

Freedom to Marry E-Update
Issue #13 | March 15, 2006

Contents:

- 1) A Note from Executive Director, Evan Wolfson
- 2) Landscape: LGBT Parents: Building blocks of the marriage movement
- 3) On the Horizon: Catholic Charities drops all adoptions to exclude gay and lesbian parents
- 4) Get Engaged: Utah needs help!

 1) A Note from Executive Director Evan Wolfson

Dear Friend of Freedom to Marry --

In February, anti-gay legislators in the Ohio House of Representatives introduced a bill to ban lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Ohioans from adopting or providing foster care to needy children. If passed, Ohio would surpass even Florida, where thousands of kids are denied adoptive parents willing to take them in, simply because those parents are lesbian or gay. Anti-gay crusaders in at least 16 states have spent the past several months pushing laws or ballot initiatives that would restrict the ability of gay individuals and couples to continue adopting and providing foster care to kids, heedless of those kids' real needs and best interests.

Michiganders Lori and Cin Dine', who told their story in our Story Center, have been together for 11 years. They are the parents of three "beautiful, smart, and well adjusted children." Denied the freedom to marry and the security and ease of family integrity that the law provides along with marriage, they had to take extreme measures. To create a legal relationship between each parent and the other's biological child, they went to court. Lori explains, "In order for us to [protect our family], we actually had to make our children wards of the state and then we both had to adopt them back... The courtroom was actually locked so nobody could come in and fight the adoptions or try to adopt the kids from under us."

One of the anti-gay industry's favorite talking-points is that gay parents deprive children of a mother or a father. This is a deliberately inflammatory use of the classic rhetoric of prejudice to make it sound like same-sex couples are snatching children's birth-parents away from them. The implication is entirely false and morally repugnant. Giving a child a home, or strengthening the family in which a child is born or raised, does not deprive her of anything.

Millions of kids in this country -- children in every state -- have gay parents, and authorities as respected and knowledgeable as the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Psychological Association agree that it is in the best interests of these kids to provide their family the same support and protections as others -- including the freedom to marry. Gay men and lesbians will continue to have kids -- whether biologically or through adopting and/or parenting the kids of their partner as well as other children needing care. All these children deserve to know that their relationship with both of their parents is stable and legally recognized. If we as a society care about kids--real kids, not just rhetorical children used as a weapon in a culture war--then we have to acknowledge that same-sex couples do have children and those children, it follows, have gay parents. Those kids deserve protection and security.

It simply makes no sense to say, on the one hand, "We care about children," and then, on the other hand, punish some kids for having the "wrong parents" by denying their families marriage and its many tangible and intangible benefits. Whether the anti-gay assault is on parenting or on marriage, the right response is for us to talk about real families and the illogic and injustice of undermining couples and their kids.

-- Evan Wolfson

Follow developments in the movement for marriage equality on our website (www.freedomtomarry.org), and in future issues of Freedom to Marry's bi-monthly E-Update.

LINKS:

- * HB 515 information from Equality Ohio - http://eqfed.org/equalityohio/notice-description.tcl?newsletter_id=3739519
- * Lori and Cin Dine' in the Story Center - <http://www.freedomtomarry.org/document.asp?id=3926>
- * The Story Center - <http://www.freedomtomarry.org/node.asp?id=2043>
- * American Academy of Pediatrics - <http://www.aap.org/advocacy/archives/febsamesex.htm>
- * American Psychological Association - <http://www.apa.org/pi/lgbcpolicy/parents.html>
- * "Why Marriage Matters: America, Equality, and Gay People's Right to Marry" - Evan Wolfson - <http://www.freedomtomarry.org/node.asp?id=3470>
- * Resources - <http://www.thetaskforce.org/theissues/issue.cfm?issuelD=30>

~~~~~  
2) LANDSCAPE: LGBT Parents: Building Blocks of the Marriage Movement  
~~~~~

As I travel around the country, I hear the argument that children do better when they are raised in a "traditional" home with "married" parents. The truth is the "traditional" definition of family (married heterosexual couple with 1.5 children) is only one of the many family structures that our country's children are born into or currently being raised in.

Studies have shown that the presence of a married father and mother is not a prerequisite to positive outcomes for children.

Family Pride's Real Families, Real Facts public education campaign will continue to point out the hypocrisy of religious and political extremists who don't want us to marry because they don't think we should have kids, ignoring the reality that millions of us already are parents, but parenting without equal protections for our children ...

Read the rest of the article here:

<http://www.freedomtomarry.org/document.asp?id=4108>

-- Special to Freedom to Marry by Jennifer Chrisler, Executive Director, Family Pride

LINKS:

- * More - <http://www.freedomtomarry.org/document.asp?id=4108>
- * Family Pride - <http://www.familypride.org/>

~~~~~  
3) ON THE HORIZON: Catholic Charities drops all adoptions to exclude gay and lesbian  
Page 2

parents  
-----

This month, the Boston Archdiocese's Catholic Charities said that rather than comply with Massachusetts' anti-discrimination law, it would stop providing adoption services altogether. State law allows qualified gay and lesbian individuals and couples to adopt because secure and stable homes are in the children's best interests.

In December, the 42-member board of directors of Catholic Charities voted unanimously to continue considering gay and lesbian households for adoptions. When MA's bishops overturned their decision, seemingly on orders from the Vatican, eight members of Catholic Charities' board of directors stepped down in protest.

Within an hour of Catholic Charities' announcement, Gov. Mitt Romney, who plans to run for president in 2008, said he would file a bill that would allow religious organizations that provide adoption services to seek exemption from the state's anti-discrimination laws.

Romney's bow to discrimination drew a rebuke from children's advocates, professionals, and newspapers, including the conservative Boston Herald, across the state and country as well as from local politicians, including Romney's own Lt. Governor Kerry Healey, who accused both the governor and Catholic Charities of using kids as weapons for political and ideological agendas. Critics also noted that allowing Catholic Charities this exemption would render the state vulnerable to countless appeals for religious exemptions, placing it in the disastrous position of having to evaluate different religions and further undermining the needs of kids and families.

LINKS:

- \* More - <http://www.freedomtomarry.org/node.asp?id=3539>
- \* Contact Gov. Mitt Romney - [http://www.mass.gov/?pageID=gov2utility&sid=Agov2&U=gov\\_contact\\_us](http://www.mass.gov/?pageID=gov2utility&sid=Agov2&U=gov_contact_us)
- \* The Boston Herald articles - <http://news.bostonherald.com/opinion/view.bg?articleid=130364>
- \* Lt. Governor Kerry Healey - <http://www.healeycommitttee.com/>
- \* Why Marriage Matters to Children and Families - <http://www.freedomtomarry.org/node.asp?id=3485>

-----  
4) GET ENGAGED: Utah needs help!  
-----

The Utah Legislature has just passed a discriminatory and harmful piece of legislation hurting couples and kids.

If HB 148 takes effect, courts will no longer be permitted to award visitation, custody, legal-guardian status, child support, or adoption without the express permission of a biological parent.

Further, children being raised by non-biological parents may lose their rights to continued financial and emotional support.

The bill was sponsored by Rep. LaVar Christensen, R-Draper, who also sponsored Utah's state constitutional amendment to deny same-sex couples and their kids marriage and all other measures of protection for their families.



