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Speak Out

Rewriting Reagan's history

TO THE EDITOR:

As a survivor of the 1980s AIDS tragedy, I am mad as hell with Ronald Reagan apologists who are exploiting the president's death to rewrite the history of gay men who died from AIDS. For example, last December they succeeded in forcing CBS to censor the movie *The Reagans*, which was critical of his AIDS policies. In 1993, Reagan apologists forced NBC to move the AIDS history movie *And the Band Played On* to HBO.

Reagan apologists are now whining that nobody should demean a deceased president. I agree, but the 'Republicans' canonization of Reagan will not change the historical facts.

Nobody will ever know if Reagan actually said that AIDS is God's retribution against homosexuals. But everybody knows that Reagan's inner staff included the notorious Pat Buchanan and Gary Bauer, who are still promoting similar anti-gay religious beliefs today.

The real issue is that Reagan did not break his silence about AIDS until three years after HIV was discovered. And two years after his Hollywood friend Rock Hudson died.

Reagan apologists nitpick that Reagan mentioned AIDS in some earlier papers. However, Surgeon General C. Everett Koop apparently wrote these obscure statements, and newspapers never printed them.

Furthermore, Reagan's first speech on AIDS shamefully did not even mention homosexual victims of AIDS. Instead, he prudishly recommended testing heterosexual marriage license applicants for HIV.

Reagan's "virtuous but addicted to the sin of gambling" Education Secretary William Bennett blocked all AIDS prevention education until seven years after AIDS was first detected. Silence equaled death.

President Bush's political nominee Linda Chavez recently excused Reagan's silence by saying the lack of "safe-sex education" during his administration did not matter because current HIV statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention suggest "safe sex" is "ignored by many gay men." This is an insult to the many gay men who implemented safe sex on their own initiative and significantly reduced the HIV infection rate.

Fox News host Bill O'Reilly hypocritically justified censorship of *The Reagans* because a few "gay activists" had "censored" Dr. Laura Schlesinger. He violated his own moral code of not justifying bad behavior with other people's bad behavior. Besides, Dr. Laura is still spouting her anti-gay bigotry on the radio despite the objections of many people.

Columnist Derooy Murdock defended Reagan's AIDS budget by pointing to the large increases in money that was allocated to AIDS by Congress. But in fact, Reagan repeatedly rejected the AIDS budget requests from a Congress that prudently feared AIDS.

Michael Reagan jealously defended his father by also accusing gay "AIDS activists" of selfishly demanding and getting more money than any other disease. He misleadingly concealed the fact that virtually all of this money was already being spent on basic viral research programs. Studying HIV has proven to be a good way to improve our knowledge of all viruses, including those that cause cancer.

I am tired of talking about AIDS. I just wish the Reagan apologists would shut up.

THOMAS KRAEMER
Corvallis

A matter of fact

TO THE EDITOR:

I know for a fact that many of my friends would be alive today if the Reagan administration

had mounted even a token response to the cancer that AIDS became in the early '80s.

I wouldn't feel so bitter if the Reagan administration's lack of action was due to ignorance or bureaucratic stupidity. No, I am sure it was deliberate.

I have never felt that Reagan's life should be any less than any other. I have never wished ill on him nor thought that his disease was punishment for his failure as a president.

By the same token, I will NOT stand by idly and watch him be immortalized without reminding all of the thousands upon thousands who died before AIDS was ever recognized and research began receiving federal funding. I will recall Oliver North and the Iran Contra scandal where he damaged our world image by selling arms to terrorists. And finally, I won't forget that "Reaganomics" turned upside down the lives and financial nest eggs of millions of Americans when our economy came tumbling down.

These are my memories of Ronald Reagan, and I am standing firm on the facts as they are.

BILL FRY
Portland

Let's talk about the sanctity of marriage

TO THE EDITOR:

When society tries to ban a group of people from a right that should be protected for all consenting adults (in this case marriage), this is a form of discrimination.

Why is it discrimination? To expect all members of the same society to pay taxes that contribute to the commonwealth, but limit the fundamental rights of certain individuals (in this case the gay population), is discrimination.

Let's start with the facts. Since 2000, according to the National Center for Health Statistics, the rate of marriage is 8.4 people in 1,000. The rate of divorce is 4 in 1,000. About half of the people getting married every year are getting divorced.

I think before the people can cast the stones, they must look at what is really at stake. Are family values at stake? I think not.

One must ask how many single-parent families are in our society, given the facts presented by the government. Are these families bad? Should they not be recognized?

As a person growing up in a "traditional family," I found that many things define family values that have nothing to do with the definition of marriage. I felt that the most important thing was to have loving parents—be they man and woman, man and man or woman and woman—who made sure that I had food to eat and that I got a good education (to grow up and not discriminate against others and accept others for their differences) and, above all, kept me safe from all those who would do me harm. This could be accomplished by any two individuals committed to each other enough to raise a "family."

Teaching discrimination is harmful. To say that one type of family is better than another is wrong. Who are we to judge?

It seems to me that marriage has become a disposable institution among the heterosexual population. This is proven with the facts presented by the government.

What harm will gay marriage do? None. The harm is already done by the part of society that tries to discriminate against the rest of society in the name of God.

Recognizing a part of society that already exists will only contribute to the common good and bring our society into an age of unconditional understanding and maturity. Let's teach our children love and compassion, not hate and indifference. There are already too many wars in our world.