

Ryan Murphy Speech

On behalf of the cast of “POSE,” it is such an honor to be here tonight. This event and this moment has specific relevance for me, because I myself used to be like one of the kids involved in The Trevor Project.

When I was 19, in Indiana, I myself called a suicide hotline. Overwhelmed by the AIDS crisis, by the fact that I was the only “out” person in my friend group, the only “out” person I knew at the time, and alienated from my family, I felt profound despair. I made a call one late night in November. I made a connection, got some hope, and carried on. It’s powerful life saving work this organization does. In my roundabout way, I know this first hand.

Obviously the work that the Trevor Project does is vital and must be continued. But tonight and this event honoring Trevor got me thinking. Along with supporting the important lifeline that is Trevor, why don't we consider targeting the people who are causing the problem here?

The homophobes, the trans naysayers, and the small restricted and dangerous minds who are causing so many young people to needlessly hate and doubt themselves in our country when what they should be receiving from this country is love and support and understanding. Weren't we as a nation established on the idea of equality, not appalling and illegal discrimination?

It’s a simple and very strong idea, I think. Let’s help the kids by showing the small-minded the door. There is actually a way to do this. And I want to do it.

It was the midterms this year that gave me hope. One after one, anti-LGBTQ candidates who made hate speech and ideology part of their legacy fell, disgraced and eliminated by candidates (who were largely boosted by victory by young and female voters, by the way.) The number was astounding to me — over 20 anti-LGBTQ right wing politicians and their horrifying views were gone in a day. Dana Rohrabacher, Mia Love, Jason Lewis, Pete Sessions — bigots, all of them. And all replaced by allies, new politicians who won’t spread harmful and wrong rhetoric that can lead a young LGBTQ person to actually believe they are not good enough or worthy enough to stay on this earth anymore.

I want to do more of this kind of outreach for young people who are struggling. I want these hateful and wrong politicians to go and to stop polluting our moral and ethical ether. Based on this fall, I think it’s now possible to create a movement to protect and nourish our own.

“POSE” the TV show, the beautiful cast, has always at our root been about activism. For many of our stars and actors, the very act of existing and being who they were born to be is activism. At the beginning of the show, we pledged that all my personal profits from the program would go to trans rights causes. While we are not in profits just yet, we did get a second season by FX and a Netflix deal, so that’s hopefully coming. We have already donated several hundred thousand dollars to trans organizations that need our support and help.

And that brings me to the newest “POSE Gives Back” initiative. I’ll keep it simple, here’s what I’m doing.

In 2020, I’m going to create and fund, with corporate sponsorship, a multimillion-dollar organization that targets anti-LGBTQ candidates running for office. We are narrowing our focus to 20 of them, Senate and Congressional candidates who think they can get votes by hurting and discriminating against us. Well, we can get votes too and we can fight back.

The idea of this initiative is two fold - we are going to financially support candidates running against those with anti LGBTQ hate views - help pay for advertisements, organization, infrastructure, etc. We are going to send a message which says you cannot make discrimination against us a political virtue anymore. You can’t keep killing our vulnerable young people by promoting and nationalizing your rural, close-minded anti-constitutional viewpoints. Maybe if candidates in the future see that embracing these viewpoints leads them to being kicked out of office and losing something tangible, the conversation can shift and change.

We know where the work needs to get done.

Hello Mike Lee, the young Ivy League trained Senator from Utah. Mr. Lee is a future leader of the GOP who just committed himself to the bad old days by introducing what has been called “the vilest anti-LGBTQ religious freedom bill of our time.” He’s up in 2020. We see you, Mike Lee.

Also, hey there Susan Collins, who worked hard to end Don’t Ask Don’t Tell and protect LGBTQ rights in the workplace and who voted for Supreme Court justice Brett Kavanaugh. If you don’t believe he’ll erase our gains, I’ve got a Trump Moscow Tower to sell you. She’s up in 2020 and Maine’s a blue state. We see you, Susan Collins.

Lindsey Graham sang a Maria Callas worthy aria on Kavanaugh’s behalf, and has anyone ever worked so hard to to disassociate himself from any gay anything? He’s up in 2020 and South Carolina really needs its tourist economy, doesn’t it? We see you, Lindsey Graham.

Also, hi there Steve King. Mr. King of Iowa is vying to become America’s biggest bigot. His side business is rhetorical gay bashing, even coming after his party’s leadership for supporting “a candidate in a primary in California who had a same sex partner they put all over glossy mailers.” Let’s show Rep. King that the Queens are not having it.

Additionally, here’s the second prong of attack - so many of these midterm victories were squeakers, tight races sometimes won by 700 or less votes. What we need to do in these 20 races we are supporting is really get out the vote, and so we will. We will organize and promote LGBTQ voter registration in these specific races. They say we are 10 percent strong, which I say after two drinks and an open mind goes up to 25 percent. Well, let’s get these Silent Minority votes and let’s show people not involved in the process, because they think their voices don’t matter, that they DO matter, that there are young lives literally at stake. These voices can swing races, and make a huge huge difference.

Will we win all these races? Probably not. But we will win some of them, and hopefully start a change. And maybe start creating a world where young LGBTQ people no longer think death is a viable alternative, as I did so many years ago.

On behalf of myself and the cast of POSE, all of us agents of change, I say thank you for this honor tonight.