

Faith In America

Religion-Based Bigotry... Let's End It Now And Forever

Press Release

Oct. 5, 2007

Faith In America Launches Greenville Education Campaign About Religious-Based Discrimination Against LGBT Citizens

Grassroots, Media Campaign Dedicated to the Memory of Sean Kennedy

Greenville, SC - Faith In America on Oct. 1, 2007 launched the second leg of its national "Call to Courage" campaign dedicated to the memory of Sean Kennedy, a Greenville resident who was attacked and killed outside of a local bar after reportedly being identified as a "faggot." Elke Kennedy, the mother of Sean Kennedy, and local religious and social justice organizations joined FIA to announce the six-week, cutting-edge campaign to educate Greenville residents about the misuse of religious teachings to discriminate and isolate gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people.

"Today marks an important day in the shared history of America's religious and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities. For too long we've stood on separate sides of an impasse" said Jimmy Creech, Executive Director of Faith In America. "But through this education campaign we will begin a deep and sustained dialogue to bridge the gaps of understanding and respect in Greenville and other cities across this nation." Creech served twenty-nine years as a minister in The United Methodist Church and is a leading expert and spokesman on faith and LGBT issues.

The campaign consists of grassroots organizing, direct mail and paid advertisements (including radio, cable TV, newspaper ads and billboards) designed to inform the public on the parallels between the historical precedents of religion-based bigotry and today's struggle for full and equal rights for gay American citizens. The campaign will conclude with a town hall meeting to enable Greenville residents to honestly discuss religion-based bigotry against LGBT citizens.

According to Creech, Faith In America dedicated the campaign to the memory of Sean Kennedy because his death serves as a constant reminder of the harm created in an environment that engenders hatred toward the LGBT citizens at the hands of misguided religious teachings. The campaign was launched less than 100-feet away from the scene of Kennedy's murder. "We're asking the citizens of Greenville to join us in a stand against discrimination in all forms," added Creech. "This campaign is a first step toward putting an end to bigotry disguised as religious truth and creating a just world where everyone is able to live openly and flourish in America without prejudice."

Practically every major local television news station, radio and newspaper covered Faith In America's press conference to launch the Call to Courage campaign in Greenville, S.C.

Speaking at the press conference were Creech; Elke Kennedy; Rev. Donna Stroud; Metropolitan Community Church Worldwide, Greenville; and Rev. Dr. Bennie Colclough, Co-Chair of S.C. Progressive Network and Pastor of Greater Bethel AME Church in Kingtree, S.C.

Faith In America is working with local allied groups such as Upstate United, South Carolina Equality Coalition and the Metropolitan Community Church. Greenville is the second of five cities that FIA has

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targeted as part of its “Call to Courage” national campaign. The campaign launched on May 6th in Ames, Iowa and will proceed to cities in New Hampshire, Nevada, and Florida.

Faith In America Inc. is a civil rights advocacy organization whose mission is to end legal and spiritual discrimination against gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people in America and to gain full and equal rights for those citizens. Faith In America is not a religious organization but works to educate Americans about the harm caused by religion-based bigotry against LGBT individuals. The organization in April announced a series of grassroots campaigns in five cities across America.

Within the first two weeks following the launch, Faith In America had signed up close to 100 Greenville residents who have voiced their support and willingness to volunteer for the campaign.

Below is a sampling of the comments the organization has received.

I read with pleasure your guest editorial in The Greenville News. I'm a 63 year old female, Caucasian, heterosexual, raised in the Methodist Church, S.C. native who never understood the bigotry that church goers (including my family) constantly exhibited. I still don't, and it's one of the main reasons I no longer am a part of any organized religion.

I so appreciate what you and your group are doing in Greenville. Here's hoping it makes a difference.