses, leading vitriolic campaigns against us. Regrettably, our heterosexual colleagues are not always as aware. They know that FBI founder J. Edgar Hoover waged a vicious war against communists and homosexuals, but they don't know he cross-dressed at home, and had a male lover. They know that Anita Bryant led the nation in a war against gay people in the 1970s, but they don't know her husband was bisexual.

Is every anti-gay bully gay, or married to someone whom they suspect is? No, not necessarily, but every one of them is compensating for something. While the gay civil rights movement has had the support of many black people, for instance, black ministers, as a group, have been notoriously homophobic. They denied that AIDS was a black issue, and thus threw gasoline on the fire of the epidemic that swept through their community. They preach hell fire and brimstone about homosexuality to their predominantly female congregations and their predominantly closeted gay choirs. They vociferously oppose gay marriage when the vast majority of their members are single parents. Why - because of the Bible? There are lots of white ministers who preach the Bible but are nowhere near as preoccupied with the issue as are black preachers. For me, it's a case of the small dog yapping either because of homosexual inclinations, or feelings of personal inadequacy.

Four young gay people were buried by their families in the last three week because of suicide. Tyler Clementi was 18. Seth Walsh was 13. Asher Brown was 13. Billy Lucas was 15. All of them had been bullied to death. It's got to stop. The only way it will stop is if we educate ourselves as a nation about sexuality, and get past our fears of it.

By far, corporations are doing a better job of educating their employees on gay and transgender issues than any other segment of society. Churches are the worst places to expect wise and accurate words about human sexuality. Schools are nearly as bad.

There's an epidemic of feelings of sexual inadequacy in this country. This emotional sickness kills innocent bystanders like Tyler, Seth, Asher, and Billy. Self-hating bigots need to be stopped and exposed. They roam the halls of Congress and hold court in pulpits across the country. They are not just sexually immature college roommates or grade school classmates. They are mayors of big cities, assistant attorneys general, and radio and television talk show hosts who rant about morality.

Stopping the damage done to gay and transgender people by anti-gay yappers requires both that we call people on their bigotry, and that we accept that ignorance is the parent of fear, and fear is the parent of hatred.