



# Guestbians

OurChart's guest bloggers, serving up hot opinions and cool insights.

## Standing With Us

APRIL 5, 2007 - 4:40PM — CHOLENE ESPINOZA

Taylor Branch, in his book, *At Canaan's Edge*, chronicles the Civil Rights movement in exemplary detail. Branch describes the inner workings of the Johnson administration in such detail that I felt as though I was there with them as they struggled with an unpopular war and simultaneously found themselves at the precipice of ending codified racial discrimination in the United States. It has been said that history does not exactly repeat itself, but it often rhymes. As tempting as it is for me to detail the parallels of then and now, I will instead focus on one fact I learned in Branch's book. Namely, the critical role sympathetic white men and women of conscience played in the Civil Rights movement. Their level of commitment varied from marching along side African Americans in picket lines, to speaking out in public, to providing material and financial support for the movement. They did so at great risk to themselves, their businesses, and their reputations.



I was reminded of this same courage this past week while reading two interviews in the March 22, 2007 issue of *Metro Weekly*, *Washington D.C.'s Washington's Gay and Lesbian News Magazine*. The interviews with the L Word's Cybill Shepherd and Pam Grier reminded me that the passing of time does not dilute conviction in the face of injustice. Ms. Shepherd recounts in vivid detail the fear she felt when initially playing a bisexual character. She reminded me of one of my favorite quotes, "Courage is not the absence of fear, it is the action in the face of fear."

Pam Grier sees gay and lesbian equality under the law as a civil rights issue. "The comparison, I feel, is a community that is being ostracized over their sexuality, which is like being ostracized for the color of your skin. You can't change your skin. You can't change your sexuality...And granted, all the parallels aren't concrete, but there is for me a deep, deep comparison." Ms. Grier knows the heavy burden of being made to feel *less than*, and she has invested her time, money, talent and wisdom in order to ease that burden for others.

Ms. Shepherd and Ms. Grier have made me more aware of those who stand with and for us even though they are not gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender. Since I read the *Metro Weekly* article, I have met Anne Wynne, the founder of Atticus Circle, "an organization that educates and mobilizes straight allies in support of equal rights for LGBT Americans and our families." She is also on the Board of Equality Texas and the Service Members Legal Defense Network.

My US Air Force Academy classmate, Lt Colonel Rob Levinson, has also enlisted in the cause to repeal Don't Ask, Don't Tell. He wrote an opinion piece printed March 29, 2007 in the *Washington Post* titled, *Fitness to Fight is the Standard*. The article was circulated throughout the entire US armed forces in the

day's edition of *The Early Bird*, the military's Google News equivalent. He hasn't been reprimanded and most of the feedback has been in the form *Amen*.

I recently flew with a co pilot, who, if you closed your eyes, would think that you were listening to George W. Bush—same accent. He surprised me when he announced at 37,000 feet. "Well, you're not gonna believe this, but for a heterosexual, I'm one of the biggest gay activists out there." He then proceeded to tell me that he had recently spent two hours with his Indiana State member of Congress arguing against a law that would have made it illegal for gay people to adopt children. As he said with his George Bush accent, "First thing I did was show him the preamble to the Indiana Constitution. Then I told him, your children are going to be embarrassed to say their last name ten years from now if you go through with this."

Finally, the creator and cast of the L Word reminded me in their acceptance speeches of the Randy Shilts Visibility Award that we are one body, one community and discrimination is "Un-American." No single person or group owns a movement; and those who have the least to gain by change are often times the most powerful agents of change. There is an authenticity to their selflessness that causes others to listen. Thank you L Ladies for inspiring me to continually affirm, enlist, enroll and thank all who stand with us.

Cholene Espinoza's blog | [Login or register to post comments](#)

## Comments

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**APRIL 7, 2007 - 9:09PM — GARNETFAIRY**  
**civil rights movement continues**

I have a myspace page which is totally "out". I recently received a message from someone in DC thanking me for being out and visible on myspace. It made me feel really good to think something so simple and personal as a myspace page could be considered activism. Then I thought, geez surely I can do more than that.

I am totally out to everyone I know and I am politically active so I guess that is a bit more that I do. But still there seems like there should be so much more to do. At the moment I am limited in what I can do because I am saving for a car and live in a town with no public transportation. But, still I am going to see what else I can get involved in. I always wished my parents would get involved in PFLAG but they have no interest in it for whatever reason. I think it is important to recognize the work that is done by PFLAG on our behalf. They, to me, are like the whites who marched with the blacks back in the day. Their contributions should not be overlooked as they are an important part of our movement.

I took a survey today regarding an upcoming training event for our movement in ways to be more effective in working within the system to promote our rights/causes. I dont know how I got on the list to take the survey; but, it made me feel good to have been chosen. I would love to attend the proposed workshops discussed.

I have been a regular writer to capital hill for years promoting our cause, and my other values such as animal welfare. I have the phone number to Congress in my cellphone. These are simple things to do. The NOW website has a very handy tool for writing your representatives on their issues and also on any issue you support. [www.now.org](http://www.now.org) is the website. I have always considered lesbians to be automatic feminists; but, I find I meet more and more women who

are not at all involved in feminism.

Attend a fundraiser or other meet-the-candidates event and when you introduce yourself, be proud and identify your minority membership and tell them you hope they intend to support your interest group if they take office. Candidates are very friendly people. Especially if your comments include a check for their campaign fund.

One thing that the early civil rights activists had that we don't, is automatic visibility. It was very easy to see the numbers of people of color at a rally or other event. So many of us are closeted for whatever reason. Unless you have an extreme butch look or wear the T-shirt and carry the rainbow flag it is difficult to know who is who at rallies and political events. Visibility has always been an issue for our community because of the potential loss of a job or problems for those in traditional marriages still for whatever reason and other closet tags. It has helped to keep us marginalized. We are fortunate that the times are once again changing and some of the stigma has been reduced some places. But do we really want to be like a light-skinned black, passing for white in the old days or do we want to stand and be recognized and therefore demand to be dealt with? It is a personal choice for sure one that can carry many consequences real and imagined. But I for one intend to identify myself, I've got the haircut, now I need the t-shirt.

garnetfairy has spoken....muhahaha

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**APRIL 6, 2007 - 10:03PM — EAGER STUDENT**

### **This my feelings and words on the issue at hand.....**

I would like to thank you for a well written column. The Civil Rights was a big movement that was lead by many men and women. One of the famous civil rights leaders, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. stated in the introduction of the famous speech "I have dream", "In the process of gaining our rightful place we must not be guilty of wrongful deeds. Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred. We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline. We must not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical violence. Again and again we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force. We cannot walk alone. And as we walk, we must make the pledge that we shall always march ahead. We cannot turn back. "

I believe we can use this passage as the struggle we face as Lesbians, Gay, Queer, Bisexuals, Transgender, Transsexuals, and etc. In every step we make together that is one step closer to achieve our goal to be recognized as citizens who entitle to have marriage. We will receive benefits as a marry couple. We are able to see our love one in the hospital without being turned away. We are able to place our love one on our insurances benefits and all the benefits an employer offers their employees. We will be given recognition to the lesbians and gay men who serve to protect this country as military soldiers and to receive the same awards-promotions-like the heterosexual men and women who had and are serving to protect our country. As long we stand together, holding hands and walking together as a unit, no one will be able to knock us down, or ignore us anymore. Without saying a word as members of our group speak to others about acknowledgment, entitlement, equality, and justice.

Many women and men have been terminated from their employments. These are many women and men who stood by other soldiers in the line of duty to fight against those who are

threatening the rights of people, countries and to prevent destruction to United States of America. Some were killed and injured by the enemies of war. However, many of our brothers and sisters were murdered and wounded by the hands of American people because of their lifestyle. Many were discharged dishonorable from the military and employment in this country due to their life style. The lifestyles did not prevent anyone from performing their duties as a soldier and an employer. Those who were vanished and barred from the books of the U.S.A of military should have not been and reconciliation should be made for them. No one should face this type of behavior by a country, who prides themselves as leaders, possess a democratic government and a leading the world in technology and education.

Today, we will recognize all of those men and women who had fallen. We will show forgiveness to those who inflicted emotional, mental, physical and sexual harm. We will carry them in our hearts, minds and thoughts each day we live and take a step toward equality. In the past, many others had made a path for each one of us to walk on without the injustice they had faced. We will continue the production of this path by gaining the opportunities as those who are not practicing our lifestyle. We will move as one united group instead of subdivisions under the umbrella term of homosexuality. We will not longer be staggered or unruly and providing ourselves as easy targets. We will walk as one united group and we will continue our mission of equality in America.

In conclusion, we are not going away, we are not going to step backwards and we will accomplish the goals, today, tomorrow or the next. We will not allow the work to be unfinished by those who sacrifice their lives. We will be determined, driven and motivated to conquer the minds of others to be recognized. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., had spoken of "a dream of all people, of all races and colors and backgrounds, sharing in an America marked by freedom and democracy." We fall into the background section as he had spoken to millions of people in 1963. We will hold our heads high, embrace the hands in our group, walks as a unit forward and be successful with each step.

This is how I feel within my heart, mind and thoughts.

Eager Student

Life is short for drama and let's enjoy life as best as we can.

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**APRIL 6, 2007 - 3:42PM — JENNYLOVEMWAH**  
**Wow!**

Great column! \*Speechless\*

I love all the quotes and the stories you shared with us.

I just wanna thank everyone who stand with us, and you for being really engaged in this fight. When you mentioned the L Ladies, it reminded me of how much power and strenght the show The L Word has given me. When I was coming out to myself, there were times I'd only feel safe and like I belonged somewhere when I watched the show. I've always been really open minded and I've always seen sexuality and anything related to sex as something really natural, but some people can be really mean; I was afraid of what I'd go through. But I've always kept in mind that whoever loves me has to love me for who I am. Every piece of me.

I believe someday we can win this fight.  
Don't ever give up, sisters! :)

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**APRIL 9, 2007 - 6:55AM — MARTIKA2008**  
**WE CAN WIN**

IF WE STAND TOGETHER AND PERSIST WE WILL PREVAIL IN WINNING THS FIGHT AND YES  
THANKS FOR ALL THOSE WHO ARE NOT AFRAID TO STAND WITH US.

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**APRIL 6, 2007 - 12:19PM — MGC59**  
**guest blogger**

great blog. this country is comprised of people who wanted to be free; have a better life, and freedom of choice. you have done a great service to this country and defended the right to be free. i believe everyone is entitled to what this country stands for; life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness ( whatever your pursuit is). you wrote a great blog and spelled it out for all people. good luck in your future pursuits and many thanks for your service to our country. peace and grace

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**APRIL 5, 2007 - 6:24PM — SUZANNE STROH**  
**You Go, Cho**

Great column, Captain. I hope Rob Levinson and your co-pilot get a chance to read my thanks for taking a stand.

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**APRIL 5, 2007 - 5:21PM — REBELREIGN**  
**One fight**

I'm always grateful to those who stand, even if they are not the ones directly discriminated against. It's encouraging when more and more straight men and women are standing with us and helping in this struggle for equality and the right for all to have the right to enjoy life.

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