

## False anti-gay claims targeted at Black voters in swing states, media report

Anti-gay activists made last ditch efforts to swing voters against Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry in Michigan and Florida, it was reported election day. Voters in Michigan have complained that they are receiving misleading automated phone calls falsely claiming that Kerry supports gay marriage.<sup>1</sup> In fact, Kerry opposes marriage equality for same-sex couples, although he also opposes the Federal Marriage Amendment, which would ban marriage and threaten other forms of partner recognition.

According to the Associated Press, the automated calls made in the heavily Democratic and African American cities of Detroit, Flint, Pontiac and Grand Rapids had a female voice saying:

“When you vote this Tuesday remember to legalize gay marriage by supporting John Kerry. We need John Kerry in order to make gay marriage legal for our city. Gay marriage is a right we all want. It’s a basic Democratic principle. It’s time to move forward and be progressive. Without John Kerry, George Bush will stop gay marriage. That’s why we need Kerry. So Tuesday, stand up for gay marriage by supporting John Kerry.”<sup>2</sup>

In Florida the Sunday before the election (October 31), *LA Weekly* reported that four apparent Bush supporters held hand-made signs that read “Support Gay Adoption” over official Kerry-Edwards campaign signs in front of an early voting station at the African American Research Library in Fort Lauderdale. The four also held signs reading “Abortion Our Choice Our Right.” They claimed to be members of ACT UP, the militant AIDS Coalition To Unleash Power, from San Francisco. But *LA Weekly* blogger Joshua Bearman reported that they were “an obvious bunch of Republicans pretending to be from ACT UP.”<sup>3</sup>

Senators Kerry<sup>4</sup> and Edwards<sup>5</sup> agree with the American Academy of Pediatrics,<sup>6</sup> the American Academy of Family Physicians,<sup>7</sup> and the National Association of Social

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<sup>1</sup> Gray, K. (2004, November 1). Presidential campaigns, voters upset about misleading calls. *Detroit Free Press*. [http://www.freep.com/news/latestnews/pm1049\\_20041101.htm](http://www.freep.com/news/latestnews/pm1049_20041101.htm). Accessed November 2, 2004.

<sup>2</sup> Hoffman, K. (2004, November 1). Voters complain about misleading calls. *Associated Press*. [http://news.yahoo.com/news?tmpl=story&cid=694&u=/ap/20041101/ap\\_on\\_el\\_pr/mislead...](http://news.yahoo.com/news?tmpl=story&cid=694&u=/ap/20041101/ap_on_el_pr/mislead...) Accessed November 2, 2004.

<sup>3</sup> Bearman, J. (2004, October 31). How They Do, Part III.

<sup>4</sup> Response to National Gay and Lesbian Task Force survey. (2003, May). Cited in Cahill, S. et al. *The 2004 Democratic presidential candidates on gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender issues*. New York: National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute. p. 27.

<sup>5</sup> Response to National Gay and Lesbian Task Force survey. (2003, May). Cited in Cahill, S. et al. *The 2004 Democratic presidential candidates on gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender issues*. New York: National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute. p. 15.

Workers<sup>8</sup> that adoption decisions should be made on an individual, case-by-case basis based on what is in the best interest of the child and without discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. At least 110,000 children are waiting to be adopted in the U.S.<sup>9</sup> But in 1997 there were qualified adoptive parents available for only 20,000 of them.<sup>10</sup> Approximately 588,000 children are currently in foster care.<sup>11</sup> Florida has banned homosexuals from adopting since 1977, when Orange juice spokeswoman Anita Bryant claimed, falsely, that gay people threatened Florida's children. Six states currently limit or ban adoption or foster parenting by gay men, lesbians, and/or same-sex couples.<sup>12</sup>

In addition to these instances of anti-gay electioneering, here are some others from the 2004 election cycle:

- The Republican Party in West Virginia and Arkansas has mailed out a flier claiming that “liberal politicians and their hand-picked activists judges” are promoting a “radical agenda” including banning the Bible and legalizing same-sex marriage. A graphic depicts the Bible with the word “banned” stamped over it; next to this image is a man on his knees proposing to another man with the word “allowed” over them.
- In Oregon anti-gay activists claim that if the anti-gay marriage amendment they are promoting (Measure 36) fails, then “gay and lesbian sex will be taught in Oregon schools.” The Defense of Marriage Coalition’s flier claims that, in Massachusetts where marriage equality for same-sex couples is legal, “National Public Radio just interviewed a Massachusetts teacher who uses charts with her Middle School students to explicitly teach gay sex. If parents object, she says, ‘give me a break, gay marriage in Massachusetts is legal now.’”
- In Massachusetts, incumbent Democratic State Representative Vinnie Ciampa was defeated by an openly gay challenger in the Democratic primary. Carl Sciortino challenged Ciampa, in part, because Ciampa voted to undercut the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ruling in favor of marriage equality. Sciortino defeated Ciampa in a closely contested primary. Ciampa is running a sticker campaign to win back his seat in today’s final election. The anti-gay Parents’ Rights Coalition/Article 8 Alliance (a group seeking to impeach the

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<sup>6</sup> Perrin, Ellen C., MD, and the Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health. (2002, Feb.). “Technical Report: Coparent or Second-Parent Adoption by Same-Sex Parents.” *Pediatrics*. 109(2): 341-344.

<sup>7</sup> Stoeber, J. (2002, Oct. 17). “Delegates Vote for Adoption Policy.” *FP Report*. Available at <http://www.aafp.org/fpr/assembly2002/1017/7.html>.

<sup>8</sup> Ferrero, E., Freker, J. and Foster, T. (2002). *Too High a Price: The Case Against Restricting Gay Parenting*. New York: ACLU Lesbian and Gay Rights Project. Available online at <http://www.lethimstay.com/pdfs/gayadoptionbook.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> Child Welfare League of America (n.d.). Adoption fact sheet. <http://www.cwla.org/programs/adoption/adoptionfactsheet.htm> . Accessed March 1, 2004.

<sup>10</sup> M. Petit and P. Curtis, *Child abuse and neglect: A look at the states; 1997 Child Welfare League of America Stat Book*, 1997.

<sup>11</sup> Child Welfare League of America (n.d.). Facts and figures. <http://www.cwla.org/programs/fostercare/factsheet.htm>. Accessed March 1, 2004.

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.thetaskforce.org/downloads/adoptionmap.pdf>

judges who supported marriage equality) has sent out a mailing in Ciampa's district titled "A Special Report on the Homosexual Lobby's Secret Campaign to Install a Homosexual, Anti-Catholic Extremist in the State Legislature." Sciortino is Catholic. The report refers to "the homosexual lobby" as "one of the most powerful and well-financed extremist groups in America..." Although most of the gay and pro-gay activists working to elect Sciortino live in nearby Boston or Cambridge or in Ciampa's district of Somerville and Medford (cities next to Boston), the report claims that "[a]s in the primary, you'll see all kinds of people you've never before seen in the streets and neighborhoods campaigning for Sciortino, many in cars with out-of-state license plates."

- In New Hanover County, North Carolina, County GOP Chairman Charlton Allen sent out a letter to voters noting that "Julia Boseman seeks to become the first openly gay or lesbian legislator in North Carolina." The letter was reproduced by the state Republican Party, and was both mailed out as a flyer to voters and published in local newspapers as an advertisement.<sup>13</sup>
- South Carolina GOP Senate hopeful Jim DeMint said in a debate with Democratic opponent Inez Tenenbaum that gays should not be allowed to teach in South Carolina public schools.<sup>14</sup> DeMint also said pregnant women should not be allowed to teach. DeMint later apologized for the remark about pregnant women, but refused to apologize for saying gay people should not be allowed to teach. The South Carolina GOP platform opposes hiring gay teachers.<sup>15</sup>

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*Founded in 1973, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Foundation (the Task Force) was the first national lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) civil rights and advocacy organization and remains the movement's leading voice for freedom, justice, and equality. We work to build the grassroots political strength of our community by training state and local activists and leaders, working to strengthen the infrastructure of state and local allies, and organizing broad-based campaigns to build public support for complete equality for LGBT people. Our Policy Institute, the community's premiere think tank, provides research and policy analysis to support the struggle for complete equality. As part of a broader social justice movement, we work to create a world that respects and makes visible the diversity of human expression and identity where all people may fully participate in society. Headquartered in Washington, DC, we also have offices in New York City, Los Angeles, and Cambridge. The Task Force is a 501(c)(3) corporation incorporated in Washington, DC. Contributions to the Task Force are tax-deductible to the full extent allowed by law. <http://www.TheTaskForce.org>*

*The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, Inc. ("NGLTF, Inc."), founded in 1974, works to build the grassroots political power of the LGBT community to win complete equality. We do this through direct and grassroots lobbying to defeat anti-LGBT ballot initiatives and legislation and pass pro-LGBT legislation and other measures. We also analyze and report on the positions of candidates for public office on issues of importance to the LGBT community. NGLTF, Inc. is a 501(c)(4) non-profit corporation incorporated in New York. Contributions to NGLTF, Inc. are not tax-deductible.*

<sup>13</sup> Newscenter staff. (2004, October 28). North Carolina campaigns attack gays. 365Gay.com.

<sup>14</sup> Johnson, P. (2004, October 4). Gay attacks mark campaigns. 365Gay.com.

<sup>15</sup> Newscenter staff. (2004, October 6), GOP Senate hopeful refuses apology over anti-gay teacher remark. 365Gay.com.