

*Jeff Cleghorn**

I am from a working-class family in a small town in Georgia. I pursued an Army ROTC scholarship that allowed me to attend college, graduating as a “distinguished military graduate” from North Georgia College.

Commissioned into the Military Intelligence Corps, I served in South Korea, Arizona, South Carolina, Germany and the Pentagon. I twice successfully commanded company-size units. I spent my final years on active duty serving as a counter-terrorism analyst for Asia on the staff of the Joint Chiefs.

I was medically retired in 1996, after which I enrolled in the George Washington University Law School. I worked as an attorney with the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network from 1999-2003.

I now confidently live my life as an openly gay American veteran, and I am committed to helping those who continue to serve in enforced silence by ridding the armed forces of “don’t ask, don’t tell.” I hope all

* Major, U.S. Army (Retired). Director of the Military Education Initiative, a non-profit public education project working to inform America’s 27 million veterans, and organizations representing them, about current research and facts surrounding the military service of gay and lesbian Americans. The author has traveled across the country and spoken extensively about the policy before academic and military audiences, including the Army War College. He has also discussed and debated the issue on national television, including appearances on CNN, C-Span, FOX News’ The O’Reilly Factor, MSNBC’s Buchanan and Press and CNNfn. The author has also written extensively about the “Don’t Tell” policy, including contributions to SLDN’s annual policy evaluation reports from 1999 through 2003, as well as authoring opinion pieces in the Army/Navy/Air Force/Marine Corps Times newspapers, the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, and other publications. Mr. Cleghorn is admitted to the Georgia and District of Columbia Bars, and is a member of the American Legion, the Association of the United States Army, the Military Officers Association of America and American Veterans for Equal Rights (AVER).

This essay first appeared as part of *Documenting Courage: Veteran Speak Out*. This project is designed to educate the Executive branch, members of Congress, and the public on the contributions of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender veterans. *Documenting Courage: Veterans Speak Out*, Human Rights Campaign, at www.hrc.org/Content/ContentGroups/Documenting_Courage/Stories2/Documenting_Courage_Veterans_Speak_Out2.htm (last visited April 12, 2004).

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gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender veterans will stand up and speak out, as our service and sacrifice are powerful testimonies to counter those who falsely state that we are unfit to defend our nation