



# A Statement Opposing the War from the Michigan Office of The American Friends Service Committee's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Issues Program and Rainbow Quakers

If ever there were a time for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) people to broaden the framework of our anti-violence work to oppose racism, abuses of law enforcement authority, militarism and war, that time is now. We find many compelling reasons why LGBT people of good will everywhere should say "No" to war on Iraq and "No" to the Bush government's permanent "War on Terror." First and foremost, we believe these wars are illegal, immoral and unjust. Massive violence, violations of human and Constitutional rights, and the silencing of dissent can never produce safety and justice for any group or society. We believe that those who care about democracy in the United States and those with a global commitment to human rights have a moral obligation to speak out when we believe political leaders are taking us in a wrong direction.

Today, many LGBT organizations and activists are questioning whether they should take a stand against the war. The question at the center: "Is war 'our' issue?" The answer depends on whom we understand to be the queer community and whether we seek justice only for one group or whether our vision is beautiful and bold enough to include all people. The LGBT communities with whom we work with include people of color, poor people, immigrants and youth. We know from our own experience that People of Color, poor people, women and children suffer most from the violence of militarism at home and abroad. It is simply not possible for us to do our work effectively or appropriately without confronting this militarism and the violence of racism, just as we confront the violence of homophobia and heterosexism. These struggles are intertwined. They are not separate.

Today, the U.S. government stands on the verge of launching a major war against Iraq and is bringing extraordinary pressure to bear upon other countries to endorse this action. This push to war is happening despite massive public doubt about—and increasing opposition to—this war both in the U.S. and throughout the world. It is clear to the world that a pre-emptive first strike against Iraq will only fuel the fires of hatred, fear and violence, and produce pain, misery and suffering on a scale so large as to be almost incomprehensible. The suffering of ordinary Iraqi people is already great. More than 500,000 infants and very young children in Iraq have already died as a direct result of U.S.-supported economic sanctions because they had no medicine or clean water to drink. How can this be called just? It is not only the people of Iraq who are at risk. This war places us *all* at risk.

U.S. political leaders are promulgating a reprehensible new foreign policy doctrine that asserts the right of the United States to launch unilateral, preemptive military strikes against any nation or group that stands in the way of the U.S. government's desire for unfettered access to the world's natural resources and the satisfaction of its geopolitical ambitions. This doctrine is in direct violation of established international law.

At home, as abroad, the current administration's new permanent "War on Terror" is rapidly eroding basic Constitutional rights, including the right of due process. The U.S.A. Patriot Act and other related measures authorize an unprecedented expansion of the scope and authority of law enforcement, unconstrained by any reasonable checks and balances. Abuses of the human and Constitutional rights of immigrants are commonplace. This expansion of police authority comes at a time when the entire framework of Constitutional and civil rights is already under assault; attacks often directed against people of color (immigrants and U.S. born), women and LGBT people. The assault on our rights is accompanied by an accelerated shift of public resources away from human needs and toward prisons, policing and militarization. Those most hurt by the violent impact of these shifts are poor people and People of Color, including those who are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender.

Hate violence, like state violence, is increasing in the U.S. Hard-won state and local legislative gains for LGBT people are not secure, but must be defended again and again against organized political attacks by the Right. Politicians offer queer communities penalty enhancement hate crime bills, not federal civil rights protections. Funds that could help respond compassionately and meaningfully to the global pandemic of HIV/AIDS are instead being directed to already-bloated military and "national security" budgets. Youth programs and many human services programs serving LGBT constituencies are in jeopardy.

The current shockwave of hatred, fear and violence threatens to engulf the world unless we turn to one another in a radical spirit of nonviolence, generosity and justice to stop the devastation of civilian populations abroad and racism and oppression at home. By lifting up a powerful voice of resistance and a call for authentic justice, we will encourage others to do the same.

For our own sake, and the sake of others, LGBT people *must* speak out against violence of all kinds.

WAR AT HOME! QUEERS SAY NO TO WAR! STOP THE WAR ABROAD! STOP THE WAR AT HOME! QUEERS SAY NO TO WAR! STOP THE WAR ABROAD! STOP THE WAR AT HOME!

The American Friends Service Committee is an independent Quaker organization whose work for social justice, peace and humanitarian service is carried forward by people of many religious and spiritual traditions. We seek to give practical expression to the belief that there is "that of God," or Sacred Spirit, in every person and in all peoples. Our programs are rooted in the radical faith that the power of love, given tangible expression in our social, economic and spiritual struggles, can overcome violence, despair and injustice.

Get involved with anti-war efforts! Contact AFSC by filling out and returning this form, or by emailing us to find out how you can help. We are also planning a Queer-specific action--find out how to join us! Check out the following web links for more information about peace organizing efforts in your area: [www.mipeace.org](http://www.mipeace.org), <http://justpeaceinfo.org>, [www.afsc-fan.org](http://www.afsc-fan.org), [www.afsc.org](http://www.afsc.org), [www.peacepledge.org](http://www.peacepledge.org)

I want to help AFSC work for justice for all oppressed people including poor people, People of Color, women, children and LGBT people.

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**SUPPORT AFSC'S WORK!** Fill out and return this form to AFSC, 1414 Hill, Ann Arbor, MI 48104! Include any donation you are able to give in support of AFSC's work both nationally and here in Michigan. Make checks payable to AFSC and designate the memo to "LGBT Program."