No Hate [VIDEO]

September 27, 2010 By Oriol R. Gutierrez Jr.

Pedro Julio Serrano was interviewed on CNN en Español immediately following a federal judge's decision that declared California's Proposition 8 unconstitutional. His appearance helped frame the issue of gay marriage for millions of Spanish-speaking people around the world.

"This is an incredible victory. Not only for same-sex couples but for all citizens because there is an acknowledgment of an equality promised by the federal Constitution of the United States," Serrano said during the broadcast. "This decision demonstrates that the rights of citizens can never be put up for a popular vote."

Initial reactions to his appearance were favorable from people all over Latin America. But after gay Latino blogger Andrés Duque subtitled the interview in English and posted it on his blog Blabbeando and on YouTube, praise for Serrano started pouring in from all corners of the globe. Although flattered by the international attention, for Serrano, it was just another moment to stand up for what he believes in. He's had many such moments in his more than a decade of advocacy.

The 36-year-old was the first openly HIV-positive and openly gay person to run for public office in Puerto Rico, where he was born and raised. In 2003, he founded Puerto Rico Para Tod@s (Puerto Rico for All), a lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) equality and social justice group. He currently lives in New York City and works as the communications manager of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, whose mission is to build the grassroots power of the LGBT community.

Other recent events such as the brutal murder in 2009 of Jorge Steven López Mercado—a gay teenager who was an established HIV activist in Puerto Rico—have put Serrano in the nexus between HIV and Latino LGBT issues. After hearing about the crime, Serrano immediately reached out to López Mercado's family and helped them navigate the media and to advocate on their behalf with local officials to prosecute the murder as a hate crime.

Clearly Serrano is a committed and effective advocate for people living with HIV/AIDS and for LGBT civil rights. "If it hadn't been for HIV, I wouldn't be an activist," Serrano says. "A virus is not stronger than me that has a mind, that has a heart, that has a soul, that has a body to fight it. That has been my guiding light."

Watch Serrano's Prop 8 appearance on CNN en Español:

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http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/Pedro-Julio-HIV-19166-7774