

Remarks for Academy Theatre's Nomination as Youth Activists of the Year by The Las Vegas Gay and Lesbian Center, 2004

In our season brochure that we send out at the beginning of each school year, we have implemented the slogan, These Kids are Good.

Obviously we are, in this case, referring to their talent and skill on the boards. But we are also referring to the goodness within these dedicated, intelligent, remarkable young people.

I am here this evening to introduce to you some of those good kids that were involved in our recent production of *The Laramie Project*, and to salute the goodness in each of them. I'm talking about the kind of goodness that extends beyond the wings of our stages. I am talking about the hearts, souls and compassionate minds of these fine young people.

Because of the nature of our school and student body, we are by nature a fairly liberal institution. By definition, to be liberal is to be tolerant of different views and standards of beliefs and behavior in others. These students that made up the cast and crew of *The Laramie Project* exemplified the highest ideals of liberalism. When we first heard that "that man" and his pathetic band of mean-spirited and misguided family and acquaintances were going to pay us a "friendly visit," their first reaction was, well, less than charitable. But after we discussed it, studied the hateful intentions of these pathetic bigots, these liberal-minded students began to understand that, rather than attack hate with more hate, that they were going to stand up proudly, and search within themselves for the strength to tell the truth. And tell the truth they did, night after night, focusing their energies on this story that is itself a soul-searching look at how we see ourselves and our fears and prejudices.

And they showed such poise and dignity. During this whole experience, these students stood together in support of ideals of basic human truths. They stood together for the ideals that every person in this world should have the right to pursue their happiness and fulfillment, that sexuality is just one aspect of the total person. They optimistically believe that, one day, everyone will be able to live their lives according to the dictates of their own hearts and consciences.

They came round to these truths by searching their hearts, viewing the greater issues through the eyes of a fine, talented young man, a man much like them, with a love for the theatre burning in his soul: a young man that had to die in order that we as a country could begin to see the error of our ways.

These are truly, in so many ways, Good Kids. And I sure do love them. So I would like to introduce to you some of the members of the cast and crew of Academy Theatre's production of *The Laramie Project*, James Adams, Alex Aikens, David Andino, Molly Bernard, Katie Carter, Fae Dukes-Compton, Lindsay Norwood and Katie Rand.

—John Morris, 2004

Las Vegas Academy Theatre — Clark County School District