



**Florida Action Committee, Inc.**  
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August 7, 2018

South Florida Gay News  
Attn: Norm Kent  
2520 N. Dixie Highway  
Wilton Manors, FL 33305

SENT VIA EMAIL  
[norm@normkent.com](mailto:norm@normkent.com)

**RE: THE PRIDE CENTER**

Dear Mr. Kent:

I am president of the Florida Action Committee (FAC). FAC is a not-for-profit public safety advocacy organization. Our membership is comprised of over one thousand (1,000) individuals in Florida and their families.

The mission of our organization is to educate the media, our legislators and the public with the facts surrounding sex offense issues. Our concern is for every citizen of Florida to enjoy a safer environment, particularly our children.

Sex and sexual wrongdoing are surely hot button issues. When it became known that a long-time employee of the Wilton Manors Pride Center is on the sex offense registry for a long-ago offense, a controversy ensued. I hasten to add that the individual in question, Clarence Collins, was not accused of any wrongful conduct – the mere revelation of his registrant status triggered the controversy.

What's concerning is that South Florida Gay News has prolonged this episode beyond all reason, and stoked prejudice and bigotry. More than 10 stories have been devoted to this issue, and typically have sensational headlines and a fear-mongering tone.

FAC is concerned with the well-being of all; our membership includes LGBT people including individuals required to register. Florida, as you may know, has the third highest number of registrants in the country. Harsh laws have pushed many into homelessness and we know LGBT people who do not have permanent housing and continue to be pushed around by South Florida authorities—some may be SFGN readers.

The Pride Center is an important community institution; this prolonged and nasty-toned coverage by SFGN is disheartening and even raises questions as to whether there is some animus toward The Pride Center.

Sadly, the tone of the articles echoes the kinds of prejudice and fears that were once directed at the entire LGBT community. That is something that concerns us!

The notion that those who commit sex offenses “can’t stop, won’t stop” is nonsense. In several landmark decisions, the US Supreme Court spread that falsehood. The New York Times blasted the Court in a major article in the national section, ‘Did the Supreme Court Base a Ruling on a Myth?’ It appears The Pride Center controversy is powered by that falsehood, too. The truth is the re-offense rate for those who commit sex offenses is among the lowest for any category of offenders.

Let us not forget that that Mr. Collins worked for The Pride Center, serving the Ft. Lauderdale gay community, for many years before they installed a playground and there has never been a complaint of any misconduct. Indeed, Mr. Collins is beloved by many who have come to know him in the decades since his offense.

To forever judge and villainize an individual over a fact in their life that they cannot change is unfair. To launch an attack against The Pride Center or the individuals who offered support to a rehabilitated member of their community is shameful!

As the publisher of a newspaper targeting a LGBT audience I’m surprised that you are not more sensitive to the dangers of “othering” a group of people in our community.

If public safety is a concern here, that issue has gotten lost in a haze of fear. More than 96% of sex offenses are committed by someone not on the registry. Your publication would serve a greater public benefit if you spent more time talking about measures that improve public safety than punishing and pathologizing Clarence Collins and The Pride Center’s administration.

I would welcome the opportunity to sit down with you and your writers to discuss ways SFGN might engage criminal justice issues involving LGBT people.

Sincerely,

s/

Gail Colletta, President  
The Florida Action Committee, Inc.

Cc: The Pride Center

Gary Resnick, Mayor, Wilton Manors