

Freedom to Marry E-Update
Issue #21 | August 2, 2006

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1) A Note from Evan Wolfson

Dear friends –

In 1790 George Washington declared, "As Mankind becomes more liberal, they will be more apt to allow that all those who conduct themselves as worthy members of the community are equally entitled to the protections of civil government. I hope ever to see America among the foremost nations of justice and liberality."

In its sharply divided 5-4 ruling at the end of July, the State Supreme Court fell short of Washington's principle of fairness, failing, for now, to end the exclusion of committed gay couples and their kids from marriage, with all its protections, security, and meaning.

What's to be said about the court's ruling?

It was a splintered court—four justices joined powerful dissents (Justice Bridge's and Justice Fairhurst's dissents are must-reads.) A three-justice plurality applying the wrong standard of review—one that was undeservedly, hopelessly, and self-fulfillingly deferential—was joined by two justices in a fiery anti-gay concurrence, making up the margin of defeat.

We cannot accept the right's invitation (or that of some of our "friends") to declare our fight over and slink away. And we should not let our politicians off the hook by saying it can't happen here in Washington or that it will take forever; you don't rally people to action or hold politicians accountable by declaring at the outset that your goal is beyond your reach. The work ahead will entail organization, outreach, lobbying, education, and supporting candidates who are for marriage (and replacing those who are not).

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:

- * The full text of Evan's note - <http://www.freedomtomarry.org/document.asp?id=4607>
- * Justice Bridge's dissent - <http://www.courts.wa.gov/opinions/?fa=opinions.opindi sp&docid=759341DI1>
- * Justice Fairhurst's dissent - <http://www.courts.wa.gov/opinions/?fa=opinions.opindi sp&docid=759341DI3>

2) Marriage Matters: Civic, religious, civil rights leaders join to declare

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'Marriage Matters' in a broad, new affirmative ad campaign

In full-page newspaper advertisements that began on July 25, 2006, and appeared from coast to coast, more than 60 civic, religious, labor and civil rights leaders and organizations declared their commitment to working toward equality for gay and lesbian families. The ads, titled "Marriage Matters," appeared in 51 publications, including the New York Times, the Fresno Bee (Calif.), the Cedar Rapids Gazette (Iowa), the Raleigh News & Observer (N.C.), the Capital Gazette (Md.), the Cook County Daily Herald (Ill.) and La Opinion (Calif). The advertisements come at a moment of widening and deepening support for the legal recognition of same-sex relationships, including the freedom to marry.

Two-thirds of the signatories are non-gay allies, including nine prominent labor leaders, heads of six leading civil rights organizations, 11 religious leaders and nine mayors, in addition to 14 national lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender organizations.

LINK:

* Read more about the Marriage Matters ads -
<http://www.freedomtomarry.org/node.asp?id=3699>

3) Freedom to Marry welcomes a new Voice of Equality

UUA President Rev. William G. Sinkford has signed on as a Voice of Equality with Freedom to Marry.

The Rev. William G. Sinkford, 59, was elected president of the Unitarian Universalist Association in June, 2001. As president of this liberal denomination, he is responsible to the UUA Board of Trustees for administering staff and programs that serve its more than 1,000 member congregations. He also acts as principal spokesperson and minister-at-large for the Association.

"Like so many people of conscience, Unitarian Universalists are saddened by the recent setbacks in the struggle for marriage equality," said Rev. Sinkford in response to the recent ruling against equal marriage rights by the Washington Supreme Court. "Today we are even more keenly aware that our society has a long way to go before we fully honor every person's inherent worth and dignity."

Read Rev. Sinkford's statement decrying the WA Supreme Court ruling against marriage equality in its entirety on UUA's website.

LINKS:

- * Voices of Equality - <http://www.freedomtomarry.org/voe.asp>
- * The Rev. William G. Sinkford - <http://www.freedomtomarry.org/document.asp?id=4665>
- * Unitarian Universalist Association - <http://www.uua.org/>
- * Rev. Sinkford's statement - http://www.uua.org/president/060726_ftm.html

4) Important LGBT South Asian/APA Survey

Our partners at the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force are conducting the largest study ever of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Asian and Pacific Islander Americans. They are looking for at least 500 people to complete the online survey. It's confidential, anonymous, and available in four languages: English, Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese.

So, why participate in this survey? Well, for one, it helps determine what people's collective experiences have been, particularly with harassment and violence related to sexual orientation, gender identity, or ethnic heritage. And the more data we have, the more solid info we have to show what kind of problems exist that need to be addressed, and to advocate for change.

LINK:

* The survey - http://www.thetaskforce.org/community/api_survey.cfm

QUOTE:

"The plurality and concurrence condone blatant discrimination against Washington's gay and lesbian citizens in the name of encouraging procreation, marriage for individuals in relationships that result in children, and the raising of children in homes headed by opposite-sex parents, while ignoring the fact that denying same-sex couples the right to marry has no prospect of furthering any of those interests."

-- Washington State Justice Mary Fairhurst

OTHER POINTS OF INTEREST:

Most visited pages last week:

- About Jason - <http://www.freedomtomarry.org/document.asp?id=4550>
- Evan's analysis of recent events - <http://www.freedomtomarry.org/document.asp?id=4607>
- The WEDrock CD - <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.

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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

There are many ways you can get involved by helping win and defend marriage equality nationwide.

To read a sample letter you can write and send to family and friends, visit:
<http://www.freedomtomarry.org/document.asp?id=3171&view=page=280>

SPEECH: Winning Marriage Equality: The Road Ahead

Wolfson delivers the Cal Anderson Memorial Lecture at The Evergreen State College in Olympia, WA, and calls for all of us to engage neighbors and fellow citizens in the personal and informational conversations they deserve – and trust that from that engagement will come marriage.

To read this speech, visit:
<http://www.freedomtomarry.org/document.asp?id=3886>

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Why Marriage Matters: America, Equality, and Gay People's Right to Marry, by Evan Wolfson

For more information about this great resource, visit:
<http://www.freedomtomarry.org/node.asp?id=3470>

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* Sign the Marriage Resolution:
"Because marriage is a basic human right and an individual choice, RESOLVED, the State should not interfere with same-gender couples who choose to marry and share fully and equally in the rights, responsibilities and commitment of civil marriage."

To add your name to the long and distinguished list of supporters of Civil Marriage in America, visit: <http://www.freedomtomarry.org/node.asp?id=3508>

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Sign our Religious Endorsement:
Endorsements are only accepted from ordained clergy, professional religious educators, theologians, and staff of religious institutions.

To sign, visit: http://www.freedomtomarry.org/religious_institute.asp

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SIGN-UP:

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If you received this E-Update from a friend or family member and find it a useful resource on marriage equality, sign-up on the Freedom to Marry website to get E-Updates, visit: http://www.freedomtomarry.org/e_update.asp

Pass it on!

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Let us know what's going on in your community to advance the cause. Email the editor at editor1@freedomtomarry.org.