

PROMOTING MURDER ISN'T A "CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE"

January 29, 2010



Neil Portnow
President
The Recording Academy

Dear Mr. Portnow:

When the Recording Academy nominated Buju Banton for a Grammy in the category of Best Reggae Album, it honored someone who has **promoted the murder of gay people throughout his career.**

In "Boom, Bye Bye," which Banton wrote as a youth and continues to perform, he sings that "batty bwoy" and "batty man" (slurs equivalent to "fa--ot") "have to die" and he will "shoot them in the head" or "burn them." As recently as three months ago, he refused requests to stop performing the song.

Another song, "Batty Rider" from Banton's 1993 record, "Mr. Mention," glorifies the shooting of gay men. And in October 2009, Banton was quoted in news reports as saying: "This is a fight, and as I said in one of my songs 'there is no end to the war between me and fa--ots.'"

This type of music has fueled anti-gay violence here and especially in Banton's home country of Jamaica, where hate crimes against gay men and lesbians—including murder—are common and sometimes celebrated. It is why we opposed his nomination in a letter to you. Your response—that "artists of a variety of political or cultural perspectives have been nominated or featured on the telecast, despite protests and backlash"—is surprising, as is your defense that the Grammy Awards honor musical achievement "regardless of politics."

Performers who glorify the murder of gay people through their music aren't reflecting a "political or cultural perspective," or "politics," they're reflecting their hatred and promoting brutal and illegal violence against a group of innocent people. And to honor an artist such as Buju Banton, honors his extraordinarily hateful work.

The L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center, the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation and the signatories below, strongly urge you to **use the televised Grammy show to denounce all music that promotes or celebrates violence against any group of people, and the artists who perform such music.**

Sincerely,

*L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center
Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation
National Black Justice Coalition
People For the American Way
New York LGBT Community Center
New York City Anti-Violence Project
The San Diego LGBT Community Center
Equality California (EQCA)
BiNet USA
New York Area Bisexual Network (NYABN)
CenterLink: The Community of LGBT Centers
International Federation of Black Prides, Inc.*

*Gay and Lesbian Medical Association
Gay Men of African Descent
International Foundation for Gender Education
Queers for Economic Justice
OutRage!
Stop Murder Music Campaign
The Maryland Black Family Alliance
The American Institute of Bisexuality (AIB)
Bisexual Resource Center
Immigration Equality
Gay Liberation Network
New England GLBT Veterans, Inc.*