Welcoming LGBT asylum seekers

Thousands of people flee homophobic and transphobic persecution expecting to find safety in North America. Many face new hardships once they arrive. In the U.S. asylum seekers cannot use most medical or social service programs. It takes at least six months before they can legally work. Many are forced into homelessness while their claim is processed. They can experience new discriminations because of their race, language barriers, and the fact that they are LGBT.

The speakers gathered here all work with, and in some cases are themselves asylum seekers who have suffered persecution on the basis of their sexual and/or gender non-conformity.
What can I do? Sign our petition
Honor the Human Rights of LGBT Asylum Seekers in the U.S.

To:
Members of Congress
President Barack Obama
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
U.S. Department of Justice

LGBT people who flee attacks, torture, and murder in their home countries expect to find safety in the U.S. but often face more hardships when they arrive. Unlike refugees, asylum seekers are not allowed to work until they have been granted asylum or until at least 180 days after filing an application, whichever occurs first. They are also not able to access most programs that are supported by government funds. Many become homeless while their claims are pending, and others are vulnerable to abuse in immigration detention. Those with out proper documents upon entry, or who attempt to reenter after being turned away, are being criminally prosecuted under U.S. federal law. Language barriers and ongoing discrimination can leave asylum seekers in despair, especially if they are detained or do not receive community support.

Specifically, we call on leaders to:

1) Lift the one-year filing deadline on asylum applications, which especially harms LGBT people who are living in the shadows with limited access to information;

2) Remove the “bed quota,” the law requiring that at least 34,000 beds be filled in immigration detention facilities nightly, as it provides inhuman incentives to keep people locked up. LGBT people are particularly vulnerable to harm while detained;

3) Support alternatives to immigration detention, such as the programs that are being established by an increasing number of faith-based and community-based organizations around the U.S.;

4) Remove barriers to asylum seekers resulting from Department of Homeland Security (DHS) referrals to the Department of Justice (DOJ) for criminal prosecution of asylum seekers prior to adjudication of asylum claims and stop criminalizing asylees.

- Sign the petition online at www.lgbt-fan.org/petition