

Challenging Homophobic NHL Fans

by Stephen Elliott-Buckley - Monday, April 23, 2012

<http://politicsrespun.org/2012/04/challenging-homophobic-nhl-fans/>

Having spent some time recently examining the [NHL's and NHLPA's collective negligence about headshots](#), I was inspired to address the homophobia that surrounds hockey fandom last night. Sure the Canucks lost, but before that, someone called them a bunch of faggles in Twitterland. How did that all go down, and what hope is there that the NHL actually cares about combating mindless, ignorant bigotry and homophobia? Read about it after the jump.

Sometimes I think I'm a bit ahead of some curves. Starting in the late 1990s, I developed a "gay speech" that I would use in my suburban Vancouver high school English classrooms whenever students said something like, "that's so gay," like homework on the weekend or something. My speech consisted of a rhetorical monologue about whether by gay the student meant maybe Irish, Korean, tall, nearsighted, balding, or some other group identifier. The answer was always no, because all they meant was stupid, pathetic, annoying, etc.

Eventually word got out and students in each class would get the gay speech when someone opened it up. After a few semesters it became somewhat of a thing, but I was sure proud of the self-examination that came from it. One semester, however, a class went almost the whole semester without anyone slipping up. And even if the gay speech didn't stop them all from thinking "that's so gay" or saying it in other contexts, the least I could do was help create the most non-hostile classroom environment possible.

Years later [the BCTF started a fantastic campaign](#) to empower teachers to oppose the tendency of people to use gay as shorthand for something horrible. That made me very proud.

Now, the NHL has started a campaign to address the powerful homophobia that exists in sports, including the NHL. [Apparently, you CAN play if you're gay](#). That's a good start. I'm not sure I need to spend any time establishing the context that being gay in a highly testosterone sport [or otherwise] is a troublesome thing for lots of bigots.

But it will take some time for the NHL to create an air of acceptance for homosexuals in more than the "typical" sports, to come out of the closet, but in the meantime, I want to affirm and encourage everyone one of you who encounters a bigoted or merely non-thinking homophobe when they spout off some ignorance. I know from teaching high school I firmly believe that the vast majority of "that's so gay" comments came from people who simply hadn't thought about the power of that phrase to contribute to horrible conditions some people are forced to endure in our society.

That's why I'd like to encourage you all to step up and confront someone who spouts some homophobia just like we do when someone starts off an anecdote with, "I'm not a racist, but..." because we all know where that goes.

And below is what I encountered last night in the Twitter some time during the Canucks losing their last game of the year. Again. [Sigh](#). And I just want to note the really sad attempt for Mark Kozak to appeal to this Superbad movie thing to explain something, like how since it was used in a movie [[in a homophobic way](#)], that maybe he's ok saying it too. And I also wanted to note that this [t-shirt company he founded](#) has shirts that say "Truth and Consequence," which I actually find quite fitting to him outing himself as a homophobe. Maybe a consequence for that truth could be that you [let him know in Twitter](#) that you think calling people faggles is just not ok. And maybe [you won't buy his t-shirts](#).

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