

NATIONAL CENTER on Domestic and Sexual Violence

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January 10, 2012

Re: Legalization of cage fighting in New York

Dear State Assembly Member:

We are writing you to raise concerns about renewed efforts by Zuffa LLC, the parent company of the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC), to legalize cage fighting in the State of New York.

You are no doubt aware that the State of New York banned cage fighting in 1997. We urge you to continue to uphold the ban on cage fighting, given that the UFC, the largest promoter of cage fighting events in the U.S., has failed to demonstrate that it is willing to ensure its fighters behave in a socially responsible way, even as the company expressly markets its fights and fighters to children.

We believe that the UFC contributes to a culture of violence against women, and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people. Children, in particular, should not be exposed to the homophobic, misogynistic and violent language that has been permitted by the UFC.

Please see the following website, UFC = Unfit For Children (www.UnfitForChildren.org), for more information. Some examples of anti-gay and anti-women statements by people associated with the UFC include the following:

- In videos, UFC light heavyweight Quinton “Rampage” Jackson repeatedly urged Japanese fans to repeat an anti-gay slur.¹ The fans, who do not appear to understand English, repeated the anti-gay slur at Jackson’s urging. In one video, Jackson instructed a Japanese man to say, “Goodbye, I want you to piss on my face.”²
- Recently, a UFC fighter taunted his opponent by threatening to act like former Penn State assistant football coach Jerry Sandusky, who has been charged with 52 counts of molesting boys. UFC fighter Rashad Evans said, “Cause I’m gonna put those hands on you worse than that dude did them other kids at Penn State.”³

¹ <http://www.worldstarhiphop.com/videos/video.php?v=wshh2zhS44X4iE40BITU>

² Ibid.

³ Gross, Josh, “Evans’ Sandusky comment hits low note,” Dec. 7, 2011, ESPN.com, http://espn.go.com/blog/mma/post/_id/6893/evans-hits-low-note-with-sandusky-comment; YouTube video, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=84xtd-MeUPQ&feature=youtu.be>

- In November, UFC light heavyweight fighter Forrest Griffin joked about rape on Twitter. “Rape is the new missionary,” Griffin tweeted. After a woman objected to the tweet, Griffin tweeted back, “Keep it to yourself nobody cares,” according to the *Huffington Post*.⁴
- In an expletive-filled video rant posted on YouTube.com, UFC president Dana White used an anti-gay slur, saying, “Whoever gave you that quote is a [expletive] and a [expletive] faggot and a [expletive] liar and everything else.”⁵ He also uttered the “F” word a total of 34 times, the “S” word 4 times, and referred to a female sports journalist as a “[expletive] dumb bitch.”⁶
- Joe Rogan, who does commentary for televised UFC events, recently used a homophobic slur while referring to a MMA blogger.⁷ Rogan also referred to an MMA blogger as a part of the female anatomy. According to sportswriter Kevin Iole of *Yahoo! Sports*, Rogan then wrote on a blog, “Never did I imagine that so many people would get their panties in a bunch about the use of the word [expletive] to describe a female blogger.”⁸
- In a recent UFC promotional video, Michael Bisping, a UFC middleweight fighter and coach on the reality television show “The Ultimate Fighter,” screamed an anti-gay slur at his opponent.⁹ In addition, Bisping was quoted by ESPN saying of an opponent, “He broke rank for a moment, but other than that he was my bitch and he’ll be my bitch on Saturday night.”¹⁰
- In a radio interview last year, UFC heavyweight Frank Mir said of his opponent Brock Lesnar, “I hate who he is as a person. I want to break his neck in the ring. I want him to be the first person that dies due to Octagon-related injuries.”¹¹
- According to the *Los Angeles Times*, “Rampage” Jackson shouted “every conceivable gay slur” at a movie crew member of “The A-Team” who had called him a homophobic epithet.¹² He was also quoted in the article saying, “Acting is kind of gay. It makes you soft.”
- In August, UFC heavyweight Antonio Rodrigo Nogueira was quoted saying that he would not train with gay students. He was quoted in USA Today saying, “What if the gay person has that

⁴ The Huffington Post, “Forrest Griffin Rape Jokes: MMA Fighter Sparks Controversy on Twitter,” Nov. 9, 2011, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/11/09/forrest-griffin-rape-jokes-twitter_n_1084471.html

⁵ YouTube video, <http://www.youtube.com/embed/-Pq-1RI-ggU>

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Clarke, Norm, “UFC, don’t tolerate vile Rogan remarks,” June 6, 2011, *Las Vegas-Review Journal*, <http://www.lvrj.com/news/ufc-don-t-tolerate-vile-rogan-remarks-123212728.html>

⁸ Iole, Kevin, “UFC cannot condone sexual harassment,” June 3, 2011, *Yahoo! Sports*, http://sports.yahoo.com/mma/news?slug=ki-iole_ufc_sexual_harrasment_060311

⁹ YouTube video, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dbvKTpvsh3k&feature=player_embedded

¹⁰ ESPN staff, “Miller’s my bitch & he’ll be my bitch Saturday – Bisping,” Nov. 29, 2011, <http://www.espn.co.uk/ufc/sport/story/123774.html?wrappertype=print>

¹¹ Hill, Adam, “Tough talk: Mir wants rematch with Lesnar to ‘break his neck in the ring,’” Feb. 23, 2010, *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, http://www.lvrj.com/sports/tough-talk_-mir-wants-rematch-with-lesnar-to-break-his-neck-in-the-ring_-85026177.html

¹² Lee, Chris, “Rampage Jackson brings a bad attitude to ‘A-Team’: ‘Acting is kind of gay,’” May 29, 2010, *Los Angeles Times*, <http://herocomplex.latimes.com/2010/05/29/rampage-jackson-brings-a-bad-attitude-to-atteam-acting-is-kind-of-gay/>

malice of having physical contact with me, of staying there grappling? I would have no problems having a gay student in my academy, but I would rather not train with him.”¹³

This kind of hateful rhetoric is not acceptable in America, where we are teaching our children to respect those who are different and where we are working to stop bullying in our schools and communities.

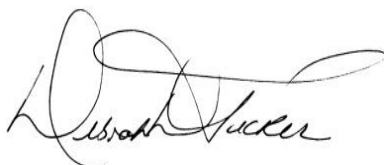
Remarkably, we have yet to find evidence that any of the UFC athletes identified in this letter have been disciplined by the UFC or its owner, Zuffa LLC. By contrast, other professional sports organizations have taken a hard stance against anti-gay conduct and have held athletes accountable through suspensions and/or fines when athletes have used homophobic epithets.¹⁴

In fact, UFC president Dana White recently dismissed concerns regarding homophobic speech by people associated with the organization. In an interview, White said, “I don’t deal with the holier-than-thou, uh, bullshit. I don’t. We do the best we can do.”¹⁵ He also said, “How do you really think that we can possibly police 375 fighters and try to control everything they say?”¹⁶

This month, a group of mothers and survivors of sexual assault in UFC’s home state of Nevada called on the UFC to stop tolerating offensive language and adopt an ethical code of conduct.¹⁷ The UFC has not responded to their demand.

The UFC has yet to demonstrate to the public that they are capable of promoting socially responsible behavior by its fighters. As a result, we strongly encourage you to reject any legislation that would enable this company to hold cage fighting events in the State of New York.

Respectfully,



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cc: NCDV Board of Directors
Michele McKeon, [New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence](#)
Joanne Zannoni, [New York State Coalition Against Sexual Assault](#)
Stacey Sarver, [WomensLaw.org](#)
Chris Serres, [Culinary Workers Union, Local 226](#)

¹³ Non, Sergio, “Nogueira: I won’t train with a gay fighter,” Aug. 19, 2011, *USA Today*, <http://www.usatoday.com/sports/mma/post/2011/08/nogueira-i-wont-train-with-a-gay-fighter/416035/1>

¹⁴ Bresnahan, Mike, “Lakers’ Kobe Bryant is fined \$100,000 by NBA for anti-gay slur to referee,” April 13, 2011, *Los Angeles Times*, <http://articles.latimes.com/2011/apr/13/sports/la-sp-kobe-bryant-lakers-20110414>; Abrams, Jonathan, “Noah Fined \$50,000 for Antigay Slur,” May 23, 2011, *New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/24/sports/basketball/bulls-noah-apologizes-for-using-antigay-slur.html>; Odum, Charles, *Associated Press*, “MLB hits Braves’ McDowell with fine, 2-week ban,” May 1, 2011, *Yahoo! News*, <http://news.yahoo.com/mlb-hits-braves-mcdowell-fine-2-week-ban-171045396.html>

¹⁵ YouTube video, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xtc6RpfUGUc&feature=youtube_gdata_player

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Griffith, Martin, *Associated Press*, “Group criticizes UFC after fighter’s rape tweet,” Nov. 12, 2011, *San Jose Mercury News*, http://www.mercurynews.com/ci_19324085?source=rss_viewed