

**Thank You Presentation
for Out & Equal - ERG of the Year Award - 2009**

Thursday, October 8, 2009

Wasn't Hillary great? In 2007, in my personal capacity, I met her at a historic LGBT Americans for Hillary event and said to her that same sex partners of Foreign Service Officers need benefits. She said "good idea." And, I was off and running. It took only two words to motivate me. And, full circle, here she is congratulating us.

On behalf of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and straight members of GLIFAA, we express our deepest gratitude to President Obama and Secretary Clinton. And, it is with great joy that I thank Out & Equal, and the judges of the Outies Awards for recognizing us with this award. We also thank our senior executive mentors – at the Department of State Undersecretary for Management Patrick Kennedy, and at USAID, former Counselors Lisa Chiles and Mosina Jordan.

We also thank our friend Ambassador Michael Guest and the Council for Global Equality, the Human Rights Campaign, and the LGBT Caucus led by Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin and her incredibly talented staffers.

Let me be clear. **We** succeeded because we had a committed, global ERG membership - out as LGBT and straight allies - who believed service for their country is not incompatible with fundamental human rights, **American rights**.

Over 17 years, through both supportive times and periods of adversity, GLIFAA's **members** have demonstrated remarkable persistence in the fight for equality, fairness, and inclusiveness. By **being out as LGBT or allies**, sharing our stories with unflinching moral courage, we demonstrated foresight with the Obama transition teams at State and USAID so much so that **our recommendations were the first to**

implemented by the Administration - government wide. Our strategy worked, increasing morale not only in the State Department and USAID but paving the path for similar benefits for personnel posted overseas with the Foreign Commercial Service, Foreign Agricultural Service, the Peace Corps, the Centers for Disease Control and the Department of Justice, among others.

Living in our authentic selves, we continue to speak to **OUR** truth every day such our board member in Baku, or in the work of our courageous officers, who serve often at great personal risk in Baghdad, Kabul and Islamabad, separated from loved ones, in a myriad of places, from Brasilia to Bogota, London to Lisbon, Mumbai to Manila, and Cape Town to Cairo.

While this award is a milestone, we have a long way to go – our same-sex partners do not have health insurance, pension, or immigration rights. LGBT Marines protecting us overseas cannot be open about who they are. And, we absolutely and unequivocally must listen more to the concerns of transgender employees.

Help us to make the workplace even better and join us in the Foreign Service or Civil Service and leave a legacy for the next generation.

We are indeed living in times of HISTORIC change. With our FEARLESS commitment to human rights, we SHALL prevail, simultaneously serving our country and the LGBT communities at home and abroad.

There is NO turning back. We WILL achieve ALL our goals - TOGETHER.

Thank you.