



National Coalition Announces New Initiative to Raise Profile of People of Color Who Support Marriage for Same-Sex Couples

Major ad placements featuring people of color who support marriage equality kick off the campaign launch.

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(New York, February 13, 2006) — As polling continues to show increased support for marriage equality for same-sex couples in state after state, five national organizations today announced a new initiative to elevate communities of color who support marriage equality for same-sex couples.

“This is an exciting time in our growing civil rights movement for marriage equality,” said **Samiya Bashir, Communications Director of Freedom to Marry**. “The Marriage Equality Matters campaign demonstrates the power of engaging the public and showing them the reality of marriage equality, rather than right-wing rhetoric and scare tactics. When it comes to opening hearts and minds to fairness and reaching the diverse communities who make up our American landscape seeing is, in fact, believing.”

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 that reaches out not only to communities of color, but white audiences as well. This initiative, launched in conjunction with **National Freedom to Marry Week, February 12–18, 2006**, will feature African-American, Latino/a and Asian Pacific American people, gay and non-gay, standing up in support of ending discrimination in marriage.

“The right-wing has perpetuated the idea that people of color are overwhelmingly against marriage for same-sex couples—it is important that people see this for what it is—a half-baked myth that needs correcting,” said **Kevin Cathcart, Executive Director of Lambda Legal**. “We are very pleased to have such strong coalition partners in this effort—together we can reach many communities who need to see that Marriage Equality Matters to people of color.”

The group has kicked off its campaign with a widespread web presence featuring online banner ads appearing on websites such as www.essence.com, www.AsianAvenue.com, www.MiGente.com and www.ChopBlock.com.

- The banner ads, which feature a diverse array of people of color wearing t-shirts that read “Marriage Equality Matters,” depict the wide-ranging support marriage equality has across the country. To view the banner ad and mini poster, visit www.lambdalegal.org/mem. The group is also planning a photo exhibit appearing in venues across the country that will be in full swing during lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Pride month in June.

“Same-gender-loving, black families have more to lose if /when we are denied the responsibilities and protections of marriage,” said **H. Alexander Robinson, Chief Executive Officer of the National Black Justice Coalition**. “On average, black same-gender-loving women are more likely to be raising children, black gay families earn less and are more likely to have public sector jobs than our white peers. The black family is a fundamental driver of black



advancement, so discriminatory policies that further marginalize black gay families put the entire black community at risk.”

“The most important thing Latinas/os can do is to be vocal and open about our support for justice and equality,” said **Lisbeth Melendez Rivera, National Convener for the National Latina/o Coalition for Justice**. “Marriage equality will become a reality—we know it, our opposition knows it—hence the desperation to create the illusion that Latinas/os don’t believe in marriage for same-sex couples. Protecting our familias is core to us. Marriage equality will guarantee security and justice for ALL Latino families and that is worth fighting for.”

“Marriage equality matters to Asian Pacific Americans (APA) because it confers important protections for our families, and nothing is more important to our community than making sure our families are safe, healthy and intact,” said **Andy Shie Kee Wong, Coalition Manager of Asian Equality**. “Indeed, for many APA same-sex couples, this struggle for equality is as much about challenging our second-class status as it is about safeguarding our families and children.”

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Lambda Legal is a national organization committed to achieving full recognition of the civil rights of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transgender people and those with HIV through impact litigation, education and public policy work.

The National Black Justice Coalition is a civil rights organization of Black lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people and our allies dedicated to fostering equality by fighting racism and homophobia. The Coalition advocates for social justice by educating and mobilizing opinion leaders, including elected officials, clergy, and media, with a focus on Black communities.

The National Latina/o Coalition for Justice fights to end discrimination in marriage. The Coalition aims to achieve its goals by promoting comprehensive public education, organizing and media outreach while working with decision-makers and grassroots activists across the country.

Asian Equality recognizes the historic legacy of marriage discrimination in the United States and its profound impact on Asian Pacific American (APA) families. Through community organizing, public education, and media outreach, we seek to empower our APA communities to challenge this legacy and to confront present-day marriage discrimination against same-sex couples. In doing so, we want to affirm the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) members of our communities and acknowledge the enriching presence of their love and lives.

Freedom to Marry is the gay and non-gay partnership working to end the exclusion of lesbians and gays, and their families, from marriage laws nationwide. Launched in 2003, Freedom to Marry is headed by Evan Wolfson, nationally recognized as the architect of the modern marriage movement. Freedom to Marry guides and focuses this social justice movement on a national level. The organization acts as a strategy and support center for national state and local partners, a catalyst that drives and shapes the national debate on marriage equality and an alliance-builder fostering support from non-gay allies.