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■ dialogue

Human Rights Campaign is perfect target, not the best buy

By Mikey Rox

[Editor's note: After apologizing for donating a large sum to the campaign of an anti-LGBT candidate in Minnesota, Target has ceased negotiations with HRC.]

Somebody call Tom Cruise. The Human Rights Campaign is on a Mission: Impossible.

Its goal? To convince two of the world's largest corporations, Target and Best Buy, to donate a combined quarter-million dollars to pro-equality candidates in Minnesota after the retail behemoths contributed an equal amount to MN Forward, a right-wing political action committee that backs anti-equality gubernatorial candidate Tom Emmer.

Pressure mounted against the consumer juggernauts as the HRC led a charge intended to shame both outlets into giving funds to politicians who work on behalf of equal rights. As if that's supposed to "right" the "wrong."

Where the HRC gets off scolding Best Buy and Target is beyond me. As a business, the HRC makes business decisions too, like choosing not to compensate its hardworking volunteers — the men and women who canvass the streets in extreme heat and cold to spread the pro-equality message. I dare anyone to ask how much Solomonee gets paid to sit in his cushy office while his underpaid and, in some cases, unpaid minions do the grunt work. In fact, I double dare you. And I want to be there when you fall out of your chair in disbelief.

It goes without saying that I'm siding with Best Buy and Target on this one. But not just because I think the HRC is a crock.

I'm Team Target because the numbers don't lie. Target is one of the most philanthropic companies in the nation, and it gives more than \$3 million each week — each week! — to the communities in which it operates. And I'm Team Best Buy because the consumer electronics retailer donates up to 1.5 percent of pretax earnings to support national organizations like the United Way and American Red Cross, as well as funding scholarship and other community initiatives throughout the country.

Let us not overlook either that both companies were featured in the HRC's Best (continued on page 35)

QUEERLY

QUOTABLE



"These data show, yet again, that 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' undermines national security. Why are we firing linguists and infantrymen in the middle of two wars?"
— **Aaron Belkin**, director of the Palm Center, a research institute at the University of California, in response to data that show that eight linguists, 20 infantrymen, 16 medical aides, seven combat engineers, six military artillery operating crew members and one member of the Special Forces were among 428 service members discharged from the military in 2009 under DADT

"... Angle [is] tacitly punishing inclusive corporations; they can't help her campaign unless they conform to her worldview. She's telling companies how they should build their business. She is, in a word, 'dictating' her beliefs. Those who disagree with her are left in the cold, a policy that's more closely associated with fascism than the free market Angle allegedly adores." — **New York City journalist Andrew Belonsky**, writing on *Change.org* about Sharron Angle, Republican candidate for U.S. Senate running against Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid in Nevada, in response to Angle's answer on a PAC questionnaire indicating that she would not take money from any corporation that had LGBT-inclusive benefits

"I went to school with my classmates my whole life, and it hurts that I'm not included in my senior yearbook as part of my graduating class. I never thought that my school would punish me just for being who I am." — **Ceara Sturgis**, a Mississippi high school senior whose name and senior portrait were excluded from her school yearbook because she posed for the portrait in a tuxedo ■

(continued from page 10)

Places to Work 2010, listed among the "top businesses that support equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender employees."

None of that matters to the HRC, though. Still, despite the HRC's smear campaign, Target and Best Buy are sticking to their positions of support for MN Forward and Emmer, because at the end of the day both corporations have to protect their bottom lines – two of which include providing top-quality merchandise to Americans at affordable prices and providing jobs. Lots of jobs. Target defended itself best in response to a letter from an outraged customer – both of which were posted on Queerty.com – when it said, "Our support of causes and candidates is based strictly on issues that affect our retail and business objectives" and "MN Forward's objective is to elect candidates from both parties who will make job creation and economic growth a top priority."

Right on. Jeremy Bentham would agree.

He's the dead English philosopher who advocated and made popular an idea called utilitarianism – that is, choosing an action based on the greatest good for the greatest number of people. I believe that's what's happening here.

Target and Best Buy aren't stupid; they don't take their political decisions lightly. One must assume that they knew what they were getting into. One must also trust that theirs was a strategic decision that in the long run will benefit more people than it will put off.

By now, however, you've probably made up your mind to boycott both establishments because the venerable HRC told you to. But I hope you'll permit these three words: Beware the propaganda.

The HRC has an agenda, too – and as much as you think it's advocating for equal rights, it's equally intent on raising a ton of cash. Because Solmonese doesn't get paid in rainbows and unicorns. If you think that statement's false, take a good long look at the bold blue "Donate Today" button on the bottom of your HRC e-mails.

Why is it there? Because money – not idealism – makes the world go 'round.

At least Target and Best Buy admit it. ■

Mikey Rox is an award-winning writer and journalist and the founder of Paper Rox Scissors, a copywriting and creative consulting company in New York City. He can be reached at mkey@paperroxcissors.com.

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