



December 29, 1993

Colonel Ron Ray
3317 Halls Hill
Crestwood, KY 40014

Dear Ron:

I thought you might be interested in the enclosed material. It is from the Alliance Defense Fund, the new organization I spoke to you about on the phone. They are hosting a breakfast at the NRB convention in Washington on the morning of Monday, January 31st, and I would love for you to attend with me if at all possible.

Please let me know.

Sincerely yours,

Patrick C. Matrisciana
President, Jeremiah Films, Inc.

P.S. I have also enclosed the transcripts from the recent "Fight the Right" meeting with Mel White.

JEREMIAH FILMS
FIGHT THE RIGHT

Tape One

... Community Services Center, and sitting to my left is the Reverend Elder Nancy Wilson, who is pastor of MCC, LA, and tonight's moderator of The Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches, my co-moderator for the evening. And we are really pleased to be doing a joint event. This is the first collaborative event between the Center and MCC, and it's hard to think of a better topic than fighting the rights for that inaugural effort.

We are here tonight to talk about fighting right wing political extremists. Individuals and groups who are actively seeking to deny gay-lesbian people, both our most basic of civil rights, and even in many instances, people who are speaking our entire annihilation. Groups like these often disguise themselves as members of the political mainstream, when they are in reality, as U_____ S_____ says, religious supremacists, people who are certainly not right about much of anything.

We have gathered a very impressive panel, far more expert than I, in addressing this issue tonight, and right now, to run through the list of who we have with us tonight,

first of all, to Nancy's left is Dr. Mel White, who is dean of the largest MCC church in the country, Cathedral of Hope, in Dallas, Texas, and former ghost writer for Jerry Falwell, Billy Graham, Pat Robertson, among many others. So he has quite an inside perspective.

Alright, being asked to stand up so you can see me a little better.

Alright, next to Dr. White is Rabbi _____ Agar, who is the first Rabbi of Congregation _____, a new congregation in West Hollywood. Then we have J. Craig F_____.

Moving from the religious side of the panel to the more political side of the panel, we have Jay Craig F_____, who is the director of the Western Office of _____ Legal Defense and Education Fund.

Next to Jay is Micky Wheatley, who is a local civil rights attorney, and co-founder of P_____nation L.A.

And we hope that we have joining us later Phil Wilson, who is the Director of Public Policy for _____ Los Angeles, and one of the founders of the Black Gay and Lesbian Leadership forums, we expect him coming in a little bit later.

And now, how we're going to work this tonight is, I'm going to make a few comments, and then Nancy is going to make a few comments, and then we're going to turn the panel, to

make, each of our panelists will make some remarks, and then we will open up the floor to folks who have questions. We have a microphone that is set up here, that people can come and talk to, or if you've got a nice loud voice you can even stand where you are.

Now, the lesbian, and gay, and bisexual communities have made a tremendous amount of progress in the twenty-five years since the Stonewall Rebellion. We have even during the repressive Reagan and Bush administrations, managed to get enacted human rights ordinances, and even state wide laws which protect gay and lesbian people from discrimination, and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. In fact today, of seven states in this country, and virtually every major metropolitan area in the United States has such an ordinance.

We also have made massive strides in the health care arena, after a lot of struggle, we have helped to change the response of this nation to the pandemic age that has taken so many of our best and brightest _____. And also, putting the focus on gay and lesbian health care in this nation in the way that it hasn't happened before.

We also have elected many openly gay and lesbian candidates, to cities, states, and even national office. And, last November, for the first time in history, we elected

a president who was open supportive of gay and lesbian civil rights in his campaign. So last January, when the official inauguration poet, M_____ declared that we, gay and lesbian people, should lift our eyes upon this day, breaking for us. It isn't surprising that our hearts were full of hope, and that we felt there was promise for our community everywhere.

But it wasn't long after that, that we began to see President Clinton distancing himself from our community, with regard to the issue of lifting the ban, and ending the practice of discriminating against gay and lesbian people in the military.

The next six months, since January, catapulted our community to the forefront of the national debate in a way that has never happened before. And, at the same time, the right wing religious supremists were doing everything in their power to try to push us back into the closet, or at the very least, prevent that door from closing behind us, because they did not want to see that ban lifted. And they had help, and they had help from very powerful people, people who many in this nation view as heroes, folks like Colin Powell, and Norman S_____. And let's not forget hatermonger Sam, let's pretend, Nunn.

In the end, unfortunately, bigotry and ignorance

prevailed, and the ban was not lifted. And in fact, on September 9th, the senate voted to codify the ban. And it is anticipated that the house will not be far behind in doing the same thing. So, after all of this over, we will in fact, in my opinion, be worse off than we were before.

Now the bad news is, we lost the battle. But the good news is, we really held the line on public opinion on this issue, against some very powerful opposition. According to the Gallop Pole organization, which was doing a lot of work during this entire battle, in January 50 percent of the nation favored discrimination, favored the ban. By the time all of this bul_____ was over, and Sam Nunn had paraded his cast of circus characters before the hearings, the percentage points had raised only one percentage point. Only 51 percent of people favored the ban.

Now think about that for a minute. With all of that publicity, that still means that somewhere from 43 percent to 49 percent, depending on how many people listed themselves as undecided, were supportive of our community. Now that's a pretty phenomenal statement. And that took a lot of work.

Unfortunately, these poles also showed that the anti-gay people felt a lot more strongly about their issue in this battle, than did the pro-gay folks. And I think that was reflected in some of the difficulties that those of us who

were working in this arena had, immobilizing members of our community to really get active on the military issue. And unfortunately, the military issue was not the first battle that we have had, or lost, with the religious supremists, but it's one of the most visible.

Morgan C _____ is the current grass roots campaign of religious supremists around the country to enact anti-gay ordinances in states and localities around the country. Current campaigns are active in Arizona, Ohio, Maine, Florida, Washington, Missouri, Idaho, Michigan, Colorado, still in Oregon, and perhaps this list will include California, and maybe dozens more states by the end of 1994. We are under attack, pure and simple, and we've got to do something about it.

And some of the things that we can do about it is, we have to get active. We've got to get active in our local and our national organizations, and we have to fight apathy, and get involved, even when the issues aren't our favorite ones, like the military, because it becomes symbolic for things a lot more important than just the issue of whether we can openly serve in the armed forces.

We also have to give more money. Sadly, the religious supremists organizations have us beat all to hell in raising money. Probably the wrong puns used for this group, I just

thought of that, (audience laughing). Let me just give you an example. The six largest gay and lesbian political organizations in the country, have total combined budgets of twelve and a half million. Alright, HRCF, Human _____ Campaign Fund is 5.5 million, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force is 3.3 million, Land and Legal Defense and Education fund is 1.8 million, P____ flags is 900,000, the victory fund is 600,000, and the National Center for Lesbian rights is 400,000.

Now in comparison, when you look at the six largest organizations of the religious supremists movement, they have amassed annual budgets of \$213,000,000. Alright, that means -- and those organizations like the Christian Broadcast Network, which \$106,000,000 budget. Focus on Families, 77 million; the Christian Coalition, 10 million; Concerned Women for America, 10 million; American Family Association, 7 million; and the American Center for Law and Justice, 3 million.

Our six organizations, national organizations have budgets of totalling only 6 percent of the six largest religious right wing organizations. And those organizations are only anti-gay, they're anti-woman, anti-choice, anti-First Amendment, they're supporting prayer in schools, and many of them are pro-white supremacists. In short, they're

agenda is to end the separation between church and state, and they want to infuse, into our government, fundamentalists religious right wing ethics that they want to run all of our lives. Not only is that bad for lesbian and gay and bisexual people, but that's bad for all Americans.

And tonight's town hall is just one event, in what we hope will become a county-wide, state-wide, and even nationwide effort, not only of our community, but of all fair minded people to pull the sheets off of these religious supremacists, and expose them for what they really are.

One one easy way to describe that, is hateful, small-minded terrified bigots. And that's why we have to get education out there, so that most of this nation knows that these are not people who represent any kind of majority, or any kind of significant minority, other than the fact that they are so loud in what they're doing. But if we do not stand up and be equally loud, they will appear to be far stronger than what their numbers really represent.

The important part of that effort is going to be mobilizing the lesbian and gay religious communities, which, if you look in any community in this nation, where there are active gay and lesbian communities, which includes most of the large communities and many others, the largest single block of organizations are the religious organizations

combined. That's where a lot of our power is, and sometimes those of us who have been more involved in the political side of things, don't realize that. And, at least in Los Angeles, Nancy and I hope to play a big part in mobilizing together to fight this, and I'm going to let her talk a little bit more about that, (audience clapping).

Now that was a hell of a decision, don't you think that, that was just a wonderful thank you Lord. Why am I here? Because for 22 years I've been involved in Metropolitan Community Church, which is the first religious organization, organized ever in the history of the world, openly, by and for, lesbians and gay men, to begin to provide open spirituality for our people, and I pastored the first church in the world, that was ever organized for that purpose.

And because it's been between a rock and a hard place, between an extremely homophobic, religious context that we live in, and a very church and religious phobic gay and lesbian community, and rightfully so, in many ways. That's, that's a completely rational sense. Those who are gay and lesbian religious people have a very irrational sense perhaps, in terms of our own loyalties, and our sense of who we are. I'm a preacher by three points, and they are,

(laughter), they are crisis, coalition, and the word "rage."
So I want to lift up those three words tonight.

First of all crisis. I believe we live in a moment in history, around these issues coming together. As Gloria Jean talked about how the gay and lesbians, particularly a bisexual religious organizations, and the whole sexual organizations, and unmasking of the religious right, or religious wrong, or religious supremacists, as they're called in our country.

You know, Clinton's election provided the perfect setting for backlash. For years the religious right was getting a little bored, they've been too successful, and they couldn't raise more money. The Moral Majority folded, as soon as Clinton was elected, they're back in business, because they have an enemy, and we have to understand that. And that we live in a political, spiritual, and moral crisis.

The L. A. Times, in addition to the article Saturday about this meeting, talked about the fact that there is a systematic -- hear that word -- systematic war going on against separation of church and state, and the Bill of Rights, especially freedom of speech and freedom of religion. And this is a hard, enormous war that's going on. And they described the enemies of the religious right are feminists, gays, lesbians, intellectuals, but certainly also hosts of

other groups of people are included. In California, the new scapegoats, of course, are immigrants. That's what is happening in our state, in our culture. And the religious right is organized. State by state they are well funded, city by city.

The last time, in the gay and lesbian community, I kind of hear the religious rights stereotype as a bunch of silly, crazy fundamentalists, on TV, and we can kind of blow them off. But that's not the political reality. Whether we like it or not, we have to take these folks seriously for what they are and can do; how they undergird etiology that makes violence possible against us and our community. Because they have power, they have money, they elect people to office all the time; and in times of economic stress, they have the time worn rhetoric of fear and hate mongering. They know how to push the buttons, how to get the dollars, and get the job done.

Coalitions. The gay and lesbian community, even if we expand out and say, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender community, cannot hope to win against the religious right on our own. Forget it, we cannot do it. We can try, and be beaten down. We've experienced many times. But the truth is, in our queer politics, in this decade, we've got to get a lot more broadbased in what's queer, and we have to de-

ghettoize our politics. We talk about diversity, it's a clique in a lot of our movements, but the truth is, we really do have to reach out with common cause, to the AIDS community, to the women's movement, to African Americans, to those fighting for the rights of immigrants in our country, to the poor, and to decent people everywhere who ran the right is unmasked are repulsed. That really does happen, and can happen.

I'll give you an example. Last week in Mississippi, southern Mississippi, there are -- were no gay and lesbian organizations in southern Mississippi until very recently. There is an MCC in Biloxi, Mississippi, and the pastor was a student pastor of mine here at MCC LA, and she went to southern Mississippi. And they organized the first gay and lesbian community service center, _____ Friendly. And they were so excited, they even got a grant to establish the first gay and lesbian center and AIDS program in southern Mississippi. And the largest Baptist church, in a suburban city, rose up against them, and went to the city council. The city council bowed to them, and they drove, threatened to drive out the gay and lesbian center out of the city, and MCC out of the city. Threatened them.

And last week, five hundred people marched in southern Mississippi, it was the first open rally, rights march help

for gay and lesbian community in Mississippi's history. Five hundred people marched, many of them from outside of Mississippi, from neighboring southern cities. And friends, the people marched in that town, and two very important things happened.

Besides the rally itself, which was very successful and peaceful, there were as many police officers as there were people marching, that march, you're all familiar with that. But two things happened. Five businesses in Biloxi, Mississippi, flew rainbow flags that day, in that city, (audience clapping). And another thing that happened, was on the steps of the _____ Baptist church, and on the steps of the Baptist church, was a way woman, the member of that church who stood out in front of the church, and as they went by said, "I'm so sorry, this should never have happened. I'm so sorry, this should never have happened. You should be welcomed in our city."

The process of unmasking, and helping people to get over their fear and shame, to stand up to their own religious leaders, we have to make coalition, with people like that woman, who saw the unmasking of the hatred and bigotry in her own city. Authoritarian religion, I'm sorry, is not what I understand to be Christianity. It is the religion of fascists. Authoritarian religion is a religion of fascists,

(audience clapping).

Last, but not least, rage. For so many of us, it's so easy for our rage to simply go inside, or harm naulity, we do both those things extremely well. Our rage has got to become a spiritual renewal in our community. Rage is a spiritual force, it is perhaps the most primary spiritual force. Rage is about, when we know injustice is happening, and when injustice is happening, it rises up in our guts, it is a primal spiritual force. All religions in the world recognize that primal spiritual force of rage and outrage, as injustice.

And the truth is, that our rage, as a community, can be _____ into violence and counter violence, and those who are not in power, and that's us, will be the victims. That's one choice.

The other way, is that rage can become spiritual energy for action. And that means getting educated. And one of the things I want to say is that those of you who are atheists or don't believe in religion of any kind, we need not to see each other as the enemy. But, you know, for those of us who do understand something about how religions work, we have some interesting information. For instance, all the things a lot of Christian churches expound about homosexuality in the Bible, simply isn't true. And we can kind of answer

questions about that, on their terms, and we have some tremendous gifts to give and to share. And even if you don't believe a word of the Bible, it's kind of fun to be able to argue with fundamentalists on their own terms, (laughter and clapping).

So I think it would help us to get over our Bible phobia too, it's okay. But to be able to know that we don't have to be afraid of that, or people speaking up or saying to us, we can argue back, we can stand our own ground, and nobody has the right to tell us that we aren't spiritual people the way we are.

I'm working on a book that's about outing the Bible, because I think the truth is, the Bible is a tremendously gay, lesbian, and bisexual book in a lot of ways, (clapping), and more sex and violence in that Book than any other book ever written, you know, incredible. But there is some powerful good news just there about what's really there. And we have a job to unmask a lot of things. And I that those of us -- we need to make those coalitions, we need to know each other, as on opposite sides of the fence, but come together, and come together with groups we may have thought we could never find common cause with. Because the truth is, we do live in this moment in history, and we have to see this. Thank you, (audience cheering).

Our next speaker is Dr. Mel White, who is also the author, by the way, of the biography of K_____ K_____, has produced 50 films, has an incredible story, and please give him a warm welcome from Dallas, Texas, (audience cheering).

At the outset, I have to say that I'm both embarrassed and ashamed that I spent so many years working for the religious right. I was in agreement with a good thing, a good part of the things they were saying, at the time. I still love Jesus, and want to be a part of His coalition.

I'm also embarrassed and ashamed that I spent so many years trying to be an ex-gay, for God knows there is no such thing. But it took me a lot longer than it took God to figure that out, (laughter). I spent tens of thousands of dollars, I was exorcised, and electric shocked, and counseled by the best Christian therapists, and tranquilized finally, and then finally a good woman psychologist said to me, "Mel, you're not even sick, you know, you're just a gay man." She said, "Fall in love with another gay man and get it over with." Then I found her advice to be priceless.

Gary and I have been in a relationship for ten years now and it's all worked out. During all those horrible moments when I thought everything would collapse if I really tried to

become congruent with who I am, that everything would end. In fact, becoming congruent has been the beginning of me. And you who waited, like I watched Niki at -- I was, I marched with you, you didn't know it, but many times I was down there learning from you what I needed to know, when I was still in the closet. And so for all of you who waited so patiently for me, and for all of you who are waiting so patiently for others, thank you.

The next thing I need to say is that, there are a lot of people here, tonight, from the religious right, who are still strong believers in at least most of what they say. And they've come tonight, caring enough about this dialogue to be here and to listen. If you would like to stand and be recognized by this crowd, I'd be glad to do that. If you folks who are from the religious right would like to stand, or if you could just consider yourself an evangelical, or a fundamentalist Christian would like to stand, we'd like to give you a hand for coming. Anybody here? Thank you. There are others, (audience clapping).

Our main cameraman Pat Matriciano is of course from the religious right, and his footage, you've noticed the name Jeremiah Films, on some of the films that have really knocked us pretty savagely. But he's here tonight, and I think that in the spirit of pluralism, and the spirit -- we are not here

to censor other people, but to make our side of the truth known.

And so for me, it's very difficult to talk about Jerry Falwell, and have as much fun as you guys do, because I, because I know Jerry Falwell intimately. He's a man, and if you have a dirty mind that's alright to. I don't know him in the Biblical sense, I just know him as a friend and as employer. Jerry has a wonderful family, he's loyal to his church, and committed to this nation. He's sincere about what he says, but he's sincerely wrong.

And in that moment, the more we caricature people like Jerry, the more we make them like Pat Robertson, to be booking them, the more we keep any kind of change from taking place. Because the more we make them look like crazies, the less interested we are in being sane ourselves, in dealing with the craziness, (audience clapping).

And what I do in the privacy of my living room, and what I say in the privacy of my living room about them, that's none of your business. But I'll give you some clues. I think they're killing us. I think their rhetoric is killing us. This is one of Jerry's recent pieces, and I don't think he listed his budget, in that list of budgets. And Jerry Falwell's budget is well over 50, somewhere close to 200,000,000 a year. So the \$213,000,000 figure is really

low. I would say it's much closer to a \$1,000,000,000. That the religious right -- if you threw in the denominations, who are working like the Southern Baptists, now they've scored, just the working concept with those who are on television, we have a \$1,000,000,000 budget or more.

This little piece, if you open it up, you would think it would be sent primarily just to elderly, because it's so large, (laughter). But, this is simply Jerry's way of launching the dialogue by saying, "We declare war on gay people. We declare war." This is a declaration of war, and the reason he's declaring war is, that we have, that's we who are gay and lesbian by sexual and transgender people here, we have "A Godly humanistic scheme to destroy America's traditional moral values, and a plan to eliminate God and Christianity from American society."

This, if you will sign this, this is the declaration of war pledge, and enclose a small gift, you can get a video tape that was, the teacher's Nancy Wilson, dancing at the inaugural ball. Like I said, she should be censored for the way she dances, (laughter).

Here's another recent sample from Andrea Sheldon. I don't know if you saw Lou and me going face to face on Larry King Live, I wasn't fishing for a compliment, I was just saying that Lou Sheldon is another one that wasn't included,

but he has all kinds of his family employed, like his daughter is the head of their organization of lobbying in Washington, D.C. She said, at the march on Washington, how many of you were there? How many women were there? Okay, in this crowd. I would say that parody was fairly close in that march, wouldn't you, at least 35-40 percent women, maybe more.

Well, her review was, "that most of the people I encountered were not what we would call main stream, rather, they were militant, and angry homosexual men, demanding the right to sodomize 16 year old boys."

You see, when this kind of hysterical material gets out, Jerry and Lou, when you send that kind of material out, we have now traced the data, so that we know exactly the results of this kind of rhetoric. First of all, I hope your ghost writers are writing this, because you are smart enough to know it's a lie, all of it, it's a lie. It's just plain a lie.

Most of us, most of us here are main stream folks. And when we get out to protest, it's because what you're saying about us is killing us, it's leads directly to our deaths, (audience clapping).

One last thing before we get started, and all these voices continue to ring in your brain, remember, behind the

religious right, and the glossy images that they portray through the mail and over television, is another much more ugly kind of rhetoric. Literalists, real result of the censor of the religious right, is to kill us.

We have 73 people at our cathedral volunteering to monitor the religious right. They simply send in their \$35.00 and get on the mailing list of all of them. Seventy-three different organizations we're on. We have inside plants at about 40 of them, people who are working for us, inside their organizations, inside their organizations, (audience clapping).

But one of our women wrote recently to R. J. Rush____ who is the theologian of choice, of the selectivists who are Biblical literalists, and said, "I'm about to be married to a gay man, what advice would you give me?"

And I have in writing, the handwriting of R. J. Rush____, the letter that says, "You know that God and His law makes it clear that the death penalty is required for all homosexuals."

That just beneath the surface of all this servility, this is servility, is the urge to our death. Don't forget that the first political action committee in 1933, that Adolph Hitler started was, the political action committee to end abortion and homosexuality. Don't forget, that just a

few years later, gay men were being herded into prisons, whose names were out so that they could get them, and shortly after they died. And using Leviticus as the same kind of instructions, there is not any doubt in my mind, that if the 1996 election goes downhill and Clinton's battles to rescue the economy fails, that the real fascists, gay basher gets into power, there is no doubt in my mind, that barb wire fences could go around our pleasant ghettos, and that our death would be imminent. I don't think I'm an alarmist, I think I'm a reader of history, and I say, "Jerry, Pat, do you want that really, for us? Do you really want to see us dead?"

One last story, Jerry Falwell, in 1964, had a segregated church core. The congress _____ quality sent four men to picket, an African American and three Black men, young men, courageous men. They went on the porch, and then they did all they could, and Jerry said, after the press was gone, "Nothing, there's nothing wrong with these guys that a good haircut wouldn't cure," and how Jerry is very social and jovial at moments like this.

But then he told me, when I was writing his autobiography, you know what changed me about that? I had a friend named Jasper, who was an African American, who did my shoes on Monday. And every Monday I sat down in his little

chair, and Jasper would look up to me and say, "Brother Falwell I heard you on television this Sunday, I loved your sermon." But one Sunday, after the riots were gone, and the core was gone, he said to me, "But Jerry, you know I love Jesus."

Jerry said, "Yes."

Said, "Well Jerry, when do you think I'll be able to come and join your church, and worship Jesus with you?"

And Jerry said, "It broke my heart." I knew at that moment, and I was wrong. So Jerry, what we're really trying to say, is Jerry, we love Jesus, oh we have the right to seek Him in our own ways too; all we want, all we want is to worship with you. Is that too much to ask? (audience clapping).

Doesn't that take courage to come back, and come out to our community, and speak so passionately? (audience clapping). Well, usually it's not the Jew who brings the good news, (laughter), but the Rabbi has, it's always the Jew, _____, but the Rabbi has some good news to share with you tonight. And that good news -- alright I'll stand up. And that good news is that I think, as Reverend Wilson made us aware, that there are many non-gay and non-lesbian people

who are our allies, and who are friends, and who stand with us in this battle for our civil rights, (audience clapping). There are many people across this country who are just as angry, and just as upset, when they hear about gay bashings; when they hear about these attempts to subvert civil rights in America, when they are faced with the challenges of the separation of church and state, the attack at our Constitution and Bill of Rights are under at this present time. There are people that are angry, who are not gay and lesbian, in this country. And that is something that we must be in coalition with that movement, (audience clapping).

Tonight, one of the things that I think that we, as a community, must really, really begin to work together, is that we must reach beyond our own gay and lesbian community, our own bisexual community, our own HIB community, to reach out across the city of Los Angeles, our county, and across the nation, to be in coalition with those people who are ready to stand with us, and stand by our sides.

And that is a great challenge for many of us in this room, because we've come from our straight families and friends, many of you in this room have been rejected by them, and hurt by them. And so it's hard to think that there might be loving people, who are not gay and lesbian, who want to stand with us. But there are.

And I brought tonight a hand out of what can be done in your community to combat the religious right. And I just want to give credit. I'm not going to go through all of these suggestions. There is information here, how to fight, how to be a part of coalitions opposing anti-gay statewide measures in Arizona, and Florida, and Idaho; and anti-gay city measures, there's information here. But this particular document was compiled by the Reform Movement of Judaism Religions Action Center in Washington.

The Religious Action Center in Washington, D. C. is the arm of the reform movement of Judaism, the most liberal branch denomination of Judaism, that prepares from a Jewish ethical and religious values point of view, political positions. It's the Jewish Reform Movement lobbying arm in Washington, if you will.

For many years now, the Reform Movement of Judaism has stood side by side with the gay and lesbian community. First in the '70s, endorsing the decriminalization of homosexual acts, ordaining gay and lesbian individuals as rabbis and cantors, endorsing gay and lesbian synagogues, and inviting them to be part of their main stream movement. In Judaism we don't necessarily have synagogues that are a separate denomination, as Empty Sea is it's own denomination. But the synagogues are part of the main stream movement. And I think

that is an important model, that we can learn from in our larger gay and lesbian political movement as well.

This particular hand out was passed out to every reform and reconstructed synagogue in the United States, that's over a thousand synagogues across the United States, and sent to their committees who are involved in social action, and social justice issues. It's specifically about the religious right, and how to fight them in your community. And more than half of this documents talks specifically of why their synagogues must be involved in fighting anti-gay initiatives in their community.

And so this is a really wonderful example of where we have friends, that we can reach out beyond our own gay and lesbian ghetto, in the political realm, to make friends, to build coalitions, and have people stand with us. And I think that's really good news for all of us who are tired, (audience clapping).

I think one of the other issues that I want to raise in particular, is that though we see for the most part, that this movement of the radical religious right that is so trying to subvert our constitution and our form of life, they would rather have us bureaucracy than a democracy. And that would mean, at least for me as a Jewish person, that I had no room in this country as well, to practice my spiritual and

religious values.

And so, the fact that I'm a lesbian has nothing to do with it, in some ways, it's also an attack on who I am as a Jewish person. And that's something for all of us who are not of the Christian faith, to be concerned about as well. Because this is a threat to our democratic way of life in the United States, (audience clapping).

But don't just think that all of the information that Mel just shared with us, and the mailings, and the flyers, are the only issues that they're dealing with are gay and lesbian, or abortion rights, there are other kinds of issues that the radical religious right has targeted as part of a package to attack all of our rights.

And one of those in particular, is facing, we're facing in our own community, in California, this November, and that's Proposition 174. Some of you don't know about it, because you don't have kids. And you think that the schools are not your issue. But we, as a gay and lesbian community, for those of us that do have kids, for those of us that work with kids, who are teachers, who are camp counselors, who are social workers, and for those of us who don't have children, but went to school, and that means everybody in this room went somewhere to school. We have to be concerned about broader issues, because the radical religious right is

attacking a whole host of issues, and we must become more aware, in our political realities, about what those issues are.

Proposition 174 is the School Voucher Initiative, which will take money from our taxes, to pay for public schools, and anybody with 25 kids, can set up a school, and they can be paid through tax dollars, they can teach what they want, they can not have accredited teachers, and any church group, and any school group can go in and teach whatever they want, and they don't have to be regulated by the State Board of Education.

That's a threat to us, as a gay and lesbian community, (audience clapping). They're going to teach, and it's happening already, in certain private school education. They're going to teach that we're the monster, they're going to teach the myths that you know about that they spread, the lies that they spread about that, and they're going to raise up an entire generation of young people whose objectives will be to do what they interpret Leviticus to say, to kill us.

And so we must be aware, and we must be informed about issues beyond the military ban on gay and lesbians, beyond anti-gay initiatives that would take away our job and housing. We must be aware of issues like the School Voucher Initiative as well.

Finally, tonight, the last thing that I really want to say, is that -- and Reverend Wilson touched on it a little bit. I know, because I've been the rabbi in this community for a long time now, and that most of the gay and lesbian and bisexual community, does not have a particular religious heritage or faith that they practice on a regular basis. And I understand the reasons behind that. I understand the pain, and I understand the discrimination and the homophobia that has been taught through religious tradition.

But, I also believe that the time has come for us to articulate our own holiness, as people. Regardless of what -- (audience clapping) -- regardless of the fact that you might be an atheist, and you might be an agnostic, and not really believe in a kind of divine force of the universe, whatever name you want to call it, Ala, Adenoi, Jesus, Lord, whatever name you want to call it. We, as gay and lesbian people, must live each and every single day with the idea that we are morally upright and acceptable human beings. We must live each and everyday to that important and special dignity.

And those of us that are from religious backgrounds, we call that holiness. That we have an innate sense of holiness within us. And that, my friends, is going to be a major step on the road to answering the passion, and the belief system

of those in the radical religious right who come to this debate and argument, on their passions and their religious fervor, of what they believe is right, and how they believe the world is. To paint them as merely crazies, that's really not going to answer the question.

But we must break up to assert our own moral acceptability to ourselves, first, and our own holiness. And then we will be able to have a more stable, and more essential way of entering into this debate. And I believe, more successes in the way that we reach out and fight the religious right. Thank you, (audience clapping).

... today, about what I wanted to say to group like this. As a recovering attorney, as a _____, and somebody who is really not all that involved with the religious community, I wanted to talk a little. I was thinking about what I could add to the people here who have so much, so eloquent to say.

The one thing that I did want to think about, and then sort of discuss or chat with you about is, there is an awful lot of disturbing talk in our community that organized religion is the enemy.