

Affinity Community Services
Testimony to Chicago City Council Committee on Human Relations
April 29, 2010

My name is Kim Hunt and I'm the executive director of Affinity Community Services. Affinity is a social justice organization that has served the LGBTQ community for 15 years, black lesbians, bisexual and transgender women and LGBTQ youth of African descent in particular. Our program space is very deliberately located on the south side of Chicago, an area of the city that suffers from a dearth of resources for the LGBTQ community. Affinity's programs address intersectional issues faced by our constituents especially as they relate to racism, sexism, and homophobia. Our fundamental commitment is to facilitate wellness and justice within the community through a variety of direct service and social change strategies. And we place high priority on creating safe and affirming spaces for ALL youth.

I am honored to be here today to voice Affinity Community Services' support for the resolution to request the Committee on Human Relations to conduct a hearing to evaluate and analyze hate crimes motivated by homophobia and transphobia in the City of Chicago as well as to hear from the Chicago Police Department and pertinent not for profit organizations serving Chicago's LGBTQ community. And we encourage the committee to work very hard to ensure that the diversity of the LGBTQ community be honored and reflected in the voices that participate in this hearing.

Affinity Community Services, like other organizations that work within the LGBTQ community, is all too familiar with the debilitating effects of persecution, disrespect, and violence directed towards persons who are or are perceived to be gay or whose gender identity is not or does not appear to be consistent with his or her physical characteristics or gender presentation. Affinity was borne out of the desire of black gays, lesbians, bisexual, and transgender people to be seen and heard within the black community and the broader LGBTQ community. Our founders knew that visibility was critically important to the work of ensuring that the needs of our constituents are at least acknowledged, their rights are upheld, and their stories are told – especially when they cannot tell those stories themselves.

As Affinity continues to work with its constituents and allies towards social change, equal rights and the enforcement of those rights, we honor the lives of the Jorge Mercados and Sakia Gunns of the world – young brothers and sisters whose lives were snatched from us because some selfish, short-sighted, close minded person decided to let hate rule over tolerance and acceptance. We also want to bring forth the voices represented by the many organizations that do great and meaningful work in our community but do not have staff or the capacity to come to give their testimony today.

I thank you for your time and consideration.