



Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community protests anti-gay artists and hate language at NYC concert

Statement from Zaheer Mustafa, Organizing & Training Project Director, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force

NEW YORK, Aug. 25 — I am here today on behalf of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force to again reinforce our support for this mission to stop hate music in all forms. For over three decades the Task Force has been the uncompromising voice of our movement and we are proud to stand with you and speak out on this issue.

On a more personal note, as a person who spent his early years of life in the Caribbean I have witnessed the violent homophobia that this music has fueled. I have seen unimaginable violence towards people who are merely suspected of being gay or lesbian. These lyrics teach people to hate and enshrine hate for gays and lesbians in the mentality of an entire region of the world.

Reggae music once talked about peace and love. Bob Marley sang about “One Love,” not burning gay people. Artists who preach hate never last for long because the world only spins forward and the world is ultimately compassionate. Buju Banton and Bounty Killa will be judged by history and I urge them to understand that artists who preach hate never become legends. And I urge them to sign the Reggae Compassionate Act.

There exists so much potential for change in the Caribbean community’s attitudes towards gay people but how can that change come when Caribbean families continue to play this music at gatherings in front of young people? How can change come when governments from Guyana to Jamaica turn a blind eye to anti-gay violence? How can change come when this concert is being sponsored by radio stations we listen to and the beer we drink?

Given the violent homophobia that exists in the Caribbean community, I find it disturbing that major U.S. companies continue to market this type of music. As of today, you can find “Boom Bye Bye” for sale by every major music retailer, including Amazon.com, iTunes and Virgin Music. That is appalling and we have an obligation to look at the facts and know where we are spending our money.

We have the power to create the change we want to see. As bad as it might appear for us sometimes we are in a better position to empower ourselves and rally against hate music. We cannot and will not let this stop here today. We must take action in every aspect of our lives until the world knows that we are not their punching bag.

Whether you are from the Caribbean community and have witnessed the violent homophobia like I have or just believe that no one should live in fear, we here today have to do all we can to stop this music from spreading to new generation of young people. It’s time to define a new, more tolerant generations of Caribbean people. It’s time to put an end to the hate. It’s time to rise up and say we deserve to live in peace and without fear. It is time to say we deserve to live.