

Myths and Facts about the Coors Boycott and the Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgendered Community

Coors wants you to help fund anti-bigotry. Coors wants to have it both ways: Coors wants to continue to fund the attack on gay rights and Coors also wants lesbians and gay men to help pay for the attack on gay rights by continuing to buy Coors beer. Just as Coors is funding the attempt of right-wing groups to nullify last June's U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Grutter v. Bollinger* to uphold affirmative action, so Coors is also continuing to fund right-wing groups' attempts to foment a right-wing backlash to nullify the victory in last June's U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Lawrence and Garner v. Texas* to strike down Texas' anti-gay "Homosexual Conduct" law.

■ **Myth: The Coors Company has changed, so the boycott is no longer necessary.**

Fact: The Coors family still supports extreme right wing anti-gay groups and politicians, through their foundations and individual Coors family members who profit from the brewery. Coors wants lesbians and gay men to buy their beer so they can use the profits to fund right wing attacks on our civil rights. Beneficiaries of the Coors' largesse include:

- The Heritage Foundation, founded and financed by Joseph Coors, and most recently financed to the tune of \$1.35 million from 1997 through 2000 by Castle Rock Foundation, a Coors organization created to conceal the Coors name. William Coors is president of both the Adolph Coors and Castle Rock Foundations.

Heritage is famous for far right wing attacks on gay rights, including 1) opposition to the "don't ask, don't tell" policy, supporting instead the full ban on gay and lesbian service members, 2) opposition to the Legal Services Corporation (which provides legal aid to poor people) for giving legal assistance to gay and lesbian couples seeking to adopt children, and 3) strongly criticizing the U.S. Supreme Court for striking down Colorado's anti-gay Amendment 2 (which banned gay rights laws in Colorado).

- Jeffrey Coors was the Free Congress Foundation chair at that time, and a board member of Castle Rock along with his uncle William Coors. Jeffrey Coors is still a Free Congress trustee. Free Congress Foundation filed a friend of the court brief in the Hawaii same-sex marriage case calling homosexuality "repugnant to...the laws of nature and nature's God," and reminding the court that William Blackstone had called sodomy "a crime of deeper malignancy than even rape...He called sodomy "an infamous crime against nature." The Free Congress Foundation has received at least \$150,000 per year from Coors' Castle Rock Foundation from the time Castle Rock was formed in 1993 until at least 2000.

The Free Congress Foundation's website today posts a "Declaration of Cultural Independence" which states, "Television 'normalizes' every deviance, including homosexuality and the inversion of the traditional roles of men and women."

- The Center for the Study of Popular Culture, David Horowitz' far right wing group. Horowitz has written demagogically, blaming gay men for the spread of AIDS. Recently Horowitz put ads in college newspapers suggesting that black Americans benefited from slavery.
- The Council for National Policy, a group of far right wing anti-gay bigots including Pat Robertson, Phyllis Schlafly, Jerry Falwell, Oliver North, Gary Bauer, Ralph Reed, Ed Meese, Lon Mabon and Sen. Jesse Helms.

■ **Myth: Coors is a model of pro-gay workplace practices and shouldn't be held responsible for the actions of a few ultraconservative family members.**

Fact: In 1977 lesbian/gay businesses joined an AFL-CIO boycott of Coors, citing Coors' history of support for attacks on gay rights. Sales of Coors beer plummeted in the gay community. In response, in 1978 Coors

adopted language against discrimination on account of sexual orientation in employment, and has offered small sums of money to lesbian/gay organizations in order to recover beer sales and improve Coors' public image. *But Coors has never stopped funding right-wing attacks on gay rights.*

The lesbian/gay boycott of Coors has hurt Coors so badly that in 1995 Coors was one of the first major corporations to adopt same sex domestic partner benefits. But this did not mean an end to Coors' continuing financial support for attacks on gay rights.

Improved working conditions for lesbians and gay men at Coors do not include union rights and protection. The Coors Company has destroyed 19 unions since 1960, including the Boilermakers, Ironworkers, Electricians and Plumbers, Pipefitters and Brewers locals. The Coors strategy was to propose an outrageous and unacceptable "final offer," forcing a union strike. Coors then hired non-union replacements and conducted union decertification elections with a majority scab workforce. *Today Coors is the only nonunion mass producer of beer in the country.*

■ **Myth: The Coors family is separate from the brewery, so boycotting Coors won't hurt the family.**

Fact: All voting stock in the Adolph Coors Company is owned by the Adolph Coors Jr. Trust. The Adolph Coors Jr. Trust is controlled by William Coors and his nephews Peter and Jeffrey Coors. William Coors is the chairman of Adolph Coors Co, Peter Coors is the director of Adolph Coors Co and chairman of Coors Brewing Co and Jeffrey Coors is the CEO of Graphic Packaging International, formerly ACX Technologies, a spin-off company which sells the brewery its paper and cardboard packaging, worth \$130 million in 2001. Jeffrey is also the chairman of Castle Rock Foundation.

The Coors businesses make a lot of money. Salaries, bonuses, dividends and stock options have funneled easily \$100 million from the brewery to members of the Coors family over the last ten years. Professional managers run the daily operations, but the brewery is still the ongoing source of the Coors family wealth and of their continuing funding of far right wing attacks on civil rights.

When the late Joseph Coors' direct funding of far right wing groups such as the Heritage Foundation became controversial, he and William Coors founded the Adolph Coors Foundation to put up a paper wall between the brewery and their gifts to far right wing causes. In 1993 the Castle Rock Foundation was split off from the Adolph Coors Foundation, to remove the name of Coors from the more controversial gifts. Castle Rock took over funding of the Heritage Foundation and Free Congress.

Adolph Coors Foundation and Castle Rock Foundation share the same board, including William, Peter, Jeffrey and Holly Coors, and the same pool of assets. Until 1997, both foundations were supported by a large block of Adolph Coors Company stock. When articles in gay papers exposed the link between the stock, Castle Rock Foundation and their support for anti-gay groups, the foundations sold their Adolph Coors Co stock and bought an equivalent block of ACX Technologies, Jeffrey Coors' spin-off company, stock they still hold.

Resources: "Coors and the LGBT Community" by Bruce Mirken; Heritage Foundation www.heritage.org; Free Congress Foundation www.freecongress.org; "Citizen Coors: An American Dynasty" by Daniel Baum; "The Coors Connection" by Russ Bellant

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mcrdefense@yahoo.com
letters@bamn.com
www.bamn.com