

Peter Tatchell: Apology and Correction

Raw Nerve Books wishes to make an unreserved apology to the human rights campaigner Peter Tatchell and to the LGBT human rights organisation OutRage!, regarding untrue allegations published in the book, *Out of Place: Interrogating Silences in Queerness/Raciality*, edited by Adi Kuntsman & Esperanza Miyake (Raw Nerve Books, 2008).

These untrue allegations appeared in the chapter 'Gay Imperialism: Gender and Sexuality Discourse in the 'War on Terror' by Jin Haritaworn, Tamsila Tauqir and Esra Erdem.

We regret that this chapter contains serious, defamatory untruths concerning Peter Tatchell and OutRage! It casts unjustified doubt on their character, motives and integrity, and involves a fundamental misrepresentation of their campaigns.

We accept that the human rights work of Mr Tatchell and OutRage! is motivated by a sincere support for people struggle against tyranny and injustice, and has involved valuable assistance to many LGBT campaigners in the UK and worldwide.

Raw Nerve Books hereby offers the following correction to the offending erroneous chapter in Out of Place:

Contrary to the claims made in the book, *Out of Place*, Mr Tatchell has never "claimed the role of liberator and expert about Muslim gays and lesbians." He is not Islamophobic and is not "part of the Islamophobia industry." Nor is OutRage!

Neither he nor OutRage! are racist. They have not engaged in "racial" politics. Mr Tatchell has never described "Muslims as Nazis" and he has never made the equation "Muslim=Nazi" or "Muslim=Evil." He has never "collaborated with the extreme right" and never "participated with several racist and fascist groups."

Mr Tatchell has never "employed tactics of intimidation and aggressive divide and rule", nor has he "attempted to discredit those who resist his patronage." He does not "sling mud onto Muslim communities". The Nigerian same-sex marriage bill was not "already defeated." It was merely dormant and was soon afterwards revived, as Mr Tatchell, OutRage! and some Nigerian LGBT activists predicted.

The condemnation of Mr Tatchell and OutRage! by a number of African LGBT activists in 2007 was signed by people who did not know Mr Tatchell and OutRage! and who had never had any connection with them. They were therefore not making an informed judgement based on their personal experience. The letter of condemnation resulted from untrue gossip spread by one person who was waging a sectarian political vendetta. All of the African LGBT activists who have worked with Mr Tatchell and OutRage! refused to sign it.

We accept that Peter Tatchell was one of the first LGBT campaigners to reject a western-centred approach to LGBT human rights and, from the early 1970s, to campaign for LGBT human rights universally and internationally, not just in Britain. He has worked in solidarity with many LGBT activists in the global south, acting to support, empower and publicise their freedom struggles, including J-Flag in Jamaica, GALZ in Zimbabwe, Iraqi LGBT in Iraq, Blue Diamond Society in Nepal, OLGA and GLOW in South Africa, the Persian Gay and Lesbian Organisation, Iranian Queer Rights Organisation and Iranian Queer Railroad in Iran, to name just a few.

In the UK, he has worked with, and has been supported by, Muslim and black rights campaigners, including Adnan Ali, Valerie Mason-John and Ali Hili, who are cited favourably in the same chapter of the book that condemns Mr Tatchell. Indeed, Mr Hili has been a long-standing member of OutRage! and its Middle East spokesperson – yet the authors did not mention this in their citation of his work for Iraqi LGBT.

Several UK LGBT black and Asian groups have worked and / or continue to work with Mr Tatchell and OutRage!, including the Black Gay Mens' Advisory Group, Black Lesbians and Gays Against Media Homophobia, Gay Uganda (UK), Iraqi LGBT (UK) and the Naz Project.

We accept that Mr Tatchell has never criticised Muslims in general, only Muslim fundamentalists – in the same way that he has also criticised all other forms of religious fundamentalism, Christian, Judaist and so on. In fact, his criticisms and protests against Christian fundamentalism have been far more numerous and robust than those challenging fundamentalist Muslims.

The insinuation that he is anti-Muslim is untrue. He has been in dialogue with Muslim community and faith leaders for many years. He is on record as condemning anti-Muslim prejudice and defending Muslim

communities against racist attacks. He has campaigned to support Muslims seeking asylum, Muslims abused in prisons and Muslims falsely accused of terrorism.

We accept that Mr Tatchell has a long history of anti-racism, dating back to the 1970s, including Rock Against Racism, the Anti-Nazi League and the Anti-Apartheid Movement. During past and recent elections, he has written and campaigned against the British National Party (BNP). For many years, he was targeted for violent attack by the far right because of his anti-racist stance.

At the March for Free Expression in 2006, fascists were not invited. They were told to stay away. Moreover, Mr Tatchell denounced the far right and racists during his speech from the podium.

We accept that Mr Tatchell has campaigned against imperialism for over 40 years. From the 1960s, he has been active in anti-imperialist solidarity campaigns, supporting the national liberation struggles of the peoples of Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Angola, Guinea-Bissau, Eritrea, Oman, Nicaragua, Palestine, Western Sahara, East Timor and West Papua.

He has received personal thanks for his solidarity work from, among others, Thabo Mbeki, the former President of South Africa, and Jose Ramos Horta, the President of East Timor.

Mr Tatchell continues to campaign for the independence of the Western Sahara, Palestine and West Papua. He supports the struggles for democracy and human rights in Iran, Russia, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Burma, Turkey, Columbia, Somaliland, Baluchistan, Zimbabwe, Sudan, Belarus and elsewhere. As well as opposing the war in Iraq and the western occupation, he has spoken out against US threats to attack Iran.

Raw Nerve Books very much regrets the unfounded, baseless allegations against Mr Tatchell and OutRage!, and invites our readers to visit Mr Tatchell's website to judge his record for themselves:
www.petertatchell.net

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