



20 October 2010

Hon. Anil Roberts
Minister of Sport & Youth Affairs
12 Abercromby Street Port of Spain

Dear Minister Roberts:

Oct. 22-29 Evangelical mission from US to T&T to ‘combat acceptance of homosexuality’

On Friday evening, an evangelical mission arrives on our shores from the United States whose goal is to target young people, as well as those who care for them medically and spiritually, with a message that homosexuality is disordered and the cause of spiritual damnation. The solution to having such a sexual orientation, they propose, is a life of penitence and prayerful abstinence, or of consistent efforts to change.

We are writing you because we were once young people struggling mightily with sexual feelings and identities within ourselves that the world around us told us were condemned and pathological. And because you are a gatekeeper responsible for the health and development of young people in a nation we all belong to, and are committed to building.

As young people, we were surrounded by adults who did us harm every day, including some who tried to prey on us. The pathway for most of us to mental health and a productive adulthood at peace with our sexual orientation or gender identity often involved validation by an important adult who told us we were good and valuable and worthy – or one who stepped in and protected us from someone else’s abuse.

We are appealing to you to be one of those important adults for Trinidad & Tobago’s young people in the coming weeks.

His Way Out Ministries and its American director Phillip Lee, a “self-confessed” homosexual who spent much of his best years leading a richly sexual life, have targeted the Caribbean for their evangelizing work, and already made inroads in Jamaica (where they met with the Governor General last year) and Guyana, (where they now boast of having a base after a handful of visits). They have posted on their group’s website (www.hiswayout.com) news of an October 22 to 29 mission to our country because “it is time to combat what seems to be a growing acceptance of homosexuality in Trinidad”. This perception is no doubt based on public statements made in recent months by the Honourable Prime Minister and Chief Justice and the Chair of the Elections and Boundaries Commission about including everyone in the benefits and protections of citizenship and humanity, regardless to sexual orientation. During Ugandan President Museveni’s visit for last year’s Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting, the international news media drew attention to what US groups’ divisive evangelizing against homosexuality has wrought in his country. Our nation has now become the target of such foreign groups, who want to turn the clock back on democratic progress, social harmony, and the enjoyment of human rights here.

Communications have gone locally regarding several activities planned for the His Way Out visit here. These include appearances on Christian and mainstream broadcasters, a youth-targeted event on the campus of the University of the West Indies, an October 27 visit to Tobago – and “an interactive seminar on sexual health” targeting young people ages 13 to 35, to be held at Naparima Girls School on October 23. The invitation promises that “health professionals” will assist Lee in empowering attendees with “factual response[s]” on sexuality. The invitation letter and other communications regarding the local visit bear the names of a board member of the Children’s Authority who is medical director of an important health facility, and of two practising local physicians. Another event, originally advertised on the visitors’ website as taking place at Fatima College, is reportedly being moved to St. George’s College, a government secondary school. The group has also announced a meeting with the Mayor of Port of Spain.

We are concerned that our visitors are targeting young people. We believe that you should be as well. Increasingly, political, civic and religious leaders in the US are raising concerns about the link between messages about sexual orientation that shame and stigmatise young people on the one hand and self-inflicted and anti-gay violence by young people on the other. His Way Out arrives here two days after a national memorial event in their own country to commemorate an alarming series of teenagers who have taken their lives in recent weeks in response to anti-gay bullying. Very recently as well, a group of 16- to 23-year-olds in New York City imprisoned and tortured two young gay men for hours, forcing them to admit their sexual desire and to burn a third man on the testicles and shove objects in his rectum. Now is a time when others are calling for heightened vigilance in protecting young people of minority sexual orientation from harm.

We urge you to spend some effort to look into His Way Out activities taking place in facilities that may be under your aegis to ensure that no harm is done to young people. We ask you to verify that any claims they may make as to the medical or professional soundness of their messages are warranted, and to ensure that counselling about sexuality and HIV they deliver to our young people are consistent with and do not serve to undermine HFLE standards and our national HIV-related goals to mitigate stigma and discrimination. And we trust you will safeguard our democratic values by preventing foreign fundamentalists from inflaming prejudice or intolerance in the hearts of young citizens.

We worry that the painstaking partnerships we have forged with faith communities in moving forward HFLE and HIV goals, and in assuring all that Trinbagonians can practice an affirming faith, are threatened by this visit. We are all responsible for meeting the challenge to ensure the development of the nation's young people, including their healthy sexual development free from physical, psychological, sexual or spiritual violence, and HIV. Spiritual violence of the kind entities like His Way Out deploy against particular social groups damages young people's healthy development, as it harmed many of ours.

We treasure our country passionately. We want to keep it open to visitors and to the free flow of ideas, including our own. But we care equally about our nation's vulnerable young people, and that they be assured the protection of adults like you from those who would do damage to their healthy development, full of pride and self-efficacy, into who they were intended to be.

Please let us know that you received our correspondence and whether you share, and plan any action on, these concerns.

Yours truly,



Colin Robinson, Communications Coordinator, on behalf of the Coalition

cc: Sen. Hon. Therese Baptiste-Cornelis, Minister of Health
Hon. Tim Gopeesingh, Minister of Education
Sen. Hon. Mary King, Minister of Planning, Economic & Social Restructuring & Gender Affairs
Hon. Anil Roberts, Minister of Sport & Youth Affairs
Hon. Glenn Ramadharsingh, Minister of the People & Social Development
Hon. Rodger Samuel, Minister of State in the Office of the Prime Minister
Hon. Ramona Ramdial, Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Planning...and Gender Affairs
Hon. Keith Rowley, Political Leader, People's National Movement
Hon. Louis LeeSing, Mayor of Port of Spain
Rev. Elvis Elahie, Moderator, Presbyterian Church
Angela LeeLoy, Chair, National AIDS Coordinating Committee
Patricia Ramgoolam, Principal, Naparima Girls High School
James Sammy, Principal, St. George's College
Zena Ramatali, President, National Parent Teacher Association
Luke Sinnette, Gender Affairs Officer, Trinidad Youth Council