

# DAN CHOI

b. February 22, 1981

## ACTIVIST

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*“Action and sacrifice speak much more loudly than the best crafted, eloquent speech.”*

Lt. Dan Choi is a West Point graduate, Iraq War veteran and Arabic linguist. He was the nation’s leading activist for the repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” (DADT).

Choi was born in Orange County, California, and raised in an evangelical Korean-American household. His father is a Baptist minister; his mother is a nurse. Inspired by the film “Saving Private Ryan,” Choi decided to attend West Point.

After graduating from West Point with degrees in Arabic linguistics and environmental engineering, Choi served as an Army infantry officer in Iraq. In 2008, he transferred from active duty to the Army National Guard. That same year, Choi and a group of West Point alumni founded Knights Out, an organization supporting the rights of LGBT soldiers.

In 2009, Choi appeared on the “The Rachel Maddow Show” and said something that would change his life forever: “I am gay.” Within a month, the U.S. Army notified him that he was being discharged under “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.”

When he received his discharge papers, Choi knew he had to fight back. He wrote an open letter asking President Obama to repeal the policy and reinstate him, calling his discharge “a slap in the face.”

Choi sent his West Point graduation ring to Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid. It was a reminder to the senator of a promise he made to repeal the ban on gays and lesbians in the military.

Choi became the leading activist and national spokesman for the repeal of DADT. His media savvy drew attention to the issue. In 2010, he was arrested three times for handcuffing himself to the White House fence during protests.

Later in 2010, Choi was invited to the White House to witness President Obama signing the bill repealing “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” into law. Afterward, Senator Reid invited Choi to his office, where he returned Choi’s West Point ring. “The next time I get a ring from a man,” Choi responded, “I expect it to be for full, equal American marriage.”

Choi continues to advocate for LGBT civil rights and for veterans’ health benefits. He is a graduate student at Harvard University. He resides in New York City.



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