



Florida Action Committee, Inc.
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www.floridaactioncommittee.org

April 10, 2018

Board of Directors
The Pride Center at Equality Park
2040 N Dixie Hwy.
Wilton Manors, FL 33305

SENT VIA EMAIL
rboo@PrideCenterFlorida.org
kfegenbush@PrideCenterFlorida.org

RE: CLARENCE COLLINS

Dear Board:

I, like yourselves, sit on the Board of Directors of a not-for-profit organization in South Florida. I, like yourselves, represent a segment of our population that has experienced prejudice, hatred and even violence. I, like yourselves, fight to dispel myths and irrational fears directed at my members. Through my organization, I, like yourselves, seek to foster a culture of acceptance for my population, so they can function as meaningful members of society. I sit on the Board of Directors of the Florida Action Committee, Inc.

The Florida Action Committee (www.floridaactioncommittee.org) is a not-for-profit, public safety advocacy organization. Our membership is comprised of over eight hundred members, including registered sex offenders/predators, their families, treatment professionals and other stake-holders. Our mission is to end the cycle of sexual violence and make our communities safer.

To address the point that immediately jumped into your minds; I recognize the distinction between someone with a sexual orientation and someone who has sexually offended. I clearly do not seek to equate the two and I am not condoning nor defending sexual abuse. I do, however, know what it is like to live with a fact of life that is unchangeable and to try to live the best life despite accompanying prejudice.

I am writing in response to the recent media attention surrounding your termination of Clarence Collins. I don't know Mr. Collins and my opinions are based entirely on what I've read in the news, the supportive comments found on a GoFundMe page established in his support and decades of studies and empirical research on the subject of sexual offense and recidivism.

It's my understanding that Mr. Collins was employed by The Pride Center for approximately fifteen years and was a valued employee. Within the last few years, your center installed a playground and recently, after some members learned of Mr. Collins' status as a "Sexual Predator", you fired him. He is

now unemployed, facing homelessness and being vilified by the Board of an organization where he was previously beloved for more than a dozen years.

Contrary to public misconception, sex offenders have a very low rate of recidivism. Among the lowest of all crimes, even according to the US Department of Justice.¹ Studies demonstrate that the highest risk sexual offender, after living offense free in the community for 15 years, is of no greater risk of sexual offending than someone who has never offended.² Sex offenders, as you've hopefully come to know, are not all homogenous.

I understand the weight of political and financial pressure. Unfortunately, in this case it seems The Pride Center has capitulated to the weight of that pressure and in the process undermined the principles upon which your organization should stand.

While nobody would ever expect you to condone what Mr. Collins did more than two decades ago, as the leaders of an organization that advances tolerance and acceptance, we would not expect you to turn your back on a longstanding and devoted employee over something he did more than 20 years ago and has, based on the supportive comments of those in your community who know him well, spent two decades trying to repent for.

Sincerely,

s/

Gail Colletta, President
The Florida Action Committee, Inc.
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CC: The Sun-Sentinel
letters@sun-sentinel.com

South Florida Gay News
jason.parsley@sfgn.com

The Miami Herald
rhirsch@miamiherald.com

¹ <https://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=pbdetail&iid=1136>

² Hanson, R.Karl & Harris, Andrew & Helmus, Leslie Maaik & Thornton, David. (2014). High-Risk Sex Offenders May Not Be High Risk Forever. Journal of interpersonal violence. 29. 10.1177/0886260514526062.