



NATIONAL EXECUTIVE BOARD STATEMENT ON BULLYING OF LGBT YOUTH

October 15, 2010

In communities across Canada and the United States we have seen an increase in harassment and violence against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered teens. In the last month there has been a shocking series of teen suicides linked to bullying, taunting and lack of acceptance and understanding of sexual orientation.

CAW members and staff are deeply saddened by the recent suicide deaths of Canadian youth Chantal Dube and Jeanine Blanchette and American students Asher Brown, Seth Walsh, Justin Aaburg, Billy Lucas, Cody Barker, Tyler Clementi, Justin "Chloe" Lacey, Aiyisha Hassan and Raymond Chase. We extend our heartfelt sympathy to their families and friends and to all people who share their loss.

Our LGBT youth deserve better than to be subjected to these horrific acts of bullying. Schools should and must be safe places that encourage learning and understanding, not intimidation and disrespect.

Research shows that students who are gay or who are perceived to be gay are dramatically more vulnerable to bullying. These kids have a higher rate of suicide-- the suicide rate of LGBT youth is three to four times higher than heterosexual youth. The LGBT community has been faced with discrimination and violence, higher rates of depression, anxiety, isolation and sadly higher rates of suicide than their heterosexual counterparts.

These health risks are not due to sexual orientation itself, but rather the negative response from some members of society. Homophobia and transphobia are devastating our youth. These stories are all too prevalent in Canadian schools. This is a critical issue of which government and education ministers are aware, yet little action has been taken to address these ongoing problems.

The CAW is gravely concerned about this surge in attacks against LGBT youth. The widely accepted statistic is that 1 in 10 of us is lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, which means that the CAW represents many people who identify as LGBT. Many more are strong allies and have children who identify as LGBT.

In the face of this rise in bullying, we must urgently renew our vigilance against all forms of bullying, including jokes, slurs, harassment, threats and any form of violent behaviour. We are asking those in positions of authority or leadership roles in their community and schools to stand up and speak out against bullying while creating safe space and support services for those youth who are targeted for discrimination.

We must keep up this fight until each and every one of us can enjoy equal liberty, mobility and respect, to live openly with our families and loved ones in dignity.

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