

Freedom to Marry E-Update
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1) A Note from Executive Director Evan Wolfson

Dear Friend --

This past Sunday's New York Times featured an article by Pam Belluck entitled "The Not-So United States," which examined several major questions roiling U.S. politics now -- "everything from teaching 'intelligent design' as an alternative to evolution in public schools to financing stem cell research to preventing gay couples from adopting," and, of course, abortion and the freedom to marry. With "red-blue" divergence "beyond cultural hot buttons to issues like health care and tort reform," Belluck asks, "Is the country destined to balkanize into a patchwork of polar-opposite policies? How will this diversity be reconciled? Does it need to be?"

In fact, as the article discussed, and as I explain in my book, *Why Marriage Matters*, this is in many ways the classic American pattern of civil rights advances -- a "patchwork" period prior to national resolution. During such patchwork periods we see some states move toward equality faster, while others resist and even regress, stampeded by pressure groups and pandering politicians into adding additional layers of discrimination before -- eventually -- buyer's remorse sets in and a national resolution in favor of inclusion and equality comes. In our struggle to end discrimination in marriage, the patchwork has begun, in part because it takes the first states some time to go first, and in part because of the ferocious anti-gay campaign underway state by state to make America a house divided.

"Not all states march in sync," said Pauline Maier, an American history professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the New York Times article. "There's always been a patch-quilt of state institutions... In many ways, states showed a better way of dealing with things and a more just society. In other states, they may have seemed backward for a time, but at least they were isolated."

I talk more about this pattern, and what needs to be done, in a speech, *Marriage Equality and Lessons for the Scary Work of Winning*, delivered to the National Lesbian & Gay Law Association's 2004 "Lavender Law" conference, prior to the votes on that year's crop of anti-gay ballot measures. As Belluck, notes, "There have been other points in American history when state laws were radically different, historians say, citing slavery, and then the Jim Crow laws in the South." There are valuable lessons to be learned and inspiration to be gleaned--as we thread the patchwork on our own arc to victory.

"[T]he crystal ball," Belluck concludes, "would indicate that some of the issues enthralling the states will eventually get sorted out nationally in federal legislation" or court decisions upholding our constitutional unity as a free and equal people. To ensure that when that national resolution comes, it is the right answer -- and that it comes soon -- we must work hard to get more states leading the way and build a critical mass of public opinion in favor of inclusion and fairness. That work is at hand now -- in every state, for us.

-- 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:

- * New York Times Article - http://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/23/weekinreview/23bellduck.html?_r=1&oref=slogin&pagewanted=all
- * Why Marriage Matters - <http://www.freedomtomarry.org/node.asp?id=3470>
- * Marriage Equality and Lessons for the Scary Work of Winning - <http://www.freedomtomarry.org/document.asp?id=3197>
- * Resources - http://www.freedomtomarry.org/node_evan.asp?id=3471

2) LANDSCAPE: Rolling Eggs, Making Change

~~ About 100 gay and lesbian couples and their children were among the 15,000 people participating in the annual Egg Roll at the White House in an annual Easter tradition where egg-rolling races, a moon-bounce and a costumed Easter bunny awaited them. Jennifer Chrisler, Executive Director of Family Pride, gave us her impression of the event as a part of the continuing conversation about why marriage matters to each of us and our families. ~~

Over the last few months, I have been asked so many times, by people coming from a variety of perspectives, about Family Pride's participation in the White House Easter Egg Roll.

The day of the Egg Roll was an amazing day. The focus remained on families, including LGBT-headed families. By participating – visibly – in this great American tradition, we were able to show that our families, like most families, want nothing but the best for their children.

Every time we introduce ourselves -- to another person, to another community, to the world – we take a step forward toward equality. One of the great lessons of our movement – and one that the Egg Roll clearly confirmed -- is that talking about our families and our children is a great way to humanize us to those who don't know us. We can't miss any opportunity to make an impact for our families and our civil rights.

Read the rest of Jennifer's essay on our website.

LINKS:

- * The rest of the essay - <http://www.freedomtomarry.org/document.asp?id=4266>
- * More information - <http://www.freedomtomarry.org/node.asp?id=3485>

3) ON THE HORIZON: Equality Para Todos

On Monday, Freedom to Marry's Pedro Julio Serrano will again travel to Puerto Rico, at the invitation of Governor Aníbal Acevedo Vilá, to discuss the importance of equal marriage rights for lesbian and gay couples. He will also meet with the Archbishop of San Juan, Monsignor Roberto González Nieves, as well as representatives of more than 30 organizations seeking to form a Freedom to Marry Task Force in time to do public education around the upcoming revision of Puerto Rico's Civil Code.

Along with a pending non-discrimination bill and the current debate over the Code, Puerto Rican legislators are considering a proposal to include civil unions for both gay and non-gay couples, conferring many, but not all, of the rights and responsibilities of marriage. Pedro Julio is eager to discuss with activists and the media the importance of pressing for the freedom to marry as the best way to assure fairness and equality para todos.

While in Puerto Rico, Pedro Julio has also scheduled media appearances with both his mother Alicia and his father Héctor to talk about how non-gay allies can be crucial partners in the struggle for the freedom to marry. Gracias to the whole Serrano-Mújica-Burgos family for telling their stories and 'making the ask' --the way to move hearts and minds in Puerto Rico and all fifty states.

LINKS:

- * More - <http://www.freedomtomarry.org/document.asp?id=2876>
- * Pedro Julio Serrano - <http://pedrojuloserrano.blogspot.com/>
- * Governor Aníbal Acevedo Vilá - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/An%C3%ADbal_Acevedo_Vil%C3%A1
- * Monsignor Roberto González Nieves - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roberto_Gonz%C3%A1lez_Nieves

4) GET ENGAGED: Freedom to Marry Seeks Program Director

Freedom to Marry is seeking strong non-gay or gay candidates to fill our Program Director position, as Rodney McKenzie leaves us in a few weeks for a return to direct grassroots organizing.

Freedom to Marry's Program Director is charged with shaping and implementing the program activities in conjunction with Freedom to Marry's non-gay and gay partner organizations, particularly in the states; providing assistance and guidance to coalition partners and allies; coordinating our regrating program; and implementing Freedom to Marry's day-to-day contribution to this national marriage equality campaign.

Applicant must: be an excellent strategist, manager, educator, and coalition-builder; possess exceptional oral and written communications skills; and have leadership experience in fast-paced national or state-wide advocacy organizations, political campaigns or the like.

This exciting position is based in New York. To apply, please send a cover letter, resume, and three references all in a single Microsoft Word document as an attachment via e-mail with JOB-DIRECTOR as the topic to Charles Ignacio, Deputy Director, at charles@freedomtomarry.org.

LINKS:

- * Program Director job description - <http://www.freedomtomarry.org/node.asp?id=3510>
- * Rodney McKenzie - <http://www.freedomtomarry.org/document.asp?id=1012>
- * More - <http://www.freedomtomarry.org/node.asp?id=3510>

QUOTE:

"Why is that controversial? It seems to me that these are families, and they are entitled to be there just like any other family."

- Lois Kutchera, a preschool teacher on vacation from Fort Lauderdale, Fla., with her husband and two children at this year's White House Easter Egg Roll

OTHER POINTS OF INTEREST:

Most visited pages last week:

- * WEDrock - <http://www.freedomtomarry.org/node.asp?id=3623>
- * Freedom to Marry Abroad - <http://www.freedomtomarry.org/node.asp?id=3482>
- * Special to Freedom to Marry! LGBT Parents: Building Blocks of the Marriage Movement by Jennifer Chrisler, Executive Director of Family Pride - <http://www.freedomtomarry.org/document.asp?id=4108>
- * Pedro Julio Serrano - <http://www.freedomtomarry.org/document.asp?id=2876&page=2>

The WEDrock cd will be available in stores soon, but you can get it now with a donation! - <http://www.freedomtomarry.org/node.asp?id=3623>

Lambda Legal, National Black Justice Coalition, Asian Equality, National Latina/o Coalition for Justice, and Freedom to Marry have teamed up to spearhead a campaign featuring a diverse array of people of color depicting the wide-ranging support marriage equality has across the country.

To view the banner ad and mini poster, visit Lambda Legal.

GET ENGAGED: Write to friends and family and help them understand why marriage matters to you

