Join The Impact Responds

December 29, 2008 By Peter Staley

After my post last week offering a (hopefully helpful) critique of Join The Impact's anti-Prop 8 actions thus far, Dan Savage posted his own critique, saying "I want to get Peter Staley's back." In response, Rex Wockner countered that "Stonewall 2.0 isn't fizzling."

Probably missed by most during the holiday diversions, JTI's co-founder, Amy Balliett, posted a comment in Dan's blog (comment #15) responding to our critiques:

> I keep hearing this statement that JTI is "patting themselves on the back" and not writing honest postmortems. To begin with, JTI has very often patted its volunteers on the back, not itself. Second, JTI only wrote a postmortem on Light Up the Night and on the November 15th rally only. As mentioned above, Day Without a Gay was something that JTI helped with, but it was not ours. Hence, no postmortem. Light Up the Night had a very clear goal that JTI accomplished: Reach 1 Million People With the Message of Equality. With over 1 million "5 rights fliers" handed out, a spike in membership over the next few days, and a great deal of coverage across the country - I'd say that goal was met.

While everyone continues to debate this, we keep losing sight of the big picture:

Those who oppose same-sex marriage are unified under faith. Even if they are independent thinkers in many respects, they let their faith guide them for issues like civil marriage - this means that they will always be a unified movement. On the flip side of the coin, we are all out and proud because we are independent thinkers in all respects. The problem with this is that many of our leaders spend more time questioning one another rather than working together for the greater good. If we don’t unite, then we will not win any of the many basic human rights that we deserve. We instead run the risk of dividing our community from the inside out while our opponents divide us from the outside in.

November 15th was about uniting and becoming visible.
December 20th was about outreach and education.
January 10th DOMA protest (This is at the city and not the state capitol level) - Has a clear goal: 1 Million Plus

Signatures on the Open Letter to Barack Obama (written in response to his Open Letter to the Gay Community). This letter will be in his hand on day one, showing him that we expect him to stick to his promises.

Each event is one step in the movement, not a solve all. When it comes down to it, if we allow our visibility to deter, then we become a community easily ignored. Dan, you are an outspoken gay man who I have always loved to listen to and read. JTI does not have to be the only organization calling for visibility (and it is not). We are teaming up with MEUSA on various events, for instance. The Courage Campaign has done a great deal as well. What JTI does provide is the platform for ideas. This gives everyone in this movement the opportunity to have a loud voice. Why don’t you put out an idea for visibility, outreach, etc?

Oh and in response to getting all of us in a room together, if someone wants to donate about $10K to the cause, then we’ll have a means to do this. Until then, JTI

is comprised of an all volunteer group of young activists who are working some long hours and span across the country.

Well put. And I understand the sentiment behind her statement that “many of our leaders spend more time questioning one another rather than working together for the greater good.” In my defense, I’ve promoted JTI events on this blog, marched at a JTI action in New York, and offered suggestions for future actions. But I’m stumped as to how we do constructive postmortems with no physical place to gather and hash things out.

JTI is the new Web-based activism, and as such, the postmortems are happening online, for better or worse. Amy mentions that JTI has done its own postmortems, but besides glowing day-after blog postings, I haven’t found any serious what-we-did-right-and-what-we-did-wrong analysis on their website.

I’m open to other ideas of how us bloggers can support JTI while voicing our opinions on past and future actions, and to find a way for those opinions to be seen as helping rather than hindering JTI’s progress.

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