HLS Lambda Statement on Scott Lively’s Recent Appearance at Harvard Law School

This Thursday afternoon, HLS Lambda received notification from Harvard administrators that Scott Lively would be coming to speak at the gubernatorial Forum on Criminal Justice at Harvard Law School.

Scott Lively is a candidate for governor of Massachusetts. He played an instrumental role in the promotion of Uganda’s 2014 Anti-Homosexuality Act, which penalizes consensual same-sex sexual activity with life imprisonment. He has also expressed support for Russia’s recent anti-LGBTQ “propaganda” legislation.

Throughout the forum, Lively repeatedly articulated a viewpoint that we find homophobic, racist, and sexist. We believe it is a moral stain on our community that a person with such views could be running for governor of Massachusetts. Fortunately, because of the advance notice we had received from Harvard administrators earlier in the day, we were able to organize a protest. We distributed literature relaying Lively’s stated views and held signs throughout the event. We were heartened when so many members of the audience joined us in our protest—literally standing in solidarity as we turned our backs on a message of hate.

It is unfortunate that such a candidate was able to distract from the important issue of criminal justice reform in Massachusetts. Lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth are 40 percent more likely than other teens to be punished by school authorities, police, and the courts. Nearly half of Black trans* individuals have been incarcerated at some point in their lives. Additionally, LGBTQ individuals are three times more likely than non-LGBTQ individuals to face sexual abuse once in prison. We look forward to what the next governor of Massachusetts will be able to accomplish on these issues.

Lambda thanks the Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race and Justice, the Harvard Black Law Students Association, and the Middlesex Community College for encouraging this important discussion. We are also very appreciative of the Harvard administrators, event organizers, and forum moderators for supporting our efforts.