

Opposing NATO and the G8: Why LGBTQ Folks Should Be Involved

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A statement from the LGBTQ Caucus of the Coalition Against the NATO / G8 War & Poverty Agenda (USA).

Next May, 2012 Chicago will host two huge, international summits as leaders of the NATO military alliance and the “G8,” a forum consisting of representatives from eight of the largest industrial economies, will gather here.

The G8 has led the charge for government give-aways to corporations, including banks, and attacks on working people’s living standards. G8 members currently include Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Russia. These countries comprise only 14% of the world’s population but 60% of the Gross World Product and more than 70% of the world’s military expenditures.

NATO, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, is a Cold War relic once designed to meet alleged “Soviet aggression” in Europe and now reconfigured to provide a veneer of international legitimacy to U.S.-led military attacks, often under the guise of humanitarian action, in countries as divergent and far-flung as Libya, Afghanistan, and the former Yugoslavia. These “interventions” often increase already-existing internal violence, impede the work of relief organizations on the ground, violate international law, and provide cover for enhancing the power and influence of Western states at the expense of the beleaguered inhabitants of the targeted countries. Just a portion of the military spending by NATO could save the lives of thousands of people daily who are in desperate need of food, clean water, shelter, and medical care.

A meeting by either of these two notorious organizations would be reason enough for large protests. How much more so now that, in May, 2012, Chicago will see them both meeting in the same city, at the same time, for the first time in over three decades!

Many thousands of social justice activists will converge on Chicago in protest. But why, specifically, should LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer) people get involved in protests against G8 and NATO? What do militarism and economic austerity have to do with us?

First, the NATO and G8 leaders are arguably, in Martin Luther King, Jr.’s words from 1967, “the greatest purveyors of violence in the world today.” Their decisions inflict harm and destruction on peoples all over the globe. As LGBTQ people in the United States we have historically been characterized as “Others,” as “deviants,” dehumanized and marginalized, and made to feel bestial, perverse, and unnatural. We therefore share a common bond with the targets of G8/NATO imperialism and its relentless attempt to dehumanize its enemies and render them faceless. Such

dehumanization, as we well know, helps “justify” such obscenities as colonization, torture, bombings, rape, and starvation. We know that heightened militarism and insensitivity to suffering create a less tolerant, more hateful society that jeopardizes our own safety.

Furthermore, struggles against austerity and militarism impact LGBTQ people directly. Every dollar that bails out a bank or pays for military occupation is one less dollar to meet the legitimate employment, housing, transportation, medical, and education needs of LGBTQs. Since 9/11, the U.S. military budget has nearly doubled. Spending on current and past wars now consumes 67% of the federal budget. Yet, in the budget debate, both Obama and Congress were agreed that military spending would be largely spared sharp spending cuts, and what cuts were proposed mostly affect veterans’ benefits, not the cost of current and future wars.

While the exact cost of the 2008 Wall Street bailout will never be known, most economists say it exceeded a trillion dollars. This figure does not include the lost income from the massive unemployment and production shutdowns that resulted from the banks’ credit freeze. There is every reason to expect that Democrats and Republicans, if “too-big-to-fail” banks were once again to totter on the edge, would again unite in a bipartisan effort to rescue these behemoths with another trillion dollars diverted from working families to the already well-off.

These many pressing issues provide ample reason for us to join the protests next May. Sadly, though, the LGBTQ movement has drifted far from the mass street mobilizations and civil disobedience that marked its birth. Our tactical toolbox has been limited in recent years to lobbying and fundraising. As a result, our movement is facing a crisis of legitimacy in our community.

Rather than joining in solidarity with other social justice movements, LGBTQ leaders have instead focused on courting Democratic Party politicians whose commitment to satisfy the genuine needs of the 99% is as weak---in fact, as non-existent---as their Republican brethren. While this strategy has earned perks for LGBTQ insiders, it has been a disaster for promoting our specific issues concerning safe schools and discrimination, let alone our wider issues concerning jobs, education, immigrant rights, and civil rights in general.

The “gay-rights-only” focus and our leaders’ tight alliance with Democrats have prevented the LGBTQ movement from visibly partnering with a multitude of other progressive movements, despite the overlap between our movement and these latter. After all, who among us is secure in our jobs? Who doesn’t know a gay couple whose partner is an immigrant? Who among us is not burdened with repaying college loans? Who doesn’t know someone whose home has been foreclosed? Who among us feels safe in our medical insurance coverage?

It is once again time to take to the streets together and show the world that we are a beautiful and proud part of the 99%. The series of high-profile tragedies of LGBTQ youth in 2011 have highlighted the fact that too many of our people are still bullied at school and still victimized at home. In addition, too many of us are still unfairly targeted by the criminal justice system; too many of us are still unemployed, still deported, still wounded in our country’s wars, and still without medical coverage.

These conditions are not going to change by lobbying Congress or re-electing Obama. They will change when we hold the rainbow flags and march in the streets as teachers and workers, as community members and immigrants, old and young together, all races, and with our many sexual identities to celebrate.

We will march unafraid because we know that the whole LGBTQ community is marching with us.

So we call you to action. Resist the dehumanizing impact of militarism. Oppose the austerity measures imposed at home and abroad. Support the rights of our entire LGBTQ family!

Stand up and fight back! Come to Chicago and oppose the G8/NATO summits in May, 2012!

To get involved in organizing LGBTQ-themed actions against the summits, please email
LGBTLiberation aol.com.

P.S.

* From Solidarity website, <http://www.solidarity-us.org/site/node/3473>