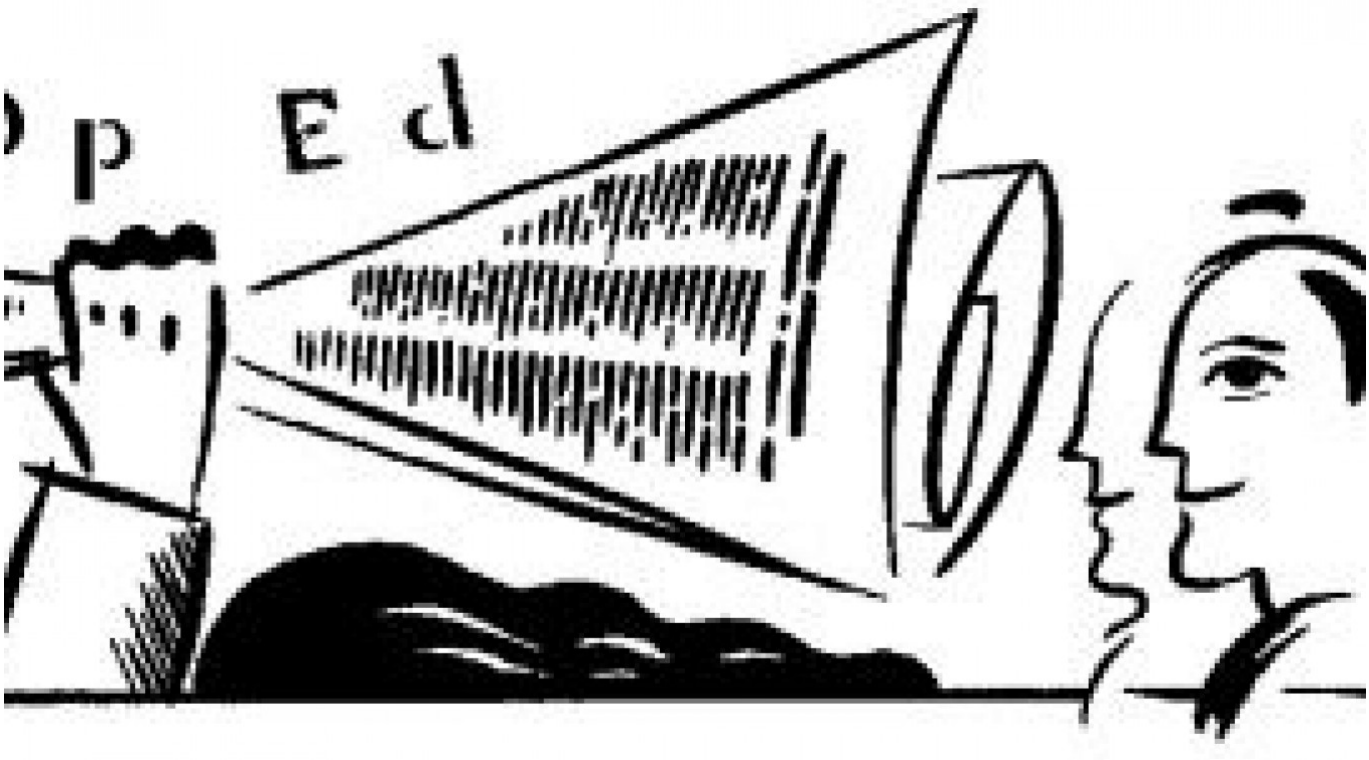
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Anti-Gay Law Violates Russian Childrens' Rights

By Robert Joseph Greene

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For decades, Russia has been the focus of many controversial and unsatisfied concerns in the United Nations regarding its human rights attitudes. When the Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Yakovenko highlighted his country's resolution to the United Nations Human Rights Council for the "Promotion of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms through a Better Understanding of Traditional Values of Humankind: Best Practices," he had the support of over 60 states and organizations, including members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the League of Arab States. The thinking behind this resolution was simple, as Yakovenko felt that respect for traditional values was being threatened by modern progressive rights. Without specifically naming "progressive ideals," Yakovenko was able to allow a vague notion of civility in a resolution that, when applied, is not so civil.

Essentially, Russia demonstrated this resolution on traditional values by passing the anti-gay propaganda law, which prohibits mentioning anything "supportive" and "positive" about the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) community. One could definitely see that we have a law that promotes self proclaimed "traditional values" at the expense of another

group, namely, the LGBT community. Undoubtedly, what Yakovenko and the 60 countries were trying to do was create a veiled attempt to ensure traditional values remain dominant as well as respected.

If you want to respect values and beliefs then you must not infringe unnecessarily upon those who follow them. Governments should and must remain neutral in regards to both progressive and traditional values. Families that want to follow traditional values at home will have free will to do so. Under neutral laws, this would apply equally to families that follow progressive values. The reason behind this is that families should be able to raise their children in the manner they choose. In the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child, there are 10 rights to which children are entitled regardless of household structure, norms and beliefs. The most basic are access to food, housing and medical services. Beyond that, parents follow their own value system as they see fit. However, that may be contrary to a child's understanding of what is best for themselves. In these cases, a basic age is established to allow for children to emancipate. A child has the right to remove themselves from the care of their parents if they so deem that their parents values are hindering upon their ability to grow and develop in a healthy and nurturing way.

The question remains on who has the right to judge whether a parent's value structure is reasonable enough versus the right of a child to emancipate themselves. In this light, the courts and governments must be fair and neutral. We have a set of human rights and a set of rights protecting children set by the global governing body called the United Nations. They are a concrete way to ensure the self-determination of an individual.

It is well known that Russia was not neutral when it passed the anti-gay propaganda law. If a family feels that being gay is unacceptable and they treat their child in an abusive manner, the child has no right to emancipate themselves. However, if a child feels that a progressive family is wrong for them, this law will allow a child to emancipate themselves from a family that believes in LGBT equality. As a result, this makes the anti-gay propaganda law into a law enforcing inequality. Fair laws acknowledge self-determination as the key to the success of any developing child. Those who follow traditional values do not have anything to fear because there are children who continue to live and accept their values.

Regardless of your view of homosexuality, one cannot guarantee that a son or daughter will develop a particular sexual orientation. The laws of nature take precedent over the structure of traditional human values.

Since the early 1990s, scientists have discovered that homosexual behavior in the form of sex, courtship, affection, pair bonding and even in parenting is present in animals. From primates to gut worms, there are over 500 species that have exhibited homosexual behavior. There is no recorded documentation of species alienating or punishing their own kind due to homosexual behavior except one: humans.

Every culture in this world has LGBT people. Some societies hide and/or suppress these people. Some do not, but the fact remains that LGBT people exist in every culture.

"The Blue Door" is a fairy tale I wrote about a Russian tsar who proclaims a special day called Arrow Day, where his three sons can shoot an arrow at the door of their beloved. The tsar made this proclamation because he wanted to have all his subjects feel worthy and eligible

to be part of his family. He did not want to place a hinderance on "true" love. The tsar never thought that one of his sons would want to choose a man for his beloved.

Many Russians reacted negatively to this story because they felt that this was how "gay propaganda" worked on children, despite this story being part of a collection of short stories in an adult book — not a children's book. Their accusations and hate towards me were unfounded. In their complaint letters and comments to me, many Russians failed to make a distinction between homosexuality and pedophilia. In 1999, homosexuality was formally removed from the list of Russian mental disorders. Pedophilia is the desire and action to molest children. Pedophiles can be heterosexual or homosexual. Most studies have shown that a clear majority of pedophiles are heterosexual. Those who accused me of being a pedophile are misappropriating the term. I am not a pedophile and my writing does not reflect a pro-pedophilia stance.

What is more important is that I respect a parent's right to not read my story. I may not agree with parents who do not want any exposure from the LGBT community but I do respect their decision.

However, I disagree with the passage of Russia's anti-gay propaganda law because it will bring more harm to children than good. It violates the United Nations' charter, and it violates the United Nations' Rights of the Child. If a gay child cannot get emancipation and is in harm's way from their parents because this law exists then the law is an injustice to everyone.

As our society progresses into modernity, acceptance and change, so will issues and challenges rise on the "freedoms of choice." It is a question that governments and law makers must be sensitive to as they deal with individual choices within a free world. If Russia does indeed want to be free and accept the new scientific and psychological understanding about human sexuality, they must repeal all laws that persecute the LGBT community. The anti-gay propaganda law passed by the Duma and signed by President Vladimir Putin this June is unjust and counterproductive for the advancement of Russian society. This law has raised global concern about how Russia will fulfill its stated commitment on human rights before the United Nations.

Robert Joseph Greene is a Canadian author of gay romance fiction.

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