



September 16, 2013

Board of Directors
The Gay and Lesbian Community Center of Southern Nevada
401 S. Maryland Pkwy.
Las Vegas, NV 89101

Re: The Center's Corporation of the Year: UFC

Dear Members of the Board,

The Gay and Lesbian Community Center of Southern Nevada (The Center) is an invaluable community-based organization in the Las Vegas valley that provides a safe and affirming place for the LGBTQ community and allies to gather. The health and wellness programs provided by The Center are critical to the well-being of the community. The Center also serves as a place where the LGBTQ community and allies can tackle challenges like HIV prevention, coming out issues, bullying, and discrimination. We applaud the tremendous work that has been done by The Center over the past twenty years.

One of your allies in the struggle for LGBTQ rights and positive awareness is the Culinary Workers Union, Local 226. The Culinary Union is committed to representing the best interests of its diverse membership, including its LGBTQ members. The Culinary Union's health plan was the first insurance plan in Nevada to provide health benefits to domestic partners, and the union was proud to bring hundreds of supporters to march in the Las Vegas Pride Parade in 2012 and 2013. Earlier this year, a Culinary Union representative testified on behalf of marriage equality in the state of Nevada and the union plans to be involved in the ballot initiative in 2016. UNITE HERE, the parent union of the Culinary Union, was the first union to ratify a comprehensive statement in support of civil and economic rights for LGBTQ people. Across the country, union members have worked to build a powerful coalition between the LGBTQ and labor communities in our quest for fair and equal treatment of all individuals.

In light of the great work done by The Center and the coalition between labor and the LGBTQ community, **we are alarmed that The Center is honoring the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) as the Corporation of the Year.** Not only are the owners of the UFC embroiled in a bitter labor dispute with the Culinary Union over their casino properties, Station Casinos, which provides no benefits to domestic partners through their 2013 health plan, but the UFC has a history of tolerating offensive comments by fighters and company representatives, including anti-gay and misogynistic remarks. Recently, the president of the UFC, Dana White, has shown a lack of awareness on LGBTQ issues by **planning to visit Russia in an effort to bring the UFC there, despite the country's new anti-gay legislation and the uproar it has created.** The legislation prohibits "propaganda" in support of



“nontraditional” sexual relationships, meaning virtually any expression of same-sex love or information about homosexuality is prohibited.ⁱ In July, Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a law banning gay and lesbian couples in foreign countries from adopting Russian children, and a Russian politician recently drafted a new law to take children away from homosexual parents.^{ii,iii} ESPN reported on August 29th that, when asked about the controversy in Russia and the backlash surrounding it, White said: “No, I know nothing about it.”^{iv}

Also, a 10% stake of Zuffa LLC, the UFC’s parent company, is owned by a government-controlled company of Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates (UAE).^v According to the US Department of State, consensual same-sex sexual activity is criminalized under both civil law and Sharia in the UAE. Under Sharia the death penalty is the punishment for individuals who engage in consensual same-sex sexual conduct.^{vi}

The UFC’s history of tolerating inappropriate and hurtful statements by fighters and representatives is shameful. Since the beginning of the year, over 78 women’s organizations and advocates for survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence, including the National Organization of Women (NOW), as well as clergy and academics from 47 U.S. states and 24 countries, have demanded that the UFC put an end to the sexist and homophobic remarks and actions made by UFC fighters and company representatives. This spring, some lawmakers in the State of New York moved to maintain New York’s longstanding ban against MMA events, despite opposition from the UFC. In August, the Boston City Council voted to ban children under 16 from attending MMA fights, like the UFC, without an adult.^{vii} Boston Magazine reported that Boston City Council President Stephen Murphy said jokes about rape, abusive language that’s demeaning to women, and the use of homophobic slurs set a bad example for Boston’s youth.^{viii}

Several fighters and UFC President Dana White have **used anti-gay slurs**, and one fighter encouraged others to repeat the slurs.^{ix,x,xi} **A transgender fighter was called a “...lying, sick, sociopathic, disgusting freak”** by a UFC fighter, and another fighter was allowed to fight on national television even after **he posted a mock rape video.**^{xii,xiii} Additional details and other incidents of homophobic and sexist comments and behavior are listed in the enclosed attachment.

We are aware that the UFC has made a donation to The Center. However, we strongly believe that it is not in the best interest of The Center to align with this human cage fighting promoter. The UFC’s history of tolerating homophobic and sexist remarks reflects poorly on all those associated with it. We urge you to reconsider honoring the UFC as the Corporation of the Year.

To discuss any questions or concerns, please contact Rachel Rekowski at 702-383-7904 or rrekowski@culinaryunion226.org.

Sincerely,

Geoconda Arguello-Kline
Secretary-Treasurer, Culinary Workers Union, Local 226

Cleve Jones
Founder, The NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt

Brandon Smith
Shop Stewart & LGBT Committee Member, Culinary Workers Union, Local 226

Members of the LGBT Committee
Culinary Workers Union, Local 226

Bob Fulkerson on behalf of the Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada

Stonewall Democratic Club of Southern Nevada

Lambda Business Association

Adan Campos
MEChA UNLV Co-Chair & National MEChA Coordinating Council Board Member

The Board of the Clark County Young Democrats

Pastor Kathryn Obenour
Mary Magdalene Friends

Ruben Murillo, Jr.
President, Nevada State Education Association

ⁱ <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-08-25/no-tolerance-for-russia-s-anti-gay-games.html>

ⁱⁱ http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/07/03/putin-signs-russia-gay-adoption-ban_n_3540162.html

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/russian-politician-drafts-law-to-remove-children-from-gay-couples-8800791.html>

^{iv} Associated Press, *ESPN.com*. "Dana White wants show in Russia", August 29, 2013.

^v <http://www.mmfighting.com/2010/01/12/abu-dhabi-buys-10-of-ufc>

^{vi} <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/204599.pdf>

^{vii} http://bostonherald.com/sports/other/ultimate_fighting/2013/08/council_mma_to_stay_pg_16

^{viii} <http://www.bostonmagazine.com/news/blog/2013/08/02/boston-ban-ufc-fighting-under-18/>

^{ix} "Effed Up: UFC Fighter Quinton "Rampage" Jackson Teaches Japanese People To Speak In English!"

<http://www.worldstarhiphop.com/videos/video.php?v=wshh2zhS44X4iE40BITU>

^x Video, <http://www.blinkx.com/watch-video/ufc-president-dana-white-notorious-rant/FYZcYppmYJ5wwYruuKpvpw, 1:49-2:02, 2:55-3:06>.

^{xi} "Dana White video blog UFC 127 Weigh-ins" <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dbvKTPvsh3k>

^{xii} YouTube video, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SfG5amLtWEQ>

^{xiii} McNeil, Franklin. *ESPN.com*. "UFC suspends Matt Mitrione", April, 8, 2013.

http://espn.go.com/mma/story/_/id/9149382/matt-mitrione-suspended-ufc-fallon-fox-remarks

^{xiii} <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SfG5amLtWEQ>