From: Equality Texas
To: Donna Rose;
Subject: Equality Texas Mourns Death of David Ritcheson, 18 y.o. Hate Crime Victim
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Equality Texas Mourns the Death of David Ritcheson

18-Year Old Victim Had Testified in April for Passage of Matthew Shepard Act

Austin, TX (July 2, 2007) - Equality Texas today mourns the death of David Ritcheson, the 18-year-old Spring, Texas teenager who had survived an April, 2006 brutal hate crime.

On April 22, 2006, Ritcheson was beaten nearly to death by self-professed Skinheads, who cut him, burned him, poured bleach over him, sodomized him with an outdoor umbrella pole and yelled anti-Hispanic slurs.

Last Novemer and December, Ritcheson sat in a courtroom in Harris County, Texas and faced his attackers for the first time as they went through their respective trials. Ritcheson's attackers eventually were convicted of aggravated sexual assault; one was given a life sentence, the other 90 years.

Less than three months ago, on April 17, 2007, David Ritcheson went to Washington, D.C. and testified before the House Judiciary Committee urging passage of the "Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2007", also known as the Matthew Shepard Act.

Ritcheson's testimony included:

"I appear before you as a survivor of one of the most despicable, shocking, and heinous acts of hate violence this country has seen in decades. Nearly one year ago on April 22, 2006, I was viciously attacked by two individuals because of my heritage as a Mexican-American."

"Weeks later I recall waking up in the hospital with a myriad of emotions, including fear and uncertainty. ***Most of all, I felt inexplicable humiliation.*** *Not only did I have to face my peers and my family, I had to face the fact that I had been targeted for violence in a brutal crime because of my ethnicity. This crime took place in middle-class America in the year 2006. The reality that hate is alive, strong, and thriving in the cities, towns, and cul-de-sacs of Suburbia, America was a suprise to me."*

"However, despite the obvious bias motivation of the crime, ***it is very frustrating to me that neither the state of Texas nor the federal government was able to utilize hate crime laws on the books today in the prosecution of my attackers.*** *I am upset that neither the Justice Department nor the FBI was able to assist or get involved in the investigation of my case because 'the crime did not fit the existing hate crimes laws'. Today I urge you to take the lead in this time of needed change and approve the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2007."*

"I am here before you today asking that our government take the lead in deterring individuals like those who attacked me from committing unthinkable and violent crimes against others because of where they are from, the color of their skin, the God they worship, the person they love, or the way they look, talk or act."

Sadly, while David Ritcheson survived the physical attacks against him, he was not able to survive the emotional scars they left. On Sunday, July 1, 2007, David Ritcheson apparently jumped to his death from the upper deck of a cruise ship in the Gulf of Mexico.

The House of Representatives has approved the Matthew Shepard Act. The bill is now in the U. S. Senate, and the radical right is working 24/7 for its defeat because the bill includes sexual orientation and gender identity and expression.

Texas Senators John Cornyn and Kay Bailey Hutchison have argued that existing hate crime laws are adequate.

David Ritcheson disagreed.

Please take a stand: for Equality, for all Americans.

Urge Passage of the Matthew Shepard Act.

Click on the link above to send an e-mail/fax to President Bush and your U.S. Senators.

Tell-A-Friend.

Equality Texas works toward the elimination of discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression. We do this through research, education and lobbying directed toward the Texas Legislature and other governmental agencies.

If you received this message from a friend, you can sign up for Equality Texas Action Center.

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