

Rahm Emanuel on HIV and LGBT Issues in His Own Words
Select Transcription from the Chicago Mayoral Candidate Forum Held on February 9, 2011

Moderator: *Would you support CPS administration or take a leadership role in mandating professional development for all school personnel on dealing with bullying, harassment and violence related to sexual orientation, in compliance with SB 3266? What structures would you put in place and how would you enforce existing structures?*

Rahm Emanuel: I wrote an op-ed in the *Windy City Times* a couple months ago on bullying because I feel this is a major issue. Who I select as CEO of schools must share my concerns as a priority about this issue. I focus on education overall – on the importance of teachers, principals and parents. These are the principles I have invested in and will raise. You can have an active mayor and an involved CEO. If you're not involving the principals, making sure teachers throughout the city, not just teacher in some neighborhoods are sensitized, and making sure parents are involved, then you aren't firing on all pistons. The CEO will be the leader of the school system and this will be a priority when I'm interviewing a candidate so that they will know upfront that this issue is of interest to the mayor.

This issue also affects homelessness because a lot of the kids being bullied at school are homeless. At Halsted Street Center, one of the things they provide to kids is CTA cards. I've laid out a policy on homelessness, but Halsted Street Center is helping take care of those kids by making sure they have a place to go in the evenings, which is, unfortunately, the CTA. I want to be clear that the mayor cares about this. The CEO cares about it. And reform of the schools will contain the message that teachers, parents and principals will have a role to play in sensitizing the schools and student body population and make for a nurturing environment for gay and lesbian students coming out at an early age.

Moderator: *What will you do to make HIV education and awareness a priority in low-income communities?*

Rahm Emanuel: That touches on a number of issues: Chicago is responsible for public health. We have a flu epidemic, we're responsible for it. HIV and AIDS is a public health issue. Public health runs 9 clinics; county is responsible for delivering on public health. The city has gotten away from its core functions – making sure it has the resources to deal with HIV/AIDS throughout the city, not just in part of the city because gay and lesbian members of our society and our city live all over the city. We will make sure that HIV/AIDS is addressed throughout the city by focusing not just on service delivery, but on the core functions of public health in terms of resources and services.

Moderator: *Over the course of one year, approximately 15,000 youth experienced homelessness throughout Chicago, of which up to 46% identify as LGBTQ. How will you address youth homelessness as it relates to the LGBTQ community, specifically addressing the lack of housing options and lack of diversity training for service providers that deal with homelessness?*

Rahm Emanuel: I think I've partially dealt with this question. The day after the blizzard I went to a homeless shelter and pledged what we're going to do to eradicate homelessness in the city. The mayor has laid out a good plan – I'm going to make sure we have the resources to see that plan through to completion. It is a comprehensive program; veterans are over sampled among the homeless. Having a comprehensive plan will catch everyone. I will have a plan that deals with homeless overall, not to take care of one community over another. Veterans are over-represented among the homeless because of

other issues they are struggling with – they have huge drug problems, huge homeless and employment problems. They are our fellow residents.

Moderator: *How do you plan to address allegations of abuse of transgender Chicagoans at the hands of the Chicago Police Department?*

Rahm Emanuel: This encompasses two questions. We're going to have a new CEO of schools, and also a new superintendent of the police department. These are two of the most significant appointments for whoever is elected mayor. Who we hire has to know that part of their process is dealing with the transgender community and must have sensitivity. It relates to harassment, and brutality, and that means the police department is trained... we keep coming back to this, because too much of what we think about comes back to what we think about the North Side: gay and lesbian and transgender people live throughout the city. We need training for the entire police department, not just a few district offices.

Moderator: *Last year in Chicago the LGBTQ community experienced many hate crimes across the city, with attacks on public transportation and the death of a woman on the South Side. With hate crime having risen outside of Boy's Town, there is concern inside the community. What are your specific plans to reduce the number of hate crimes against LGBTQ people?*

Rahm Emanuel: I've been talking about the future, but our ability to see things through, I'm going to take a minute in advocacy of what President Obama accomplished in passing that legislation on behalf of Mathew Sheppard and making it landmark legislation as part of his administration, and it is a significant deal and our ability to have a question and discussion is different than three years ago when we were asking how we are going to pass the legislation. It is now the law of the land. It has been a 10 year struggle to get to this point. I am proud it is the law of the land and that it was signed by President Obama. Second is we have those laws on the book for a reason, and making sure we enforce that law because it was passed for a purpose – not to make us feel good. To be enforced with the full force of the law and carried out at every level.

While we focused on a particular set of issues, we as a city face common challenges. The only question, whether it's on crime, education or economy, is whether we will face those issues with common purpose. I look around the room and I see part of the city, a diverse part of the city, and I see the promise of Chicago, in all its diversity. You appropriately asked questions that affect the LGBTQ community, but remember: one thing I want to do as mayor is bring the city together as one. Because if we face those common challenges, whether they be our school system, fiscal situation, or our crime problem. Obviously they affect communities differently, but they are our common challenges that must be met with common purpose. That is how we will be a stronger city as we get to work through the challenges we face. I want to thank you for your dedication and love for the city and hosting this event. Thank you very much.