

# Introductory Remarks Presentation of 2006 Dan Bradley Award to Urvashi Vaid\*

Anthony D. Romero†

Thank you for coming this afternoon. It's a pleasure to be here.

I am Anthony Romero, Executive Director of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), and I'm honored to have been given this opportunity to attend this year's Lavender Law Conference and present the National Lesbian and Gay Law Association's highest honor—the Dan Bradley Award—to my dear friend, Urvashi Vaid.

I attended my first Lavender Law Conference at Hastings College of Law many years ago, and it's wonderful to see how much the conference has grown since then.

It's also amazing how much the legal landscape has changed. Back then, we were dealing with *Bowers v. Hardwick*; now, we have *Lawrence v. Texas*.<sup>1</sup> Back then, most of us, including me, couldn't even imagine *really* fighting for gay marriage. But now we have that right in one state and we're making progress in the fight in many more.

Looking back at our past, how much we've grown, and what we've accomplished helps focus us on our purpose here this afternoon—to

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\* Lavender Law 2006 Conference (Sept. 9, 2006). Lavender Law® is the National Gay and Lesbian Law Association's (NLGLA) annual gathering of attorneys, legal academics, and law students to discuss legal and political issues affecting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex individuals and the community. The Dan Bradley Award is the NLGLA's highest honor. Bradley was the first chair of the American Bar Association Section of Individual Rights and Responsibility's Committee on the Rights of Gay People, now the Committee for Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity. Bradley envisioned the law as a tool of social justice, and believed that lawyers had an obligation to use the law to help further the interests of disadvantaged members of society. See Nat'l lesbian & Gay Law Ass'n, The Dan Bradley Award, <http://www.nlgla.org/danbradley.html> (last visited Jan. 17, 2007).

† Executive Director, American Civil Liberties Union. Mr. Romero is a graduate of Stanford University Law School and Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School of Public Policy and International Affairs. He is a member of the New York Bar Association and has sat on numerous nonprofit boards. In 2005, he was named one of *Time Magazine's* 25 Most Influential Hispanics in America. He took the helm of the ACLU in 2001 and has presided over the most successful membership growth in the organization's eighty-seven-year history.

1. 478 U.S. 186 (1986); 539 U.S. 558 (2003).

honor Urvashi Vaid—an attorney and activist who has dedicated over twenty-five years of her life to the struggle for equality.<sup>2</sup>

The Dan Bradley Award recognizes the efforts of a member of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender legal community, whose work, like the work of Dan Bradley, has led the way in our efforts to achieve equality under the law.<sup>3</sup>

Because of her incredible passion for social justice, Urvashi's work has involved her in a broad range of human rights issues. She was a staff attorney at the ACLU, where she worked on issues around HIV/AIDS in prisons.<sup>4</sup> She also served on the ACLU Board of Directors for four years, including when I began my tenure at the ACLU.<sup>5</sup>

When I first met Urvashi in 1992, she was at the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, where she was utterly devoted to the fight for equal rights under the law for GLBT people. She began as the organization's Media Director, and then served as its Executive Director, and later as Director of its Policy Institute think tank.<sup>6</sup>

More recently, I worked with Urvashi at the Ford Foundation, where she was Deputy Director of the Governance and Civil Society Unit.<sup>7</sup> She really rocked Ford's world—the only person at the Foundation who would preface her comments with “I'm a radical lesbian feminist of color.”

And almost one year ago today, Urvashi took on a new role as Executive Director of the Arcus Foundation—a philanthropic foundation that emphasizes “programs and organizations which recognize that members of the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender . . . community deserve to be welcomed and celebrated.”<sup>8</sup>

This afternoon, we're here to celebrate Urvashi—a brilliant attorney, an accomplished writer, a committed activist, a dynamic leader, and—I'm told—a fabulous lesbian-potluck-hostess. (You'll have to ask her “galpal” for confirmation on that one—I'm not privy to the “ancient lesbian potluckian rituals.”)

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2. See Arcus Found., Urvashi Vaid, [http://www.arcusfoundation.org/pages/news\\_cur\\_vaid\\_bio.shtml](http://www.arcusfoundation.org/pages/news_cur_vaid_bio.shtml) (last visited Jan. 17, 2007).

3. See Nat'l Lesbian & Gay Law Ass'n, *supra* note \*.

4. See Arcus Found., *supra* note 2.

5. See *id.*

6. *Id.*

7. See *id.*

8. Arcus Found., Background, [www.arcusfoundation.org/pages/background.shtml?mm=1](http://www.arcusfoundation.org/pages/background.shtml?mm=1) (last visited Jan. 17, 2007).

2007]

*DAN BRADLEY AWARD PRESENTATION*

113

My dear friends, I'm absolutely thrilled to introduce this year's recipient of the 2006 Dan Bradley Award. There is, in my opinion, no one more deserving. Please welcome Ms. Urvashi Vaid.