

REMARKS

OF

THE HONORABLE KAROL V. MASON
ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL
OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS

AT THE

OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS
LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, AND TRANSGENDER
PRIDE MONTH PROGRAM

ON

THURSDAY, JUNE 20, 2013
WASHINGTON, DC

Thank you, Laura. I want to welcome everyone to this OJP celebration of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Pride Month. I want to thank Laura and Todd Garrison for overseeing the organization of today's event, and for all the work they do in our EEO Office to promote diversity and inclusion.

Much of the work to bring today's panel together was done by a former OJP employee, Tom Lotito, who has since left the agency to oversee the LGBT program at the Internal Revenue Service. I'm glad that Tom was able to take a couple of hours away from his new job to join us today. Welcome back, Tom, and thank you for your efforts.

Let me also thank Jasmine D'Addario Fobian from OVC, Barbara Kelley and Karen Bachar from OJJDP, and Sheila Jerusalem from OCOM. They, too, were instrumental in organizing today's program.

Finally, I want to thank our panelists, one of whom is joining us by teleconference, as well as Mary Lou, who will introduce the panelists and moderate the discussion in just a moment.

This is exciting for me. It's my first opportunity as Assistant Attorney General to address an OJP event. It's also a chance to continue what I know is a relatively new, but very important, tradition here at OJP. The first OJP-wide Pride Month event was held just two years ago, and it's wonderful to see how it's become such a key part of our special emphasis program in such a short time.

You may recall that at the first Pride Month event, stickers with the DOJ Pride symbol were distributed. Those stickers carry a message: where you see the Pride sticker posted, you know that members of the LGBT community are welcome. I want you to know that when you enter the Assistant Attorney General's suite, the first thing you see is a Pride sticker posted prominently on the glass display case. And as long as I am Assistant Attorney General, that sticker will remain posted for all to see.

Our purpose here today, and throughout the month, is to celebrate the tremendous progress we've made in bringing recognition and respect to our friends and co-workers in the LGBT community. And I think we should all be proud of the role the Department of Justice has played, especially in ensuring justice for LGBT victims.

Four years ago, President Obama signed the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act, and our Attorney General has made enforcement of that law a top priority. And earlier this year, the President signed a reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity in DOJ's VAWA-funded programs. It's gratifying to know that the Department is now very much part of the solution to the problem of hatred and bias in our country.

But today's event is also about raising awareness of the challenges that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals continue to face, whether it be in the form of

blatant prejudice or through stereotypes and more subtle forms of discrimination. That's what our panel is going to talk about today – specifically, how those challenges are playing out in our service systems and what we can do to better support LGBT victims of crime. This is something I feel very strongly about: making sure service providers are welcoming and sensitive. I know the Office for Victims of Crime and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention have been doing some good work in this area, and I look forward to seeing that work continue and expand.

But it's also important that we in OJP set the example by making these issues part of the discussion around crime and justice in America. I think there's a general tendency to gloss over the problems that LGBT victims face, to treat them as though they're no different from the problems any other victim faces. Of course, the needs of LGBT victims are similar to others, but as I think we'll hear from the panel, there are differences – very important differences – and it's critical that we talk about what they are so we can begin to address them.

So I encourage you to think about how we can move this discussion forward. How can we get policymakers and practitioners in the criminal and juvenile justice fields to talk about these issues? What information do we have about LGBT victims already and what more do we need to know? And what we can we, in OJP, do to support practitioners and service providers in their outreach to the LGBT community?

We've made good progress, but we still have work to do. Part of our mission at OJP is to help ensure the fair administration of justice. Giving LGBT victims the support they need is critical to fulfilling that mandate.

I look forward to our discussion, and hope that we'll all leave with something that will help us in our work with the LGBT community. Now, I'll turn things over to Mary Lou.

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