

Bernie Sanders, Joe Rogan, the Human Rights Campaign, and Truth in Advertising

On January 20, comedian and podcast host Joe Rogan mentioned that he'll "probably vote for Bernie" Sanders in the Democratic Party's presidential primary. Rogan cited Sanders's decades of "consistency" as a "very powerful structure to operate from."

More interesting than Rogan's quasi-endorsement was the Human Rights Campaign's negative response. The organization called on Sanders to "reconsider" his acceptance of Rogan's support.

What's the organization's problem with Rogan?

"Bernie Sanders has run a campaign unabashedly supportive of the rights of LGBTQ people," says HRC president Alphonso David. "Rogan, however, has attacked transgender people, gay men, women, people of color and countless marginalized groups at every opportunity."

But in 2016, HRC backed Hillary Clinton — who had clung to marriage as a "one man, one woman" proposition until about a minute before the Supreme Court ruled otherwise — over "unabashedly supportive" Bernie Sanders.

HRC's official motto is "Working for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Equal Rights."

If political advocacy was subject to "truth in advertising" laws, that motto would be "Turning Contributions for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Equal Rights Into Support for Establishment Politicians."

As for Rogan, he doesn't seem to have truly "attacked" anyone. He "jokes" about EVERYONE, which is a comedian's job. And he muses, and lets his guests muse, about pretty much EVERYTHING through hours of podcasting every week.

I've listened to hundreds of hours of Joe Rogan's podcast, and the one thing I've never heard come out of his mouth is hate for LGBTQ people or any other minority group.

What I did hear, in the same podcast in which he lauded Sanders, was this: "Treat each other as if they are loved family members. Treat people as if they're you. And if you do treat them, and if they treat you like that ... the world is a better place."

Yes, Rogan has frequently expressed concerns about trans issues, especially in the world of sports. As a former professional fighter and commentator for professional fights, he's

interested in, and has talked extensively about, the difficulties of sorting athletes by gender in a gender-fluid age. But never, so far as I can tell, has he done so from a hateful viewpoint.

Yes, Rogan has made jokes at the expense of virtually every group on the planet. And he has a knack for turning those jokes into mirrors for himself and everyone else to see our shared humanity in.

I don't always agree with Rogan, but he grapples honestly with tough issues instead of just pushing a lucrative party line and denouncing all who dissent from that line. The Human Rights Campaign would better serve the community it claims to work for by adopting that approach instead of denouncing it.