The White House Is So Gay

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The White House is so Gay. I felt at home amid their rainbow fringes. Thank you, President and Dr. Biden, for the invitation to the 2022 White House Pride Celebration. It is good to know that during these divided times, the White House stands with us!

Once again, people like me are being used to scare voters. The right exploits fears of homosexuals as a wedge issue to get their base to the polls. They also use abortion, gun control, and liberals. This year's Pride Reception was not just a party, but also a statement of support, one that is needed and appreciated. The world is going crazy. As seen in Idaho, it's not a safe time for homosexuals. Going to the White House felt even more critical.

It was the who's who of Washington. This administration has so many senior LGBTQ staff, not all of them could join him on stage when he signed an Executive Order aimed at protecting LBGTQ people. There was a time when we were welcomed into the East Room. I moved to Washington at the start of Reagan's second term to fight an epidemic. Back then it was impossible to think about a time when community would be welcomed into the White House. The world is changing and that is why so many people are up in arms. Any shift in power, no matter how slight, can have long term ramifications. Dr. King said, "the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice."

I loved the rainbow flowers under the portrait of President Lincoln in the State Dining room. What would Lincoln think about this reception? The Civil War was a fight for the soul of America. The South lost, but the memories lingered. Unfortunately, there are too many who want to go backwards. The country couldn't even unite behind the fight against COVID! As the world continues to slug it out, homosexuals will be used to create unfounded fear and anxiety.

In this mess, how do we end the HIV epidemic? How do we provide care and prevention services to communities who are regularly vilified by too many elected officials? HIV programs must accommodate and speak to the pain that our communities endure on a regular basis. This impossible balance is what makes the work so hard. Right now, there are states with governors who want us silenced. They are searching textbooks and bathrooms. It is only a matter of time until they get to HIV. Are we ready to be part of the culture wars? In the past, our work had bipartisan support. Who knows in this America?

My concern is some government officials might think appeasement and water down HIV programs.

PrEP campaigns must be sex positive and speak to the realities of the communities hardest hit by HIV. We can’t go backwards. Technology and TikTok have changed the game. If we are serious about reaching the communities needed to be reached, then the work must be real and fearless. But that is easier said than done.

While the food was wonderful, the reception was more than a party. It was a public declaration of the administration’s support. Since we have a friendly President, now is the time to take risks with HIV initiatives that speak to the communities we’ve missed. Everything could change after 2024.

In his remarks, President Biden said that “we are in a fight for the soul of America. And that we will win.” I needed his words in ways I hadn’t understood. The lies and misrepresentations of my communities seem never ending. To have the most powerful man on the planet use his bully pulpit to stand with us is critical, especially at this divisive moment in history. As we’ve seen from Sweden and Finland, you can no longer be neutral. People, countries, and the world must take a side. It’s a fight for the soul of America, and I am hopeful.

Yours in the Struggle,

Paul Kawata

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