



March 23, 2007

Rosemary G. Aultman, Mayor
City of Clinton
300 Jefferson St
Clinton, MS 39056

Sent via Facsimile Transmission: 601.924.0113

Dear Mayor Aultman,

We are writing to strongly protest the recent actions of your police department toward Soulforce and insist that all intimidation and harassment against its members end immediately.

On March 20, Clinton police officials informed Soulforce that its members would be cited if they “attempt[ed] to gather or travel in a group of four or more” near the campus of Mississippi College. Lt. Thomas R. Ruffin acknowledged that the department’s actions “could be construed as conflicting with constitutional allowances,” but said that Soulforce’s presence in Clinton presented “valid public safety concerns.” This accusation is utterly without merit: Soulforce is enormously well respected across the country and is relentlessly nonviolent. Only after being contacted by the American Civil Liberties Union did the police lift the threat of citation.

Yesterday, as Soulforce members were getting ready to leave the city in their bus, they were persistently harassed by a police officer. The officer ordered the bus to leave town, saying, “Go on and get out of town.” After the bus driver explained that they were waiting on the remainder of the group, he was still forced to move on and threatened with arrest. This happened a total of three times — even when the bus was moved to a space the city previously designated for it.

This behavior is not only intimidating and unlawful, it will cause long-lasting damage to Clinton’s reputation, derail your goal of becoming one of the nation’s premier cities, and is exactly the opposite of what you say on your own Web site — that Clinton is known for its hospitality.

Sincerely,

Kevin Cathcart, Executive Director, Lambda Legal
Matt Foreman, Executive Director, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force
Neil Giuliano, President, Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation
Kate Kendall, Executive Director, National Center for Lesbian Rights
Patrick Sammon, President, Log Cabin Republicans
Joe Solmonese, President, Human Rights Campaign