



# RESISTING the RAINBOW

Right-Wing Responses to LGBT Gains



**Political Research Associates (PRA)** is a progressive think tank devoted to supporting movements that are building a more just and inclusive democratic society. We expose movements, institutions, and ideologies that undermine human rights.

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Right-Wing Responses to LGBT Gains

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Compiled by Pam Chamberlain

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– Pam Chamberlain

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# Executive Summary

In 2010 Political Research Associates (PRA) set out to describe the current landscape of the Right for an audience of national and grassroots social justice-oriented LGBT groups and national movement funders. This report is the result of that investigation. Over the course of the LGBT movement's growth, there have been several attempts to create comprehensive "Fight the Right" materials. One major effort in the 1990s was led by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. Its *Fight the Right Action Kit*<sup>iv</sup> included an assessment of the Right's opposition to LGBT rights as of 1993. Now, nearly 20 years later, it is time to take a new look at what is happening.

With this study, we sought to fill knowledge gaps about the U.S. Right in relationship to LGBT issues, including new players, key threats, and principal strategies. We aimed to identify opportunities for LGBT alliances to work with other constituencies and sectors that are also negatively affected by organized opponents of LGBT right. Finally, we hoped to be able to identify some promising practices/strategies that might inform future efforts of the LGBT progressive movement.

Our research questions included:

- 1) Who are the key players on the Right at this moment, and what are their primary strategies and target communities?
- 2) Can recent fights with the opposition teach us important lessons about both right-wing and progressive movement-building strategies?
- 3) What are the best practices to date in movement building to combat right-wing campaigns?
- 4) What are the common threats (issues), adversaries (organized forces and funders), and opportunities (policy/culture change) for progressive justice seeking groups?

## FORMAT OF THE REPORT

The report begins with an analytical overview of the current context of the anti-LGBT Right, followed by case study materials, profiles of key players and organizations, a section on how the Right Wing frames its arguments, and a selection of promising practices. We conclude with a summary of findings and recommendations.

## Current Context of Organized Opposition to LGBT Rights

Opposition to LGBT equality has long been both a fundamental value and a useful political tool for many American conservative organizations, especially those associated with the Christian Right. The rise of the Tea Party, coupled with the Christian Right's considerable influence on American politics has created a new political climate in which continued progress on LGBT issues may prove problematic, despite recent victories. Membership overlaps in these movements; significantly, about half of the Tea Party identifies with the Christian Right. They share similarities in ideology, organization, and level of influence as well. Since these sectors of the U.S. Political Right are so critical to the current moment, we have provided primers on their beliefs and relevance.

## Key Players and Organizations

PRA examined key organizations and players that advocate anti-LGBT public policy positions. We compiled profiles about some of these players and groups and identified the current battlegrounds on which they fight.

## Framing

Because the success of so many conservative projects has depended on the skillful construction of arguments and positions, we have included a section on how the Right develops its frames. While a few are more recent, the majority of the Right's frames have been used for decades, recycled at opportune moments and with repeated success.

## Case Studies

In order to assess how the Right actually functions in campaigns to oppose LGBT rights, we enlisted authors with experience in such struggles to describe and in some cases analyze what happened. After each description we offer a set of questions for activists to use as an aid for focused discussion about implications for further LGBT activist work.

## Promising Practices

In addition to case studies of contests with the Right, we have included a few descriptions of LGBT organizing that illustrate some aspects of successful activism. They include the process of developing a national AIDS strategy and a look at movement building. These examples may prove useful to activists planning future initiatives.

## Principal Findings

◆ **The political salience of homophobia has diminished despite the overall strength of the Right and the persistence of systemic discrimination against LGBT people.**

The anti-LGBT Right has depended for many years on the construction and mobilization of homophobia as a tool for increasing its political power. Recent gains by LGBT advocates, such as the passage of federal hate crimes legislation, the repeal of Don't Ask Don't Tell, and the increasing support for anti-discrimination measures and same-sex marriage, show that the Right is struggling against public opinion. On the other hand, many anti-LGBT organizations and individuals still use homophobia as an effective political tool.

◆ **Four factors have influenced how the Right uses homophobia in the present moment: The rise of the Christian Right; the emergence of the Tea Party; the demise of moderate Republicans; and the behavior of the LGBT movement itself.**

Each of these developments has had its own effect on how anti-LGBT sentiments are expressed

and exploited. The growth of politically mobilized Christian evangelicals, the emergence of the Tea Party and its success in the 2010 midterm elections, and the lack of a moderating influence within the Republican Party together have facilitated the ongoing use of homophobic frames and projects by conservative strategists.

◆ **The Christian Right, thriving in 2011, is pulling the Republican Party further to the Right. Central to this effort is a dangerous mainstreaming of Dominionist thinking, which supports "reclaiming" the United States as a Christian nation, governed by Christian law. A strong anti-LGBT stance is an important element of this push.**

The idea that the Christian Right is in decline, although regularly suggested by liberal pundits, is a myth. Although many younger evangelicals are questioning their parents' conservative views, especially on homosexuality, conservative Christians are still the mainstay of the anti-LGBT movement. A coordinated effort led by the Christian Right group, Family Research Council with support from the American Family Association and organized evangelical clergy is attempting to sway public opinion and influence upcoming elections. A candidate like Rick Santorum now represents the views previously held by only a very small following. The Right is now more directly influenced by the idea that Christians should run the United States, governing by Christian principles. Non-Christians and those who lead lives that do not conform to conservative evangelical beliefs can become targets of criticism.

◆ **The Tea Party has changed the political landscape, resulting in a struggle over whether fiscal or "social" issues should dominate right-wing campaigns.**

Since 2009 a new upstart of right-wing populism has brought instability and uncertainty to the conservative movement. Top-down forces coupled with grassroots energy hatched the Tea Party movement, the most current example of insurgent populist energy. The modern Tea Party, virtually all White and politically mobilized, is an unsteady coalition of social and fiscal conservatives—reflecting the angry impulses of its Christian Right, libertarian, White nationalist, and anti-tax sectors in an era of economic distress and cultural upheaval. Christian Right activists are wrangling with Tea Party leaders over who is in charge. The best-funded TP groups have favored a focus on economic issues, downplaying

expressly homophobic and racist rhetoric. This fragile coalition is unpredictable.

◆ **Despite the Right's failure to prevent major LGBT political wins, the use of homophobia as a political tool remains one of the most successful strategies for mobilizing and increasing right-wing political power.**

While many social conservatives maintain sincerely held attitudes about homosexuality, some right-wing strategists will use the socially conservative values of their base for opportunistic reasons. The strategy of introducing a homophobic ballot initiative, a piece of legislation, or even a campaign plank continues to be successful in bringing voters to the polls. As we describe in the case studies, Amendment 2 in Colorado is a historical example of this from 1992, as is another ballot initiative in Florida in 2008, the Florida Marriage Protection Amendment.

◆ **The Right has developed a limited, but repeatedly used, set of homophobic arguments. Many homophobic frames get recycled, especially if they were successful in the past.**

These frames, or ways of describing reality to influence political attitudes, are based on the fundamental beliefs of the Christian Right and are influenced both by the belief that homosexuality is a major sin and that rigidly traditional attitudes towards gender roles, the family, and sex should be retained and celebrated. Conservative Christians cast moral judgments on women and LGBT people who reject these gender roles and ascribe sinfulness to such out-of-line behavior. Even though these perspectives no longer dominate the culture, they still wield a powerful influence. Our case studies illustrate the mainstays of these still-current frames, including the claims that: gays are sexual perverts who breed disease; that homosexuality is a shameful sin; that the LGBT movement has a political agenda that threatens the core of American society; and that gays want "special rights." The anti-LGBT frame that focused on a generic threat to the family has been adapted to the more narrowly defined "protect marriage" argument. A recent frame blames LGBT activists for youth suicide and bullying. Secular arguments are usually screens for the tested religious ones, as the shift from frames overtly appealing to Christian conservatives to those adjusted for a broader audience illustrates.

◆ **The Right's anti-LGBT frames and strategies are increasingly complex, sophisticated, and successful.**

To build and maintain support, conservative strategists use their existing prejudice against the "other" to their advantage, whether it is based on gender, race, or other characteristics. Campaigns against immigration reform, abortion, LGBT rights, or terrorism are linked by this fear-based frame. Sometimes messages are subtly crafted to avoid the appearance of overt bigotry, such as an appeal to fundamental American principles of religious freedom or majority rule to argue for what amounts to discrimination. Strategists take advantage of current demographics within their conservative base and use the latest online data-mining technologies to cultivate new members and to keep existing ones.

The Right has taken advantage of misguided populist campaigns such as the Birther or 9/11 Truth movements to expand its reach and spark followers' emotions. Its more conservative flank now has prominent spokespeople like Rick Santorum and Rick Perry who, as presidential candidates, have snagged mainstream media attention for anti-LGBT Christian conservative messages. And it continues to attract new major donors whose conservative Christian perspectives are reflected in the projects they fund.

◆ **The current broad coalition on the Right, including the Tea Party, must be taken seriously, especially in the 2012 elections. Whether or not the presidency will be won by a conservative, fiscal and social conservatives have the power to alter the political landscape in deep ways.**

The goal of the U.S. Political Right at this moment is to usurp power from its political adversaries, whether that power is found in the White House, Congress, state legislatures, or in the culture. The Christian Right represents at least 15% of the vote in the United States, and with party affiliation loosening and greater numbers of voters identifying as Independents, no presidential candidate can win without a major part of this bloc. Roughly half the Tea Party identifies with the Christian Right, exacerbating the struggle between the fiscal and the social conservatives within the Tea Party. Since the socially conservative elements of the Right continue to use homophobic frames and strategies, their ultimate success may be heavily influenced by continuing to cultivate negative attitudes towards LGBT people. In our Florida case study, for example, we see that the

opposition was able to garner over 60% of the vote to win an anti-LGBT referendum, an amount far greater than the estimated number of Tea Party or Christian Right voters.

◆ **Some small anti-LGBT organizations have unexpected levels of influence.**

Virulently homophobic views are cultivated by anti-gay pseudo-research groups like the National Association for the Research and Therapy of Homosexuality (NARTH) and the Family Research Institute. Far from being merely a fringe element in the anti-LGBT movement, these researchers draw conclusions that are then taken up by individuals and groups with access to mass media who amplify the messages, resulting in disproportionate influence on public opinion.

◆ **Despite clear indications they are losing the war on LGBT rights, the Christian Right core of the anti-LGBT movement will not soon abandon its opposition.**

Social conservatives recognize that they are losing some major battles with the LGBT movement. Since 2009, federal LGBT hate crimes legislation has passed, Don't Ask Don't Tell (DADT) has been repealed, The Defense of Marriage Act is losing support, and more states have legalized same-sex marriage (with others in the pipeline). In the face of public opinion moving away from them, the anti-LGBT Right must grapple with several strategic questions:

- 1) How will it deal with the growing support for LGBT issues among younger evangelicals, its future base?
- 2) To what extent will the anti-LGBT Right continue to use expensive strategies like state-level ballot initiatives?
- 3) To what extent will it choose to place LGBT issues on the back burner for the 2012 elections?
- 4) How will it use homophobia to reach political goals in the future?

◆ **Funding streams for anti-LGBT campaigns continue to come from many of the traditional foundation and individual sources that fund other Religious Right causes, but there are new developments.**

The issues many of these new funders support, such as opposition to abortion, immigration, and the separation of church and state, are all aspects of a continuing culture war in which women, immi-

grants, and LGBT people are seen as threats to a traditionalist way of life. Anti-LGBT funding comes from the same sources that support other conservative issues.

From time to time newly exposed wealthy Rightist individuals and groups gain the notoriety as major funders. The Koch brothers are examples of this, as is Ken Eldred, a Christian venture capitalist, who supports high-tech conservative organizing projects as an expression of his Christian faith. The Mormon Church (LDS) and the Roman Catholic fraternal organization, the Knights of Columbus, are other examples of newly visible anti-LGBT funders.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A FUTURE LGBT ROAD MAP

As PRA reflected on what we have learned from this project, we recognized that certain ideas have emerged that may be useful for LGBT activists, advocates, and funders. These are summarized below:

- 1) **Keep the long view.** It is tempting to focus only on the LGBT issue of the moment, whether it be a ballot question, a court case, or a public campaign to challenge heterosexist norms. Such threats necessarily require immediate resources and creative tactics. But it is also necessary to look beyond today's right-wing campaigns and the next election cycle, to consider the overall context of the LGBT movement, including key trends and future possibilities.
- 2) **Interpret data about the Right to create a solid analysis that fuels strategic opportunities.** So much information is readily available now from a wide array of sources that it is sometimes difficult to separate reliable facts from conclusions based on assumptions. It is vital to screen available information for its dependability, and analyze the data to identify salient issues and frames. Early interpretation of California's Prop 8 polling, for instance, led to mistaken conclusions about the role of race in that contest. Only careful consideration of the Right's actual strategies and their results, both within and outside the anti-LGBT arena, will help activists assess the opposition's direction and strength. Funders should support LGBT organizations and their allies to undertake this type of research.

- 3) **Reevaluate the progressive LGBT movement's goals and focus.** Many advocacy groups, including the major LGBT national groups headquartered in Washington, D.C., have focused on legislative or judicial paths to formal equality for LGBT people. This approach is essential, and it has been largely successful, but it cannot be the end goal. *De jure* equality does not guarantee actual equality, and actual equality does not itself guarantee true liberty. Substantial parts of the LGBT movement, which mirror marginalized groups in the general culture, are not fully experiencing these new gains. As LGBT people continue to gain generic legal rights and protections, the Right will develop its own new directions. LGBT strategists need multiple opportunities to gather, to consider revising or adjusting movement goals. These convenings serve as incubators for an expanded LGBT-initiated, but multi-issue, vision.
- 4) **Cultivate broader coalitions across issue areas to develop allies, increase support, and contribute to a broader social justice agenda.** LGBT people remain a numerical minority and as we have learned from marriage equality struggles, cannot achieve legislative, judicial, or cultural goals without networks of allies and a commitment to social justice for all. LGBT groups should engage in friendly coalitions with goals that intersect easily with LGBT issues. But they can also benefit working in less comfortable alliances under acceptably negotiated conditions. A successful effort of cross-community coalition work is the National HIV/AIDS Coalition described in this report, which worked with a diversity of groups towards shared goals. Funding for broadening the diversity of other movements should be shared between LGBT groups and others.
- 5) **Prepare for the inevitable backlash.** Any push for social or political change against the status quo will necessarily prompt a backlash from opponents and those currently in power. Expect the Right sometimes to use recycled arguments and frames, and sometimes to invent new ones. But they will always mount a counterattack. Build an expectation of that attack into strategic planning at all levels.

## CONCLUSION

No one report can map the totality of the Right's efforts to thwart LGBT equality and liberty—this project chose a finite number of areas to study, including a description of the current status of the anti-LGBT Right and a review of promising practices among LGBT activists. There is much more to be learned. For instance, we do not have a clear enough picture of the future road map of the Right's engagement in anti-LGBT activity to predict with any accuracy exactly which frames will be used, or in which campaigns the Right will choose to deploy them. Because we cannot predict the scope of future activity with much specificity, we cannot say how much financial support should be distributed to LGBT activism and in what arenas. We do know from the work of our research allies that the amounts have not increased sufficiently to keep up with the potential growth and needs of LGBT movement organizations, especially LGBT groups that focus on the most marginalized parts of the LGBT community.<sup>2</sup>

Despite the relentless use of homophobia as a political tool and continued strong opposition to dismantling structural homophobia, what we do see is the significant accomplishments of hundreds of LGBT organizations in the United States working against the Right, and for the rights of LGBT people. It is their work that gives us hope.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Sarah Gregory and Scot Nakagawa, *Fight the Right Action Kit*, (Portland OR: National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, 1993). <http://www.qrd.org/qrd/orgs/NGLTF/fttr/action.kit/complete.kit.text>

<sup>2</sup> See *LGBTQ Grantmaking by U.S. Foundations, and U.S. Foundation Support for LGBTQ Communities of Color: Racial Equity Campaign Update* (New York: Funders for LGBTQ Issues) 2009.



# Introduction

In 2010 Political Research Associates (PRA) began to look at the factors affecting the influence and potential success of conservative anti-LGBT individuals, organizations, and projects. We wanted to describe the current landscape of the Right for an audience of national and grassroots social justice-oriented LGBT groups and national movement funders. This report is the result of that investigation. Over the course of the LGBT movement's growth, there have been several attempts to create organized "Fight the Right" materials. One major effort in the 1990s was led by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. Its *Fight the Right Action Kit*<sup>1</sup> included an assessment of the Right's opposition to LGBT rights as of 1993. Now, nearly 20 years later, it is time to take a new look at what is happening.

Isaac Newton's laws of motion have a certain metaphorical relevance to watching the relationship between the U.S. political Right and LGBT activism. The idea that every action has its reaction translates to every political movement has its counter movement. Homophobic assumptions have guided public opinion and policy in the United States for centuries. Almost as soon as the budding gay liberation movement came into public view in the 1960s, conservative backlash began.<sup>2</sup> The history of the anti-LGBT movement has been a response to the growing visibility and power of LGBT activists and campaigns.

With this study, we hoped to fill in knowledge gaps about the U.S. Right in relationship to LGBT issues, including new players, key threats, and primary strategies. We sought to identify opportunities for LGBT alliances to work with other constituencies and sectors. Finally, we hoped to be able to identify some promising practices/strategies that might suggest a future direction for the LGBT progressive movement.

Our Research Questions:

- 1) Who are the key players on the Right at this moment, and what are their primary strategies and target communities?
- 2) Can recent fights with the opposition teach us important lessons about both right-wing and progressive movement-building strategies?
- 3) What are the best practices to date in movement building to combat right-wing campaigns?
- 4) What are the common threats (issues), enemies (organized forces and funders), and opportunities (policy/culture change) for progressive justice seeking groups?

## METHODOLOGY

PRA performs qualitative social science research, informed primarily by approaches associated with the fields of political science and sociology. We use social movement theory to analyze the movements and projects of the U.S. political Right. In order to identify salient issues for this research, PRA staff reviewed existing literature on the Right's attacks on LGBT equality. Using our in-house library of primary materials from the Right as well as online documents, we maintained our monitoring of key anti-LGBT direct mail material, and print and online media. We reviewed the available anti-LGBT movement strategists' statements and recommendations. We convened a two-day session with core consultants to discuss issues and set the project's direction. We assigned writers directly involved in key LGBT organizing efforts to create case studies for current organizers to highlight lessons relevant to current and

future organizing efforts. We used the following criteria to select case study topics: 1) Does the incident illustrate important Right-Wing and/or progressive strategies? 2) Does the incident embody lessons for the LGBT movement? and 3) Are there available participant observers who can create relevant materials for our use?

### FORMAT OF THE REPORT

The report begins with an analytical narrative on the current context of the anti-LGBT Right, followed by case study materials, profiles of key players and organizations, a section on how the Right-Wing frames its arguments, and descriptions of selected promising practices. We conclude with a summary of findings and recommendations.

### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Sarah Gregory and Scot Nakagawa, *Fight the Right Action Kit*, (Portland OR: National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, 1993). <http://www.qrd.org/qrd/orgs/NGLTF/fr/action.kit/complete.kit.text>

<sup>2</sup> "The Thirty Years War: a timeline of the anti-gay movement," *Intelligence Report*, Southern Poverty Law Center, Spring 2005, n. 117. <http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/intelligence-report/browse-all-issues/2005/spring/the-thirty-years-war>

# The Current Context

## Still Powerful or Losing Ground?

THE ANTI-LGBT RIGHT IN 2011

*Pam Chamberlain*

### A PARADOX

**2011** was a frustrating year for the anti-LGBT Right. The loose coalition of conservative forces that oppose LGBT rights had been successful for decades. Multiple organizations have mobilized millions of voters and many millions of dollars against LGBT campaigns, but the results are decidedly mixed.

On the one hand, the Christian Right has successfully inserted homophobic arguments into virtually any discussion of LGBT people, from public schools to the HIV/AIDS epidemic, from rights in employment and the military to same-sex marriage. LGBT people have been denied the right to marry in 31 states. We still do not have an inclusive federal anti-discrimination law, and some religious organizations insist on denying LGBT people equal status among their employees. Gay-bashing and especially violence against transgender people continue at unacceptable levels. Homophobia remains rampant in the culture.

On the other hand, the LGBT rights movement has made tremendous progress in recent years. Public policy is changing. A federal hate crimes law is in place. 2011 was a landmark year for LGBT rights. In February the Justice Department announced that it would no longer support the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) in court. In July President Obama officially certified the repeal of the Defense Department's 18 year-old "Don't Ask Don't Tell" policy. There are now over 5,000 gay-straight alliances in U.S. schools, which are becoming more welcoming places for everyone. Same-sex marriage is legal in six states as of 2011, and 40% of Americans now live in states where some form of same-sex marriage or civil union is allowed. Public opinion is changing, too. In 2011 for the first time, a majority of Americans indi-

cated they felt same-sex marriage should be legal. 51% of those polled indicate they felt this way, up from 37% in 2003.<sup>1</sup> In May the Gallup poll reported that a strong majority of Americans, 56%, felt that gay or lesbian relations were morally acceptable.<sup>2</sup> And the rate of increased support for same-sex marriage has doubled in the last fifteen years.<sup>3</sup>

Some organizations long opposed to LGBT equality have had to admit that the tide is turning. Jim Daly, the successor to James Dobson as president of the Christian Right organization Focus on the Family, admitted defeat to Right-wing strategist Martin Olasky in a June 2011 interview. Daly replied:

What about same-sex marriage? We're losing on that one, especially among the 20- and 30-somethings: 65 to 70 percent of them favor same-sex marriage. I don't know if that's going to change with a little more age—demographers would say probably not. We've probably lost that. I don't want to be extremist here, but I think we need to start calculating where we are in the culture.<sup>4</sup>

So who is winning this ongoing battle over civil rights and cultural change? Some on the anti-LGBT Right may admit to defeat around same-sex marriage, but they are not about to throw in the towel. Too much is at stake for them and their position of influence within the Republican Party. Change comes slowly, and those social conservatives who are mobilized around religious principles or the fear that LGBT people remain a threat to their way of life are still a major part of the political landscape. In addition these voters can be encouraged to support candidates with broader platforms than just opposition to LGBT rights.

The driving force in opposing LGBT rights has been the Christian Right, including both the Roman Catholic Church hierarchy and conservative evangelical Protestants. Their ample infrastructures have helped to shape the anti-LGBT agenda and its campaigns. The marriage promotion concept, for example, emerged from a faith-based campaign to preserve traditional heterosexual marriage in the face of rapid cultural change. By the same token, the impetus for opposing LGBT rights rests in part on the perception that LGBT people threaten God-given traditional gender norms. One of the challenges for LGBT activists in the United States has been how to respond to homophobic attitudes rooted in (or justified by) religious beliefs.

*The ideas that LGBT people are a threat and homosexuality is a dangerous phenomenon were constructed as part of its overall strategy to mobilize support based on scapegoating and fear.*

The Tea Party phenomenon has mobilized many conservatives who have rallied around lower taxes and smaller government. But many of these people also carry a range of opinions on social issues along with their Right-wing populist economic views. The rise of Tea Party influence, especially in Congress after the 2010 midterm elections, has emboldened many, but polarized decision-makers. We will examine these factors that characterize the current state of the anti-LGBT Right.

The Right has experienced slow but relentless growth since Ronald Reagan took office in 1981. The country has undergone a major conservative political shift, not just under the three Republican presidencies, but during two Democratic administrations as well. Neoliberal thinking that favors a market-driven economy has influenced various branches of the federal government, which have acted to deregulate private interests. National security concerns, both domestic and international, have helped shift spending priorities. The financial crisis that broke open in 2008 also served to pull government interests, and funding, further away from public programs for those in need. Its legacy is a lasting atmosphere of uncertainty.

A series of politically motivated “culture wars” has deeply affected both public opinion and public policy. This phenomenon has punctured the social safety net, shrunk other governmental services, and encouraged “litmus tests” for candidates on social

issues such as abortion, sexuality education, and the place of religion in public life.

Over the same period of time, millions of voters have been mobilized to support conservative candidates and policies through the growth of the Christian Right and other burgeoning social movements. An effective infrastructure of grassroots organizations, charismatic leaders, media networks, and consistent funding provided the scaffolding for a powerful political force. Most of the country is not old enough to remember what it was like before the rise of the New Right that propelled Reagan to office. In fact, the “New” Right is no longer new, and it feels to many like the status quo, not the political insurgency it once was. The Right has secured a place for itself in the American political scene in the 21st century, and the homophobic Right has been a central player in its success.<sup>5</sup>

Right-wing strategists have targeted various groups such as immigrants, African-Americans, and Muslims as opportunities arose. The ideas that LGBT people are a threat and homosexuality is a dangerous phenomenon were constructed as part of its overall strategy to mobilize support based on scapegoating and fear.<sup>6</sup> Those opportunities appeared as the gay movement took hold, and backlash against that movement emerged in force. The relationship between LGBT and anti-LGBT movements is dynamic and complicated. Sociologists study how opposing social and political movements interact in ways that affect each other.<sup>7</sup> The LGBT movement and its opponents are engaged in a kind of cosmic dance, with every active decision provoking a reaction. There is no reason to believe that this will not continue, even if the arena shifts from the ballot and the courts to another location. In assessing their future goals, then, LGBT activists would do well to remember that any campaign will provoke a counter-campaign.

The U.S. political Right is at a crossroads in 2011. After 30 years of growth, it is eager to retake the White House, riding the tide of dissatisfaction with a slumping economy. We know that the rise of Christian Right and the Tea Party, coupled with the demise of a moderate wing of the Republican Party, have shaped the current conservative political landscape. What we don't know is how they will shape the future of the United States.



Anti-Obama signs from a Tea Party rally.

## A FORMIDABLE OPPONENT: THE CHRISTIAN RIGHT

Any assessment of the current state of U.S. political life must take the Christian Right into account. Since the late 1970s when strategist Paul Weyrich and pastor Jerry Falwell helped to form the Moral Majority, conservative evangelical Christians have been successfully politicized both to speak out and to vote on behalf of their religious views on social issues. National political organizations such as the Moral Majority, Christian Coalition, Focus on the Family, and its Washington lobby arm the Family Research Council have been replicated at the state level by smaller but no less influential electoral groups and think tanks.

The Christian Right has exerted its influence on political life so relentlessly that it has become a part of the fabric of political conservatism in this country. It is safe to say that in the United States, the regulation of social norms has become more conservative because of the Christian Right's influence. The best example of this is the yearly introduction of state-level bills to limit access to abortion. According to the Guttmacher Institute, over 900 anti-abortion bills were introduced to state legislatures in the first three months of 2011, and although this is a shocking number, it is only up moderately from the previous year.<sup>8</sup> The legislators who sponsored these bills are not necessarily members of the Christian Right themselves, but they are sensitive to members of their constituency whom they view as increasingly supportive of the political symbolism of anti-abortion measures.

While about 40% of the U.S. population identifies as evangelical Christians, far fewer are actual members of the Christian Right. About 15% of voters are affiliated with the Christian Right.<sup>9</sup> (Mainstream media have begun to use “social conservatives” as an alternative descriptor, a result of the movement’s ability to cast itself as a secular force.) Still, 15% is a significant percentage, especially in primary races, one that candidates and political parties cannot ignore. Right-wing strategists have learned to skillfully mobilize the Christian Right in crucial swing state elections as recently as the 2010 midterms. Now the Republican Party faces a dilemma: what to do with a bloc of voters who represent a more conservative position on social issues. Their views are to the right of what is required on a national platform for the GOP to win the presidency in 2012, given who has been voting in presidential elections.

Christian conservatism dominates the Tea Party; about 40% of Tea Party supporters consider themselves members of the Christian Right. Although commonly understood as a right-wing populist tax protest movement, the Tea Party is supported by nearly half of all White evangelicals (the largest of any religious group supporting this new formation of fiscal and social conservatives), who bring a conservative social perspective to political issues.<sup>10</sup> In pragmatic terms, this has meant that the Tea Party opposes reproductive freedom for women, the acceptance of homosexuality and the legalization of same-sex marriage, and comprehensive sexuality education. Conservative candidates who won in the 2010 midterms have found themselves beholden not just to a constituency that favors smaller government and lower taxes, but to social conservatives who have demanded they act on a Christian Right agenda. A 2010 University of Washington poll reported that 88% of “true believers” in the Tea Party agreed with Arizona’s notorious SB 1070 law that requires police to

*The Christian Right has become part of the fabric of political conservatism in the country.*

demand anyone they suspect of being an undocumented resident to show proof of immigration status.<sup>11</sup> The same poll found that only 18% of Tea Party true believers agreed that gay and lesbian couples should have the same right to marry as straight couples.

The political leverage of the Christian Right can be seen in the 2011 federal budget debates in an eleventh hour fight that threatened a government shutdown. Attempts to defund Planned Parenthood hinged on what was framed as opposition to taxpayer support for abortion. The issue of abortion has become a polarizing one separating the two major parties. The Christian Right has been the major influence that has kept abortion at the top of elected officials' agendas, even though only 13% of the elec-

torate considers moral values the most pressing issue facing the country in 2011.<sup>12</sup> This discrepancy shows that a small percentage of voters can influence, or at least throw a wrench into, the major policy decisions.

*Heterosexism is seen as the God-given norm, not a socially constructed idea.*

### A CHRISTIAN RIGHT WORLDVIEW

Social justice advocates and LGBT activists can better understand the nature of the opposition if they have an overview of what most socially conservative, politically active Christians believe. Much of this worldview revolves around the concept of sin. According to Christian theology, committing sins is the human condition; it is what keeps people from being close to God. Active, personal repentance leads to God's forgiveness, and this is the path to being saved by Christ. To convert sinners to people who are saved, or born again, is a major function of evangelicals. Further, it is the conservative Christian's responsibility to eradicate sin wherever it is observed, even in other people. That is why there is such intense criticism of sinful deeds among conservative evangelicals and why it is acceptable, even required, to tell others how to live.

In the modern conservative Christian's eyes, serious sins include those acts contributing to what they see as the rapid moral decay of the family: divorce, single parenting, pre-marital and extra-marital sex, homosexuality, and abortion among them. Because evangelical Christians and Roman Catholics hold as doctrine that the family is a sacred unit of God's plan, traditional gender roles are reinforced. Heterosexism, or the belief that heterosexuality is

superior to other sexual orientations, is seen as the God-given norm, not a socially constructed idea. Another factor is also at play. Despite attempts by Christian family counselors to support sexual intimacy within marriage, many leaders of the Christian Right find it difficult to talk positively about sex.

Believers in Christian Nationalism, or the idea that the United States once was, and should be reclaimed as, a Christian nation with Biblical-inspired laws and policy, have become emboldened. This phenomenon, also called Dominionism, should be of major concern to LGBT activists. For instance, Johnny Enlow, an Atlanta pastor who reflects the New Apostolic Reformation style of Dominionist thinking and has indicated support for the Ugandan Anti-Homosexuality Bill, said:

For me, the point of criminalizing homosexuality is not to bring punishment to homosexuals but rather to inform society of right and wrong.<sup>13</sup>

In other words, writing laws against LGBT people will set standards for morality which are designed to affect everyone.

Politicians on the Right are taking notice. Texas Governor Rick Perry, former Alaska governor Sarah Palin, and member of Congress Michele Bachmann (R-MN) all recognize the value of identifying with this tendency and have incorporated coded references to Dominionism.<sup>14</sup> Rick Perry's August 2011 prayer rally, The Response, was a direct invitation for Dominionists to present themselves as valid stakeholders in political decisions.

Of course, not all members of the Christian Right believe in these principles to the same degree. Over the past thirty years, the Christian Right's leadership has observed which beliefs are most often shared across their supporters, both those associated with denominational churches like Lutherans or Baptists and those not associated with mainstream Protestant denominations, a group that includes many Fundamentalist and Pentecostal churches. It has been these strategists' challenge to develop issues, such as opposition to abortion and same-sex marriage, into successful organizing tools. Although the idea of the sanctity of life is a common thread throughout the theological fabric of conservative Christians, opposition to abortion and its links to an absolute belief in the sanctity of life would not have become such important planks in the Christian Right's platform without deliberate design.<sup>15</sup>

## THE RISE OF THE CHRISTIAN RIGHT

When *Roe v. Wade* gave women the right to access abortions in 1973, the Christian Right had not yet coalesced. To contemporary eyes it is ironic that when a movement did rally by the end of the 1970s, it was not originally around abortion. Randall Balmer, a religious historian, suggests that early strategists deliberately created an “abortion myth” which attempted to make the Christian Right appear altruistic and noble in supporting life. Instead, Balmer revealed that strategists first noticed the potential for Christian Right mobilization in 1975 when their Christian schools were threatened with losing their tax-exempt status.

The Religious Right arose as a political movement for the purpose, effectively, of defending racial segregation at Bob Jones University and at other segregated schools.<sup>16</sup>

Rallying around segregation, however, did not seem like a winning strategy. Those strategists, including Paul Weyrich who remained a leader in Christian Right organizing until his death in 2008, searched for an issue that would command broader support among conservative evangelicals. They settled on abortion. This turned out to be very much a winning choice, because it united both Catholics and Protestants into a broad coalition, and it has brought in countless millions of dollars into the Christian Right’s war chest.

Opposition to homosexuality was politicized in this country during the 1950s with what has been described as the “Lavender Scare,” comparable to the “Red Scare” of the same general time period. Congressional testimony attested to the security risk of homosexuals in government service, and Communists and gay men were often seen as equally threatening to the country’s security. Because most gay men and lesbians kept their sexual orientation hidden, they were considered vulnerable to blackmail by enemy agents, and an estimated several thousand gay men and lesbians lost their jobs.<sup>21</sup> During this time, although some conservative pushback developed to the post WWII relaxation of traditional morality in American culture, there was no organized Christian Right. Conservative Christians had retreated from political debate after the public embarrassment of the Scopes trial in 1925 and the failure of Prohibition in 1933. But this changed in the late 1970s with two connected campaigns—Christian



A Californian expresses opposition to marriage equality.

pop singer Anita Bryant’s Save Our Children campaign in Florida and the Briggs Amendment in California.

Bryant, driven by her conservative Christian values and supported by national figures like Rev. Jerry Falwell and Sen. Jesse Helms (R-NC), became a national anti-gay spokesperson. She was successful in waging a campaign that overturned an anti-discrimination law in Dade County protecting gay men and lesbians. John Briggs, a state senator in Orange County, California, was emboldened by what he saw when he visited Miami and went home to sponsor a similar bill. California had not passed an anti-discrimination law, so he invented a cause: prohibit gay men and lesbians from teaching in California public schools. California’s liberal regions, an expanding LGBT community, and a national spotlight focused on California mobilized by emerging leaders like Harvey Milk worked to defeat the Briggs Amendment.

These early anti-gay initiatives shared a common frame: our children are in danger. If they get too close to LGBT people, they will be recruited into the “gay lifestyle.” Such disinformation resonated strongly with a public that saw itself as the protectors of children; it is an enduring idea still being used today, despite its false and deliberately misleading premise.

The growing movement benefitted from existing Christian hierarchies, especially in the Roman Catholic Church, now a part of the movement

because of its anti-abortion stance. Opposition to homosexuality was a natural unifier as well. Pat Robertson's Christian Broadcasting Network provided the publicity reach across the country, especially in the South where the Christian Right had the largest potential base of supporters. The Christian Coalition, most active between 1988-2000, used churches to distribute millions of "voters guides," a skillful but debatably legal tactic for a not-for-profit, demonstrating its ability to get its supporters to the polls.

Another important strategy in expanding the Christian Right was the development of state-based groups. James Dobson's Focus on the Family, Phyllis Schlafly's Eagle Forum, and Beverly LaHaye's Concerned Women for America all organized state affiliates that focused on both federal and state legislation. These groups formed campaigns that differed from state to state, either working within Republican Party structures or challenging the GOP with their own candidates and issues as ways to reach their political goals.

Such state-based groups still exist and exercise a range of influence. In some states, such as Iowa, where the Christian Right's plan has been to engage with and eventually control the Republican Party, a conciliatory approach has brought them more success. In those states where they have taken a more confrontational approach, supporting candidates and issues that represent a pure "traditional values" platform, the Christian Right has done less well.<sup>18</sup> Because the measure of success of political activity is sometimes oversimplified by focusing only on who is elected to public office, the Christian Right has been mistakenly dubbed "dead" or "dying" when Democrats perform well in a given election. It is more accurate to observe the broader indicators of political influence, including the ability to affect public opinion and the clout to influence legislation. By these measures, the Christian Right is still very much a player in 2011. Its strategists have successfully developed alliances, not just with fiscal conservatives most recently through the Tea Party, but with other sectors of the Right as well, including militarists, neoconservatives, and anti-immigrant forces. According to political analysts Green, Rozell and Wilcox, the Christian Right has undergone a long, slow march towards increasing its

political and cultural influence in the United States over the past 30 years. This is a major reason for the overall swing to the Right within American politics.

### EVALUATING IMPACT

One way to gauge the relative power of a movement like the Christian Right is to ask who benefits from its efforts. Christian Right voters have clearly influenced the electoral careers of many politicians from George W. Bush to Michele Bachmann. Anyone with a radio, TV or Internet connection can watch, read, or listen to politically inspired programming on a variety of Christian and Right-leaning stations and sites. This media industry has multiple outlets with explicit Christian content, like Trinity and Christian Broadcasting networks, as well as Fox News. Presidential hopefuls stop in at the annual Values Voters Summit in Washington every fall where they can get a sense of their standing with the most faithful of Christian Right voters as judged by its annual Value Voters Presidential Poll. (In 2011, Ron Paul garnered 37% of the votes, while Mitt Romney culled 4%.)<sup>19</sup> Conservative candidates at every level have found that stating their positions on abortion and LGBT rights can bring in votes. More pro-life voters require a candidate to share their views on abortion than do pro-choice candidates.<sup>20</sup> Yet the Republican candidates are not unanimous in their opposition to abortion. When Rudolph Giuliani ran for president in 2008, his pro-choice position among other factors made him a controversial figure in Republican circles. Being pro-life and Republican can increase your influence in Congress in 2011.

The Christian Right understands that its conservative arguments help attract and maintain supporters. It will need to sustain those supporters, not just in 2012, but in the near and more distant futures as well. Its influence can be—and often is—multiplied when it works in coalition with other sectors of the socially conservative Right.

Those who are hurt by the Christian Right include groups targeted and demonized for religious and political reasons. Single parents, children, sexually active youth, LGBT people of all types, low income people, and people of color have all been scapegoated by the Christian Right for contributing to the moral and economic decay of American culture. When the Christian Right uses its considerable power to target a particular group, it can be costly and

*Single parents, children, sexually active youth, LGBT people of all types, low income people, and people of color have all been scapegoated by the Christian Right.*

exhausting, but necessary, to pull together an effective response.

### A TEA PARTY ON THE RIGHT

Since 2009 the Tea Party phenomenon has been all over the news, making its name a household word and successfully endorsing multiple conservative and economic libertarian political candidates. This type of conservative insurgency is nothing new. It is the latest form of a reaction against progressive politics that began in opposition to Franklin Roosevelt's social welfare policies of the New Deal. It lives on today as a combination of upstart grassroots groups, corporate funders, political ideologues, Free Market libertarians, anti-union activists, xenophobic White supremacists, and conservative Christian activists. Some scholars refer to the Tea Party, or more accurately, the wide array of groups and individuals associated with the Tea Party name, as a form of Right-wing populism which periodically has appeared on our political scene since the colonial era.<sup>21</sup>

To defenders of LGBT rights, the Tea Party phenomenon may appear innocuous or even alluring, given its rhetorical emphasis on economic rather than "social" issues. There are indeed social libertarians within the Tea Party for whom homosexuality is not a principal political concern. On balance, however, the Tea Party represents a threat to LGBT people, both directly and indirectly.

The economy has been the public focus of Tea Party demands: reduce spending, lower taxes, pay down the deficit, and shrink the size of government. Early complaints criticized the bank bailouts, corporate bonuses, and other examples of privilege for the rich, marking this upsurge in political activity as decidedly populist. In some cases these sentiments enjoyed broad support across the political spectrum.

Specific campaigns, like attempts to repeal the health care reform law of 2010 or new state anti-immigrant legislation, signal a broader dissatisfaction with government. This "throw the bums out" approach hit incumbents hard during the 2010 midterm elections. There was a call for narrowing the reach of government, except when it is needed to protect corporate, conservative, or mega-wealthy interests. Many who suffer from the impact of the recent Great Recession on their own lives agree with at least part of the Tea Party rhetoric as a way to deal with their frustration over no quick recovery. Early Tea Party rallies were characterized by expressions of

anger directed at whomever the participants chose to blame for their own economic insecurities and social dissatisfaction. Bankers, immigrants, and Obama led the list of scapegoats for fiscal troubles, and abortion providers, single mothers, and LGBT people have also been singled out, because they are easy targets, and they represent departure from the idealized norm.<sup>22</sup>

While anti-LGBT signs have been commonplace at Tea Party rallies, evidence of the apparent sanctioned homophobia within its ranks, the greater political danger to LGBT people lies with the leaders and Tea Party supported candidates. They craft positions and platforms to attract the broadest range of conservatives. In anticipation of the January 2012 Iowa caucuses, Tea Party favorites Rick Santorum, Michele Bachmann, and Rick Perry signed a controversial anti-gay marriage pledge promoted by the conservative Iowan group Family Leader. This cemented their support of the Defense of Marriage Act and reasserted them as standard bearers for traditional values, a position for them as equally important as support for smaller government and lower taxes.

*The Tea Party represents a threat to LGBT people, both directly and indirectly.*

### WHO SUPPORTS THE TEA PARTY?

Individual Tea Party members, or at least those who express support for the movement, are almost exclusively White, better educated than the general public, older and more likely male, and more conservative politically than most Republicans. They are middle class, and they uniformly think Obama has done a bad job as president. Depending on the wording of polls, we can estimate that by the 2010 midterm elections, between 20-28% of voters supported Tea Party positions.<sup>23</sup> Tea Party supporters have become one of the most influential political blocs, and this has happened in the short span of just over a year.

For an LGBT audience perhaps the most pertinent piece of demographic information about Tea Party backers is their religious affiliation. Almost half of Tea Party supporters identify as conservative Christians.<sup>24</sup> If you couple that with the fact that Tea Partiers are almost by definition politically active, you have evidence that the Tea Party agenda is ripe for mobilization around the classic culture war issues of abortion and same-sex marriage.

### TEA PARTY INFRASTRUCTURE

Multiple organizations are connected through a loose affiliation with the “Tea Party” name. Some are very much grassroots organizations, emerging from locally organized efforts and spearheaded by people often with little or no previous political experience. These groups do not all adhere to an economic cause alone. Tea Party organizations include members and some leaders who espouse White supremacy and antisemitism.<sup>25</sup> Others are national groups, well financed by corporate backers like FreedomWorks, which attempt to influence the agenda and strategies of the Tea Parties from a national perch. While FreedomWorks insists it has a membership of over one million members, it functions more as a fictional grassroots, or “Astroturf,” group because the policy decisions, positions on issues, and funding all come from the top. In the 1980s prominent Right-wing funder David Koch founded Citizens for a Sound Economy, the precursor to FreedomWorks, as a grassroots-looking

front for business interests. This same “Astroturf” approach is retained in FreedomWorks.

Dick Armey, a former Republican member of Congress, and one time majority leader, heads FreedomWorks. The group is focused on the economic issues attractive to corporations: smaller

government, and “more freedom,” which on the one hand appeals to individuals who are concerned about how their taxes are spent, but on the other hand supports deregulation of corporations in the name of free enterprise and lower taxes, not just for Main Street but for Wall Street. FreedomWorks has pushed its own preferred economic issues, and it is in the forefront of attempts to repeal The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. The publisher of *Forbes* magazine, Steve Forbes, sits on the FreedomWorks board as well as on the board of the Heritage Foundation, a key framer of conservative ideas.

But other forces are at work within Tea Party organizations. In February of 2010 a social networking group called Tea Party Nation convened a national convention of Tea Party members in Nashville. Sarah Palin and Tom Tancredo, a conservative Christian and anti-immigrant politician from Colorado, spoke, signaling that at least for this sector of the movement, the Christian Right’s social agenda was an effective draw. Roy Moore, the Alabama judge

who refused to remove the Ten Commandments from his courtroom, got accolades for his speech, which included:

[Obama] has ignored our history and our heritage, arrogantly declaring to the world that we are no longer a Christian nation. He has elevated immorality to a new level, setting aside the entire month of June to celebrate gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender pride. He now threatens to change our law to allow homosexuality in our military...<sup>26</sup>

Another example is the Tea Party-endorsed takeover of the Wake County School District that includes Raleigh, North Carolina. In the past the school board’s response to White flight from the city to suburbs had been to do away with high-poverty, racially segregated schools by instituting a policy of school choice across a district big enough to include all economic levels. A new conservative board has replaced this practice with neighborhood schools, arguing that there is no longer a need for deliberate desegregation programs, appealing to what some erroneously call a “postracial” society. One school board member said that, “This is Raleigh in 2010, not Selma, Alabama in the 1960s—My life is integrated.... We need new paradigms.”<sup>27</sup> This new paradigm is re-segregation.

The Tea Party, then, is more than just a smaller government, lower-taxes insurgency. It has attracted a broad range of factions with diverse political goals into a project that demonstrated its political power in the 2010 elections and seeks to expand its influence. Within the Tea Party, Christian conservatism and even Christian Nationalism are forces vying for influence with libertarian, anti-immigrant, anti-LGBT, and anti-Washington impulses. One result has been the further erosion of moderate voices within the Republican Party.

### POLARIZING THE PARTIES

The Republican Party’s moderate faction, described by some as “Rockefeller Republicans,” was a group of politicians who, despite their more conservative leanings in some areas, shared an enlightened view of the purposes of government and the function of debate, compromise, and negotiated settlements with the Democrats. Named after Nelson Rockefeller, who served as governor of New York from 1959-1973 and was Vice President under Gerald

*The Tea Party is more than just a smaller government, lower taxes insurgency.*



A participant at a Tea Party rally expresses his disdain for the government.

Ford, this group of politicians prevented Republicans from slipping too far to the Right, and exercised a moderating and restraining influence on Congress until the 1990s. As many voters became more conservative or left the party to become Independents, support for moderate Republicans diminished. This group has been called RINOs, or “Republicans in Name Only,” a term of derision. The Congressional delegation dwindled in size until now only a handful remains, including the likes of Senators Olympia Snowe and Susan Collins of Maine and Lisa Murkowski of Alaska.

The 2010 midterms were a demonstration of the newly-developed heft of the anti-incumbent Tea Party. Republicans gained control of the House of Representatives and Tea Party-endorsed Nikki Haley and Rand Paul won their races in South Carolina and Kentucky. With moderates so diminished in influence, not just in Congress but among the Republican Party leadership, the party is faced with the quandary of how to run a winning presidential candidate in the age of the Tea Party and the renewed strength of the Christian Right. As Paul Starr, co-editor of the liberal *American Prospect* magazine has said:

The source of the party’s shift is a mysterious death that may be the single most important contemporary political development—the demise of the moderate Republican in national politics.

Worrying that the Right wing of the Republican Party may undo the social, labor, and environmental protections enacted since the New Deal, Starr continues:

I was never much of a fan of moderate Republicans, yet these days, I find myself wishing more than anything else that they would rise from the dead.<sup>28</sup>

## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS ABOUT THE TEA PARTY

Paul Weyrich recognized the value of bringing various parts of the conservative movement together with a shared project. In describing the 2002 founding of the secretive rightist Arlington Group, he said, “If we could all sing off the same sheet of music, we could be a significant force....”<sup>29</sup> The project Weyrich described was a series of state ballot initiatives against same-sex marriage, one that united the Christian Right and showcased its renewed power. It’s tempting to speculate: what if strong alliances to fight the Right had been in place in those states, as there was in Oregon in its successful campaign against the anti-LGBT ballot question Measure 9, which learned its lessons from a loss four years before with their Measure 8?

These days it is the Tea Party that has become a vehicle for various Right-wing sectors to work collab-

oratively toward shared goals. The 2010 midterm elections were the first major show of that power. Although it remains to be seen what direction the Tea Parties will take and what their staying power will be, there is no question that they bear careful scrutiny and warrant swift strategic responses.

### THE REST OF THE RIGHT

While the Tea Party is undoubtedly a major player on the Right in 2011, it is only part of the picture. The Political Right in the United States is a complex set of organizations, movements, and key players that currently controls, but is independent of, the Republican Party. These groups hold sometimes competing or contradictory agendas.<sup>30</sup> For instance, some libertarians may feel that the wars in Iraq and

Afghanistan were a waste of taxpayer money, antagonizing those who support military intervention abroad as necessary for national security. Cultural warriors from the Christian Right, on the other hand, have no patience for pragmatists who are willing to compromise on an absolute prohibition to abortion. Even within the Tea Party, there are splits. Anti-immigrant advocates can worry some corporate interests that depend on low-wage immigrant labor to sustain their profits.

The scale and complexity of the Right make it difficult to challenge successfully. For many liberal and progressive activists, choosing to focus on one issue at a time, such as LGBT rights, feels more manageable and reflects the development of many groups as single issue organizations. There are problems with this approach, though. Single-issue organizing can create an artificial competition among issues, for relative importance with liberals and social justice advocates, for followers, and for funding. It can mask potential connections across issues and discourage the formations of useful alliances. Single-issue approaches have been criticized for focusing only on narrowly defined goals, such as the legalization of same-sex marriage rather than the full equality of all LGBT people.

The Right's vulnerabilities will be found in the cracks in its ideological mortar, rather than by focusing exclusively on toppling a single pillar of the struc-

ture like "Don't Ask, Don't Tell." For the 2012 presidential election, for instance, the Republicans need a combination of Christian Right voters, Tea Party supporters, what's left of moderate old-style conservatives, along with other constituencies, and fence-sitting Independents susceptible to timely and skillful issue framing.

### HOW THE RIGHT USES HOMOPHOBIA

Because conservative Christians currently constitute a large proportion of the Right, its agenda is susceptible to the use of moral traditionalist arguments, including homophobic ones. Although one purpose of a homophobic campaign is to challenge and weaken the LGBT movement for equality (and to punish a group that is seen as a threat to mainstream culture), there is another reason for using anti-gay arguments. Anti-gay frames mobilize existing prejudice as a way to sustain a mass movement.

Strategists have mounted anti-gay campaigns since at least the 1950s when the finding of an "enemy" to scapegoat was perfected during the "Red Scare." Conservative strategists in the 1970s saw the value of building a coalition among several sectors of the Right, including Christian Right leader Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority. This "New Right" managed to overcome the embarrassment the Republicans suffered in the 1964 Goldwater loss by 1980 when it successfully propelled Ronald Reagan into the White House.

This network of strategists and organizations continued to build its power during the 1980s. By the 1990s, the campaigns that used anti-gay themes became more sophisticated. According to political scientist Jean Hardisty, this not-so-new coalition was able:

- to make local anti-homosexual campaigns appear to be exclusively grassroots efforts, when they are guided by major national organizations;
- to increase the effect of each New Right organization's efforts by building networks and coalitions among the organizations and by coordinating political campaigns;
- to camouflage the religious content of the organizing and create the more secular theme of "defense of the family;"
- to pursue the anti-homosexual campaign under the slogan "no special rights," despite that slogan's inaccuracy.<sup>31</sup>

*Single issue approaches have been criticized for focusing only on narrowly-defined goals, such as the legalization of same-sex marriage rather than the full equality of all LGBT people.*



Is the invisible hand of the Market the same as the invisible hand of God?

The anti-gay efforts in Oregon in the 1980s and beyond (Measure 8) and in the 1990s in Colorado (Amendment 2) have become case studies of how to construct a campaign based on homophobia in order to build a conservative movement. These efforts are described in the case studies section of this report.

### STRATEGIES

Anti-LGBT organizers make use of a number of strategies that are shared with other parts of the Right. Because these approaches are effective, they are worth noting.

- 1) The Right has been adept at skillful **framing of its issues** to make them appealing to their target audiences. “Traditional family values” evolved into more specific campaigns that opposed certain progressive efforts such as: comprehensive sexuality education (a threat to “parental rights” since parents should teach their children their own values about sexuality themselves); welfare rights (shrinking the social safety net through “marriage promotion”); the legalization of same-sex marriage (a threat to “religious freedom” by “requiring” churches to sanctify same-sex marriage) and the need for “marriage protection” to codify discrimination against LGBT couples who seek to marry. This report further describes specific anti-LGBT frames in a special framing section.

- 2) Right-wing strategists **take advantage of misguided populist actions** by tacit or deliberate encouragement like the challenge to Obama’s citizenship and the 9/11 Truth movements, the Town Hall anti-health care reform activities of 2010, and the fear that allowing the budget to pass in 2011 would mandate federally-funded abortions, despite their unfounded claims and conspiracist thinking. Such expressions of dissatisfaction with the Obama administration have opened the opportunity for the expansion of grassroots opposition to Democratic initiatives. The Right uses these impulses to mobilize their base, gaining mainstream media attention and putting pressure on government officials while at the same time maintaining contact and organizing their troops for future actions.

- 3) After Barry Goldwater’s defeat in 1964, the discovery that church rosters and lists of candidate supporters could be combined into mailing lists was a coup for the Right. Those lists have evolved with technological advances to fine-tuned **online organizing and database development**. Companies now specialize in the creation of conservative and Christian “customer relations management” lists based on consumer and personal interest harvested from online data mining.

*Anti-gay frames mobilize existing prejudice as a way to sustain a mass movement.*

- 4) The Right **showcases media-friendly spokespeople** like Sarah Palin and Michele Bachmann and observes public reaction to **trial balloons** that champion positions on current issues or perhaps introduce new ones. Even if the speakers are found to err in the details of their message, mainstream media attention to these speakers brings the message to a broader audience and gives strategists a chance to calculate the potential of a particular idea.
- 5) As was seen in California’s 2008 Proposition 8 campaign, the Right can **create political wedges** between the LGBT movement and its potential allies. The African-American community underwent targeted organizing through its churches to become mobilized not based on a shared experience of discrimi-

nation but by capitalizing on homophobia among church goers.

- 6) The Right **sticks with successful tactics**, such as the state-level DOMA ballot initiatives, until they no longer prove fruitful. The number of ballot questions has slowed since 2008 and Proposition 8, signaling the possibility that new approaches are on the horizon.
- 7) A new breed of **venture capitalist donors** are now joining traditional funders (e.g. family foundations such as Scaife, Bradley, Coors' Castle Rock, or Olin) for the Right. They are funding modern infrastructural campaigns. Silicon Valley entrepreneurs like Ken Eldred and Reid Rutherford have backed a major Christian effort called United in Purpose and its get out the vote campaign called "Champion the Vote." The plan for Champion the Vote uses the frames of the sanctity of life, religious freedom, and traditional marriage to target unregistered Christians and engage them in the 2012 elections.<sup>32</sup> Ralph Reed and Gary Marx's Faith and Freedom Coalition seeks to cement the relationship between conservative Christians and fiscal conservatives through a massive voter database and mobilization project targeting those constituencies.

### THREATS TO LGBT RIGHTS

Many LGBT people are familiar with the Right's history of homophobic attacks: the destruction of careers under Sen. McCarthy, the persistent gay-bashing in bars, on the street, or anywhere LGBT people appeared visible, legal fights in legislatures and courtrooms, the federal government's reaction to HIV/AIDS, the discrimination against LGBT people in such places as the military, employment, and the bedroom, and the stubborn refusal to legalize same-sex marriage.

One way to look at these attacks is to see them merely as manifestations of prejudice, but that fails to recognize the *systemic use of prejudice* as mortar for building a powerful conservative movement. The LGBT community and its demands are targets of the Right in part because mounting opposition to LGBT activism continues to bring in money, volunteers and voters.

A deeper problem exists for LGBT people beyond scapegoating and that is the potential effect of core



Mitt Romney speaking at the Values Voters Summit.

conservative proposals. A fiscally conservative philosophy holds these tenets: government should remain small with little or no debt; businesses and banks are deregulated to stimulate free market activity; and taxes are kept low in order to encourage corporate growth. According to critics of the Tea Party, such policies have contributed to the shrinking of the social safety net, have eroded retirement savings, and have increased home foreclosures.<sup>33</sup> These economic justice issues are at once a challenge and an opportunity for the LGBT community.

Three compelling reasons exist for the LGBT community to challenge the Tea Party and the Christian Right agenda. The first is that everyone has been affected by the current economic crisis, and LGBT people themselves have an interest in economic recovery, whether they are people in need, unemployed, middle class, or homeowners. We are beginning to get a more accurate picture of who LGBT people really are, thanks to new U.S. Census policies and analysts from groups such as the Williams Institute at UCLA, the Urban Institute, and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. We now can demonstrate what had been evident only anecdotally: LGBT people are at least as poor, and equally as racially diverse, as the country as a whole. 1 in 4 LGBT people are people of color.<sup>34</sup> Slices of the LGBT community, such as transgender people and families with children, are at higher risk. Children of same-sex couples are twice as likely to be poor than children of heterosexual couples.<sup>35</sup> Transgender individuals are unemployed at twice the national average.<sup>36</sup>

Secondly, some members of the LGBT community have experienced the Great Recession's hardships disproportionately. On the one hand, LGBT people have historically had difficulty accessing cer-

tain benefits once guaranteed by social safety net programs. But people of color, parents, the elderly and sick, transgender people, and others who struggle to make ends meet have been hit harder, and they are, or should be, constituents of LGBT advocacy groups.

Finally, the LGBT movement has an opportunity at this moment to recognize these disparities as structural issues that, if unaddressed in an effective way, will continue to affect the wellbeing of everyone. It is during such times of instability that the Right historically has tried to promote its agenda. Because LGBT people exist in and live among all the communities targeted by Rightist rhetoric, they too are susceptible. There is no denying the value of understanding how this threat works and what can be done about it. Recent demands for economic justice have been buoyed by Occupy Wall Street actions, and there is plenty of room for LGBT movement support in this and other progressive economic projects.

What this means for LGBT people is this: recognizing that they are attacked in part as a way to build conservative political strength can make it easier to identify with other vulnerable groups that are victims of the same strategy. This is more readily seen in some cases than in others. For instance, the anti-abortion movement shares the same set of funders, spokespeople, strategists, organizations, and media outlets with the anti-gay movement. And they share a goal as well: the continued mobilization of conservative Christians and their allies as a crucial part of maintaining and expanding conservative power. Sometimes the anti-immigrant movement sifts its rhetoric through a filter of non-race-based, specious arguments. Examples are false claims that immigrants degrade the environment by overloading our country as newcomers, or immigrants are a drain on taxpayer-supported social services. This is scapegoating, blaming one group for complex societal problems, and using existing prejudice to distract voters from the causes and potential solutions to these problems.

At first this may seem unrelated to fighting the Right around such issues as the legalization of same-sex marriage. But both LGBT people and immigrants are blamed for conservative-identified problems, such as the disintegration of traditional sex and gender roles or the high cost of publicly funded social services.

Challenging the Right's support of bigotry will eventually bring about laws that prohibit overt discrimination, or *de jure* inequality, if, and this is a big "if," those supporting such laws become the majori-

ty. This has been the focus of the decades-long struggle for LGBT rights. In the long run, challenging the Right can help bring about success.

But laws alone will not guarantee that all members of the LGBT community will experience equality. Under-supported parts of the LGBT community, such as youth or transgender people, are potential targets for *de facto*, or matter-of-fact, discrimination.

The most pervasive forms of discrimination run deeper than the existence of overtly anti-LGBT policies. Structural homophobia—the built-in anti-LGBT practices of institutions from faith communities to government agencies—and cultural homophobia—the (heterosexist) expectation that LGBT people should be less valued than other members of society—are stubbornly holding on as elements of American life. Unless LGBT people have the means to meet societally-sanctioned standards of acceptability, individuals will not easily overcome these challenges. Those standards include: appearing gender conforming, living in conventional family structures, practicing normative sexual behaviors, and avoiding incrimination by the criminal justice or immigration systems.

*One way to look at these attacks is to see them merely as manifestations of prejudice, but that fails to recognize the systemic use of prejudice as mortar for building a powerful conservative movement.*

### SOCIAL AND FISCAL CONSERVATISM

The July 2011 debt ceiling debate in Congress showed the nation how powerful Tea Party "fiscal conservatives" can be and how their actions can directly affect social services. Although the resolution did allow the ceiling to be raised, moderate and mainstream Democrats were disappointed to realize that there were few gains for them and their constituents in need. Entitlement programs like Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security remain targeted as part of a plan to cut spending and balance the federal budget without raising taxes. Because the Congressional Tea Party Caucus was so inflexible in their no new taxes position, the prolonged debate was judged overly rancorous by the public, and when it was over, a record-breaking 82% of the public expressed disapproval of Congress.<sup>37</sup> The areas of inflexibility included refusing to adequately fund government programs that help people in need, such as

low income people and the elderly.

Social Security survivor benefits do not exist for LGBT couples because of federal restrictions on the definition of marriage, designed specifically to exclude LGBT couples. Federal health insurance plans, Medicare and Medicaid, also do not acknowledge same-sex marriage and prevent access to the subsequent shared benefits available to straight married couples. Certain health care procedures are denied public funding to women and transgender persons. Arguments that support cutting these entitlement programs, therefore, make it even harder for LGBT people to receive the benefits available to others. It follows, then, that fiscal arguments about reducing the budget have a disproportionately negative effect on LGBT people.

Conservative Christian beliefs can have a profound effect on support for government provision of social services. In a 2011 study by Baylor University sociologists, researchers found that 1 in 5 Americans believe God has a plan for them and that this belief affects their interpretation of economic issues. According to the study's researchers, believers are able to associate economist Adam Smith's "invisible hand," a phrase Smith coined to describe the force that guides the market, with a God who guides all things. According to Baylor sociologist Paul Froese:

*But laws alone will not guarantee that all members of the LGBT community will experience equality.*

They think the economy works because God wants it to work. It's a new religious economic idealism...[with politicians] invoking God while chanting "less government."<sup>38</sup>

79 percent of those who believed God has a plan also felt that "able-bodied people out of work shouldn't receive unemployment checks."<sup>39</sup>

In 2009, a new alliance, the Freedom Federation, was formed by a collection of Christian Right organizations. One of the founding members, however, was not known to many Christian Right supporters at the time. Americans for Prosperity, the "Astroturf" group funded by the Koch brothers that struggles to maintain control over the Tea Party, affiliated itself with this group in an apparent effort to infuse the lower taxes/shrink government frame into Christian Right discussions. As Peter Montgomery of RightWingWatch at People For the American Way

observed, this indicates "...a merger of the Religious Right and the ostensibly secular Tea Party movement to create an electoral juggernaut that will determine the outcome of the 2012 Republican presidential primary."<sup>40</sup>

## IMPLICATIONS FOR LGBT ORGANIZING

Building on the awareness of how the Right works helps develop a clearer picture of how and why to oppose the Tea Party and other Right-wing projects. As the most recent version of an upsurge in conservative populist activism, and one of the most successful in many years, the Tea Party must be reckoned with. When it engages in polarizing rhetoric based on fear, whether it is homophobic, anti-immigrant, anti-liberal, or "post-racial" racism, it should be exposed and challenged for using inflammatory language that plays on fear and ignorance.

The Christian Right uses anti-abortion and homophobic rhetoric to build power through fear. The Tea Party uses a similar tactic of developing anti-government, anti-Obama, and anti-incumbent language to playing on fears about the economic crisis. The Right will no doubt continue to use multiple strategies across different issues to achieve social exclusion of its scapegoated targets. Tony Perkins recently combined multiple fear-based allusions into a single pithy frame used to plead for money:

Unfortunately, liberals in Congress and pro-abortion and pro-homosexual activists work hard to silence Christians and conservatives completely.<sup>41</sup>

A Latino Tea Party spokesperson is quoted in Tea Party Nation's website:

It is estimated that in the next 5 years, illegal immigration will account for 35% of the increase in the school population in the United States; and this huge cost of educating the illegal aliens will be pay (sic) by the American taxpayers.<sup>42</sup>

Not only can such language contribute to an uncivil climate, it distracts many of us from the key issue that provoked the impetus of the Tea Party in the first place—an economy with serious problems, negatively affecting almost everyone.

**SUMMARY**

The Right uses homophobia as a tool because it has worked for them in the past. It has contributed to the rise and consolidation of conservative political power and the perpetuation of unearned power and privilege for the few at the expense of the many.

2011 has been a moment of refocusing for the U.S. Right as it wrestles with an upcoming election year, a potentially responsive but unpredictable Congress, at least as far as conservative issues are concerned, and uncertainty about how much to depend on old standbys like anti-LGBT campaigns. While using homophobic references can continue to rally the true believers to vote, strategists on the Right must wrestle with how far the anti-LGBT frames will carry their movement without fizzling out or backfiring.

One possibility is a sort of containment strategy with homophobia as the drawstring. Given the fact that eventually many LGBT policies are changing, strategists on the Right may choose to cut their losses on some of these fights and focus their efforts elsewhere. As we have seen in other struggles, the passage of laws does not eradicate prejudice, and that prejudice can be used in a campaign to solidify hard right conservative political power.

We already have hints of the directions the Right may take, focusing on what they may consider more vulnerable areas of the LGBT movement. The Right argues that the transgender community is threatening religious freedom by advocating for the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA):

ENDA is designed to get homosexuals, bisexuals, cross-dressers, and transsexuals added to the list of federally-protected minorities. If this is accomplished, the LGBT agenda will be imposed on businesses, local, state and federal governments, including public schools K-12, Christian day care centers and camps, plus religious broadcasters with more than 15 employees.<sup>43</sup>

They allege that advocates for LGBT youth are “taking over” public schools and “causing” youth suicides:

[LGBT youth] have been told by the homosexual movement...that they are “born gay” and can never change. This—and not society’s disapproval—may create a sense of despair that can lead to suicide.<sup>44</sup>

This containment strategy could have deep implications for LGBT activists and other social justice advocates. The use of homophobia is just one tool that the Right is able to wield in its relentless pushback of liberalism and progressive reforms. Because their toolkit includes tactics that take advantage of American unease around issues of race, sexuality, economic status, or religion, the Right may choose to focus on one of its other tools. It may cut its losses around *de jure* equality issues like the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) and ride the tide of Tea Party hostility to big government.

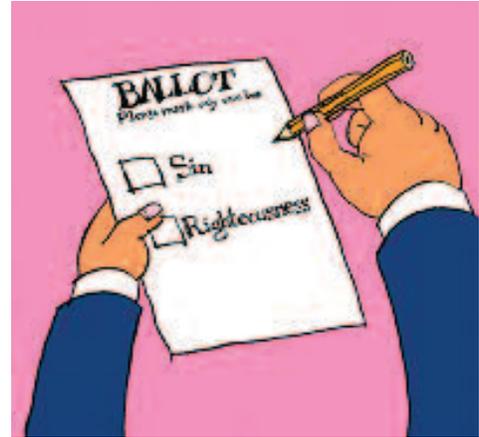
But the Right may find, where coalitions of targeted or marginalized groups have come together, that it is more difficult to oppose a force greater than the size of the LGBT community alone. While it is probable that any LGBT campaign will attract a countermovement, it will be less likely that the Right will prevail against LGBT forces in coalition with other groups. Examples of this include Oregon’s Safe Schools for All campaign and the One Kalamazoo campaign in Michigan.<sup>45</sup> Additional areas of potential activism include LGBT coalition work around immigration reform, maintaining Medicare and Social Security, seeking reproductive justice, and reinvigorating the government’s commitment to those in need. We have not yet seen the complete realization of the potential intersection of LGBT activism and the work of other social justice movements. It may just be the path for full LGBT liberation.

*The use of homophobia is just one tool that the Right is able to wield in its relentless pushback of liberalism.*

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## Black Conservatives, the Tea Party, and LGBT Politics

by Kenyon Farrow

Racial politics remains a clear place of tension in the LGBT equality movement. Many within the White LGBT community and some equality organizations feel that African Americans, as the bearers of the Civil Rights Movement, are disappointed in the level of Black support for LGBT issues, particularly marriage equality. Many people in the Black community, including Black LGBT leadership, feel like the LGBT community and its organizations give lip service to racial—and economic—justice causes that affect African Americans as a whole.

As a result, the conservative movement is able to exploit the tensions between these two communities. These tensions became visible after the Proposition 8 vote in California banned same-sex marriage in the state. Initial reporting that 70 percent of Black voters backed the ban (the number was actually 58 percent) led LGBT blogger Dan Savage and others to blame the black community for the reversal.

Any effort to create trust between the Black community—including its LGBT members—and White LGBT activists starts with understanding what is going on. Black people are often assumed to be monolithic in their opinions, or always supporting any other group advocating for some expansion of civil rights. But there are complex political dynamics in the Black community, including Black Democrats who are conservative on social issues. There are also a handful of Black people who are in fact conservatives, nurtured by the conservative movement to both advance their agenda and to undercut any allegations of racism by people on the Left.

Now that there is a newly reconfigured conservative movement known as the Tea Party, it should be no surprise that there are also Black conservatives who are also closely aligned with it, including one member of Congress, Rep. Allen West (R-FL), and Fox News favorite Herman Cain. Despite their high visibility, however, these Black conservatives do not have much influence within the Black community. But as we'll see, Black social conservatism within otherwise liberal churches was nurtured by Right-wing outreach and "uplift" narratives deeply rooted in the community. Arguments from the Right about the need for Blacks to pull up their bootstraps found an audience among Black middle class strivers seeking to distance themselves from the unwashed. As we build new alliances, we need to navigate these complex political configurations. Here's a quick run-down, followed by some possible ways to improve the political alliance between Blacks and the LGBT community.

### CONTEMPORARY BLACK CONSERVATISM

Since the 1980s, the conservative movement has sought to organize, promote, and disseminate the intellectual work and philosophies of Black conservative intellectuals and policy makers. Having Black allies is a way to thwart allegations that conservatives, and the Republican party by extension, were really aligned with racist extremist groups like the Ku Klux Klan.

Much of the work done to support Black conservatives like Shelby Steele, Ward Connerly, and Clarence Thomas focused on what seemed to be fiscal conservative issues; however social and cultural rhetoric was often used at the same time. So much of the Black conservative intellectual and policy output

*Much of the Black conservative intellectual and policy output of the 1980s was based on the idea that institutional racism was over.*



An example of social marketing, targeted to African Americans.

of the 1980s was based on the idea that institutional racism was over, and that affirmative action and social safety net programs like welfare were actually promoting poverty and dependency. If these programs ended, they argued, poor Blacks would be forced to compete in the workplace, and prove themselves to be “productive” citizens. Furthermore, if Black women were removed from the welfare rolls, they would be more likely to marry (men), and have fewer children that the state was responsible for taking care of, according to the conservative logic. So economic conservatism, while cloaked as “fiscal prudence,” has long relied on social conservatism (rhetoric dependent on sexism, racism, and a hatred of the poor) as a primary vehicle for delivering those messages and policy prescriptions.

With the election of President Obama, the Right has used his Presidency to both drum up racialized anxieties of White America, and at the same time continue to advance the notion that America has become a “post-racial” society.<sup>1</sup> Newt Gingrich’s rhetoric calling Barack Obama the “food stamp” President is only the latest example.

We’ve seen a resurgence in racial uplift narratives from segments of the Black community, calling for self discipline and responsibility for Black people to overcome racism as individuals (as opposed to fighting institutional and structural forms of racism). This veers dangerously close to conservative explanations blaming Blacks for the foreclosure crisis, poverty, and health disparities in their communities.

President Obama has used racial uplift rhetoric with Black audiences in the United States and Africa alike, perhaps as a way of thwarting concerns that he would be “too black” a president. At the 2009 Centennial celebration of the NAACP, President Obama ended his speech with the kinds of “personal responsibility” narratives common among conservatives. While controversial with some Black leaders, this approach also plays well to Black middle class audiences who often espouse such beliefs behind closed doors:

Government programs alone won’t get our children to the Promised Land. We need a new mind set, a new set of attitudes—because one of the most durable and destructive legacies of discrimination is the way we’ve internalized a sense of limitation; how so many in our community have come to expect so little from the world and from themselves.... To parents—to parents, we can’t tell our kids to do well in school and then fail to support them when they get home. You can’t just contract out parenting. For our kids to excel, we have to accept our responsibility to help them learn. That means putting away the Xbox. Putting our kids to bed at a reasonable hour. It means attending those parent-teacher conferences and reading to our children and helping them with their homework.<sup>2</sup>

The Democratic President is using this rhetoric

of “personal responsibility” to signal to mostly White voters a detachment from civil rights, and so are Black GOP leaders. Tea Party favorite Herman Cain told CNN in October 2011, “I don’t believe racism in this country today holds anybody back in a big way. I have seen blacks in middle management move up to top management in some of the biggest corporations in America. They weren’t held back because of racism. No. People sometimes hold themselves back because they want to use racism as an excuse for them not being able to achieve what they want to achieve.”<sup>3</sup>

Similarly, newly elected Representative Tim Scott (R-SC), a Black conservative rising star in the GOP and Tea Party, thinks that selling capitalism and free-marketeering will cure poverty. He told *TheGrio.com*, “I think we have a responsibility to sell capitalism and entrepreneurship to folks in desperate straits. If economically you feel yourself cut out of the American dream, I think it is our responsibility to go there and say it is alive, it is well and it is for you. Then it is their responsibility to do something with it.”<sup>4</sup>

*The conservative movement sought to particularly use homophobia as a wedge issue with African Americans starting in the 1980s.*

If racial uplift narratives work to signal an idea that poverty is a result of lack of discipline or immorality, it is no surprise that sexuality and gender identity would similarly be used to argue against social welfare programs, or civil equality. But the conservative movement sought to particularly use homophobia as a wedge issue with African Americans starting in the 1980s. The Traditional Values Coalition and the Congress of the Springs of Life Ministries released a video in 1993 targeting Black Christian churches called *Gay Rights, Special Rights: Inside the Homosexual Agenda*. The goal of the video was to paint nonheterosexual people as only White and upper class, and as sexual pariahs, while portraying Black people as pure, chaste, and morally superior. The video juxtaposed images of White gay men from the leather/S&M community with the voice of Dr. Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream” speech, leaving conservative Black viewers with the fear that the Civil Rights Movement was being taken over by morally debased human beings.



Rep. Tim Scott (R-SC) campaigned on a racial uplift, pro-entrepreneurship agenda.

The Christian Conservative Movement used that video as a grassroots movement building strategy to generate support among socially conservative Black Christian ministers and their congregations to neutralize the backing of LGBT rights by Black voters. It is true that polls have shown that Black voters are less supportive of same-sex marriage and think of “civil rights” as a very particular movement in the political history of African Americans.

But it is also important to note that African-American opinions about same-sex marriage do not translate into other “LGBT” nondiscrimination issues, as Black voters overwhelmingly support other forms of relationship recognition for LGBT families, as well as ending other forms of discrimination against LGBT people in jobs, employment, and other aspects of public life. In addition, neither Black conservatives nor the conservative movement as a whole have made headway in turning African Americans into politically conservative voters on virtually any other issue.

Nevertheless, this video outreach proved to be a very smart political strategy, as Black churches (due to the dismantling of radical Black political formations and the decline in Black membership in unions and other organized groups and spaces) have become a major site of mobilizing Black voters. They often provide voter registration cards, and assistance with getting members to the polls who do not have cars, are disabled, or are senior citizens. Black ministers often have relationships to municipal, county, state and federal elected officials to carry concerns of their

members into the halls of policymakers in ways Blacks who are not involved in religious and civic institutions do not have. This, in and of itself, characterizes part of who is able, or motivated, to vote in the Black community.

### AFRICAN AMERICANS AND THE TEA PARTY

The truth is Tea Party and GOP positions, such as cutting social welfare programs, repealing the Fourteenth Amendment which guarantees citizenship for anyone born in the United States, supporting “birtherism,” and the overt and covert racism espoused by its leadership and base, are a complete turnoff for most African Americans. During the August 2011 recess, members of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) embarked on a five-city jobs fair and tour to cities with large Black populations, particularly those impacted by the recession. At a town hall meeting in Miami as part of that tour, CBC members addressed their concerns with the Tea Party and its influence in American policy and politics in no uncertain terms. In addition to Rep. Maxine Waters (D-CA) making news with her sound bite that “The Tea Party can go straight to hell,” Rep. Andre Carson (D-IN) offered up another stinging analysis of the Tea Party’s relationship to Black interests:

This is the effort that we’re seeing of Jim Crow.... Some of these folks in Congress right now would love to see us as second-class citizens. Some of them in Congress right now of this Tea Party movement would love to see you and me ... hanging on a tree. Some of them right now in Congress are comfortable where we were 50 or 60 years ago.<sup>6</sup>

While Carson’s comments may seem incendiary to some, the audience in attendance erupted in loud and approving cheers and applause.

Rep. Allen West (R-FL) was not one of them. West, the only member of both the Congressional Black Caucus and the House Tea Party Caucus, appeared on Fox News’ *The O’Reilly Factor* the following morning to respond, using one of the most popular narratives of Black Conservatives—most Black people are simply blind followers (i.e. slaves) of the Left, and that by embracing the Conservative Movement and its values, one can become independent and “free.”

So you have this 21st Century plantation ... where the Democrat (sic) party has forever taken the Black vote for granted, and you have established certain Black leaders who are nothing more than the overseers of that plantation.<sup>7</sup>

There is one Tea Party organization that is explicitly targeting African Americans. The Crispus Attucks Tea Party, founded in January, 2011 as a local Houston, TX organization, lists elements of its mission:

- Break the cycles of economic and psychological dependency on government programs that degrade and shackle many Americans of African descent.
- Support the efforts of those who want to leave the “Socialist Plantation.”
- Teach each how to assume all of liberty’s responsibilities and capitalize on America’s most precious opportunities.
- Maximize the percentage of Americans of African descent capable of fully assimilating into American society.
- Protect and defend the Constitution of The United States of America.<sup>8</sup>

There is no public information on the number of members of the Crispus Attucks Tea Party, but its Facebook page, as late as September 2011, had only 310 “likes.” According to the 2010 Census data, Houston, Texas is home to nearly 500,000 people of African descent. And the group has no official position on LGBT issues posted on its website.

One of the speakers at the founding event of the Crispus Attucks Tea Party movement is a conservative favorite, Anita MonCrief, an African-American lawyer and former staff member and whistleblower of ACORN, which famously collapsed after conservative Andrew Breitbart posted a video supposedly showing its staff helping a pimp. MonCrief is important to the conservative movement, since she describes herself as a former diehard liberal who found “freedom” among conservatives after seeing how ACORN, and by extension all liberal organizations, tokenized poor Black people. At the inaugural meeting of the Crispus Attucks Tea Party, MonCrief noted,

*African-American opinions about same-sex marriage do not translate into other “LGBT” nondiscrimination issues.*

We need to stop letting them use us and our children and these social programs to get us. When you look at these neighborhoods that have been 40 years after [President Lyndon B.] Johnson's Great Society, where you've had welfare checks, you've got generational poverty, you've got a got a mom, a grandmom, and a granddaughter all living in the same ghetto.... We've given the Democrats a chance, and what have they given us? A neighborhood that looks like a nuclear bomb was dropped on us.... It's a shame when the liquor stores and the weed places are the only stores in our community.<sup>9</sup>

While MonCrief is not addressing anti-LGBT people in her speech, the tactic of talking about economic conditions as part and parcel of personal irresponsibility paves the way for frames deploring sexual behavior and immorality. Former Black Republican Presidential candidate Alan Keyes, a staunch opponent of LGBT rights, evicted his own daughter and stopped paying her college tuition when she came out as a lesbian in 2005.<sup>10</sup> But conservative Black clergy are the source of the vast majority of public anti-LGBT attacks, perhaps anchored from the years of outreach by White social conservatives. You hear attacks from Bishop E.W. Jackson of Exodus Faith Ministries,<sup>11</sup> Donnie McLurkin<sup>12</sup> and Bishop Eddie Long (who recently settled out of court on a lawsuit by four young men all claiming Long used his power and influence to have sexual relationships with them).<sup>13</sup>

*Conservative Black clergy are the source of the vast majority of public anti-LGBT attacks.*

### HOW TO COMBAT CONSERVATIVE WEDGE ISSUES WITH BLACK VOTERS

While the Black conservative movement is not likely to spread wildly throughout the African-American community, LGBTQ advocates need to rethink how they work with Black communities and organizations if they want to neutralize the influence of social conservatism.

#### Alliances with other marginalized groups:

Conservatives often demonize recipients to argue for the drastic reduction or even elimination of social safety net spending on Social Security, Medicare, public housing, or Medicaid. LGBT groups need to realize the future of social safety net spending matters greatly to LGBT people, particularly people of color, who disproportionately rely on such government services to survive. Facing the harshest barriers are those with disabilities or HIV/AIDS, low-income queer women unable to apply for support for their family, and trans people unable to supply an ID when applying for benefits. Unfortunately, many of the most well-resourced LGBT organizations have shied away from talking about the most marginalized communities in favor of playing to the most socially assimilatable groups of LGBT people.<sup>14</sup>

**Voting:** LGBT groups need to defend voting rights. Voter purging and voter suppression have become major tactics for conservatives to attempt to win elections by shrinking the liberal, low income voting pool. Republican lawmakers at the state level are passing laws requiring voters to display government issued ID at the polls as a way to combat nonexistent "voter fraud."

Requests for ID are more likely to stop poor people, African Americans, young people, and senior citizens from voting. The Brennan Center for Law and Justice reported that 25 percent of eligible Black voters do not possess government issued ID—well over 5 million people. The same study reported 11 percent of all voting age Americans do not have a government ID.<sup>15</sup> Given the many ways that a lack of ID, or presenting as differently gendered in front of official bureaucracies, challenges transgender peoples' ability to participate in civic life, it is hard to imagine that access to voting is not also restricted for many trans and gender nonconforming people.

As a result of laws that ban people convicted of felonies from voting (even after time has been served) nearly 13 percent of Black men are ineligible to vote—a total of 5.3 million people.<sup>16</sup> LGBT advocates would do well to join in efforts to increase voter participation because of the way it impacts low-income LGBT people and can shift the legislative paradigm to include low income LGBT issues.

Expanding the rolls also would bring in younger,



Anita Moncrief, ACORN Whistleblower, spoke at the Crispus Attucks inaugural meeting.

more LGBT friendly voters. It is older, mostly socially conservative Black Christians who serve as the primary voting base in the African-American community.<sup>17</sup> At the same time, The Black Youth Project found that Black youth who were less religious and who listened to more hip-hop were more open to LGBT issues.<sup>18</sup> Poor and working-class Black youth are precisely one of the groups most likely to be vulnerable to the loss of voting rights due to any of the voter suppression schemes of the Republican Party.

**Support Coalitions:** LGBT funders need to increase support for organizations that are working across issues and communities, and could do more to promote knowledge of how racial and economic justice issues actually impact the LGBT community. LGBT people can support and fund Black LGBT culture and advocacy projects, and work in and out of Black faith settings. This would help shift the conversation away from the hostility directed at African Americans.

Together these strategies will help challenge the Right and its use of LGBT rights as a wedge issue in the Black community, while strengthening and supporting the most marginalized of LGBT folks.

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## CASE STUDIES

*The Right mounts opposition campaigns to nearly every effort associated with LGBT rights. The following summaries describe six battles between LGBT supporters and their opposition. Together they reveal how the Right both recycles successful elements and also tries new approaches to block LGBT movement success. These stories include state legislation, a protracted city ordinance fight, several ballot initiatives, and working directly with an anti-gay church. Each case study is followed by a brief set of questions designed to aid activists, organizers, and students of social movements to analyze how opposing forces dealt with one another and what factors influenced the outcomes of the campaigns.*

### Tying the Not

#### HOW THE RIGHT SUCCEEDED IN PASSING PROPOSITION 8\*

Surina Khan

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On June 26, 2008, 1,000 ministers, mostly from evangelical congregations, met by conference call to discuss tactics for passing Proposition 8, a ballot initiative to ban same-sex marriage in California by amending the state constitution. The call was convened by Pastor Jim Garlow from the 2,500-member Skyline Church in San Diego County. The ministers on the call had a far reach: they lead congregations representing about one million people, and Garlow alone provides radio commentary to 629 stations each day.

The strategy session, which included input from lawyers and political consultants, was one of many efforts in a broad-based organizing campaign by the Christian Right to galvanize support for Proposition 8.

Proposition 8 passed in the November 2008 election by four points, with 52 percent of voters supporting it and 48 percent opposing it. The Right was successful in their multipronged approach to oppose same-sex marriage in a state that has national significance in the marriage equality movement. Simply put, they out-organized the No on 8 Campaign.

An analysis of how the Right succeeded in their efforts reveals a campaign of misinformation and

unlikely alliances that took years of planning, dating back to at least the mid-1990s. It also reveals a shrewd, media-savvy, well-funded, and well-organized grassroots movement that understood California's complex geographic and political landscape. The Yes on 8 campaign effectively reached California's diverse racial and ethnic communities with materials translated into at least fourteen different languages including Spanish, Hmong, Vietnamese, Chinese, Filipino, Samoan, Punjabi, Farsi, Russian, and Polish.

Garlow told the ministers on the conference call that on the weekend before the election, his goal was to fill Qualcomm Stadium in San Diego and other amphitheaters with people praying for a ban on gay marriage. To this end, they organized a 40-day fasting period leading up to Election day, along with 100 days of prayer.

"We are working with all the churches who are willing to work with us," noted Frank Schubert, the campaign manager for Yes on 8. "It's woven together

*An analysis of how the Right succeeded in their efforts reveals a campaign of misinformation and unlikely alliances that took years of planning, dating back to at least the mid-1990s.*

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to form what we hope will be the largest grass-roots campaign in California history.”

### A Broad Network of Support

The weaving together of the campaign involved a broad network of support and funding that included such prominent Christian Right organizations as Focus on the Family, Concerned Women for America, and the Family Research Council.

The campaign raised more than \$40 million from conservative supporters across the country. Much of the funding came from prominent donors like the Utah-based Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and the Roman Catholic conservative group, Knights of Columbus. Proposition 8 also received donations from Elsa Broekhuizen, the

widow of Michigan-based Christian Right supporter Edgar Prince and the mother of Erik Prince, founder of the controversial private military firm, Academi, formerly known as Xe or Blackwater.

The initiative's third largest private donor was Howard F. Ahmanson, Jr., reclusive heir to

the Home Savings of America banking fortune and a trustee of the Ahmanson Foundation. Ahmanson donated \$900,000 to the passage of Proposition 8. In a 1985 interview with the *Orange County Register*, Ahmanson summarized his political agenda: “My goal is the total integration of biblical law into our lives.”

Ahmanson has been behind campaigns to teach “intelligent design” in public school classrooms and to rollback affirmative action in California. He has been a supporter of anti-gay issues for many years. Ahmanson's most controversial philanthropy relates to his funding of the religious empire of Rousas John Rushdoony, an evangelical theologian who advocated placing the United States under the control of a Christian theocracy which includes death by stoning for practicing homosexuals.

### Unlikely Alliances

The Yes on 8 campaign set out to change how the initiative process can further a conservative movement agenda. Campaign organizers built a well-funded operation that rivaled any major electoral campaign in its scope and complexity. They also built a powerful religious coalition that centrally involved

the Roman Catholic Church, Protestant evangelicals, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS). In an internal memo dating back to 1997, the LDS proposed a coalition with the Catholic Church in order to stem what they saw as the rising tide of gay marriage in Hawaii and California. In the memo, a high-ranking Mormon leader discussed approaches for challenging gay marriage and noted that anti-gay marriage legislation would not be a successful pursuit.

The memo notes that a referendum, while expensive, would be the only route. It advocates for an alliance with the Catholic Church in order to launch a successful campaign against gay marriage. “The Church should be in a coalition and not out front by itself,” the memo notes. “The public image of the Catholic Church is higher than our Church.... If we get into this, they are the ones with which to join.”

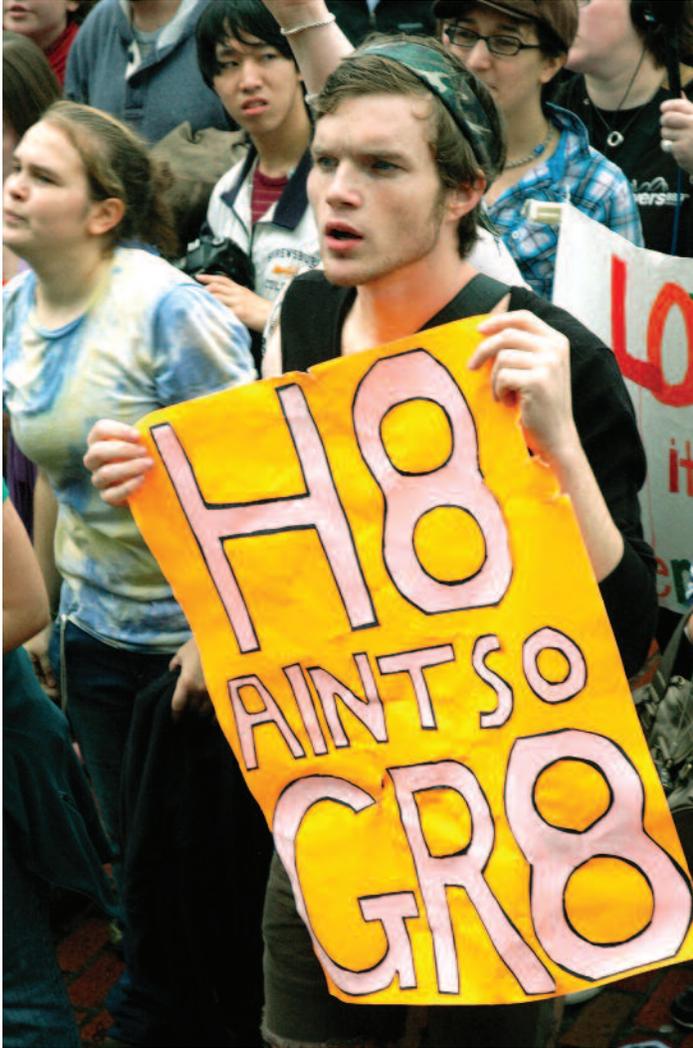
The memo notes that in order to win the battle against gay marriage, “there may have to be certain legal rights recognized for unmarried people such as hospital visitation so that opponents in the legislature come away with something.” The Right was willing to concede some rights for gays in an effort to defeat same-sex marriage.

The fact that the coalition to define marriage in California as the union between “one man and one woman” was anchored by a church whose founder claimed 33 wives did not seem to deter their ability to wage a successful campaign. Nor it seems did the fact that the coalition—which framed Prop 8 as a fight to protect California's children—was quietly knit together by the Catholic archbishop of San Francisco, who once excused the molestation of children at the hands of a pedophile priest as mere “horseplay.” But once the Mormons joined the effort, they quickly established themselves as “the foundation of the campaign.”

### Misinformation Campaign

The Yes on 8 coalition promoted a staggering misinformation campaign. Multiple advertisements told voters that without Proposition 8, their churches would be forced to perform same-sex unions and be stripped of their tax-exempt status; that schools would teach children to practice homosexuality; and that even President (then candidate) Barack Obama had stated during his campaign that he did not favor gay marriage (although Obama did come out in opposition to Proposition 8). Obama's statement against gay marriage was circulated in a flier by the Yes on 8 Campaign, targeting African-American

*The Yes on 8 coalition promoted a staggering misinformation campaign.*



A protester to the Yes on Prop 8 campaign.

households. The campaign also used Obama's voice in a statewide robo-call. This kind of outreach and organizing in communities of color was particularly effective.

Perhaps understanding that public perception had shifted significantly in support of LGBT people and marriage equality since Proposition 22 in 2000 when 61 percent of voters voted to ban same-sex marriage in California, the campaign did not put out a message of overt hate against lesbian and gay people. Instead their messaging centered on not taking away rights for gays and lesbians. "Gay couples in domestic partnerships have and will continue to have the same legal rights as married spouses. We're not here to stop anyone from expressing their commitment or

responsibility to another. We're simply here to protect the definition of marriage to what the majority of California voters (and all of history) have decided it should be—a union between a man and a woman." This strategy allowed the Christian Right to attract a moderate base that may not have taken a hardline position against LGBT people, positioning themselves as being compassionate towards gays and lesbians while trying to hold onto the "sanctity of traditional marriage."

The campaign's messaging centered on children and the harm that would come to them if same-sex marriage passed. This framing was a compelling one for their base, especially when coupled with the message that no rights would be taken away from gays and lesbians if Proposition 8 passed. The campaign insisted on the falsehood that if Proposition 8 did not pass, children would be forced to learn about gay marriage in schools. "If the same-sex marriage ruling is not overturned, teachers will be required to teach young children that there is no difference between gay marriage and traditional marriage."

One press release noted, "[San Francisco] Mayor Gavin Newsom made it perfectly clear for parents throughout the state that the target is not just marriage for gay activists, they have also set their sites [sic] on our schools."

Mainstream outlets like the *Los Angeles Times* and the *San Francisco Chronicle* countered these falsehoods as did the No on 8 Campaign, but with little impact. The misinformation messaging had taken root in churches across the state, in rural, mostly White, communities, and in many communities of color.

### Road to Inequity

The Yes on 8 Campaign understood that to win in California required campaigning in both urban and rural areas of the state as well as doing outreach to youth. The campaign effectively used media technologies and far-reaching social networking sites

*This strategy allowed the Christian Right to attract a moderate base that may not have taken a hardline position against LGBT people.*

including Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter. A Facebook group promoting Proposition 8 had more than 60,000 members. The Yes on 8 website made it simple for anyone to copy a sidebar or graphic to be displayed on websites and other locations. Unbeknownst to them, some gay bloggers were surprised and many appalled that their sites featured this sidebar.

They also went to small towns and big cities across the state. In October, the campaign organized a bus tour that began in Sacramento and ended in San Diego. Rally stops during the tour included Chico, Oakland, Salinas, Fresno, Modesto, Bakersfield, Lancaster, Los Angeles, Montclair, Indio, El Centro, Camarillo and Fullerton. With the exception of Oakland and Los Angeles, a majority of voters in these regions supported the proposition.

Organizing in churches was a key strategy. The Yes on 8 Campaign gave very specific instructions to churches on how to organize their congregations to support the initiative.

Throughout the summer, Yes on 8 had more than 100,000 volunteers knocking on doors in every zip code in the state, which gave them an enormous grassroots advantage. Central to their base of support were Christian people whom they were able to organize through churches. According to the Campaign, they visited 70 percent of all California households in person, and contacted another 15 percent by phone. If these numbers are to be believed, the campaign's get-out-the-vote effort was equally impressive. The weekend before the vote, the campaign's volunteers went door to door, speaking to supporters and directing them to the right precinct locations. On election day Yes on 8 had 100,000 people—five per precinct—checking voter rolls and contacting supporters who hadn't shown up to vote.

Nearly every single television station in San Diego covered the end of the bus tour and along the way the campaign was successful in generating media stories in television, radio, and newspapers. In addition to these stories, the campaign had a well-developed strategy of buying media ads in a range of ethnic media outlets. Early on in their efforts, the Yes on 8 Campaign purchased ad space in Chinese, African-American, Spanish, and Korean media. In

addition to purchasing these ethnic media advertisements, the campaign held massive rallies for Christians in communities of color.

Yes on 8 placed advertisements on Latino television and radio statewide with prominent Latino spokespeople and religious leaders voicing support for the proposition. In the African-American community, the campaign was successful in building alliances with pastors who used their sermons to galvanize their congregations to support the Proposition. The Asian community also was well-represented with advertisements in Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, and South Asian media markets.

For years, the California Christian Right apparatus, long hampered by nativism and racism, had been unable to make inroads into communities of color—a demographic necessity in a state that is more than 50 percent people of color and growing. With Proposition 8, they finally took hold in building a base of support in communities of color. This base, as well as the organizing they did in rural, mostly White communities, will be important for the Christian Right as they move forward to advance a broader agenda.

The Christian Right in California made a strategic shift in sharpening its “family values” focus on sexuality and marriage. This shift is likely to be effective for the long term political objectives of the Right, which include an assault on the legal protections against discrimination for LGBT people. The coalition of “family values” organizations have used an anti-LGBT message to organize and mobilize conservative constituents, recruit followers, and raise money. The broader agenda that the Christian Right will continue to pursue will promote Christian Nationalism, an ideology that seeks to use laws and regulations to promote fundamentalist Christian values on the nation. This is an agenda that seeks to eliminate the constitutional wall separating church and state in pursuit of an antidemocratic and authoritarian agenda.

With Proposition 8, the Christian Right was successful in furthering a divisive political agenda that offers fundamentalist Christian dogma and heterosexuality as the only acceptable norms.

The Yes on 8 Campaign was able to draw upon the complex movement of infrastructure organizations that make up the Right, including publishing houses, legal organizations, think tanks, mass-based organizations, and funding organizations that helped provide the resources needed for the movement to

*For years, the California Christian Right apparatus, long hampered by nativism and racism, had been unable to make inroads into communities of color.*

advance their agenda and secure a base of support in California.

### Lessons to Learn

The Christian Right in California and elsewhere is seeking to enshrine discrimination through constitutional amendments. Like California, the Right was successful in passing a constitutional amendment in Florida that eliminated marriage for same-sex couples. And in Arkansas the Right was successful in its campaign to take away the right of same-sex couples and most straight unmarried couples to adopt children or be foster parents. And yet, it's important to recognize that the Christian Right's opposition to same-sex marriage is only one part of a broader pro- (heterosexual) marriage, "family values" agenda that includes abstinence-only sex education, stringent divorce laws, coercive marriage promotion policies directed toward women on welfare, and attacks on reproductive freedom.

The LGBT and progressive movement's response must remain focused on the leadership of the right-wing movement which has successfully organized in diverse communities and built broad-based alliances. Demonizing the followers and accusing them of voting for hate will not advance a progressive agenda.

The LGBT movement has focused on marriage equality as a stand-alone issue and with Proposition 8 missed the opportunity to organize, particularly in communities of color and build a broad coalition that addresses the range of issues affecting families, including economic security, immigration status, incarceration, and health benefits for non-married family members.

The Right's success with Proposition 8 leaves marriage equality efforts with much to learn and hope for. The youth vote is one reason to be hopeful. Sixty-one percent of voters younger than 30 opposed Proposition 8, while 61 percent of those older than 65 supported it. Generational shifts are likely to benefit LGBT efforts. For future efforts, LGBT advocates and organizers will have to undo the false assumption that most people of color voted for Proposition 8, particularly when many youth of color did not. While it's true that the Right was successful in organizing in communities of color, it is not accurate to say that people of color are the reason that Proposition 8 passed. Blaming communities of color, as some segments of the LGBT movement have done, will not move us where we need to go.

Our current legal and economic structures favor straight married couples over other kinds of families. Meanwhile, a 30-year political assault on the social safety net has left households with more burdens and constraints and fewer resources. There is, however, potential to create new structures that make it easier for all kinds of families to provide one another with adequate material support. A progressive response can find ways to recognize and accommodate all family structures with our public policies in order to build more stable families and communities. A continuing effort to diversify and democratize partnership and household recognition may have more staying power and potential for success in the longer term.

The Right's success with the passage of Proposition 8 should be a call to the LGBT movement to build alliances across issues and constituencies. The efforts towards same-sex marriage should be part of a larger effort to strengthen the stability and security of diverse households and families.

*Demonizing the followers and accusing them of voting for hate will not advance a progressive agenda.*

### Questions for Discussion

1. The author states that the anti-LGBT Yes on 8 Campaign out-organized their opposition. What were their most effective strategies?
2. How could the No on 8 Campaign have countered the misinformation circulated by Yes on 8?
3. Is it better to focus on the grassroots expressions of hate or on calling out the Right's strategies and tactics?
4. According to the author, The LGBT community missed important organizing opportunities. What lessons do you take away from this case study?

# Oregon's Safe Schools for All Campaign

## A CASE STUDY IN BUILDING VALUES-BASED STRATEGIC ALLIANCES

By Holly Pruett

*Holly Pruett is a Portland, Oregon--based social change strategist and consultant. She was the leader for many years of the nonprofit Stand for Children, and in the mid-1990s was a staffer of the main organization opposing the state referendum seeking to legalize discrimination based on sexuality.*

*In 2009 Basic Rights Oregon (BRO) convened a broad, racially diverse, student-centered coalition to strengthen Oregon's anti-bullying and anti-harassment laws. The Oregon Safe Schools for All Act passed with strong, bipartisan support, despite Oregon's history of divisive anti-gay political battles (including five statewide and two-dozen local anti-LGBT ballot measures since 1988). While the organization's relationships with legislative leadership made passage likely (both House and Senate were controlled by pro-equality majorities), BRO viewed the Safe Schools for All Campaign through the dual lenses of values and strategy. Building the coalition was strategically effective—it helped reduce the chance of opposition to the bill—but it also deepened the relationships that are core to BRO's progressive commitments, and helped build the capacity of allied organizations to effect policy change.*

### I. Introduction

Oregon is a state with two faces. As in other parts of the Northwest, the hard Right grew in strength in the 1990s, but faced off against politically liberal and progressive Oregonians who challenged its anti-immigrant and White supremacist campaigns.

Oregon also has long been a proving ground for the Christian Right's anti-LGBT agenda. Since 1988 the Right has run five statewide and more than 25 local anti-LGBT ballot measures, and has spent well over \$8 million on the statewide ballot measures alone.<sup>1</sup>

Basic Rights Oregon, an LGBT rights group, emerged and devised a politically sophisticated strategy based on coalition building in this fiery environment. Formed in 1996, it is the state's chief advocacy group dedicated to ending discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, combining both grassroots action and professional lobbying.

In 2009 Basic Rights Oregon convened a broad, racially diverse, student-centered coalition to strengthen Oregon's anti-bullying and anti-harassment laws. The Oregon Safe Schools for All Act

passed with strong, bipartisan support, despite Oregon's history of divisive anti-gay political battles. While the organization's relationships with legislative leadership made passage likely (both House and Senate were controlled by pro-equality majorities), Basic Rights Oregon sought to build a broader campaign for two strategic reasons—it helped reduce the chance of opposition to the bill—but also it deepened the relationships that are core to BRO's progressive commitments. As a bonus, the experience helped build the capacity of allied organizations to effect policy change.

### II. Background: Oregon's LGBT Fight the Right History

#### A. 1992-2004: Creating a Movement-Building Campaign Organization

The year 1988 was a wakeup call for Oregon's LGBT community. Measure 8, a referendum seeking to repeal the governor's ban against discrimination based on sexual orientation by state agencies, passed with nearly 53 percent of the vote.<sup>2</sup> Organizations sprang up to increase the visibility and political power of gays and lesbians in Oregon. Those groups, and many others—both local and national—engaged in the epic and well-documented battle against Measure 9 in 1992, the same year a state court overturned the

*Since 1988 the Right has run five statewide and more than 25 local anti-LGBT ballot measures, and has spent well over \$8 million on the statewide ballot measures alone.*

previous ballot measure as unconstitutional. That grueling effort prevented the amendment of the State Constitution to declare homosexuality “perverse and abnormal” and on par with pedophilia and bestiality.

The defensive campaign against Measure 9, while successful, left the community fractured. It had been run as a traditional electoral campaign, focused solely on achieving “fifty percent plus one” of the vote. Many believed that instead the movement should take a lesson from the Right’s playbook and use these campaigns to build a stronger movement capable not just of winning an individual fight, but able to build power to achieve long-term victories.

When the Right through the now-defunct Oregon Citizens Alliance filed a slightly watered-down version of Measure 9 for the 1994 statewide ballot as well as dozens of local anti-LGBT measures, a group of activists began to build a statewide campaign organization that looked at the long term. It both defeated the 1994 measure and converted the resources developed in those defensive fights—the research, analysis, volunteers, coalition partners, donors, media contacts, and voter lists—into assets for long-term movement building. From that foundation, Basic Rights Oregon was born. It went on to defeat yet another statewide ballot initiative backed by the Oregon Citizens Alliance in 2000.

One of Basic Rights Oregon’s first cross-issue acts came when an anti-immigrant ballot measure was filed in 2006. The new group reached out to the immigrant rights community and offered to share its hard won expertise in defeating right-wing measures. While the measure failed to qualify for the ballot, this outreach laid an important piece of the foundation in a good relationship between the LGBT and immigrant rights communities in Oregon.

### *B. 2004-2007: Losing on Marriage, Winning Domestic Partnerships & Anti-Discrimination Protections*

By 2004 the Right’s Oregon Citizens Alliance faded in importance; leadership of the anti-LGBT Right in Oregon had shifted to the Oregon Family Council. The Council launched the Defense of Marriage Coalition to push an amendment to the Oregon Constitution defining marriage as between one man and one woman.<sup>3</sup> The right-wing coalition won with a slim margin. Spending \$3.1 million and

engaging 10,000 volunteers, Basic Rights Oregon came closer than any other state at that time to defeating an anti-gay marriage amendment.

Despite the loss on the marriage ballot measure, Basic Rights Oregon rode the momentum from that 2004 campaign into the 2005 legislative session, where the Senate passed an omnibus anti-discrimination and relationship rights bill, which was later derailed by a procedural maneuver by opponents in the House. As part of a general progressive sweep, Basic Rights Oregon’s electoral arm helped elect a pro-equality majority to the legislature in 2006, leading to success in the next legislative session. In May 2007, the Governor signed into law the Oregon Family Fairness Act, which grants domestic partnerships to same-sex couples, and the Oregon Equality Act, banning discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in employment, housing and public accommodations.

The leading opposition group at that time—the Oregon Family Council/ Oregon Defense of Marriage Coalition—declined to fight the enactment of these laws, perhaps because they saw polling that showed strong support for the legislation among Oregon voters. However, other opponents began to gather signatures to force a referendum on the legislation on the November 2008 ballot, aided by legal challenges filed by the Alliance Defense Fund of Arizona. Those efforts failed and the bills became law.

### *C. 2008-Present: Building Values-Based Strategic Alliances for the Long Haul*

The 2008 election was only the second presidential election since 1984 when an attack on the LGBT community was not on the ballot for a statewide vote in Oregon. Basic Rights Oregon saw this as an historic opportunity to build bridges and progressive power.

Accordingly, the group used its resources to educate LGBT Oregonians about the harmful impacts of several anti-labor, anti-tax, and costly criminal justice ballot measures. The organization coordinated voter forums in seven communities, educating and mobilizing the LGBT base on these measures and building partnerships with allied organizations.



The logo of the Oregon Safe Schools for All Coalition

*One of Basic Rights Oregon’s first cross-issue acts came when an anti-immigrant ballot measure was filed in 2006.*

Even more significantly, the organization partnered with key statewide organizations to challenge two anti-immigrant measures on the ballot in a rural county. This campaign brought together the Rural Organizing Project's base in rural Oregon, the state's immigrant rights coalition CAUSA's expertise, and Basic Rights Oregon's experience coordinating large-scale ballot measure campaigns. In a county in which just fewer than 25,000 people voted, the campaign placed 35,000 phone calls, sent 72,000 pieces of mail, knocked on 3,400 doors and completed more than 13,000 one-on-one conversations with voters. Together, the organizations defeated one measure at the ballot and the other in court.

*The 2008 election was only the second presidential election since 1984 when an attack on the LGBT community was not on the ballot for a statewide vote in Oregon.*

Basic Rights Oregon took its next steps on cross-constituency work through the Safe Schools for All Campaign, among other activities. The organization sees alliance building as the right thing to do from a *progressive values* perspective—and as *strategic* in the lead-up to the next major battle for marriage equality.

In 2011 Basic Rights Oregon undertook an unprecedented public education campaign to secure the freedom to marry. The organization set benchmarks for public opinion, coalition commitments, and fundraising. If it meets these goals it will initiate a statewide signature drive to put a constitutional amendment on the statewide ballot in November 2012 to secure equal marriage for same sex couples. The group is advancing its marriage work side by side with its Transgender Justice and Racial Justice initiatives.

### III. The Safe Schools for All Legislative Campaign

A good example of Basic Rights Oregon's long-term perspective and bread-and-butter coalition work is its Safe Schools for All Coalition. Launched in 2009, it won passage of a statewide law to strengthen Oregon's anti-bullying and anti-harassment laws and brought together a broad alliance of 30+ organizations—faith groups, businesses, communities of color, disability advocates, girls' empowerment activists, education groups, youth and student organizations—under a single banner.<sup>4</sup> Recognizing that young people of color, rural youth, and youth with disabilities are all disproportionately affected by bul-

lying and harassment, the organization built a broad coalition of anti-oppression groups and others to press for the Safe Schools Bill. (See Analysis section below for further discussion of the coalition strategy.)

The law creates standardized procedures for reporting bullying, requires every school district to adopt an antibullying policy with uniform definitions of bullying and harassment, and establishes requirements for informing parents, students and teachers of that policy. Going into and throughout the campaign and throughout, Basic Rights Oregon looked to national partners such as the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Educators Network (GLSEN) and the National Center for Lesbian Rights for resources to guide the development of the legislation and strategy.

BRO saw this campaign as an opportunity to win a critical, concrete victory for LGBT youth that would positively affect the lives of thousands of students across Oregon. Gay, transgender, and questioning youth are amongst the most vulnerable members of our community. Studies show that gay youth are more likely than their peers to drop out of school, attempt suicide, and become homeless. Plus, gay youth are at much higher risk of being the targets of bullying, harassment, and even violence in school. All of those figures are even higher for transgender youth and LGBT youth of color.<sup>5</sup>

House Bill 2599, known as the Safe Schools for All Act, amended a law first passed in 2001 when both chambers of the state legislature were controlled by conservative Republicans. The original legislation failed to mention any protected classes. This was partially in deference to the Right's objection that protections for particularly victimized groups constituted "special rights." HB 2599 addresses:

Harassment, intimidation or bullying... based on, but not... limited to, the protected class status of a person. 'Protected class' means a group of persons distinguished, or perceived to be distinguished, by race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation [which includes gender identity], national origin, marital status, familial status, source of income or disability.

Basic Rights Oregon knew that explicit naming of these protected classes might invite opposition.

### A. First Steps

BRO had partnered with the Oregon Student Association (OSA) and their offshoot, the Oregon Student Equal Rights Alliance (OSERA), during the 2007 legislative push to win the statewide anti-discrimination law. According to OSERA,

The campaign for the Oregon Equality Act raised many questions about Oregon's LGBT youth and their access to post-secondary education. After hearing from youth regarding the harassment they face on high school campuses, it became apparent that bullying and harassment against LGBT students has real ramifications, and that there is a real connection between access to post-secondary education and a student's actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity.<sup>6</sup>

The first step was to distribute a Campus Climate Survey over six months in 2008, created by Basic Rights Education Fund and OSERA, and funded by the Liberty Hill Foundation's Queer Youth Fund. The resulting report, "Too Afraid to Learn: Barriers to Post-Secondary Education for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Students," documented the hostile climate that creates barriers to high school graduation and educational performance in college for LGBT students.

The Safe Schools Coalition promoted this report and one produced by the OSA's Oregon Students of Color Coalition, "No End in Sight: An Examination of Harassment of Youth of Color in Oregon Schools." It documented the persistence of racial disparities in harassment over time and suggested it might even be getting worse, based on anonymous, voluntary statewide surveys of 8th & 11th graders.

### B. Key Campaign Activities

Armed with these reports, the campaign kicked off with a Safe Schools for ALL Youth Press Conference at the State Capitol. The press conference, which garnered significant coverage, released the two reports and announced coalition support for HB2599, also known as the *Oregon Safe Schools Act*. As with hearings and all campaign events, this press conference was specifically designed to bring multiple voices to the forefront. It emphasized how the bill would help all youth, especially students of color, students with a disability, immigrant students, as well as gay and transgender students.

Five days after the press conference, the coalition packed a hearing room for the first hearing on the legislation. The coalition featured testimony from a diverse array of youth activists, along with the leading statewide teachers union, a disability advocacy organization, a girls' empowerment organization, and a statewide grassroots parents lobby. In all, over twenty community leaders and supporters testified in favor of the bill. There was no opposition testimony at this hearing. As far as the Basic Rights Oregon lobbyist could determine, the Oregon Family Council never spoke to legislators in opposition to the bill. There were no opposition perspectives included in media coverage, which focused on the many faces of bullying and harassment presented by the coalition.

Basic Rights Oregon organized an LGBT Youth Lobby Day attended by about 250 youth. Even more significant, when organizations from communities of color held their lobby days, they featured the Safe Schools for All Act as one of their top priorities.

Key to the smooth passage of the bill was the position of the education lobby. It was clear that winning over—or at least neutralizing—the association of teachers, administrators, and school boards was essential. The coalition sought their input on draft legislation before introducing the bill, and conferred with them when it appeared that the bill would have a fiscal impact. Knowing that in the midst of the state's fiscal crisis any price tag would kill the bill, the coalition worked to remove the training and reporting requirements while it was still in committee. With this pragmatic and collaborative approach, the coalition won the support of the teachers union, which featured the legislation in its statewide magazine.

### C. Outcomes & Next Steps

The Oregon Safe Schools Act passed with a House vote of 50 to 9 and later passed the Senate by 26 to 2. On June 12, 2009, the Governor signed the Oregon Safe Schools Act into law, surrounded by diverse coalition members.

But the campaign didn't end with the law's passage. Basic Rights Education Fund published the Oregon Safe Schools Implementation Tool Kit. The Tool Kit explains what the law does and doesn't do; it provides a checklist for schools of what should be in

*As far as the Basic Rights Oregon lobbyist could determine, the Oregon Family Council never spoke to legislators in opposition to the bill.*

place, a model school district policy (developed by the Oregon School Boards Association), and a standard implementation flow chart; and it includes tips on “Lobbying Your Local School Board” and a list of Safe Schools resources.

While ongoing monitoring and support for implementation is the responsibility of the Oregon Department of Education, state budget constraints limit its capacity for oversight. There’s a larger issue, too, of deeply-protected “local control” practices; the state has very little authority over local school districts regardless of the issue. When the state’s fiscal environment improves, Basic Rights Oregon plans to go back to the statehouse to restore the training and monitoring functions of the bill.

*Basic Rights Oregon has traveled the continuum from one-way asks (what you can do for us) to reciprocity (you scratch our back then we’ll scratch yours) to what they consider authentic relationships that require full, deep engagement.*

In the meantime, local advocates in each of Oregon’s 198 school districts must see to it that the tougher new standards are adopted. The Oregon Safe Schools and Communities Coalition (OSSCC), an all-volunteer group, provides support to students, families, and school districts on an as-needed basis. OSSCC has applied for funding to monitor the implementation at the local level.

While there is no hard data about the law’s local implementation or impact on bullying, several coalition partners report that the push for stronger legislation raised awareness within their school districts.

### IV. Analysis & Lessons Learned

#### A. A Broad Coalition Can Dissuade Opposition

Basic Rights Oregon’s major investment in the Safe Schools for All Coalition paid off on several fronts.

First, Basic Rights Oregon staff attribute the lack of vocal opposition to the fact that the coalition created a diverse array of stakeholders. The chorus of voices in support provided an entry point for almost everyone to get to a place of compassion for the victims of bullying and harassment. A Republican legislator who described the bullying he’d been subjected to as an obese child carried the bill on the floor of the House.

BRO deliberately chose to present the issue as an equity issue affecting many marginalized groups. The fact that the proposed legislation wasn’t seen as a gay issue enabled BRO to build relationships with new partners. It also enabled the organization to build empathy for LGBT and other marginalized people in a less polarizing context. One activist memorably described the bill as taking on “a juvenile version of hate crimes,” describing the campaign as “a powerful story-telling, public education opportunity for legislators who might find targeted kids more sympathetic than adults.”<sup>7</sup>

As a secondary benefit, the coalition proved the adage that many hands make light work. When legislators called hearings on short notice or the news media needed an interview, the coalition provided a ready list of available people and a team of organizers to help with logistics and turn-out.

#### B. Fight the Right Work Must Be Based in Both Values and Strategy

Oregon has seen its share of alliances built strictly for strategic purposes: predominantly White organizations, for example, seeking to “color up” the face of their issue to win at a particular moment in time only to abandon the relationships after the short-term victory is in hand. After making an explicit internal commitment to racial justice work, Basic Rights Oregon has traveled the continuum from one-way asks (what *you* can do for us) to reciprocity (you scratch our back then we’ll scratch yours) to what they consider authentic relationships that require full, deep engagement.

That doesn’t mean strategic assessments aren’t made—Basic Rights Oregon believed that having students of color in the forefront of the anti-bullying campaign would reduce or mitigate anti-gay opposition. And they further believed that the relationships built or strengthened through the Safe Schools for All Campaign would help in the marriage equality fight. But “you never decouple strategy from your values,” says BRO Executive Director Jeana Frazzini. Equal to the strategic concerns was the belief that a coalition approach that authentically engaged communities of color was the right thing to do.

This approach also improved the bill. Because of Basic Rights Oregon’s ongoing relationships with racial justice organizations, its staff recognized their concern that punishment-based approaches to school problems often disproportionately impact students of

color. The coalition took care to ensure that the legislation would not exacerbate this dynamic.

Basic Rights Oregon recognized that it is privileged to have the resources to maintain a professional lobbyist in the Capitol. The group also had momentum and political capital coming out of the historic 2007 legislative wins. Knowing that bullying and harassment affect youth for a whole variety of reasons, including racial prejudice, they wanted to offer their assets as a resource to other organizations with less capacity in the State Capitol. Frazzini says,

It's one thing to do relationship building and partner with organizations in a theoretical sense but where the relationships are really forged is where you're working together and have a success that you can claim jointly.

For Rev. Joseph Santos-Lyons, coordinator of Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO), the alliance helped his then all-volunteer organization better understand how public policy affects their community, along with the nuts and bolts of the legislative process. Bringing API stories of harassment and bullying to the forefront meant, "We had to do some of the basic grassroots campaign tactics that weren't common for us," Santos-Lyons says. Analyzing the bill, finding good messengers and preparing them to present testimony and speak with the media, participating in the bill-signing ceremony with the Governor—all helped build the capacity of this fast-growing organization. "We tried to capitalize every step of the way to build the leadership of our members," says Santos-Lyons, and the alliance helped power its growth spurt. APANO brought 100 community members to the State Capitol for a Lobby Day, which featured the Safe Schools for All Act as one of two legislative priorities. Those participants then felt connected to the success of the campaign and gained a greater sense of their own power. The only missed opportunity for movement-building, Santos-Lyons feels, was the lack of intentional connection among the organizations of color participating in the coalition. He suggests a mutual introduction by email as a minimum when new groups sign on to multi-issue coalition efforts in the future.

Moving beyond the shared concern of bullying into a deeper engagement on LGBT issues will require more political education within APANO's membership, says Santos-Lyons. But he describes the collaboration on the Safe Schools Act as "groundwork

for supporting BRO's marriage education campaign."

Emily McLain, executive director of Oregon Student Association, says the campaign had a similar impact on her group. "Our student-led board saw this as a great cross-cutting issue; it engaged students of color, rural students, low-income students, and LGBT students." McLain points to the same skill-building cited by Santos-Lyons for the students involved in the campaign: "It was a great leadership development opportunity to have OSA leaders serve as spokespeople for something that was high visibility and produced a win." OSA drew on the experience for coalition work in the 2011 legislative session around tuition equity. "The Safe Schools for All campaign helped build OSA's capacity by setting an example and setting the bar high for how to work in coalition," McLain says.

### *C. Explicit Racial Justice Work Challenges the Organization in Exciting Ways*

Basic Rights Oregon recognizes that every policy or cultural dynamic that affects LGBT folks, disproportionately affects people of color who are LGBT. They've seen the divide and conquer wedge strategies of the Right and believe that building authentic relationships across communities is the only way to withstand those cynical strategies. The organization believes that they might win individual policy changes with a narrow focus, but they won't advance the underlying cultural shift needed to secure fair treatment for LGBT folks from all walks of life without broad social change. This requires the organization to hold itself to the same standard it's seeking from the wider society.

Basic Rights Oregon works to connect the dots for its primarily White base who may think, "I came to this organization to fight for LGBT equality and I don't understand how police accountability or immigrant rights fits into that." Over time, the organization has found that for every donor or volunteer they've lost by foregrounding these values in its strategy, they have engaged more folks who see themselves reflected in the work and come to it energized. While White resistance is still a dynamic, Frazzini says their racial justice work "changes the organization from within in exciting ways."

*While White resistance is still a dynamic, Frazzini says their racial justice work "changes the organization from within in exciting ways."*

Frazzini acknowledges that the marriage work presented alongside Trans Rights and Racial Justice as the organization's three initiatives means there's "something for everyone." When the resource-intensive marriage campaign is over and Basic Rights Oregon builds their racial justice and trans rights work even further, she sees opportunities to keep connecting the dots and engaging folks in work that has an impact for the whole LGBT community.

### *D. Policy Development for Cross-Issue Work is Under-Resourced*

One of the greatest strengths of the Safe Schools for All Campaign is that it centered on a truly cross-cutting issue that directly affected a number of constituencies. There is no list-in-waiting for the next opportunity. Basic Rights Oregon is interested in working with its progressive partners to identify specific policy priorities that live at the intersections of a progressive movement. They are looking for other legislative handles that will advance the interests of LGBT people, especially trans people and LGBT people of color, that also tap the self-interest of non-LGBT folks in other communities are also disempowered. Doing that policy research is a big chunk of work and as yet there are few resources to support it.

### **Questions for Discussion**

1. How did BRO develop broad-based support? In your opinion, is this amount of preparation necessary?
2. Why do you think BRO consciously decided to focus on both values and strategy?
3. Was it a good idea to avoid framing HB2599 as a gay bill?
4. Why did HB2599 pass?
5. What are your take-away lessons from this case study?

# One Kalamazoo Campaign

By Jon Hoadley and Kelly Doyle

*Jon was the campaign manager for One Kalamazoo and Kelley served on the Kalamazoo Alliance For Equality Steering Committee.*

*The One Kalamazoo Campaign was the 2009 ballot measure campaign which successfully defended a local ordinance protecting all people in the City of Kalamazoo, Michigan from discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity in the areas of employment, housing, and public accommodations. The One Kalamazoo Campaign was the outgrowth of previous successful organizing by the Kalamazoo Alliance For Equality (KAFE). The purpose of this case study is to catalog and analyze the tactics used by the pro-equality One Kalamazoo Campaign and tactics used by the anti-equality Kalamazoo Citizens Voting No to Discrimination. Additionally, this case study will place those campaign tactics in context with previous organizing by KAFE. Finally, we will attempt to draw useful action steps other communities supporting nondiscrimination ordinances can utilize.*

## History

Kalamazoo is a small city of about 75,000 residents in Southwest Michigan. The population is 70% White, 20% African-American, 3% Asian, and 5% Hispanic. The One Kalamazoo Campaign was the conclusion of a multi-year strategy to amend the City of Kalamazoo's nondiscrimination ordinance to be inclusive of sexual orientation and gender identity. The lead organization on the ground, the Kalamazoo Alliance For Equality (KAFE), formed in 2006 with the mission to influence political change that improves equality for the city's LGBT community. It was decided the principal project of the group would be the passage of a local nondiscrimination ordinance inclusive of sexual orientation and gender identity. However, KAFE knew this would be a multi-year political and educational effort.

## Kalamazoo Alliance For Equality (KAFE)

The first project of the group was to build alliances and collaborations with organizations that have traditionally been used to create wedges between demographic groups when dealing with gay and transgender issues, specifically along lines of race and faith. The epitome of this approach was the social justice series, which featured six monthly workshops highlighting activist and political issues, including how to run for office, why human rights are important, how to train and retain volunteers, and how to put your best activist skills to work.

National leaders such as Loretta Ross of SisterSong, Soulforce, and local leaders highlighted each monthly workshop. Local leaders were chosen with the intention of building alliances with non-traditional partners such as the religious based ISSAC and elected officials.

Over 100 people attended each session and participants were put into groups so they could initiate any action on their own. These workshops created working relationships across various lines of difference, such as race, gender, religion, and sexual orientation and gender identity. The events were widely covered in the media and circulated through local grassroots leaders. The relationships cultivated during this time would be later used in the One Kalamazoo campaign. The focus of this first project for KAFE was to establish itself in the public as a solid thought leader and to create alliances and collaborations.

KAFE's second project came in June 2007 as a mobilization response to the city of Kalamazoo pulling domestic partner benefits from city employees. KAFE obtained 400 signatures petitioning the city to reinstate domestic partner benefits. A large rally with over 50 people was held on the steps of city hall with news cameras capturing the delivery of sig-

*The first project of the group was to build alliances and collaborations with organizations that have traditionally been used to create wedges like race and religion.*

natures to the city manager. This was a direct message to the city that KAFE will mobilize and become vocal if needed. The city reinstated these benefits with the work of an ACLU attorney, who prescribed alternatives.

Later, KAFE was focused on the election of city commissioners who were generally supportive of the principle of nondiscrimination. First a questionnaire was sent to the 2007 city commission candidates that specifically asked about their support for an inclusive non-discrimination ordinance. All of the current commissioners except one were supportive of a non-discrimination ordinance. The one that didn't support the ordinance appeared to be unclear about the need. These guides were printed and distributed widely by KAFE. Because KAFE is best described as a 501(c)(4) organization operating as an unincorporated association, the organization could not financially support any particular candidate. However, the individuals involved with the group

*As public education and coalition building occurred, KAFE also focused on an “insider strategy” to persuade the seven city commissioners to pass the nondiscrimination ordinance.*

were free to personally give money, volunteer with candidates, and host public education events to promote candidates KAFE felt to be aligned with their interests. Fortunately, the group's work was able to support the election of at least five of the seven candidates on the commission who would be supportive of a nondiscrimination ordinance.

The next focus for KAFE was to create a small, diverse group of individuals to head up the creation

and writing of the ordinance while forming coalitions and building support for its passage. The group contained ACLU lawyers, local LGBT non-profit leaders, and a religious leader. Chair Terry Kuseske obtained endorsements of the project from the most well-known and respected grassroots leaders in the area specifically from the areas of business and health-care. When advocating with city commissions, he would purposely mention their support. As public education and coalition building occurred, KAFE also focused on an “insider strategy” to persuade the seven city commissioners to pass the nondiscrimination ordinance. Terry Kuseske led this effort. As a former teacher, member of the Kalamazoo planning commission, former county commissioner in a neighboring county, and a long-time resident of Kalamazoo, Kuseske worked with each commission-

er individually and spearheaded the efforts to draft an ordinance for the city attorney's office that would create the protections gay and transgender people need while being politically palatable. Kuseske literally stopped commissioners on the street to set up coffees or just began talking about the ordinance. Though supportive of equality, commissioners were wary of increased legislation and needed to be educated on the issue. This process took time and energy.

The first draft of the ordinance received significant community pushback from both supporters and opponents. KAFE and the larger gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender community were divided in their opinions on the ordinance. Some felt the ordinance lacked corrective measures for violators, and the ordinance also had language that was not inclusive enough of transgender people. ACLU attorneys, assisting as designers of the ordinance in the original KAFE sub-committee, heavily advocated for a bathroom exemption to be written into the ordinance for its passage. This created a divide in the LGBT community. City commission members advocated for the weak enforcement piece expressing budget concerns and were not willing to make changes. A major self-admitted mistake by KAFE was their lack of a transgender voice on the Steering Committee at this time. Local trans leader Amy Hunter was recruited to the KAFE Steering Committee to remedy this issue and provide a trans voice. Hunter slowly and meticulously collaborated to change the trans language in the ordinance to include gender identity by educating the group. Opponents objected that the religious exemption wasn't broad enough and the impact of the ordinance on businesses would be too high.

The local LGBT community and KAFE presented the ordinance to the public and the City Commission as a united front, even with the internal conflict of the language of the document. The city commission chose not to make any significant changes to the ordinance and quickly passed it through the commission on a 7-0 vote on December 1, 2008.

In Kalamazoo, citizens have the ability to refer local laws to the ballot if a sufficient number of signatures are gathered. In the 30 days after the nondiscrimination ordinance passed but prior to when the law would take effect, opponents of the ordinance collected 1,452 certified signatures, forcing the city commission to take action in one of two ways. The city commission could either place the ordinance in abatement until it was voted on by the city electorate in the next available election, which would have been

## Right-Wing Responses to LGBT Gains



A campaign image from One Kalamazoo

in February of 2009, or rescind the ordinance. The city commission chose to rescind the ordinance on January 12, 2009.

The decision to rescind the ordinance was a tactical decision. Local elected officials (not dealing with LGBT specific issues before) felt that a compromise could be made between opposing groups if all parties were part of the creation of the ordinance. Some political officials also felt advocates of the ordinance were not prepared to win a vote at the ballot box. This conclusion was based on the opposition's organization and the strength of their vocal fear tactics, not the general sentiment of the public. (The head of the opposition, with connections to the American Family Association (AFA), was a previous city commissioner and current county treasurer. She called city commissioners with concerns before the ordinance went to a vote. She also screened an AFA movie at a local church with over 100 participants that suggested that Christians would be persecuted if the gay community received rights.) Local elected officials used the rescission to encourage more public dialogue and study on the ordinance. This was particularly helpful to advocates who felt they now had an opportunity to improve the less-favorably written portions of the ordinance. Amy Hunter championed changes that made the ordinance more trans inclusive.

After the initial passage and rescission of the ordinance, local advocates began engaging national advocates, including GLAAD, the Gainesville ordinance committee, and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, to provide more technical assistance to their local efforts. Local spokespeople received media training and KAFE received strategic planning assistance. KAFE also received additional legal support to improve the drafting of the ordinance.

Local passion and organizing combined with national technical support created an environment of increased public awareness and empathy towards nondiscrimination. The city commission held a series of study groups on the issue, culminating in a March 9, 2009 public meeting held at the Kalamazoo Public Library. The meeting, lasting over six hours, featured speakers in favor of and opposed to the ordinance. Over 200 people attended the event. Proponents significantly outnumbered opponents. The rhetoric of the proponents was also characterized more favorably among the public and in the media coverage after the event. Speakers for proponents highlighted the economic benefits of equality, religious compatibility, and also illustrated the mental health effects of workplace discrimination. The opposition used slides from various gay pride events to illustrate their points. Mary Balkema, Kalamazoo County treasurer and former city commissioner, gave an opening opposition statement on behalf of Kalamazoo Citizens Voting No to Special Rights Discrimination, saying the ordinance would “victimize” religious groups. “No religious person should be indicted for living out his protected religious convictions,” Balkema said. “In order for these special rights to be accorded to a certain group, rights must be taken away from other groups who have defined rights under the law, and that is discriminatory.”

KAFE continued to push ahead with the nondiscrimination ordinance and was able to successfully lobby the city commission to remove the less desirable language from the final ordinance. Publically, this occurred due to the number of advocates for the ordinance attending the meetings and the opposition's staunch stance on having no ordinance or compromise at all. Privately, chair Terry Kuseske had to remind city commissioners of their support for the ordinance. KAFE was also successful in defeating a proposed amendment by the opponents of the ordinance that would have exempted businesses with fewer than 15 employers, a standard that would have excluded nearly two-thirds of Kalamazoo's businesses. Charles Ybema, a spokesman for the opposition, said the ordinance lays the groundwork for “reverse discrimination” and “suppressing information.” “Job openings or available housing are not going to be advertised,” Ybema said. “This entrenches the ‘Who do you know?’ phenomena. There are concerns about

*A major self-admitted mistake by KAFE was their lack of a transgender voice on the Steering Committee.*

the rights of freedom of speech and religion.... There are still public restroom issues.” At this time, chair Terry Kuseske was learning that KAFE did not have enough resources to make the issue successful at the ballot and began to request more guidance from national leaders. There was concern that we were “preaching to the choir” and not turning the hearts and minds of the mainstream. This started the process of advocating for a specialized leader and professional to move the ordinance to success. The ordinance was heard by the city commission and successfully passed, again, on June 29, 2009.

Anticipating successful passage of the ordinance by the city commission again and a potential ballot repeal campaign by the opposition, KAFE began collecting signatures for a non-legally-binding, pro-ordinance petition in February 2009. As anticipated, when opponents turned in nearly 2,100 signatures supporting repeal of the ordinance—more than the 1,273 signatures required by law—KAFE was able to hold a press conference on the same day and unveil 5,708 signatures in support of the ordinance. This framed the opposition as “out of touch” from the first day of filing.

*The head of the opposition, with connections to the American Family Association (AFA), was a previous city commissioner and current county treasurer.*

It was also at this time that KAFE made the decision to formally create a professionally staffed ballot question committee that would be separate from the local campaign. The decision to hand off control of the multi-year project was difficult. KAFE members had sweat equity and part of their personal identity wrapped up in the nondiscrimination ordinance. Turning those responsibilities over to an outside source required a leap of faith.

In May 2009, KAFE began an interview process to find a potential campaign manager to defend the nondiscrimination ordinance if a ballot campaign materialized. After an extensive interview process, Jon Hoadley was brought back to Michigan to assist with the passage of the ordinance through the city commission and the management of the One Kalamazoo campaign. Through the trust Hoadley was able to establish with KAFE by working side by side on the passage of the ordinance in June, the transition to his management of the campaign with an advisory board was smooth. As a way to formalize the transition of authority, KAFE and Hoadley, on behalf of One Kalamazoo, entered into a formal agreement

that One Kalamazoo would create strategy for the campaign, but the assets from the campaign would be given to KAFE, including lists, materials, etc.

### Key Learning Prior to the Campaign

- A local team did significant education and advocacy over a sustained period of time;
- A local team built diverse coalitions to bring unusual allies into the campaign early;
- A local team began collecting data before a campaign to start the campaign with lists and other resource;
- A local team officially transitioned the authority to make decisions affecting the nondiscrimination ordinance to a professional staffed campaign once the campaign launched;
- The team needed to reconfigure and be more inclusive to represent the transgender community.;
- Local officials learned that compromises could not be had with the opposition who continually forced the issue of having no ordinance at all;
- National groups were extremely helpful but local voices need to express national experience;
- It was important to understand the need to pass the ordinance off from the local group to the national group in reaching success.

### Why Kalamazoo Mattered

In 2009, the One Kalamazoo Campaign was the latest local nondiscrimination ordinance to be defended at the ballot box. Earlier that year, Gainesville Florida had passed a similar ordinance and progressives successfully defended it. Simultaneously, One Kalamazoo Campaign would be voting on the same day voters in Maine would be going to the ballot to weigh in on marriage and voters in Washington would be voting on domestic partnership benefits.

As such, Kalamazoo was important for multiple reasons. First, activists at the federal level had made the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) a top legislative priority. Members of Congress and pundits were watching the results to see if voters would support these local issues. Second, members of the LGBT community, especially the transgender commu-

nity, were watching to see how nondiscrimination issues would be covered in a crowded political LGBT market. Would LGBT organizations and donors only support relationship recognition or would they also support nondiscrimination? Third, anti-equality activists were hoping to score a political win in the home of one of the LGBT movement’s largest political donors, Jon Stryker. Finally, could the LGBT movement create a template for how to win on nondiscrimination issues that could be used across the country?

Taking these concerns into account, the One Kalamazoo campaign, through early polling, knew the majority of residents of Kalamazoo supported nondiscrimination. However, that same polling showed residents were likely to vote against equality if they heard the opposition’s most disturbing messages. These included the claim that the ordinance would violate women and children’s privacy rights in public restrooms, locker rooms, and showers. A talking point created by the opposition: “Is there a man in your daughter’s bathroom?”<sup>8</sup> To inoculate our supporters, our messages had to “keep a steadying hand on their shoulder,” as one consultant described it.

From the beginning, the strategy of the One Kalamazoo Campaign was to identify its supporters, assure them the opposition’s message wasn’t true, and then turn them out on Election day. Due to the high levels of support, the campaign did not focus on persuasion.

One Kalamazoo also utilized the coalitions KAFE built to bring out new messengers and show the community was united in support of the ordinance.

**Examples of the Diversity of Community Support**

Supporters included: the NAACP, League of Women Voters, Kalamazoo County Democratic Party, (CARES) Community AIDS Resource and Education Services, Fair Housing Center of Southwest Michigan, Ministry With Community, YWCA, First United Methodist Church Council, Community Healing Centers, Seeding Change, Vine Neighborhood Association, Swords into Plowshares Peace Center, Stuart Area Restoration Association, Planned Parenthood of South Central Michigan, Michigan Log Cabin Republicans, Disability Network of SW Michigan, People’s Church, Unity of Kalamazoo, Kalamazoo Gay Lesbian Resource Center, South Central Michigan AFL-CIO Labor Council, Progress Michigan, American Civil Liberties Union of Michigan, Smartshop Metal Arts

Large Donations to One Kalamazoo	
Name	Amount
Jon Stryker	\$112,800
Sharon Warner	\$35,000
National Gay and Lesbian Task Force	\$10,000 (plus a large in-kind donation)
Kalamazoo County Democrats	\$10,000
ACLU of Michigan/ACLU National	\$5,000/\$5,000
Mary Harper	\$5,380
Henry Van Ameringen	\$5,000
Jonathan Lewis	\$5,000
David Dechman	\$2,500
Human Rights Campaign	\$2,500

Center, Washtenaw County Democratic Party, Downtown Kalamazoo, Inc., The Kalamazoo Promise, Kalamazoo Communities in Schools, Michigan Citizen Action, Pride At Work Michigan, Service Employees International Union National Lavender Caucus, Service Employees International Union Central Regional Lavender Caucus, and the Kalamazoo Public Library.

The One Kalamazoo Advisory Board included representatives from county government, faith communities, student organizations, local civil rights and other advocacy groups, and the business community.

**Funding**

Throughout the course of the campaign, One Kalamazoo was able to raise and spend \$298,825 in contributions from 1,904 donors and an additional \$103,210 in in-kind donations.

The largest funders for the ordinance included (see box at upper right):

Of the total donations, a majority of donors came from within Kalamazoo County. Like traditional campaigns, One Kalamazoo focused on major donor development and traditional fundraising techniques such as direct mail to likely donors. However, the One

*Could the LGBT movement create a template for how to win on nondiscrimination issues that could be used across the country?*

Kalamazoo Campaign also wanted to find ways to build a larger local donor pool to create a fundraising base for ongoing activism. Two additional techniques utilized by One Kalamazoo included at the door solicitations, which were marginally successful, and personal online fundraising pages. Although personal online fundraising pages had been used by other campaigns, this was one of the first nondiscrimination ballot measures to utilize that technology—especially at the local level. These pages, integrated into other tactics that used online fundraising techniques like house parties or email appeals to the One Kalamazoo listserv, raised over \$45,000, or approximately 15% of the budget.

*To inoculate our supporters, our messages had to “keep a steadying hand on their shoulder.”*

The largest funders of the opposition were RJDM Balkema, \$12,000, Covenant United Reform Church, \$4,200, and the American Family Association, \$1,000.

The opposition raised in total \$55,209 with \$549 of that as in-kind services.

What’s interesting to note about the opposition funding was the amount of money that was moved

late in the campaign. Between the final pre-election filing and the required post-election filing, the opposition raised most of their campaign spending. This late cash infusion paralleled a late direct mail push by the opposition meant to mislead voters. Ironically, much like the opposition’s late campaign contributions did not see the light of day until after the election, neither did the direct mail. Voters reported receiving multiple pieces of direct mail from the opposition in the days after the election.

**Voter Contact and the Field Campaign** The field campaign focused on identifying the position of likely voters and then mobilizing them on election day. To do this, One Kalamazoo recruited over 200 volunteers to complete over 500 volunteer shifts. Throughout the campaign, One Kalamazoo was able to identify 11,604 Kalamazoo voters, of whom 7,834 were identified as supporters.

Because of the large number of staff on the campaign, One Kalamazoo experimented in tracking voters who moved away from “supportive” over time. During Get Out The Vote weekend, which extended for the 100 hours prior to election day, volunteers re-contacted identified One Kalamazoo supporters and asked for a verbal commitment to voting “yes” on ordinance 1856. Voters that informed volunteers they were no longer able to support a yes vote were recorded and represented about 10% of total live responses. Throughout GOTV weekend, One Kalamazoo sent a team of volunteers and also contracted a telemarketing service to attempt to persuade those voters—and previously identified “undecided” voters—to move back to a “yes” vote. Each voter in the 1,026 person universe received a three question persuasion script. Results are at left.

On election day, ultimately 12,402 voters weighed in on Ordinance 1856.

Yes Vote	No Vote	Drop-Off
7,671	4,731	288

After the election, One Kalamazoo matched the identified supporters to the poll books and found a startling trend. Although One Kalamazoo identified more votes than were needed to win, a lower percentage of supporters voted.

Results of a Telemarketing Campaign		
	TOTALS	
	Count	Percentage
<b>Q1. Can we count on your yes vote?</b>		
Yes	246	39.20
Undecided/No	228	36.40
Refusals	153	24.40
CONTACTS	627	
<b>Q2. (To Und/NO) What made you come to your decision?</b>		
Bathrooms	34	14.90
Confusion	36	15.80
Refuse to say/Don't Know	158	69.30
TOTAL	228	
<b>Q3. Now can we count on your yes vote?</b>		
Yes	5	2.40
Undecided	121	57.90
No	83	39.70
TOTAL	209	
Wrong Number	26	3.60
Disconnects	63	8.80
Final Dispositions	716	

Rating	# Identified	# Voted	% Voted of Identified
1	7,834	3,813	48.67%
3	1,203	669	55.61%
5	2,567	1,586	61.78%
No Rating	N/A	6,334	N/A

Going into election day, although One Kalamazoo had more than enough votes to win, not all of our voters made it to the polls. Future campaigns working on LGBT issues should investigate the potential of a similar drop-off and strategize with that in mind.

The high percentage of voters whom One Kalamazoo did not identify prior to the campaign but who ultimately voted validates the broad forms of media, such as broadcast television and radio, utilized by the campaign. Although less precise, we can assume that even unidentified voters were exposed to the One Kalamazoo message at least once throughout the campaign.

### Volunteer Recruitment

The campaign prioritized bringing new people into the work of the campaign. As a result, we had a dedicated volunteer recruitment team, institutionalized volunteer recruitment into our voter identification efforts, and tracked our success daily. This was largely managed by the philosophy of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. The initial team was also recruited largely through the efforts of the Power Summit, a large scale training and recruitment effort produced by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.

### Media

In addition to the field work, the One Kalamazoo Campaign ran a full-scale media push. The campaign was on cable television beginning three weeks out from the election. The television buy expanded to broadcast television purchased by zip code for the last week. The campaign ran three ads. The first ad focused on why people were supporting the nondiscrimination ordinance and “who” in Kalamazoo was supporting the ordinance. The ad ran a total of 973 times across a constellation of channels focusing primarily on women and likely city election voters. The second ad ran only on broadcast and had 750 points behind it.

The One Kalamazoo Campaign produced two 60-second radio ads which ran for a total of three weeks. The first ad featured Dr. Charles Warfield, the president of the local NAACP and member of the advisory board. The second ad was a response ad to the opposition’s radio ads. The second ad featured two speakers. The first was a woman with our message that everyone wants bathrooms to be safe and private, assuring the listeners that the opposition’s claim about losing privacy in bathrooms simply was not true. The second 30 seconds featured a retired sheriff reiterating those concerns and then pivoting back to our message of fairness and equality. Both ads were powerful and effective.

One Kalamazoo sent a total of five mail pieces throughout the campaign. Three pieces were targeted to likely city election voters. Two pieces were targeted to African-American voters. Four of the five mail pieces featured local community leaders and their reason for supporting the nondiscrimination ordinance. We received the most positive feedback at the doors from voters who saw their friends or neighbors in the mail pieces and read their reasons for supporting the campaign. In total, approximately 39,000 pieces of mail were sent to voters.

One Kalamazoo had a robust online presence with an active website, a full email program, and a social media team. We actively built our email list with online and offline activities, amassing close to 2,500 emails in the Kalamazoo area at the close of the campaign. This was especially helpful in our online fundraising efforts. When we sent two “keep this ad on the air” emails, we were able to raise approximately \$10,000.

When compiled in total, our voter contact schedule laid out a series of multiple touches across multiple mediums for voters and supporters.

### Lessons Learned

The Kalamazoo Campaign confirmed a few old adages and demonstrated a few new best practices. **First**, you can never start early enough. Although the campaign only lasted three months, KAFE had been working for two years on building the relationships that would sustain the campaign.

**Second**, it is important to stay on message. More so in this campaign than others, there is almost no

*Due to the recycled nature of the opposition’s messaging, we could anticipate their game plan and get ahead of them.*

positive aspect to talking about anything other than the campaign's core message: LGBT people are entitled to the same rights as everyone else. While it is important to have short, credible answers about transgender issues, how the law is executed logistically, and other factual concerns, there is no net advantage to having a prolonged conversation about any of the opposition's concerns. The opposition's messaging was based on fear and a distortion of reality, so engaging the opposition only increased their credibility.

**Third**, the opposition plays to win. In Kalamazoo, the opposition used phrases such as "vote NO to discrimination" and recycled older, falsified campaign materials from the Gainesville campaign.

*Compromise is necessarily a zero-sum game: each additional exemption to the protections creates a space where inequality is acceptable.*

Advocates for nondiscrimination protections should focus on aggressively presenting their position to the community and recycle previously used and tested messages from places like Kalamazoo.

**Fourth**, due to the recycled nature of the opposition's messaging, we could anticipate their game plan and get ahead of them.

The opposition regularly uses race and religion as wedge issues. In this case, the opposition targeted the African-American church and faith communities in general with the false message that religious freedom would be curtailed by a pro-LGBT ordinance. Building relationships with people of color and people of faith will defuse this predictable situation.

**Fifth**, there really is very little room to compromise. Advocates for nondiscrimination protections believe that all people should be treated fairly and equally. Opponents do not, and they want to reserve the right to treat gay and transgender people differently than heterosexual people. As such, compromise is necessarily a zero-sum game: each additional exemption to the protections creates a space where inequality is acceptable. Champions of these bills should be prepared to lead on the values proposition—that equality is itself moral—and recognize that the opponents simply disagree. Conversely, we have now also reached the point where doing nothing is also a statement; silence or inaction is support for discrimination.

**Finally**, while these campaigns can be an opportunity to build progressive power, progressives

should not romanticize them as educational tools. Those politicians who champion putting equality issues on the ballot are disconnected from the realities of a campaign at best and disingenuous at worst. The financial, physical, and emotional toll of having thousands of conversations about the desire to be treated the same as everyone else is significant for the community subject to the vote and especially for those working directly in the campaign.

One Kalamazoo was the result of the best thinking on nondiscrimination ballot measures over the previous thirty years combined with the resources to run a first class campaign. Fortunately, communities wishing to embrace nondiscrimination protections will not have to do the same level of invention for their campaigns. Because of the resources spent in Kalamazoo, other communities can run and win their own campaigns proving that regardless of where you live, work, or play, all people can and should be treated fairly and equally.

### Questions for Discussion

1. What were KAFE's tactics before and after the rescission of the ordinance?
2. What were the messages from Kalamazoo Citizens Voting No to Discrimination?
3. Was agreeing to an outside organizer a good idea? Why or why not?
4. KAFE decided not to focus on the opponent's claims about LGBT people. Do you agree with that approach?
5. Why did KAFE win the second time around?
6. What lessons from this case study can you bring to your work?

# Florida's Amendment 2

David Dodge

*David has worked as an electoral and grassroots community organizer and researcher on a range of issues affecting LGBT and low-income communities; currently, he is pursuing a master's degree in Public Policy at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government.*

*During the 2008 electoral season, he worked as the lead organizer for SAVE Dade, an LGBT organization based in Miami, Florida that was working to defeat Amendment 2, an anti-LGBT ballot initiative. Amendment 2, also known as the Florida Marriage Protection Amendment, sought to rewrite Florida's constitution in order to define marriage as the union between one man and one woman. The Amendment threatened to ban other forms of same-sex relationship recognition as well, such as civil unions and domestic partnerships. Though the campaign to defeat Amendment 2 raised nearly \$2.7 million more in funding, the amendment passed with 62.1% of the vote. This case study will attempt to analyze the messaging and strategies utilized by our opposition to successfully pass the measure. In addition, the author will also seek to analyze several of the missteps and missed opportunities that occurred throughout the campaign in order to provide guidance for future LGBT electoral battles.*

## I. BACKGROUND

### Previous Anti-LGBT Ballot Initiatives

Over the last decade, LGBT advocates have increasingly focused on marriage equality as a central component of the movement to advance LGBT rights within the United States. During this time, advocates have brought about several important victories; in November of 2003, Massachusetts became the first state in the country to allow same-sex couples to marry after a ruling by that state's Supreme Court. As of this writing, five additional states as well as the District of Columbia have joined Massachusetts in recognizing same-sex marriages, while 15 states now grant same-sex couples civil unions, domestic partnerships or other forms of legal protections.

The progress made by LGBT advocates, however, sparked a conservative backlash; following the legalization of same-sex marriage in Massachusetts, voters across the country began approving state constitutional amendments to prohibit relationship recognition for LGBT couples. These amendments, moreover, gained the backing of key prominent conservative political and religious leaders, and played pivotal roles in several key state and federal elections. Several political analysts, for example, have contended

that anti-LGBT constitutional amendments were part of a concerted effort by Republican strategists, notably George W. Bush's former chief political advisor, Karl Rove, to mobilize Christian Evangelical voters to the polls in the 2004 and 2006 elections. By some measures, moreover, this strategy worked; following the 2004 elections, in which 11 states approved anti-LGBT ballot initiatives, exit polls found that "moral issues" were among the most important concerns to voters.<sup>9</sup> Some analysts even attribute President Bush's successful reelection that year to social and religious conservatives drawn to the polls in support of anti-LGBT amendments.<sup>10</sup> Following the 2006 elections, a total of 27 states had passed constitutional amendments banning the recognition of same-sex marriage, and many other states had enacted laws that similarly prohibited legal recognition of LGBT relationships.

During the 2008 electoral season, Arizona, California, and Florida added constitutional amendments to the ballot in efforts to define marriage as a union between one man and one woman. Arizona had previously voted down an anti-LGBT marriage amendment in 2006, with 51.8% of the vote, becoming the first state in the country to do so.<sup>11</sup> Many political observers attribute this defeat to language in the Amendment that was interpreted to threaten civil unions and domestic partnerships in addition to

same-sex marriage.<sup>12</sup> In the 2008 version of Arizona's amendment, the language was more narrowly tailored to target same-sex marriage alone, and easily passed with 56% of the vote.

California's marriage amendment, known as Proposition 8, was the most contentious and high profile anti-LGBT ballot initiative as it sought to invalidate a decision by the state's Supreme Court in May of 2008, which had paved the way to the legalization of same-sex marriages in that state. Nationally, Proposition 8 became a major component of the 2008 electoral season, with more than \$70 million raised to fuel efforts by both proponents and opponents of the measure, more than had ever been

previously raised in a social-issue ballot campaign in the United States.<sup>13</sup> California's voters approved Proposition 8 with 52% of the vote.

Unlike in California, same-sex marriages had never been legal in Florida; accordingly, Florida's marriage amendment, known as Amendment 2, did not attract the national attention nor the amount of funding that was involved in California's Proposition

8 campaign. Nevertheless, Amendment 2, which passed with over 62% of the vote, represented a major threat to the rights of LGBT families in unique and significant ways.

### Why Florida Mattered

Within the context of the 2008 election cycle, as well as the broader movement to obtain legal recognition for LGBT families, Florida's Amendment 2 was significant for several reasons. First, unlike the marriage amendments proposed in Arizona or California, Amendment 2 sought to ban civil unions and domestic partnerships in addition to same-sex marriages. The language of Amendment read as follows:

Inasmuch as marriage is the legal union of only one man and one woman as husband and wife, no other legal union that is treated as marriage or the substantial equivalent thereof shall be valid or recognized.

The phrase "the substantial equivalent thereof" was widely interpreted to threaten a broad range of benefits for unmarried couples in Florida. A similar-

ly worded Amendment that had passed in Michigan in 2004, for example, was interpreted by that state's Supreme Court to ban state-run entities, such as universities and government agencies, from extending domestic partnership benefits to the partners of LGBT employees.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, Amendment 2 also included a provision that prohibited state judges from overturning the law, effectively precluding a judicial route towards the legalization of same-sex marriage in Florida.

Additionally, unlike most states in the country, a supermajority, or 60% of the vote, is required to pass a constitutional amendment in the state of Florida. LGBT advocates therefore only required 40% of the electorate to vote against the amendment in order to prevent its passage, which represented a major advantage over the amendment's proponents. Conversely, if Amendment 2 was successfully passed, it meant pro-LGBT advocates would eventually need to garner support from 60% of Florida's electorate in order to overturn a ban on same-sex relationship recognition. We recognized this as a highly unlikely electoral reality in Florida anytime in the near future, helping instill a heightened sense of urgency surrounding the campaign to defeat Amendment 2.

Preventing passage of Amendment 2 also had important political implications in the national fight to bring about legal recognition of same-sex relationships. For example, if successful, our campaign would have been only the second in the country, after Arizona, to defeat an attempt to ban same-sex marriages through a voter driven ballot initiative. Polls conducted early in the 2008 electoral season, moreover, indicated voters in California and Florida were both likely to reject their respective marriage amendments.<sup>15</sup> Though the stakes were higher in California, where same-sex marriages were already legal, many LGBT advocates felt that defeating an anti-LGBT ballot initiative in the more socially conservative swing state of Florida would represent an important turning point in national efforts to safeguard rights for LGBT people.

*Preventing passage of Amendment 2 also had important political implications in the national fight to bring about legal recognition of same-sex relationships.*



Florida4Marriage's logo includes references to both "red" (conservative) and "blue" (liberal) voters.

## II. THE CAMPAIGN FOR AND AGAINST AMENDMENT 2

### The Players

Florida4Marriage was the sponsoring political campaign committee of Amendment 2. The Chairman of Florida4Marriage, John Stemberger, was also the head of two conservative Christian organizations, the Florida Family Policy Council and Florida Family Action, both of which were heavily involved in the campaign to pass Amendment 2. Politically, Amendment 2 received support from Republican Governor Charlie Crist, though the Governor did not actively campaign on the Amendment's behalf. A broad network of churches and faith-based organizations also lent support and funding to the campaign to pass the marriage amendment.

While Florida4Marriage was the sole campaign committee to form in support of Amendment 2, LGBT advocates created four separate campaign committees to fight against the Amendment. These included Florida Red & Blue, Fairness for All Families, Progress Florida No on 2, and Equality Florida Action. Florida Red & Blue, headed by Derek Newton, was the largest of these committees. Several LGBT advocacy organizations also lent support to efforts to defeat the Amendment. These included SAVE Dade, an LGBT advocacy group based in Miami-Dade County, and several national LGBT organizations, including the LGBT Mentoring Project, headed by David Fleisher, and the organizing arm of the National Gay and Lesbian Taskforce (NGLTF), headed at the time by Dan Hawes. LGBT

advocates received support from a host of political figures and organizations as well. Miami Mayor Manny Diaz, the NAACP, and the League of Women Voters all publically opposed the Amendment. Then-candidate Barack Obama publically opposed the Amendment as well but did not actively campaign for its defeat.

### Funding the Campaigns

Neither pro- nor anti-LGBT advocates in Florida raised a substantial amount of money throughout the course of the Amendment 2 campaign. According to the National Institute on Money in State Politics, the proponents of Amendment 2 raised about \$1.6 million by the end of the 2008 electoral season, or only \$64,000 per congressional district in the state of Florida.<sup>16</sup> Meanwhile, LGBT advocates raised over \$4.3 million to oppose the Amendment, or \$175,000 per congressional district.<sup>17</sup>

*LGBT advocates created four separate campaign committees to fight against the Amendment.*

The funds raised in Florida appear particularly small when compared with the amounts raised during other statewide LGBT ballot campaigns in 2008. Proponents of California's Proposition 8, for example, raised over \$42 million, or roughly \$800,000 per congressional district while LGBT advocates raised over \$64 million, or over \$1.2 million per congressional district. Similarly, proponents of Arizona's Proposition 102 campaign raised almost \$8 million, or roughly \$1 million per congressional district, while LGBT advocates raised over \$8.6 million, or over \$1.2

million per congressional district.<sup>18</sup> The comparatively small amount of money raised in Florida meant that neither side was able to run truly competitive, statewide campaigns.

Despite these small fundraising totals, significant differences in the fundraising strategy existed between supporters and opponents of Amendment 2. For example, while 85% of the funds raised by LGBT advocates came from small, grassroots contributors [Table 1], almost all of the funds raised by Florida4Marriage came from organizations that provided large gifts of \$10,000 or more [Table 2]. In fact, nearly 80% of Florida4Marriage’s funding came from Florida Family Action, a conservative organization headed by Florida4Marriage’s campaign manager, John Stemberger.<sup>19</sup>

Campaign, and the Gill Action Fund.

**The Media Campaigns**

As the only effort to defeat a state-level anti-LGBT marriage amendment, Arizona’s Proposition 107 heavily influenced the media campaigns of both the proponents and opponents of Amendment 2. Moreover, Florida’s marriage amendment was worded similarly to that of Arizona’s Proposition 107—both measures contained vague language that many believed would lead state courts to ban not only same-sex marriages, but also civil unions and domestic partnerships.<sup>24</sup> LGBT advocates in Arizona, therefore, developed much of their media around the idea that Proposition 107 went “too far” by targeting heterosexual couples living in domestic partnerships. One television advertisement, for example, displayed the following statements:

**Fact:** the 2000 census showed that over 100,000 Arizona residents live in heterosexual, domestic partner relationships.

**Fact:** Proposition 107 is not about preventing same-sex marriage. That is already illegal.<sup>25</sup>

Many advocates on both sides of Arizona’s campaign attribute the defeat of Proposition 107 to this type of messaging, which stressed the measure’s impact on heterosexual couples rather than on the LGBT community.<sup>26</sup> Despite the implicit disapproval of same-sex marriage inherent in this type of mes-

*While 85% of the funds raised by LGBT advocates came from small, grassroots contributors, almost all of the funds raised by Florida4Marriage came from organizations that provided large gifts of \$10,000 or more.*

Similarly, despite the prominent role Florida Family Action played in financing Amendment 2, the organization was not required to publically disclose its donors. As such, Stemberger actively encouraged supporters to donate to Florida Family Action, as opposed to the sponsoring organization, Florida4Marriage, to evade public disclosure laws.<sup>21</sup> While LGBT advocates filed a lawsuit in an attempt to force Stemberger to release the names of top contributors to Florida Family Action, the suit was unsuccessful, leaving the

identities of many major donors to Amendment 2 unknown.<sup>22</sup>

Those who contributed directly to Florida4Marriage, however, were required to disclose their identities. Apart from Florida Family Action, other prominent donors included the owner of the Orlando Magic basketball team, Richard DeVos, Focus on the Family, and the National Organization for Marriage. Funds donated to groups working to defeat Amendment 2, meanwhile, came from a variety of individuals and organizations. Prominent contributors to the campaign to defeat Amendment 2 included David A. Burns, Chairman of YMAX communications, the Human Rights

**Table 1. Top 10 Contributors to Florida Red & Blue**

Contributors	Location	Total Donation
1. Donald A. Burns	West Palm Beach, FL	\$555,253
2. Human Rights Campaign	Washington, DC	\$255,275
3. Jonathan L. Kislak	Miami Shores, FL	\$207,956
4. Jon L. Stryker	Kalamazoo, MI	\$200,500
5. Gill Action Fund	Denver, CO	\$163,000
6. Ronald M. Ansin	Aventura, FL	\$138,550
7. Jonathan D. Lewis	Miami, FL	\$125,000
8. Fred Eychaner	Chicago, IL	\$125,000
9. Equality Florida Action Network	St. Petersburg, FL	\$102,301
10. Peter B. Lewis	Mayfield Village, OH	\$100,000

**Table 2. Top 10 Contributors to Florida4Marriage<sup>23</sup>**

Contributors	Location	Total Donation
1. Florida Family Action	Orlando, FL	\$1,124,065
2. Richard DeVos, Jr.	Grand Rapids, MI	\$100,000
3. Focus on the Family	Colorado Springs, CO	\$52,768
4. Florida Baptist Convention, Inc.	Jacksonville, FL	\$43,000
5. Al Ritz	Naples, FL	\$25,000
6. Stand for Marriage, Inc.	Terre Haute, IN	\$12,852
7. Ray Berryman	Windermere, FL	\$10,000
8. Leadership for Florida's Future	Tampa, FL	\$10,000
9. National Organization for Marriage	Manassas, VA	\$10,000
10. The First Orlando Foundation, Inc.	Orlando, FL	\$10,000

were not able to saturate television and radio markets with their media on a statewide basis. While LGBT advocates in Arizona similarly did not raise large amounts of funding— LGBT groups in Arizona raised over \$237,000 to spend per congressional district, while those in Florida raised just under \$176,000— Arizona is a significantly smaller state, with only 8 congressional districts to Florida’s 25. It was easier, therefore, for LGBT advocates in Arizona to saturate media markets and reach voters. In Florida, meanwhile, it is likely that the large majority of voters were never exposed to this messaging, limiting the potential for these advertisements to have had a serious impact on the outcome of the referendum.

saging, Florida Red & Blue, which was the primary organization developing media against Amendment 2, attempted to build off of Arizona’s success by replicating this strategy in Florida. For example, the group aired an advertisement that claimed the following:

[Amendment] 2 could take benefits away from senior couples, and let government into our private lives.<sup>27</sup>

Similarly, another advertisement features an elderly couple in a domestic partnership who worry they might be unable to visit each other in the hospital legally if Amendment 2 were to pass. Florida Red & Blue similarly emphasized messaging along these lines in media interviews. For example, Derek Newton, chairman of Florida Red & Blue, said the following in an interview with a local Fox News affiliate when asked if he believed same-sex marriage should be legal in the state of Florida:

Florida Red & Blue, and myself in particular, we don’t have an opinion on gay marriage necessarily. We are an organization that is just engaged to fight this amendment....We think it’s a bad amendment. We think it’s unnecessary and we think it has a real possibility to do a lot of harm to a lot of people.<sup>28</sup>

Though this messaging may have been effective in Arizona, it proved ineffectual in Florida for a couple of reasons. First, due to the limited amount of funds raised by Florida Red & Blue, LGBT advocates

Second, though similarly underfunded, Florida4Marriage developed media to discredit the idea that that Amendment 2 would have broad consequences for heterosexual couples. For example, one of Florida4Marriage’s main television advertisements, called “One Thing,” displayed images of families headed by heterosexual couples while a voiceover read the following:

Amendment 2 does only one thing- defining marriage as a union of a man and a woman. That’s it. When you vote, say yes to pass life on to the next generation. Vote yes to keep marriage one man, one woman. That’s it. No one loses benefits. Please, vote yes on Amendment 2.<sup>30</sup>

*Florida4Marriage provided anti-LGBT sermons to religious leaders across the state, to be delivered on the same Sunday.*

To the extent that Florida Red & Blue’s messaging was successful in reaching voters, therefore, Florida4Marriage developed a counter message that may have lessened its impact. Proponents of Arizona’s Proposition 107, meanwhile, did not develop similar messaging to counter LGBT advocates during their 2006 campaign.

Although LGBT advocates in Arizona may owe some of their success in defeating Proposition 107 to messaging that essentially excluded the LGBT community, that success was short lived. In the 2008 electoral season, anti-LGBT advocates redrafted the Amendment with language that more specifically tar-

geted LGBT couples, and the measure easily passed, with 56.2% of the vote. Therefore, even if the messaging developed by Florida Red & Blue had helped defeat Amendment 2, anti-LGBT activists would have likely placed a similar Amendment on the ballot during a future electoral cycle to more specifically target LGBT couples.

**The Field Campaigns**

Most of Florida4Marriage’s direct contact with voters occurred with the help of a broad network of faith leaders who encouraged congregants to vote for the measure and donate money to the campaign. Florida4Marriage, with the help of pastors such as Clayton Cloer of the First Baptist Church of Central Florida, also coordinated several days of outreach to faith-based congregations. During one event, called “Marriage Sunday,” Florida4Marriage provided anti-LGBT sermons to religious leaders across the state, to be delivered on the same Sunday. Beyond this faith-based strategy, however, the proponents of Amendment 2 did not engage in extensive, statewide fieldwork in Florida.

Though LGBT advocates conducted a more wide-ranging field campaign, this work was limited in several important ways. For example, field efforts to defeat Amendment 2 were largely confined to the work of SAVE Dade, an LGBT advocacy group based in Miami-Dade County. As a small organization, SAVE did not have the capacity to speak directly with voters on a statewide basis. Fieldwork was therefore limited to several targeted electoral districts in and around Miami-Dade County.

Additionally, our field efforts were hindered by the lack of an organized LGBT community in Miami upon which SAVE could build its field campaign. Though SAVE had been active with Miami’s LGBT community since 1993, the organization’s main work had centered on policy advocacy and pro-LGBT candidate endorsements. Prior to the Amendment 2 campaign, SAVE had not been engaged in sustained, grass-roots organizing. As a consequence, SAVE struggled to find qualified, local organizers to help lead the field campaign against

Amendment 2. After failing to find local organizers, for example, SAVE hired David Caldwell as Field Director, an organizer from Ohio with the LGBT mentoring project. Caldwell was brought on with only seven weeks left before the election. Similarly, SAVE brought the author in from New York City to work as Lead Organizer in late August, with less than three months before Election day. Due to these staffing issues, our field efforts did not begin operating at full capacity until very late in the electoral season.

Lastly, SAVE’s volunteer recruitment strategy was initially ineffective. For example, at the outset of the campaign, the bulk of SAVE’s volunteer recruitment was conducted at various LGBT bars and nightclubs. Though SAVE ran up to five outreach events each week, our efforts at these venues rarely produced new volunteers. Consequently, other components of our field campaign suffered as well. For example, SAVE conducted several door-to-door canvassing and phone banking sessions each week to educate voters about Amendment 2 and urge them to vote no on Election day. Given our struggle to recruit new volunteers, however, the attendance at our canvassing and phone banking actions was low, leaving us unable to reach a large number of voters.

With less than two months before election day, Caldwell and I made several important changes to our campaign that began to improve our results.

*SAVE struggled to find qualified, local organizers to help lead the field campaign against Amendment 2.*

**Table 3. Amendment 2 Results In Targeted Precincts**

Precinct	YES	NO
602	50.95%	49.05%
604	37.98%	62.02%
608	51.97%	48.03%
611	56.31%	43.69%
612	43.36%	56.64%
613	45.38%	54.62%
615	50.00%	50.00%
633	45.58%	54.42%
635	36.14%	63.86%
638	49.86%	50.14%
639	30.82%	69.18%
640	27.35%	72.65%

Most significantly, we ended volunteer recruitment efforts at LGBT bars and nightclubs, focusing instead on universities and several progressive institutions. In particular, we began to focus our volunteer recruitment efforts at the University of Miami. Our efforts at these venues were much more successful, helping us build a larger base of volunteers to further the work of our campaign.

Once our campaign developed a solid base of volunteers, we were also able to begin expanding our field operation in new and effective ways. At the University of Miami, for example, we helped support and create a pro-LGBT student-run organizing project, known as UM4Equality, which helped SAVE recruit and train several hundred students in organizing techniques. With our support, students began conducting a variety of activities, such as making brief presentations about Amendment 2 in front of the classrooms of supportive professors and holding several phone banking sessions each week to contact voters. Additionally, we began holding weekly canvassing events within the University of Miami’s dormitories and were eventually able to hold conversations with roughly half of all students living on campus.

Though our fieldwork was limited, there is some evidence that our work speaking directly to voters was effective, particularly in the electoral districts close to the University of Miami. For example, of the 12 precincts in which we were the most active near the University, none effectively reached the 60% threshold needed to pass Amendment 2 [Table 3]. Moreover, the two precincts in which we conducted the vast majority of our fieldwork, districts 639 and 640, voted overwhelmingly against the measure, with 69.18% and 72.65% of the vote respectively.<sup>31</sup>

While we cannot measure with confidence the true impact of our fieldwork on the outcome of the election in these districts, a comparison with the results of a previous LGBT-related ballot initiative, County Question 14, provides some evidence of our success. During this 2002 measure, anti-LGBT activists unsuccessfully attempted to repeal a Miami-Dade ordinance protecting LGBT people from discrimination. Over 92% of the electoral districts in Miami-Dade rejected Question 14 in greater numbers than Amendment 2, suggesting Floridian voters are more tolerant of anti-discrimination laws than they are of relationship recognition for LGBT families.<sup>32</sup> However, districts 639 and 640, the two precincts in which we conducted the vast bulk of our

**Table 4. “No” Results from Two Previous Anti-LGBT Ballot Initiatives in Targeted Electoral Districts in Miami-Dade County**

	% NO VOTE on Amendment 2 (2008)	% NO VOTE on County Question 14 (2002)	Percentage Point Difference
<b>Countywide</b>	42.39%	52.99%	-10.69
<b>Precinct 639</b>	69.18%	68.75%	+0.43
<b>Precinct 640</b>	72.65%	61.58%	+11.07

canvassing, were among the few districts to reject Amendment 2 by a wider margin than Questions 14 [Table 4].<sup>33</sup> Though other factors no doubt contributed, our work to speak directly with voters in these districts during the Amendment 2 campaign likely accounts for at least some of the increase in our support.

### III: LESSONS LEARNED

In waging future campaigns, LGBT advocates can infer several important lessons from both the positive and negative aspects of our work in Florida. Among our missteps, for example, was our decision to exclude the LGBT community from our media messaging. Florida Red & Blue’s media consultants concluded—perhaps correctly—that we would have a better chance defeating Amendment 2 if our media excluded LGBT people entirely. As a result, however, our media never once displayed the image of an LGBT family, or even mentioned the words, “gay,” “lesbian” or “same-sex.” By “de-queering” the issue in this way in our media, our campaign missed an important opportunity to begin addressing fears and misconceptions about the LGBT community.

*Our media never once displayed the image of an LGBT family, or even mentioned the words, “gay,” “lesbian” or “same-sex.”*

Second, the organizing capacity we built up throughout the course of our campaign was not sustained following the 2008 electoral season. For example, Florida Red & Blue, which was formed with the mission of defeating Amendment 2, disbanded following the passage of the Amendment. Similarly, the organizers who had been supporting SAVE’s fieldwork, including myself, had been flown in from

around the country, and very little effort was made to find local organizers to continue this work once we left. Our base of volunteers, which included several hundred people by the close of the campaign, therefore quickly dispersed after Election day. As a result, we missed an opportunity to maintain an active LGBT and allied community in Miami, thus laying the groundwork for future LGBT-related referendums and legislative battles.

A third misstep involves the lack of effective communication among the LGBT campaign committees and advocacy groups throughout the campaign. For example, rather than combine fundraising and strategizing efforts under the banner of one main campaign committee, a lack of cooperation among

LGBT advocates in Florida led to the formation of four separate campaign committees. Similarly, there was very little interaction among advocacy groups throughout the campaign. Beyond occasional joint volunteer trainings, groups like SAVE and Equality Florida did not interact with one another. As such, LGBT advocates in Florida missed an opportunity

to expand capacity, share best practices and develop strategies that would likely have been useful in our collective campaigns to defeat Amendment 2.

Among the more effective aspects of our campaign was our decision to engage a broader segment of the allied community in our fieldwork. SAVE's volunteer recruitment efforts succeeded only after we broadened our targeted venues to include non-LGBT specific sites. By the end of the campaign, moreover, the majority of our most dedicated volunteers did not identify with the LGBT community—this was especially true of our student volunteers at the University of Miami. If our campaign had begun outreach efforts at universities and other progressive institutions early on in the electoral season, our capacity would likely have been greatly improved. Though recruitment efforts should clearly continue focusing on LGBT populations, our experience in Florida suggests a larger role should be carved out for non-LGBT institutions and allies in future campaigns.

### Questions for Discussion

1. Do you agree with the position that anti-LGBT ballot questions are designed to get out the conservative vote? Does this strategy seem to work?
2. Florida's Marriage focused on a secular message: marriage = 1 man + one woman. Florida's Red and Blue chose to avoid using LGBT words. In your opinion, why did decoupling the marriage issue from LGBT references work for the opposition?
3. What is your reaction to the author's assessment of the attempt to defeat Amendment 2's shortcomings?
4. What are the implications of this case study for your own work?

*The organizing capacity we built up throughout the course of our campaign was not sustained following the 2008 electoral season.*

# Inside the Belly of the Beast

## THE RISE AND FALL OF COLORADO'S AMENDMENT 2

Cara DeGette

*Journalist Cara DeGette is a native of Colorado. She is a co-founder of the Colorado Springs Independent and the newspaper's former longtime editor.*

The night after voters passed Colorado's Amendment 2, gays and lesbians and their supporters poured into the streets. They were shocked, outraged, in disbelief. How could this be? What had happened to their beautiful, seemingly tolerant state of Colorado?

It was 1992, the year that Bill Clinton won the presidency, with the help of the majority of Coloradans. A majority of the voters had also adopted a constitutional amendment legalizing discrimination against gays and lesbians. Two days after the election, the single image that monopolized the front page of the *Rocky Mountain News* in Colorado was a grim-looking Gov. Roy Romer, marching, alongside Denver Mayor Wellington Webb and a phalanx of Amendment 2 opponents, to the state capitol, brandishing "No on 2" campaign signs. Overnight, a movement was born.

Twenty years have passed since the passage of Colorado's Amendment 2, the first state in the country that tried to ban gays and lesbians from seeking legal protections as a class.

Amendment 2 was ultimately ruled unconstitutional by the United States Supreme Court—but not before Colorado had been the target of a national boycott, struck with the moniker "The Hate State" and engaged in several years' worth of culture clashes between the hard Right and the LGBT community and their supporters.

After the 1992 election, proponents and opponents alike reported they were stunned that Amendment 2 had passed at all—and with a decisive 53.4 % majority of the voters. Its passage alone was a major victory for conservative Christian groups trying to counter what they deemed was a "militant homosexual agenda" that they warned was sweeping the nation.

Denver District Court Judge Jeffrey Bayless immediately stayed Amendment 2, until it could be reviewed by the Colorado Supreme Court. At the time, many legal observers opined that ultimately Amendment 2 would be ruled unconstitutional, pointing out that you cannot deny groups of people from seeking legal recourse and protections.

But it would take months of introspection and years of activism to reverse the damage done to the collective psyche of the state's LGBT community. The winning tactics of Amendment 2 organizers, which were exposed more than a year later, detailed a cauldron of deceit, fear-mongering and righteous conservative Christian morality that had been brewed in Colorado Springs, the state's second largest city.

*The winning tactics of Amendment 2 organizers, which were exposed more than a year later, detailed a cauldron of deceit, fear-mongering and righteous conservative Christian morality.*

### The Changing Face of Colorado Springs

Colorado Springs is 70 miles south of Denver and in the shadow of Pikes Peak, the mountain that was the inspiration of Katharine Lee Bates' anthem, *America the Beautiful*. Home to the Air Force Academy, Fort Carson army base and the North American Aerospace Command (NORAD), Colorado Springs has long been Republican-dominated in its politics.

But the political tenor of the city, while conservative, was one of a classically Western "live and let live" tradition. The community took a decidedly hard right turn when economic hard times gave the city a beating in the late 1980s.

Reeling from the military defense contract bust and the Savings and Loan scandal of the late 1980s, economic development leaders turned to religious

nonprofits as a socially and environmentally clean industry. They began courting Christian evangelical groups to relocate their headquarters to the Springs and, by the early 1990s, the city became home base to more than 65 national and international Christian organizations.

Among them was Focus on the Family, a Christian media empire that relocated from Arcadia, California in 1991 with the help of a \$4 million grant from a powerful Colorado Springs foundation. At the time, Focus on the Family was not recognized in the mainstream for its overt political activities. Rather, its founder and CEO James Dobson, a child psychologist, was better known for his daily radio broadcasts, which then largely focused on childrearing and other family-related topics. His programs were broadcast on Christian radio stations around the world.

Beginning in the early 1990s, Dobson began to emerge as a conservative political powerhouse and kingmaker. His ministry was to play a key—albeit under-the-radar—role in convincing Colorado voters to pass Amendment 2.

At about the same time that Focus on the Family and other evangelical groups were relocating to Colorado Springs, the city's Human Relations Commission made a recommendation to the mayor and city council that the city adopt a Human Rights Ordinance prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race, gender, and ethnicity. The commission recommended that sexual orientation be included in the list of identified classifications.

When they learned of the proposed ordinance, a group of opponents formed to battle what they perceived as an attempt to force acceptance of gays and lesbians and their alleged “agenda.” Over a period of months, the organization—Colorado for Family Values—successfully shot down the proposed ordinance.

Buoyed by success, Colorado for Family Values organizers decided to build on their momentum, specifically to take the battle to the state level via a ballot initiative that was to become Amendment 2. In their crosshairs were human rights ordinances that were already in place in Denver, Boulder, and Aspen—all of which included protecting people based on sexual orientation. They wanted to remove those ordinances and ensure that no other municipi-

palities could ever adopt similar measures.

After they successfully passed Amendment 2, Colorado for Family Values' hoped to take their winning show on the road, and replicate efforts in cities and states across the country.

### “The Colorado Model”

It is easier in Colorado than in most other states for citizens to amend the constitution. Sponsors need only to collect a small number of signatures from registered voters, and once the measure is approved by the Secretary of State, the proposed initiative makes the ballot. A simple majority is all that is required to pass an amendment.

Internal documents that were produced by Colorado for Family Values after Amendment 2 passed detailed their winning strategies in Colorado—and provided step-by-step recommendations for how to successfully replicate anti-gay legislation elsewhere. Called “*The Colorado Model*,” the how-to training packet was obtained by the author of this report.

According to *The Colorado Model*, in the early stage of the statewide campaign, Colorado for Family Values—led by Colorado Springs residents Kevin Tebedo and Tony Marco—was struggling along with little money and a low profile. They credited the convergence of three “miracles,” a folksy point man serving as the campaign's public face, and a good marketing strategy for their eventual win.

The documents give top credit for Amendment 2's success (Miracle #1) to Focus on the Family. For the campaign, Dobson's Christian media empire produced and distributed public service announcements (PSAs) recruiting volunteers to circulate petitions to get Amendment 2 placed on the ballot.

In what Colorado for Family Values termed Miracle #2, Christian radio stations across the state actually aired the PSAs. Requests for ballots began to pour into the Colorado Springs headquarters of Colorado for Family Values.

Miracle #3: Bill McCartney, then the football coach at the University of Colorado/ Boulder, jumped in on the action. At a press conference in February, 1992, McCartney—wearing a CU Buffs T-shirt and surrounded by cameras—called homosexuality an “abomination of God.”

Amid the resulting pandemonium, university officials rebuked McCartney, the highest paid state employee in Colorado, for airing his non-football-related opinions on the taxpayers' time. (A bumper sticker was born: “Focus On Your Own Damn Family.”)

*Beginning in the early 1990s, Dobson began to emerge as a conservative political powerhouse and kingmaker.*

But McCartney, who was listed as an “advisor” to Colorado for Family Values and went on to found the men’s Christian ministry Promise Keepers, instantly became a celebrity for the Right. And his name lent credibility to the campaign. Colorado for Family Values reported that following McCartney’s press conference, signed petitions for Amendment 2 began to flood into their office.

About the same time, former U.S. Senator Bill Armstrong, considered by many the godfather of Republican politics in Colorado, agreed to write an Amendment 2 campaign fundraising letter that was sent to 90,000 potential donors.

The long letter was filled with shocking claims, including that “militant gays” were attempting forced acceptance of their “lifestyle” onto moral Americans. Homosexuals, the former senator warned, reject traditional morals, family, and religion. Further, he asserted that homosexuals were unconcerned with their promiscuous behavior, which he claimed forced taxpayers to incur enormous health costs. Already, Armstrong warned, “militant gay activists” were forcing teachers to train children as early as kindergarten that homosexuality is “a normal, healthy lifestyle.”

“What will happen if gays achieve ‘ethnic’ status and special rights?” Armstrong wrote. “Quite simply Colorado citizens of all kinds will be deprived of their civil rights. You’ll lose your freedom of speech and conscience to object to homosexual behavior. Your church or business may be forced to hire gays. If you are a landlord, you will be compelled to rent to gays, regardless of your moral convictions. If you are a day care owner you will be forced to employ homosexuals and lesbians....”

“What can you and I do to stop them?” Armstrong asked. Specifically, he wanted \$400,000 to help fuel the campaign to pass Amendment 2.

Like McCartney’s statement, Armstrong’s letter drew instant and widespread criticism in the mainstream, and public condemnation for his prejudicial and irresponsible claims. News stories detailed Armstrong’s utterances as “tragic, hurtful, painful.” (Another bumper sticker was born: “Hate Is Not a Family Value.”)

As part of its campaign, Colorado for Family Values also opted to use and distribute the graphic and offensive “research” that had been conducted by Dr. Paul Cameron, the chairman of the Family Research Institute, then based in Washington, D.C. Cameron is the author of a booklet titled, “Medical Consequences of What Homosexuals Do,” in which

he claims gays and lesbians are unhealthy, perverted and die, often violently, at a young age. Here is just one short section that the “scientist” calls “The Biological Swapmeet”:

The typical sexual practices of homosexuals are a medical horror story—imagine exchanging saliva, feces, semen and/or blood with dozens of different men each year. Imagine drinking urine, ingesting feces and experiencing rectal trauma on a regular basis. Often these encounters occur while the participants are drunk, high, and/or in an orgy setting. Further, many of them occur in extremely unsanitary places (bathrooms, dirty peep shows), or, because homosexuals travel so frequently, in other parts of the world.

While promoting such outrageous stereotypes, Colorado for Family Values counterbalanced their campaign by adopting a folksy, grandfatherly spokesman named Will Perkins, who proved to be an effective public face of the campaign. Perkins, the owner of a Colorado Springs car dealership, was in his mid-60s, exuded an “aw-shucks” persona and was quoted saying he was involved in the campaign for his “grandchildren.”

“Will’s personality is an amiable, jovial, self-deprecating person who is impossible not to like and impossible to perceive as ‘hateful,’” according to *The Colorado Model*. “He’s also an excellent salesman, in the best sense of the word. As such, he personifies an uncanny recreation of Ronald Reagan’s rhetorical attributes.”

Finally, a week before the election, Colorado for Family Values distributed 750,000 tabloid “newspapers” to homes across the state. The 8-page document carried the headline, “Equal rights—not special rights! Stop special class status for homosexuality. Vote Yes on Amendment 2.”\*

\* Editor’s Note: The Right’s erroneous claim that LGBT people wanted “ethnic status” and “special rights” introduced coded references to race and affirmative action into the campaign. This frame proved successful for organizers in this and many other battles with LGBT activists, in part because support for affirmative action was being eroded by conservative campaigns.

*After they successfully passed Amendment 2, Colorado for Family Values’ hoped to take their winning show on the road, and replicate efforts in cities and states across the country.*

In the final count, 54.3 percent of the voters in Colorado did just that.

### The Long Legal Battle

After Colorado for Family Values' stunning victory, the state's LGBT community, joined by supporters, jumped into action. What followed was a 3 ½-year legal battle.

Within a month after the election, opponents filed suit. Richard Evans, a gay man from Denver, signed on as the lead plaintiff in *Evans v. Romer*. Evans joined eight other gay and lesbian plaintiffs, a straight man with AIDS and the Colorado cities of Denver, Boulder and Aspen.

Ironically, the named defendant was Roy Romer. Although the then-governor of Colorado was a staunch opponent of Amendment 2, he represented the people of Colorado, and so his name appeared on the lawsuit.

On January 15, 1993, Denver District Court Jeffrey Bayless ordered a temporary injunction preventing Amendment 2 from taking effect. Eleven months later, the judge declared the measure unconstitutional, a violation of the 14th Amendment. The Equal Protection Clause grants people a fundamental right to participate equally in the political process, and prohibits the "fencing out" of

an identifiable class of people. The judge, however, stopped short of identifying gays and lesbians as a group that warranted classification.

It was clear to legal observers on both sides that the case was headed to the U.S. Supreme Court. By the time the case was argued before the high court on October 10, 1995, numerous high profile attorneys and organizations were working hard to overturn Amendment 2, including Lambda Legal, the Colorado Legal Initiatives Project, the American Civil Liberties Union, and the Colorado Civil Rights Commission. Attorneys from the cities of Denver and Boulder, and attorneys Greg Eurich and Jean Dubofsky, a former Colorado Supreme Court justice, played major roles in developing legal strategies to take down Amendment 2.

On May 20, 1996, the U.S. Supreme Court, on a 6-3 ruling, declared Amendment 2 unconstitutional.

Writing the majority opinion, Justice Anthony Kennedy rejected the argument that Amendment 2

blocked gay people from seeking "special rights." "Its sheer breadth is so discontinuous with the reasons offered for it that the amendment seems inexplicable by anything but animus toward the class that it affects; it lacks a rational relationship to legitimate state interests," Justice Kennedy wrote.

And: "[Amendment 2] is at once too narrow and too broad. It identifies persons by a single trait and then denies them protection across the board. The resulting disqualification of a class of persons from the right to seek specific protection from the law is unprecedented in our jurisprudence."

### Fighting Back

From the perspective of Colorado's LGBT community and supporters, the passage of Amendment 2 was a massive wake-up call. Many gays and lesbians, who had never before been politically active, were spurred into action.

In an era that was pre-internet, pre-YouTube, and pre-social media, activists' efforts were undertaken the old fashioned way, including coming out to their families, to their employers, and declaring their orientation at public events.

As LGBT activism emerged, reported crimes against gays and lesbians spiked statewide. And the tragic suicide of Marty Booker, two days after the election, became its own call to action. Suffering from AIDS, Booker, 26, overdosed. His suicide note cited Amendment 2 as the reason.

"I refuse to live in a state where a few people can, at will, make my life a living hell," Booker wrote. "Thanks to [Colorado for Family Values], hell was delivered to my very front door!"

Indeed, nowhere was the culture war so intense than in Colorado Springs, the birthplace of Amendment 2. If Colorado was the "Hate State," then Colorado Springs must be the "Belly of the Beast"—or, take your pick from the other options: "The Most Bigoted City in America," "The Fundamentalist Capitol of the World," "The Vatican of the Religious Right."

In Colorado Springs, "Ground Zero," a gay and lesbian rights advocacy and support group, formed and began aggressive outreach to the community, including monitoring anti-gay activities in the region and sponsoring community forums. It published a monthly newspaper and responded to media inquiries from all over the world from reporters who wanted to know what it was like for gays living at "ground zero."

*After Colorado for Family Values' stunning victory, the state's LGBT community, joined by supporters, jumped into action.*

In 1995 the organization's leader, Frank Whitworth, was honored with a national Stonewall Award for his lifelong contributions to the quality of life of lesbians and gays.

"We largely encouraged visibility by gays and lesbians in the community," Whitworth recounted of the days and years post-Amendment 2, in a 1999 news story in the Denver alternative newsweekly *Westword*. "You could hardly go anywhere that we weren't there." Gays and lesbians involved themselves in non-gay organizations around town, he said, "so they could see we'd always been there."

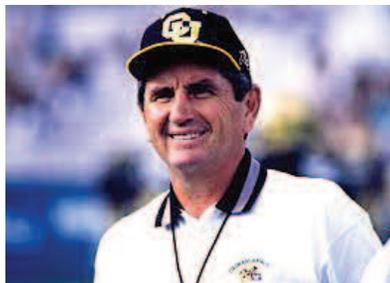
Similarly, Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) and the Southern Colorado AIDS Project stepped up their public advocacy and profiles in Colorado Springs.

Amendment 2 inspired Tim Gill, the wealthy founder of Quark, Inc., to begin speaking out publicly as a gay man. He founded the Gill Foundation and its project, the Gay & Lesbian Fund for Colorado, and continues to be one of the preeminent funders of progressive campaigns and political candidates in the nation.

To date, the Gill Foundation has invested more than \$178 million to programs with a commitment to equality for all.

According to the Gill Foundation, "In 1993, [Tim Gill] pledged \$1 million to raise awareness in Colorado about the effects of discrimination. In 1994, he established the Gill Foundation to secure equal opportunity for all Americans, regardless of sexual orientation and gender expression.... The goal of our work is straightforward: we want to create an America in which all people are treated equally and respectfully."

Citizens Project, a grassroots organization that had formed in 1992 to counter the growing influence of hard Right conservatives in Colorado Springs, spoke in strong opposition to Amendment 2. After the amendment passed, the group expanded its efforts to promote pluralism and the separation of church and state—including state-sanctioned targeting of gays and lesbians for discrimination. (And yes, the group created a bumper sticker that proved wildly popular among Colorado progressives for several years: "Celebrate Diversity.")



Bill McCartney, popular coach of the University of Colorado football team, called homosexuality an "abomination."

Post Amendment 2, Colorado Springs leaders found themselves living in a fishbowl. Any missteps became the headline of tomorrow. Colorado Springs Mayor Bob Isaac, who had ruled the city with an iron hand for nearly two decades, was widely criticized when, threatened by a boycott, he was asked to mend fences to convince the National Bar Association to hold its annual convention at the city's 5-star

Broadmoor hotel. Organizers asked him to extend an olive branch to gay and lesbian members of the Bar. "Do you mean I have to invite the queers?" Isaac asked. (The lawyers' group opted to meet elsewhere.)

In August, 1993, the *Colorado Springs Independent* launched its first edition. The passage of Amendment 2 was no coincidence in the creation of the alt-weekly newspaper. At the time, the only general circulation newspaper in the region was the arch-conservative *Gazette-Telegraph*, which had published no fewer than 14 editorials in support of Amendment 2 during the course of the campaign. Founders of the *Colorado Springs Independent* believed that the community deserved to have an alternative voice to counter the libertarian, conservative perspectives that were promoted by the city's daily.

*Shortly after the election, a national economic boycott of the state was organized.*

### Hitting Colorado Where it Hurts

Statewide, gays and lesbians and their supporters formed advocacy groups similar to that of Ground Zero—including the Common Decency Coalition and Equality Colorado—to foster grassroots education and organization, and work to repeal Amendment 2.

These groups joined national efforts to hit Colorado where it counted. Shortly after the election, a national economic boycott of the state was organized. Seven months later, Colorado Boycott director Terry Schleder offered a sobering update on the boycott, and a clear message to other states where anti-gay activists were considering similar proposals.

"As of June 1993, more than 60 companies have canceled conventions or meetings in Colorado, and

more than 110 groups have called for a boycott of Colorado to protest Amendment 2,” Schleder wrote.

Some 20 U.S. municipalities have severed ties with Colorado because of the anti-gay initiative. New York City has divested its stock holdings in any Colorado companies, and canceled a contract for new municipal buses. Ziff-Davis Publishing had planned to relocate their operations to Colorado; in the wake of Amendment 2, they reconsidered, costing the state \$1 billion in revenue over a five-year period had they chosen to operate in the state.

Municipalities that signed on to the boycott of Colorado included Atlanta, Chicago, New York, Los Angeles, Seattle, Austin, Texas, Detroit, Baltimore, Minneapolis, Boston, Philadelphia and Madison, Wisconsin.

Groups that participated in the boycott included the American Civil Liberties Union, including several state affiliates, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the American Friends Service Committee, the American Jewish Congress and numerous gay and lesbian service and support groups. Barbra Streisand

became an outspoken boycotter, as did Whoopi Goldberg, Jonathan Demme, Madonna, Joan Rivers, Nora Ephron, and the Kennedy family.

“Boycott Colorado, Inc. stands prepared to fight the battle over Amendment 2 until its eventual repeal,” noted Schleder in June, 1993. “We are unwilling to support a state that sees fit to deny civil rights and protections to any of its citizens. We are dedicated to promoting the effectiveness of the boycott nationally to prevent the spread of any ‘Amendment 2-style’ initiatives that may be attempted in other states.”

The boycott lasted another six months until Judge Bayless’ December 1993 ruling prompted its cancellation.

### Ultimately, it Boils Down to the “Loudest Voices”

At about the same time that Schleder was reporting on the success of the national boycott, the sponsors of Amendment 2—having vaulted into

national prominence—hosted a national conference to teach anti-gay activists how to replicate their winning techniques for similar anti-gay legislation in other states.

Their “Colorado Model” conference, held April 30-May 1, 1993 in Colorado Springs, drew representatives from 45 states who were interested in launching similar campaigns in cities and states across the country to fight what they continued to call the “Militant Homosexual Agenda.”

Indeed, Colorado for Family Values had emerged as a national force, joining the ranks of Pat Robertson’s Christian Coalition, James Dobson’s Focus on the Family, Phyllis Schlafly’s Eagle Forum and Lou Sheldon’s Traditional Values Coalition.

During the conference, Colorado for Family Values executive director Kevin Tebedo summed it up: “Ultimately it’s going to boil down to whose voices are the loudest.”

That year voters in the City of Cincinnati adopted a measure restricting gays and lesbians from seeking protected rights status; a reported 70% of the money that paid for that campaign came from Colorado for Family Values.

In the year after Amendment 2 passed, People for the American Way identified 132 anti-gay state or local battles that were being waged across the country. Efforts were underway in nine states for anti-gay ballot initiatives, including in Arizona, California, Florida, Idaho, Maine, Michigan, Nebraska, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, Washington, and West Virginia. Roughly half the states in the country had witnessed legislative battles over gay rights issues, from education to civil rights to marriage to sodomy.

After the U.S. Supreme Court ruling struck down Amendment 2 as unconstitutional, Colorado did not magically emerge as an LGBT-tolerant and welcoming place. In Colorado Springs, gay rights, including same-sex benefits and same-sex unions, continues to be an issue that is sure to draw controversy today. But all of the gay-friendly groups and support organizations that formed post-Amendment 2 to battle discrimination are still at work, making inroads whenever possible.

And, Colorado for Family Values—along with its “model” of legalized discrimination against lesbians and gays—ultimately found itself relegated to the dustbin of history.

*After the U.S. Supreme Court ruling struck down Amendment 2 as unconstitutional, Colorado did not magically emerge as an LGBT-tolerant and welcoming place.*

### Questions for Discussion

1. Of the six or more arguments used in Senator Armstrong's 1992 direct mail letter, how many are still being used today?
2. Why do you think the Colorado Model (direct mail fundraising, respected leadership endorsements, door to door canvassing, and statewide literature drop) successful?
3. Ground Zero organized a visibility campaign for LGBT people in Colorado Springs. How successful do you think such campaigns can be?
4. What are the pros and cons of a national boycott of an entire state?
5. What are your "take-away" lessons from this case study?

# Battle with the Mormons

Eric Ethington

*Eric Ethington is the founder of PRIDEinUtah, an activist group, and chief contributor to the group's news site.*

*The Mormon Church's organizing against LGBT rights dates back to Hawaii in the 1990s, and it took lessons from that campaign, including its use of secrecy, all the way to California.*

The first time many people concerned with LGBT rights learned about the Mormon Church's anti-LGBT activism was in 2008, when it played a major role in winning passage of California's Proposition 8, the ballot measure repealing same-sex marriage in the state. But the Mormon Church's organizing against LGBT rights dates back even earlier, to Hawaii in the 1990s, and it took lessons from that

campaign, including its use of secrecy, all the way to California. The church also brought its billions in expendable cash and a political savvy rarely seen in modern religions.

Those championing equality can also learn lessons, however, and in the aftermath of the California defeat, we learned that the Mormon Church—which for historical reasons is desperately frightened of public opinion and societal pressure, even more than most churches—can be pressured

into changing its positions. And its rigid hierarchy means that an institutional decision to change can have wide-reaching effects, for good and ill.

## HISTORY

### The Mormon Church

Most people outside of Utah are only vaguely aware of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, or Mormonism, perhaps hearing something about their (former) embrace of polygamy, or seeing clean cut youth ringing doorbells seeking new members in the missionary work required of all male members.

But what most people don't know or understand is the absolute control the church holds over its

members. Its level is almost incomprehensible unless you were raised within its grasp. The Mormons model their church hierarchy after the structure led by Jesus as seen in the New Testament. The head of the church is ordained as a "Prophet" who works with the equivalent of a board of directors, known in this case as the "Twelve Apostles." From there, leadership reaches down through general and area authorities, positions which held only by men who are as a group ordained to what the Mormon's call the Priesthood. Mormons believe that their "prophet" and "twelve apostles" are in direct communication with God and Jesus. Any resistance to even the most trivial command or doctrine their leaders give them is tantamount to apostasy and subject to punishment.

While many religious organizations oppose same-sex couples being married, the Mormon Church is one of the few which has taken proactive legal measures to fight against it. This opposition stems from how they see the afterlife. In Mormon doctrine, all aspects of life and religion center on the family, which is comprised of a Father (who holds the Priesthood and presides over the family), a Mother (who supports the Father), and children. After death, Mormonism claims that those who have been sufficiently righteous and fulfilled all the tenets of their religion continue with their family in Heaven. Once there, parents continue to have children and the Father takes on more wives and has the opportunity to become a god over a new world. Same-sex relationships threaten this version of the afterlife, as gay couples are not able to procreate.

A challenge to heterosexual dominance thus is seen as a challenge to the Mormon Church's theology and hierarchy. It acts to forestall any change in public opinion from within their membership that would turn them against the church and its antiquated policies. The fight against LGBT rights thus becomes a fight for the very life of the church.

Although no court of law or legislature would ever force them to change their doctrine, the next generation of members could drop out if their religious leaders refused to adopt a more egalitarian approach.

### Hawaii: The Fight Begins

The Mormon Church began its campaign against marriage equality in earnest during the 1990s during the first real battle over marriage, in Hawaii. In 1993, the state supreme court had declared that the state was violating its constitution in denying marriage licenses to gays and lesbians. In 1998, conservative religious forces successfully pushed a referendum adding an anti-gay marriage amendment to the constitution to stop any confusion. At the heart of those forces was the Mormon Church.

Many Americans, particularly evangelicals, are suspicious of Mormons, leading the church to craft a brilliant strategy of coalition building with other Christian religions that inspire some suspicion, particularly Roman Catholics. While the Mormons could (and did) provide funding and volunteers, these other religions were the coalition's public face. The Catholic Church and other visible allies would thereby absorb any public backlash directed towards the coalition, while the Mormons could push their agenda without any serious consequences to their public image.

The trial run of this coalition went public in 1998. Calling itself "The Hawaii Christian Coalition," it immediately began the work of encouraging all Mormons in Hawaii to send money to the coalition and to offer thousands of hours of volunteer work. Internal church documents, obtained by gay political watchdog and 2012 Republican Presidential hopeful Fred Karger, revealed just how orchestrated the church's plan was from the top of the hierarchy. Starting several years before the actual vote, letters flowed among the "Twelve Apostles" and other high-ranking leaders.

The letters reveal an explicit concern with bad publicity.<sup>36</sup> "The LDS Church receives a lukewarm favorability rating in Hawaii," one says. "This information suggests that the church should maintain a very low visibility in this campaign." A 1996 letter from Elder Neil A Maxwell to Elder Russell M. Ballard reads, "Our survey tells us we can get greater



HRC's president Joe Solmonese (R) presents 150,000 signatures to LDS representative Scott Trotter in October 2010.

public support by working with [a] coalition than if we tried to do this as a church," followed soon after with the message that "the first overtures to the Catholic Church have been made."

This plan reveals a methodical, organized and precise attack. Karger exposed letters sent back and forth between high-ranking Mormons discussing the details of the campaign and how to handle

particular issues. They sought to keep their financial support away from the public eye as can be seen in a March 21, 1996 letter from Mormon leaders to then-Church President Gordon Hinckley: "The coalition continues to raise money but the majority needs to come from us. Checks should be from individuals and can go to 'Hawaii's Future Today.'" They also hired a full time lobbyist Linda Rosehill to work within the legislature. In the same letter, they report, "Linda Rosehill only has to report her retainer for actual lobbying work and it is likely most of the contributions can be kept from disclosure." Another internal memo says, "We have organized things so the church contribution was used in an area of coalition activity that does not have to be reported."

The campaign succeeded and the Mormons, flush with not only the victory of the campaign but also the success of their invisibility, turned their attention to California. Mormon officials wrote Elder Russell M. Ballard,

The miracle of this whole issue is that the focus has been on the coalition and not at any time has either our church or the Catholics been singled out... We believe California is very ripe for a successful ballot initiative.

It is not known why they did not begin that campaign at the time, but analysts assume that the other religions involved in the coalition were not willing to lend their full support until the California Supreme Court enacted marriage equality in May 2008.

*Starting several years before the actual vote, letters flowed among the "Twelve Apostles" and other high-ranking leaders.*

## MORMON CHURCH TACTICS IN CALIFORNIA

### Fear Mongering

Two of the most effective strategies used to sway the average voter against LGBT equality are first, tell them their children will be harmed, and second, tell them their religion will be damaged. The Mormon hierarchy deployed both of these fear mongering strategies during the Proposition 8 campaign in California to change the state constitution so that it would ban marriage equality. Soon after the California Supreme Court ruled LGBT marriage constitutional, websites cropped up bearing the Mormon Church's emblem and featuring young adults discussing how churches and local religious organizations would have to shut down unless Proposition 8 passed. TV commercials told the story of how public school children would begin learning about same-sex marriage with the children's book *King & King*. Combined with web commercials falsely claiming that Proposition 8 would not actually strip rights from same-sex couples, you have the perfect breeding ground of misinformation, fear and motivation for mobilizing parents and religious believers.

*"The miracle of this whole issue is that the focus has been on the coalition and not at any time has either our church or the Catholics been singled out... We believe California is very ripe for a successful ballot initiative."*

### Funding and Canvassing

To make the fear mongering effective, the church added massive funding and volunteer hours. There isn't an organization in the world better able to deploy door-to-door volunteers in an instant than the Mormon Church, simply because it already does it every day. Through various church duties and religious social events, the model of volunteers, team captains and overseers are already prepped and require only a new message for a political campaign. Volunteer teams, instructed specifically to avoid Mormon-identified clothing such as black suits and white shirts, began combing every neighborhood of California. The door-to-door canvassing grew so quickly that within a matter of months volunteers were out around the clock.

The funding grew by leaps and bounds as Church leaders pressured members to give every cent they could towards the Yes on 8 campaign. And

it wasn't just California members; Utah families donated millions of dollars. Utah singles were pushed to join volunteer call-centers where they spent hours calling California residents, urging them to vote against civil liberties.

Realizing that a front group could help present the Mormon case, in late 2007 the Church used high-ranking Mormon Matthew Holland (son of Apostle Jeffrey Holland) to launch the National Organization For Marriage (NOM), according to Karger. Holland recruited not only several board members but its director and spokeswoman Maggie Gallagher, according to Karger. Whether the funding for NOM originally came from, and possibly is still coming from, the Mormon Church is unknown. The group has been fighting tooth, nail, and claw to keep its books hidden from public view. It has defied the orders of several judges and appeals each ruling against it for violating campaign laws by hiding its funders.

### The Mormon Church Proves Vulnerable

After California voted for Prop 8, the Mormon Church thought it had achieved its pinnacle of success. Even the usually liberal stronghold of California was convinced to support The LDS' conservative ideals. But unlike Hawaii in the 1990s, the Mormons could not keep their participation in the struggle quiet. Social networking makes it harder to keep secrets tightly held. The world knew the Mormon Church helped lead the campaign, and the world saw what it had accomplished.

The morning of November 5, 2008 marked the beginning of the end for the battle against equality. Millions of people nationwide stood as one, as thousands of new activists were born in the wildfire of outrage. And at the center of the heat stood the Mormon Church, completely unprepared for the backlash it had released against itself. Criticism was overwhelming. Protests surrounding Mormon temples broke out daily in locations nationwide for the next several weeks. News pundits brought their viewers to tears with heartfelt condemnation of the evil which had been perpetrated against the families of California. Constitutional scholars, examining the propaganda broadcast by the Yes on 8 campaign, quickly denounced its messaging.

Mormon officials claimed that they had only played a small part in the campaign and that other groups like the Roman Catholics or the African-American community were much more responsible. But evidence to the contrary was overwhelming.

## THE CHALLENGE FROM WITHIN THE CHURCH

With their worst fear—public exposure—realized, Mormon leaders began receiving complaints from their own members. Mormons upset over their own Church’s involvement began forming groups across the nation. The most prominent, *Mormonsformarriage.com*, collected thousands of signatures and stories in a challenge to Mormon leaders, demanding that they change their position and stop damaging families with their homophobia.

As weeks turned months, criticism continued to grow. A year after the vote on Proposition 8 the LGBT community in Utah won a tangible victory. Social pressure and negative public opinion have historically been the weak point of the Church. In the past it prompted the church to quit practicing polygamy, support equal civil rights for women, and allow full membership for people of color. Now it was working again.

In an attempt to assuage the public, Mormon leaders endorsed a proposed Salt Lake City ordinance outlawing housing and employment discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. Although it was a relatively small concession, it helped purchase the leverage they hoped for to convert their image from an unfeeling corporate-religious monster to a more understanding faith-based organization.

Things began to die down. Then in October 2010 the LDS church’s second-in-command, Boyd K. Packer, broadcast a now infamous speech stating, in the face of all science, that homosexuality could be “cured.” This one speech once again unleashed the tide of public ire. Activists led by the group PRIDEinUtah including many members of the faith itself gathered at the Church’s headquarters in Salt Lake City, furious at the damage perpetrated against young LGBT children raised within the Mormon faith. Nearly 5,000 people dressed all in black surrounded the two-block headquarters and “died,” enacting the suicides they said Packer’s words would cause.

Once again, societal pressure moved the Church. The rally and demonstration were broadcast across the nation, with footage running on many major news channels, including CNN. Shortly after the rally, Boyd Packer’s speech was edited and the official record of the Church removed many of his more inflammatory statements. The original text read,

“Some suppose that they were pre-set and cannot overcome what they feel are inborn tendencies toward the impure and unnatural. Not so! Why would our Heavenly Father do that to anyone? Remember he is our father.” The edited version changed the “tendencies” to “temptations” as well as completely removed the line about why God would do that to someone. That’s a significant change when you consider the difference between God wanting or not wanting you to be gay.

## THE CHALLENGE FROM OUTSIDE THE CHURCH

But that wasn’t the only change to come from Packer’s speech. The Human Rights Campaign, a national LGBT rights group, prodded into action by Utah activists, circulated a petition against the Mormon Church denouncing Packer’s remarks as unscientific and harmful.

Almost two years after the passage of Prop 8, Human Rights Campaign president Joe Solmonese hand-delivered 150,000 signatures to the Mormon headquarters in Salt Lake City. Unable to escape the press once again, the Mormon leaders made two further concessions after this action. First they publicly condemned anti-LGBT bullying of any kind, and second, they revised the leadership handbook used by local leaders. The new edition no longer compares homosexuality to forcible rape nor does it encourage reparative therapy.

Whether it is the Mormon Church or any other religion, this example shows that while conservative Christians may have a right to their beliefs, there are limits to what the public will accept when they try to impose those beliefs on others. For more and more Americans, it is no longer tolerable for large religious institutions to attack families, children and people who are not straight. And thanks to the Mormon’s involvement and coordination of the anti-LGBT campaign for Proposition 8, our country has finally woken up to the necessity of equality for all citizens. I truly feel it is a watershed, spreading support for equal rights from coast to coast. We have seen how to change the course of history, and we will never be the same. Equality is inevitable.

*There isn’t an organization in the world better able to deploy door-to-door volunteers in an instant than the Mormon Church.*

### Questions for Discussion

1. Why is the LDS (Mormon) Church so opposed to LGBT rights? What effect does an apparent religious principle have on public policy, and how do you argue against religious beliefs?
2. Why does the LDS Church avoid making its anti-LGBT stance public?
3. What were the LDS messages about LGBT people?
4. Can the tactic of shaming a church work towards realizing progressive goals?
5. How do the lessons learned in this case study apply to your work?

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## Profiles of Anti-LGBT Individuals Prominent in 2011

*The old guard anti-gay leadership that blossomed from 1980-2000 has been partially replaced. Voices the likes of Gary Bauer, James Dobson, Jerry Falwell, James Kennedy, Phyllis Schlafly, and Lou Sheldon are gone or diminished. In their place are spokespersons with varying agendas who are united in their recognition that the Christian Right and the Tea Party can mobilize enough public opinion and voters to sway elections at every level. The following is a sample of these individuals and a description of selected organizations that are gaining prominence as anti-LGBT forces.*

### Dick Arme y



Dick Arme y, former US Congressman (R-TX) and House Majority Leader (1995-2003), is the current chairman of FreedomWorks, a prominent conservative research and advocacy group. He is a good example

of a conservative who manages to appear distant from the culture wars debates while being very much involved in them.

Arme y holds a Ph.D. in economics from the University of Oklahoma and taught at a number of universities for nearly 20 years before winning a congressional seat in 1984. During his time in Congress, Arme y helped Newt Gingrich lead the “Republican Revolution” in 1994. That year the GOP gained 54 seats and won control of the House for the first time since 1952. The victory was largely spurred by the “Contract with America” that Arme y helped write. It gathered over 300 signatures from Republican candidates pledging their support for a number of key conservative issues. During the 104th Congress (1995-97), led by Arme y and Gingrich, Congress passed a number of conservative laws, like the Defense of Marriage Act, the Taxpayer Bill of Rights II, and a welfare reform act that dramatically reduced the availability of poverty relief across the country.

Arme y will occasionally speak out on the culture wars. When asked if there would be a truce on social

issues in the 2012 presidential campaign, he responded, “A truce? No. These are issues of the heart. People are not going to turn their hearts and minds away from things that they have so heartfelt.” But he quickly added, “The fact of the matter is there is sort of a question of first things first priorities.”<sup>1</sup> Arme y has said that if Republicans want to win elections they should avoid social issues and focus on economic policy.<sup>2</sup> In the same interview, Arme y said legalizing same-sex marriage was equivalent to the government “imposing homosexual marriage on the community.” He also indicated that if the Republicans gained a majority in the House, abortion would resurface as an issue. He deftly plays both sides at once, encouraging broad support for conservative economic positions while not excluding those who are motivated by their strong views on social issues.

Arme y has long been a champion of fiscal conservatism and free markets. Throughout his political career, Arme y has pushed for the replacement of the current tax code with a flat tax, meaning the same tax rate for everyone, regardless of income, and has also called for the privatization of Social Security. He has voted in line with most Republicans on social issues, such as opposing gay adoption in Washington D.C. and making it illegal to transport minors seeking an abortion.<sup>3</sup>

After leaving office, Arme y became a prominent Washington lobbyist as the chairman of FreedomWorks, an organization with a mission of

“lower taxes, less government and more economic freedom.” Arney’s work, and the work of FreedomWorks as a whole, has been influential in the Tea Party movement. FreedomWorks was founded in 1984 as Citizens for a Sound Economy and has recently increased its influence. The organization runs education programs, trains and mobilizes conservative-leaning Americans, and has helped bring national structure to the Tea Party. According to the *New York Times*, FreedomWorks’ three-day “boot camps” go through every step of the organizing process, shaping “the inchoate anger of the Tea Party with its libertarian ideology and leftist organizing tactics.”<sup>4</sup> According to the *Times*, FreedomWorks planned to spend \$10 million on the 2010 midterm elections. Voices from both sides of the political spectrum acknowledge the influence FreedomWorks had in the Republican takeover of the House of Representatives. Overall, it continues to help ground the Tea Party in more concrete, largely libertarian ideology, as well as teach Tea Party supporters the tactics to push that ideology.

FreedomWorks’ involvement with the Tea Party has also been subject to criticism from both sides of the political spectrum. On the Left, many view FreedomWorks’ influence to argue that the Tea Party should not be considered a grassroots movement, but instead is a top-down “Astroturf” development being driven by corporate interests. On the Right, many have voiced concerns of FreedomWorks hijacking the movement, and worry that the relationship jeopardizes the organic nature of the Tea Party.



### Michele Bachmann

Michele Bachmann is a congresswoman from Minnesota’s 6th district, serving her third term. She is the first Republican congresswoman from Minnesota, and just the third woman in Minnesota history to hold a seat in the U.S.

House of Representatives. Bachmann is also the organizer of the Congressional Tea Party Caucus, which she founded in July 2010 to help bring the Tea Party under the GOP’s tent. She is one of the Tea Party’s most prominent national figures and was a candidate for the Republican presidential nomination for 2012.

Bachman was born in Iowa, but moved to Anoka, Minnesota when she was young. She graduated from

Anoka High School in 1974 and Winona State University before earning her JD at Oral Roberts Law School and her LLM in tax law at the College of William and Mary.

After a number of years working as a tax attorney, Bachman began her political career in the Minnesota State Senate in 2000, where she became one of the chamber’s most conservative members. During her tenure she proposed multiple times, both in referendum and amendment forms, to ban gay marriage. Her attempts were unsuccessful. Perhaps a preview of events to come, her hard-line conservatism even clashed with her own party. In 2005, the Republican Caucus removed her<sup>5</sup> from her position as Assistant Minority Leader less than a year after appointing her, for reasons Bachmann herself called “philosophical differences” regarding her anti-tax stance.<sup>6</sup>

But just a year later, Bachmann won the election for Minnesota’s 6th congressional district. She courted a base of evangelical support after asserting, “God then called me to run for the United States Congress,” and that she “is a fool for Christ.”<sup>7</sup>

During her time in Congress, her public reputation has grown, and she has spared no opportunity to make her views known, appearing frequently on cable news and radio stations. She has carried the staunch conservatism she displayed in the Minnesota Senate into the House, voting with Republicans 92% of the time in the 111th Congress, and voting against any bill that presents, in her mind, unnecessary spending (like extended unemployment benefits).<sup>8</sup> She is outspoken about her opposition to both gay marriage and abortion, and opposes federal intrusion on individual or states’ rights except to oppose her chosen hot button issues.

She has frequently criticized Barack Obama’s presidency on both personal and political grounds. She has called Obama “anti-American,”<sup>9</sup> vehemently opposed the president’s health care plan, and even when she made an error in a speech about the location of a Revolutionary War battle, couldn’t resist taking a jab at the president, writing on her Facebook page, “And by the way... That will be the last time I borrow President Obama’s tele-promoter [sic]!”<sup>10</sup> While many of her claims, like Obama’s alleged extravagant expenditures on a trip to India, are unfounded, they still evoke responses from both supporters and critics.<sup>11</sup> In the polarized political context of 2011, her constant criticism of the president as well as her steadfast conservatism (especially on budget

issues) have gained her substantial support among conservatives. As expected, she has received glowing reports and grades from conservative interest groups, like the Taxpayer's Union and the Family Research Council, and harsh criticism from liberal and progressive groups.

As noted, Bachmann is one of the faces of the Tea Party. The Congresswoman has galvanized support from this group, even if it means going against her own party. Her House Tea Party Caucus has membership overlap with the House Immigration Reform Caucus, an anti-immigrant group. She led the group of 54 GOP members who defected from the Republican Party in March 2011 to vote against House Bills temporarily extending funding for Congress, claiming, "I am convinced that a vote for the CR [the continuing resolution to keep funding the government] is a vote to not fight against ObamaCare."<sup>12</sup> Her *de facto* representation of Tea Party ideologies in the House has occasionally brought her into conflict with Republican leadership, and may have contributed to her being overlooked for leadership positions after the 2010 election. She also gave her own "Tea Party" response to the 2011 State of the Union, which was delivered in addition to the traditional Republican response, although GOP leadership asserts it had no qualms with this maneuver.

There is no doubt, despite (or perhaps because of) these conflicts, that Bachmann's voice has become one of the loudest and most charged conservative voices in the country. With her omnipresence on cable news, she has the ability to promote her opinions on nearly every issue of national importance. As of September 2011, she held the fourth largest Republican campaign chest. When she bowed out after the Iowa caucuses, it remains to be seen what will happen to the large portion of Tea Party membership that backed her.<sup>13</sup>

### Glenn Beck



Using print, electronic media, and social marketing, *Glenn Beck* has become one of the conservative movement's loudest and most-followed voices in the past three years. He hosted the hour-long Glenn Beck program on Fox News every week-

day until June 2011. He now delivers his message through GBTV, a video network accessible by computer, TV and smartphones. He has written multiple

*New York Times* #1 bestsellers, started his own broadcast "university," and in August, 2010 hosted a rally at the Lincoln Memorial that drew tens of thousands.

Beck's professional radio career started shortly after graduating high school. He moved from city to city, joining various stations across the country in cities like Louisville, Phoenix, Baltimore and Hamden, Connecticut. But it was in Tampa, after starting the *Glenn Beck Program* in 2000, that he transitioned from small-time radio journeyman to a national voice. In mere months the show was syndicated across the country. The program then moved to Philadelphia, where it continued to grow. It is now heard over 400 stations across the country and is the third highest rated radio show among the highly coveted 25 to 54-years-old demographic.

Beck's radio success sprung him into the TV world, first as the host of *Glenn Beck*, a weekday show that premiered in 2006 on CNN *Headline News* (now known as HLN). Just as he had in Tampa, Beck's ratings quickly soared and by 2008 his program was *Headline News*' second most popular show. Shortly thereafter, he left CNN *Headline News* to host a similar show on Fox News. Beck's Fox show was a success from the outset, and the show consistently drew more viewers than all of its cable news competitors combined. Beck was forced off Fox in 2011 after his inflammatory style provoked an advertisers' boycott.

Both his TV and radio programs offer Beck a free format to project his ideologies: a high level of social and fiscal conservatism, mixed with heavy strains of libertarianism, and more than a dash of conspiracy theories. Viewers of his TV show have grown accustomed to his chalkboard presentations, in which he rambles about seeming unrelated individuals and groups until he connects the dots. And while he often presents himself as the teacher to his audience, he gives constant reminders that he is no genius, just an ordinary man, who has battled alcohol and drug addictions, seeking the truth. He also serves as a prominent attacker of liberals and progressivism across the country, frequently claiming that progressive ideals are destroying America. Among the members of what he calls "Crime, Inc.," individuals and organizations that he often connects in his theories, are President Barack Obama, former Vice President Al Gore, and former White House Green Jobs "Czar" Van Jones.

Though his rise to popularity has been swift, it has not come without controversy. He is often criticized by the media for offensive or simply false com-

ments. Many have questioned his versions of history and where he gets his information. A *New Yorker* article described two key influences on Beck: the staunchly anti-Communist John Birch Society and hard Right author W. Cleon Skousen.<sup>14</sup> Using these sources, among others, Beck has created his own version of American history, of the founding principles, and of progressivism's "destruction" of those principles, and that vision has been imparted to his viewers.

Beck's influence, however, has become immense. Simply putting Skousen's *5000 Year Leap* on his website's "Must-Read List" immediately vaulted the largely forgotten book back onto the Bestsellers' list. Particularly through his 9/12 project, an initiative based on 9 principles and 12 values, but also through the general use of his TV and radio shows, Beck has also become a leading figure in the Tea Party, aligning himself with their principles, and promoting their events. In a sort of symbiotic relationship, he has ridden the surge of anti-government, ultra-conservative sentiment that has swept the country, and both fed and eaten from it: his shows give viewers more cause for anger and his viewers give him more leeway, trust, ratings, and money. *Forbes* reports that in the twelve-month span between March 2009 and March 2010, Glenn Beck Inc., between books, radio, TV, advertising, and speaking appearances, earned \$32 million.<sup>15</sup>

Beck has generally avoided discussions about same-sex marriage, asserting he is for civil unions, "the exact same stance as the President." But in a few cases he has been caught on camera suggesting that same-sex marriage will lead to polygamy, the loss of religious freedom, and the loss of control over public schools.<sup>16</sup>

Glenn Beck has emerged as a prominent voice of the new, Tea Party-infused, Right Wing. He not only has fueled some of the fire blazing across the country, but he has greatly benefited from it. Millions of viewers, listeners and readers dutifully await his next words, and some view him as both a spiritual leader and potential political candidate. Beck's popularity is unmatched, and with his hard Right ideology, he is one of the Right Wing's foremost spokespersons.

### Paul Cameron



Paul Cameron is a psychologist who claims homosexual people are a danger to public health and the social fabric of America. His studies explicitly argue that homosexuality is a

disturbing psychological illness.<sup>17</sup> Cameron often makes links between homosexuality and child abuse, pedophilia, a shorter life expectancy, poor parenting skills, drug abuse, and violent crimes. Cameron has said allowing gay men to serve in the armed forces would degrade military capability by destroying group unity. "You'll have them having sex in the barracks. It'll be legal! That's what homosexuals do. They have sex here, there, and everywhere," he claimed.<sup>18</sup> Opponents of LGBT civil rights often cite his work. Anti-LGBT materials repeat his claims so often that they regularly appear without his name attached, as if they were actual facts.

A number of social science organizations, like the American Sociological Association, have issued statements against Cameron's bogus studies. In general, they refer to his anti-homosexual bias and his misrepresentation of scientific research. A quick reading of his research reveals unsubstantiated claims and twisted statistics. For instance, Cameron's thesis that gay people die early because of their depraved sexual lives was criticized for its poor methodology. Cameron only consulted obituaries, and an insufficient sample of them. His statistical analysis, as one critic wrote, had "internal inconsistencies."<sup>19</sup>

Cameron established a group called the Scientific Investigation of Sexuality, currently known as the Family Research Institute. The institute has published anti-LGBT propaganda on its website. One article is titled, "Gays in Military = Traitors in Military."<sup>20</sup> Another article attempts to link the LGBT civil rights movement with pederasty in the Middle East.<sup>21</sup> Cameron has said on the website, "Homosexuals are no more than non-productive 'sexual bums.' They are recruiting others, forming communities, beginning to mock and undermine the old pieties of loyalty to family, country, and God."<sup>22</sup>

Cameron credits birth control with the destruction of the traditional family. And since he views traditional families as the building blocks of civilization, birth control is a threat to America. He argues that homosexuality and birth control will cause extremely low birth rates. The birth rate will be so low that Western civilization will be destroyed.<sup>23</sup>

On the infamous anti-LGBT Ugandan bill that would criminalize homosexuality and punish homosexual acts with life imprisonment or death (which has yet to be voted on) Cameron said, "In summary, Western politicians—let alone Western Christians—have no business criticizing Ugandans for proposing

this bill. Many of its provisions would be welcome restorations to our own penal code.”<sup>24</sup>

### Jim Daly



Jim Daly is President/CEO of the evangelical, socially conservative public policy nonprofit Focus on the Family (FOF). FOF was founded by one of America’s most influential and hard-line Right Wing Christian conservatives, James Dobson.

In 2004 Dobson was America’s most influential evangelical leader.<sup>25</sup> FOF was one of the largest and most prolific religious right organizations in the United States until its downsizing in 2008. They donated \$35,310 to reelect anti-LGBT Senator Saxby Chambliss (R-GA)<sup>26</sup> and spent about \$500,000 to support Proposition 8 in California.<sup>27</sup> And according to their most recent 990 IRS form, they spend about \$25 million on communications.<sup>28</sup> Their annual operating budget has slipped from \$146 million in 2007 to \$130 million in 2010, an 11% cut.<sup>29</sup> Despite this, Daly is still a powerful figure in the Christian Right.

Daly perceives same-sex marriage as a watershed issue for religious liberty.<sup>30</sup> As he sees it, religious liberty, i.e. the ability of a public official to refuse to marry a gay couple because of religious belief, will be curtailed if gay marriage is legalized. From this logic follows the popular accusation among conservative Christian pundits that government is meddling in peoples’ lives.

FOF is one of many faith-based organizations that view political and social issues through a right-wing, orthodox Christian lens. As such they oppose abortion and comprehensive sex education, and they advocate for prayer in schools and the treatment of homosexuality with “reparative” therapy. Focus on the Family has said anti-bullying efforts in schools and legislation like the Safe Schools Improvement Act are part of a LGBT plot to introduce homosexuality to impressionable children.<sup>31</sup>

FOF refers to published material to support their agenda, but when sources are checked, their analysis is found inaccurate or misleading. In a 2011 Senate Judiciary hearing on the Defense of Marriage Act, Senator Al Franken (D-MN) revealed Thomas Minnery’s misrepresentation of a Department of a Health and Human Services study.<sup>32</sup> Minnery is senior vice president of Government and Public Policy

for Focus on the Family.

FOF has affiliate organizations in 32 states, connecting it with a large grassroots political constituency through these Family Policy Councils. It should be noted that some members of Focus on the Family may be unaware of Daly’s or the organization’s right wing agenda. Some of the services and products FOF offers are not overtly political, but they do reflect conservative ideas about child-rearing and family relationships. Daly’s leadership of FOF seems to be returning it to its original goal, the nurturance of the Christian family. In that sense it continues to advocate for the sanctity of marriage, traditional gender roles, and heterosexism, and it continues to lay the infrastructure for Christian Right organizing.

### Lou Engle



Lou Engle is a radical anti-LGBT and anti-abortion evangelical leader and founder of the TheCall, a youth-focused organization that promotes prayer rallies in America and abroad. Attendance at some of TheCall events has been estimated upwards of 100,000.

These events consist of fasting, music, sermons, and prayers that are anti-homosexual and anti-abortion. TheCall is a Dominionist organization that believes America, to regain past glory as a Christian nation, should reflect theocratic law and be governed by Christians.

Engle has taken an active interest in the so-called spiritual awakening of America’s youth. TheCall created TheCall School, which according to its website “exists to equip, disciple, and commission an emerging generation of radical Nazirites...” referring to a biblical practice of self-denial.<sup>33</sup> TheCall School attendees must “make a personal commitment to live counter to the prevailing moral laxity of our society by not participating in, advocating, supporting, or condoning sexual activity (heterosexual or homosexual) outside of marriage between a man and a woman.”<sup>34</sup>

Engle has said legalizing same-sex marriage would redefine marriage and therefore redefine the foundations of society. Same-sex marriage is also, according to Engle, a gateway to immoral behavior like polygamy.<sup>35</sup> Engle believes God will end abortion, and that abortion can be solved through adoption.<sup>36</sup> Because of same-sex marriage, abortion, and other “sins,” Engle calls for another great awakening to

“turn America back to God.”<sup>37</sup>

Patricia Nell Warren, a respected LGBT rights activist, has described Engle as, “A major figure in the New Apostolic Reformation [NAR]...[with] close ties with the violent anti-abortion movement called The Army of God, who stirred up such a frenzied atmosphere of attacks on abortion clinics that they finally incited someone to assassinate the well-known doctor George Tiller.”<sup>38</sup> The NAR, described elsewhere in this section, is a growing evangelical movement focused on establishing churches through the process of “church planting” with strong success in the global South.

According to reports at a TheCall rally in Kampala, Engle endorsed the Ugandan anti-homosexuality bill—a bill that would allow punishment of homosexuality with life imprisonment or death. Engle has said he does not support the bill, but his presence at the rally in Uganda where the bill has been widely supported, his own rhetoric, and his connections to those who support the bill, strongly suggest he endorses it.<sup>39</sup>

### Maggie Gallagher



Margret Gallagher is an anti-LGBT pundit and president of the Institute for Marriage and Public Policy. The institute’s main focus is advocating a hard-line conservative agenda on marriage, sex, divorce law, and pregnancy.

Gallagher has said, commenting on a federal judge ruling Proposition 8 unconstitutional, “The case for gay marriage is ultimately rooted in a rejection of common sense and core ideas about the natural family, including that children need a mother and father.”<sup>40</sup> She claims the mainstream media gives same-sex marriage advocates a pass and thinks polls showing increased support for marriage equality are inaccurate. “I don’t believe those polls. One of the things that’s happening is that people are afraid to say what they really think about marriage,” she said in an interview.<sup>41</sup>

In 2007 Gallagher was a co-founder of the National Organization for Marriage (NOM), a non-profit that she describes as “fighting to protect marriage and the faith communities that sustain it.”<sup>42</sup> The organization operates nationally to oppose same-sex marriage and has played a significant role in state level ballot questions. NOM has close ties to the

Church of Latter-Day Saints, Focus on the Family, and the Knights of Columbus—all organizations with anti-LGBT stances.

Gallagher has said that marriage is primarily for reproduction and child rearing and that homosexual men and women should not raise children. She has said, “Polygamy is not worse than gay marriage; it is better. At least polygamy, for all its ugly defects, is an attempt to secure stable mother-father families for children.”<sup>43</sup> Because Gallagher believes heterosexual marriage is the pillar of democratic civilization, she often links same-sex marriage with social disorder and has not hesitated to suggest that same-sex marriage might bring the demise of Western civilization.

### Harry Jackson



Harry R. Jackson Jr., an African-American Christian preacher and Pentecostal bishop, is the Senior Pastor of Hope Christian Church and chairman of the High Impact Leadership Coalition, a collection of traditional marriage and

pro-life ministers. As a social conservative activist of national celebrity, Jackson works to close the gap between the Christian faith and public policy; he believes the government should reflect Christian values. His radio commentary “The Truth in Black and White,” can be heard daily on “400+ stations nationally.”<sup>44</sup> He also appears on mainstream television shows like *The Travis Smiley Show* and the *O’Reilly Factor*. He has supported radical events like Lou Engle’s TheCall and has been associated with the New Apostolic Reformation. Jackson serves as a bridge between the African-American church and predominantly White Christian Right, represented by the Family Research Council (FRC). He co-authored a book with the FRC’s Tony Perkins, *Personal Faith Public Policy*, which argues for conservative people of faith to become active politically.

Jackson believes homosexuality is eroding black families. He is quoted in a *Washington Post* article saying, “I don’t know of anybody black who says, ‘I hate gay people.’ We’re more accepting generally. But you overlap that—homosexuality and gay marriage—with broken families, and we don’t know how to put it back together.”<sup>45</sup> On the hard Right radio show *Sons of Liberty* Jackson said the homosexual agenda is a “Satanic plot to destroy our seed.”<sup>46</sup> Jackson wrote the “Black Contract with America on Moral Values,” a

six-point agenda platform that seeks to prohibit same-sex marriage and abortion. In 2009 Jackson published an op-ed article defending Pope Benedict XVI's statement that condom distribution in Africa helps spread HIV/AIDS.<sup>47</sup>

Active in Washington D.C. politics, he proposed a "Marriage Initiative" in 2009. Had it passed the D.C. Board of Elections and Ethics, the bill would have defined marriage as only between a man and a woman. Jackson voices opinions on the environment as well, denying global warming and dismissing a green energy approach as "simply unsustainable, environmentally and economically." He also thinks the green energy sector and the political programs that support and subsidize it "undermine any opportunity America may have to rebuild her economy."<sup>48</sup>

### Matt Kibbe



Matt Kibbe is the president and CEO of FreedomWorks (FW), previously named Citizens for a Sound Economy. FW presents itself as a grassroots organization but was in fact founded as a framing and trendsetting mouthpiece for corporate deregulation by two libertarian billionaires, the Koch brothers, and Richard Fink, a vice president at Koch Industries. According to the Center for Public Integrity, the Kochs gave \$7.9 million over seven years to fund FW's operations.<sup>49</sup> Currently, FW does not disclose its corporate donors, though there have been reports that it and its sister organization, Americans for Prosperity, have received monies from tobacco conglomerates Phillip Morris and Richard Scaife.<sup>50</sup> FW's agenda is national in scope and local in practice. They have fought against public employee collective bargaining in Wisconsin, for instance, and they have also advocated against Internet neutrality laws and the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act at the federal level.<sup>51</sup>

Kibbe advocates for less government in all major issue areas such as taxes and entitlement programs, as well as financial, environmental, and industrial regulation. He supports the privatization of Social Security, placing limits on tort liability, and letting free market principles guide the public school system. He calls this a "freedom agenda."

FreedomWorks and Matt Kibbe do not explicitly oppose same-sex marriage or other LGBT civil rights issues in public. This is a deliberate attempt to avoid

wedge issues among a conservative base and to recruit support for limited government and lower taxes among a broad swath of the American voters without engaging in the debates over the culture wars that may fragment the cultivation of a rightwing populist movement spearheaded by the Tea Party.

### Koch Brothers



Charles Koch



David Koch

One of the most formidable forces in contemporary politics is the corporate behemoth known as Koch Industries. Under the leadership of brothers Charles and David Koch, the corporation has grown into the second-largest privately held company in the United States, with annual revenues of approximately a hundred billion dollars. Inherited from their father, Frederick Koch, the company evolved into an energy and chemical conglomerate that runs oil refineries in Texas, Minnesota, and Alaska, controlling about four thousand miles of pipeline. The conglomerate also owns Brawny paper towels, Dixie cups, Georgia-Pacific lumber, Stainmaster carpet, Lycra, and other products. Beginning in the 1970s, the Koch brothers entered the political arena to aggressively promote their libertarian views, which are tailored to fit their corporate interests.<sup>52</sup> They have donated millions to conservative political campaigns, lobbyists, and political/policy organizations.

But the majority of the Koch brothers' political donations have been to non-profit organizations, think tanks, and their own charitable foundations which act as front groups for their political agenda. In the summer of 2010, a *New Yorker* exposé by Jane Mayer thrust the secretive Koch brothers into the spotlight with powerful revelations about their political influence. The Koch brothers frequently use groups such as Americans for Prosperity and the libertarian Cato Institute to anonymously fund conservative political causes and campaigns. The self-proclaimed libertarians have a long history of promoting the political causes that are most beneficial to their corporate bottom line, including anti-environmentalism, industry deregulation, and low taxes. According to Mayer, some of their donations are hidden, because federal tax law allows the brothers to donate any-

mously to not-for-profit political groups to avoid disclosure of their hefty political contributions. From the late 1970s to the present, they have funneled over \$100 million into right wing groups that purport to be independent. These Koch-sponsored groups bear innocuous-sounding names such as Americans for Prosperity, but beneath the surface they take a hard-line conservative stance that reflects the brothers' anti-government philosophy.

Ironically, although the Koch brothers could be considered the biggest individual funders of the contemporary conservative movement, they have been attacked by members of their own party, who accuse them of supporting same-sex marriage and other socially liberal policies.<sup>53</sup> But the Koch brothers do not so much as support LGBT rights as they are silent on this cause. They hold a libertarian line, but they do not offer significant financial support to gay rights groups or gay-friendly politicians. Still, some gay conservatives support the Koch Brothers because they agree with their fiscal conservatism. For instance, writers for the blog site GayPatriot.net have vehemently defended the Koch brothers in multiple articles.<sup>54</sup>

The Koch Brothers may not directly set out to attack LGBT rights, but they do seem to prioritize issues favored by social conservatives. Corporate-friendly economic causes—such as deregulation of industry, anti-union policies, and low taxes—dictate where their millions of donation dollars will go.<sup>55</sup> By donating to libertarian causes, they are also supporting conservatives of various stripes, including anti-gay politicians and groups. Many fiscal conservatives are also socially conservative and can be hostile toward the LGBT community. The bottom line is that the Koch brothers—in funding Americans for Prosperity—support Tea Party groups that attract social conservatives and promote policies that undermine and limit LGBT rights.

While the Koch brothers publicly deny any connection with the Tea Party, Jane Mayer's exposé revealed their deep ties to the group. The article explains how the Koch brothers have funded the Tea Party movement from its inception, while exerting a major influence on its agenda from behind the scenes. To keep their funding a secret, they funneled massive donations into the non-profit Americans for Prosperity. The non-profit, chaired by David Koch, has played a major role in the Tea Party movement from its beginning in 2009, providing supporters with "Tea Party Talking Points," urging them to send

tea bags to President Obama, and recruiting grassroots supporters.<sup>56</sup>

Although the Tea Party was originally formed to address economic issues, many of its supporters have been vocal in their opposition to gay rights. According to People for the American Way, "Tea Party Nation has increasingly voiced a militant opposition to gay rights, endorsing activists who maintain that LGBT equality will destroy America and that anti-LGBT bullying is 'healthy.'"<sup>57</sup> Tea Party Nation president Judson Phillips has urged activists to support Michele Bachmann and her husband, as they weather backlash for their support for homosexual "reparative therapy." Phillips has argued that the gay rights movement is just a "liberal freak show" that deviates from the majority of the country's views, declaring that "most Americans do not believe homosexuality is a good thing."<sup>58</sup> Considering the Koch brothers' tremendous influence on the Tea Party, they could have chosen not to allow the group's extreme anti-gay activism, yet they allow it to continue.

The anti-LGBT agenda permeates the Republican Party and is controlling its Right wing. The Koch brothers have supported George W. Bush's agenda, which included a campaign for a constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage. Furthermore, the campaign against same-sex marriage was one of the key issues that the Republican Party used to rally support for Bush's reelection, placing same-sex marriage bans on the ballot in eleven states to encourage Republicans to come to the polls. Because the Koch brothers bankroll conservative groups and politicians, they pose a major threat to LGBT rights.

### Andrea Lafferty



Andrea Sheldon Lafferty is a former Reagan Administration official and current executive director of Traditional Values Coalition (TVC), an organization founded by her father, Reverend Louis Sheldon, in 1980. Sheldon made a career out anti-LGBT rhetoric. Andrea is following in her father's footsteps.

According to TVC's website, the organization is "America's largest non-denominational, grassroots church lobby, speaking on behalf of 43,000 allied churches and millions of like-minded patriots."<sup>59</sup> The Southern Poverty Law Center, a monitor of U.S. hate groups, listed the TVC as one of eighteen hate groups

for false and demonizing statements like, “It is evident that homosexuals molest children at a far greater rate than do their heterosexual counterparts.”<sup>60</sup>

Lafferty received media attention for her efforts against the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA), a bill to prohibit discrimination against LGBT employees. She believes transgender teachers endanger young children, and often describes the desire to change a person’s gender as a psychological illness.<sup>61</sup> Lafferty has appeared on FOX News to criticize taxpayer-funded research programs on HIV/AIDS and sexual health—a common complaint by homophobic groups that they appear to be appealing to a small government audience. Jeffrey Parsons, chairman of the Psychology Department at Hunter College, said the “Traditional Values Coalition [has] a vested interest in creating scandal around scientific research related to gay men [and] sexuality research in general.”<sup>62</sup>

Traditional Values Coalition is also actively involved in spreading fear about Islam. Lafferty has frequently spoken against the building of the Park 51 Muslim community center in lower Manhattan. In her blog she described it as a mosque for the “extreme” religion of Islam at Ground Zero (it is located two blocks from Ground Zero and is not a mosque). In a hearing of the Senate Judiciary Committee Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights, and Human Rights, Lafferty testified, “Islam is not just a religion. Islam is a geo-political military system wrapped in a cloak of religious belief that penalizes conversion with death.”<sup>63</sup>

### Peter LaBarbera



Peter LaBarbera is president of Americans For Truth About Homosexuality (AFTAH), a single-issue group whose only goal is “...devoted exclusively to exposing and countering the homosexual activist agenda.”<sup>64</sup> He has held official positions at

conservative anti-gay organizations like Concerned Women for America and the Family Research Council. Establishing his own organization, however, has revealed his single-minded focus on the purported evils of homosexuality and his ability to get his fringe ideas repeated by less extreme spokespersons.

LaBarbera interprets the increased tolerance and acceptance of LGBT people as evidence of the

America’s cultural downfall. On the Janet Mefferd Show he said homosexuality “is Satan’s point of attack on the United States of America, including the church.”<sup>65</sup> He has often stated that pedophilia is the cause for same-sex attraction. He views homosexuality as a pervasion of Judeo-Christian morality. He has also called for parents to remove their children from public schools that have anti-gay bullying programs. He believes they attempt to convert children to homosexuality. LaBarbera has proposed reinstating anti-sodomy laws that the Supreme Court ruled unconstitutional.

LaBarbera fears gay judges will undermine religious liberty and proposes a homosexual litmus test for federal judges. He wrote, “I think it’s time that the public be informed if a politician or a high court nominee has a special interest in homosexuality—that is, they are practicing homosexuality or maybe they once practiced homosexuality.”<sup>66</sup>

Among his anti-homosexual peers, LaBarbera stands out for the fervor with which he attacks LGBT civil rights issues. He often cites misleading scientific data to draw conclusions to fit his agenda. He and his organization have a well-earned spot on the Southern Poverty Law Center’s list of hate groups. Recently the IRS revoked AFTAH’s nonprofit status for failing to file required statements about its budget for three consecutive years.<sup>67</sup> Despite AFTAH’s consistently false claims, Glenn Beck, Bill O’Reilly, and other conservative media figures often refer to its materials, and LaBarbera has appeared on National Public Radio, bringing his marginal ideas to the mainstream.

### Dr. Richard Land



Dubbed by *Time* Magazine as “God’s Lobbyist,” Dr. Richard Land is the president of the Southern Baptist Convention Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, the public policy arm of Southern Baptist Convention, and serves as a

commissioner on the United States Commission on International Religious Affairs.<sup>68</sup> With 16 million members, the Southern Baptists are second in size only to the Roman Catholic Church in the United States. Land speaks to millions of listeners on the radio through Christian broadcasting networks and frequently appears on television and before Congress. He maintains an image of respectability

and moderation, although his views are decidedly anti-LGBT when it comes to sexual minority issues.

Land advocates for a constitutional amendment to “protect marriage.” He believes gay marriage will “harm families and society” and that “God’s plan for marriage and the family is the only reliable foundation for society; anything else is a dangerous and faulty substitute that will lead to society’s ruin.”<sup>69</sup> Land was one of many notable right wing evangelicals to sign and endorse the “Manhattan Declaration,” a religious manifesto co-authored by evangelical leader (and Watergate felon) Charles Colson and Catholic intellectual Robert George that, among other things, opposes gay marriage and women’s right to abortion.

Land has said on his radio show, *Richard Land Live*, the repeal of Don’t Ask Don’t Tell, “will destroy the American military,” and that “gay service members are twice as likely to sexually harass someone,” and “absent fathers and weak fathers produce gay children.”<sup>70</sup>

In 2011 Land recently signed a letter urging Speaker of the House John Boehner (R-OH) and Rep. Eric Cantor (R-VA) to defund Planned Parenthood, stating this issue was “non-negotiable.” Part of the letter read, “Planned Parenthood, a scandal-plagued abortion company, no longer deserves hundreds of millions in federal dollars each year while it continues to abuse innocent young victims.”<sup>71</sup>

### Joseph Nicolosi



Joseph Nicolosi is the founder and director of the Thomas Aquinas Psychological Clinic in Encino, CA. The clinic specializes in Nicolosi’s pseudo-scientific and discredited “reparative theory,” a theory that treats homosexuality as a psychological disease. The American Psychological Association has discredited any such treatment. At Nicolosi’s clinic, which exclusively treats homosexuality, patients can “develop their heterosexual potential” and “diminish [their] unwanted homosexuality.”<sup>72</sup> Nicolosi has written a number of books on the topic, including *Reparative Therapy of Male Homosexuality: A New Clinical Approach*, and *Shame and Attachment Loss: The Practical Work of Reparative Therapy*.

Nicolosi is the former president of the National Association for Research and Therapy of

Homosexuality (NARTH), an organization that describes itself as “...a professional, scientific organization that offers hope to those who struggle with unwanted homosexuality...”<sup>73</sup> NARTH distributes anti-LGBT educational propaganda and pseudo-scientific research. Nicolosi supplies anti-LGBT rights activists with “scientific” ammunition, often citing antiquated studies or misrepresenting academic studies for his own ideological purposes. He hides his bigotry in the veil of a disinterested, scientific inquiry. Maintaining a secular image helps to promote his scientific authority.

In fact, Nicolosi is a practicing Catholic and advertises his services through Catholic channels, although he did not reveal his religion when working with Focus on the Family and their traveling “Love Won Out” seminar on Christian ex-gay therapy which toured the United States for several years in the early 2000s.<sup>74</sup>

NARTH and other programs like it defend “reparative therapy” by claiming they only treat willing patients and do not impose their beliefs on others. They do not mention how the propaganda they explicitly promote can cause internalized hatred or sexual and psychological repression, as has been documented by the APA.<sup>75</sup> According to NARTH, homosexuality leads to pedophilia; pedophilia turns children gay; and homosexuality is a condition caused by sexual seduction, family problems, and other social issues.<sup>76</sup>

### Tony Perkins



Tony Perkins is the president of the Washington D.C. based Family Research Council (FRC), a Christian lobbying group that describes a LGBT lifestyle as “unhealthy” and “destructive” to “individuals, families, and societies.”<sup>77</sup> The FRC, perhaps the most powerful Christian presence in Washington, with strong connections to its grassroots base, is considered a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center.

Perkins is the most influential Christian Right voice in Washington in 2011. His good looks and skillful delivery of carefully constructed messages and arguments render him a popular figure on the Christian Right and a dangerous megaphone for scapegoating a variety of marginalized groups, from

LGBT people, immigrants, single parents, and sexually active youth.

In his mission to “reclaim the culture of Christ,” Perkins feels free to demonize LGBT people. Perkins identifies homosexuality as a source of mental illness, substance abuse, domestic violence, child molestation, and immoral behavior in general. He maintains the belief that homosexuality is a sin and that it can and should be cured through the love of Jesus Christ.<sup>78</sup> He continually cites pseudo-scientific evidence from groups like the American College of Pediatricians (an anti-LGBT organization formed to oppose the mainstream American Academy of Pediatrics) to bolster his arguments.<sup>79</sup>

In a 2010 response to several cases of anti-gay bullying that led gay teens to commit suicide or experience depression, Perkins said it was not “inacceptance” that led young gay and lesbian children to suffer, but that depression and suicide were the mental consequences of being gay. “We know from the social science that [homosexuals] have a higher propensity to depression or suicide because of that internal conflict,” he said.<sup>80</sup>

Perkins was one of many right wing evangelicals to denounce the repeal of Don't Ask Don't Tell. The *Huffington Post* quoted Perkins as saying,

Today is a tragic day for our armed forces. The American military...has now been hijacked and turned into a tool for imposing on the country a radical social agenda. This may advance the cause of reshaping social attitudes regarding human sexuality, but it will only do harm to the military's ability to fulfill its mission.<sup>81</sup>

Perkins argues that religion, particularly Christianity, is under attack by secular institutions. He simultaneously believes those who practice the religion of Islam are a danger to America. He has called the LGBT rights movement an act of cultural and corporate terrorism.<sup>82</sup> Because he appears less strident than the older anti-gay spokespeople, like Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, and Louis Sheldon, he is able to deliver their same messages to their audiences without sounding shrilly alarmist. He remains the most powerful anti-LGBT voice in Washington.

### Sam Rodriguez



Rev. Samuel Rodriguez, a leader of the largest Hispanic Christian organization in America, the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference (NHCLC), was named by the *Wall Street Journal* as one of the seven most influential Hispanic leaders in America. He has ties to hard line conservative organizations like the TheCall and the Oak Initiative, global evangelical projects associated with NAR. He has met with George W. Bush and President Obama to discuss immigration issues, and believes both parties have failed on the issue of immigration reform. He called Arizona's Senate Bill 1070 a radical piece of legislation and a “product of fear.”<sup>83</sup> On the other hand, Rodriguez holds conservative hard line views on same-sex marriage and abortion. Because of his influence with Hispanic voters in swing states, he will most likely play a prominent role in the 2012 elections.

He played a highly supportive role in passing California's Proposition 8 to ban same-sex marriage. In 2009 he said, “The legalization of gay marriage in Iowa and Vermont should be seen as a declaration of war on traditional values.”<sup>84</sup> He called abortion a “culture of death” in a public prayer asking Jesus to guide government officials to vote against health care legislation that provided abortion funding.<sup>85</sup>

Rodriguez believes there will be, through the Hispanic American faith community, a reawakening or resurgence of conservative Christian values. He once said on the Christian Broadcasting Network that Hispanic Americans serve as a “firewall against the incursion of Islam.”<sup>86</sup>

### Donald Wildmon



Donald Wildmon founded the American Family Association (AFA), formally the National Federal for Decency, in 1977, to censor “indecent” television like *M\*A\*S\*H* and to promote a “culture based on Biblical truth” through consumer boycotts.<sup>87</sup> A major figure in the 1980s and 90s culture wars, Wildman has been on a mission for more than thirty years to save Western civilization from what he sees as the tyranny of sex and violence of Hollywood

and those who want to remove Christ from American society.

Wildmon and the AFA have since widened their purview to oppose gay and women's civil rights, the war on Christmas by secularists and liberals, the National Endowment for the Arts, the removal of school-sponsored religious prayer from public schools, and premarital sex.<sup>88</sup> Wildmon resigned his AFA chairmanship in 2010 because of health issues, but still works within the organization. The AFA now boasts a wide network of 200 station radio networks and numerous publications, like the *AFA Report* and the *AFA Journal*.<sup>89</sup> AFA staffs about 175 employees and runs on an annual budget of \$20 million.<sup>90</sup>

Wildmon's son, Tim Wildmon, now runs the AFA, but it is AFA's Director of Issues Analysis Bryan Fischer who has gained the most notoriety for his outspoken views. Fischer has repeated the theory that Adolf Hitler was gay and that "homosexual thugs" ran the Nazi Party. In a *New York Times* interview Fischer said his views were "based on evidence of the inherent pathologies of homosexuality." These ideas have been promoted by anti-LGBT activist Scott Lively in his book, *The Pink Swastika*. In addition, the article stated Fischer's belief that "no more Muslims should be granted citizenship because their religion says to kill Americans," and that welfare recipients "rut like rabbits" because of what he calls welfare's perverse incentives.<sup>91</sup>

Wildmon and the AFA sponsored Texas Governor Rick Perry's August 2011 group prayer rally to save America, The Response, spending a reported \$1 million.<sup>92</sup> Wildmon perpetually warns that if social progressives and their liberal agenda are not stopped, Christians will become second-class citizens while homosexuals will rise to power. He is one of the most fervent adherents to the frame that homosexuals are reportedly demanding special rights.

### Wendy Wright



Wendy Wright is the former president and CEO of Concerned Women for America (CWA), the nation's largest anti-gay, anti-choice public policy women's religious right organization. Although CWA describes itself as a women's organization, its reported membership of 500,000 includes both men and women. The CWA focuses on "six core issues: the family, the sanctity of

human life, religious liberty, education, pornography and national sovereignty."<sup>93</sup> In recent years the CWA has lost prominence as a leading Christian Right organization.

Wright herself has spoken out on a number of issues from a hard Christian Right perspective. She believes gay parents are inferior to heterosexual parents; the idea of "imposing" (i.e. legalizing) same-sex marriage will result in discrimination and prejudice against those who oppose it; and that same-sex marriage is a first step to American society accepting polygamy.<sup>94</sup> Wright champions a federal constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriage.

Wright has compared the disposal of aborted fetuses to a mini Auschwitz, declaims government funding of Planned Parenthood, and opposes government funding of embryonic stem cell research. She thinks embryonic stem cell research unethical.<sup>95</sup> She has said Planned Parenthood wants to encourage teen sex "...because they benefit when kids end up having sexually transmitted diseases, unintended pregnancies, and then they lead them into having abortions. So you have to look at the financial motives of those promoting comprehensive sex ed."<sup>96</sup> Wright recently supported Ohio's Heartbeat Bill, which would ban abortions after a heartbeat is detected in a fetus.<sup>97</sup>

An adamant Creationist, Wright believes there is no scientific evidence of evolution.<sup>98</sup> She aligns her environmental views with those of Resisting the Green Dragon, a group that claims recent environmental movements of sustainability threaten American society, hurt the world's poor, endanger the sanctity of life, and as new belief system usurp Christianity.<sup>99</sup>

## ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILES

### American Family Association

#### *History and Leadership*

In 1977, evangelical pastor Donald E. Wildmon formed the National Federation for Decency, based in Tupelo, Mississippi. Initially, the group focused on lobbying against indecency on television, but soon developed broader goals and changed its name to the American Family Association (AFA) in 1988. AFA's purported goals are to protect "traditional moral values" and to combat "the radical homosexual agenda," with considerable emphasis on the latter



in recent years. Its leaders target media outlets, corporations, and public officials who they believe are promoting this agenda, which runs contrary to conservative Christian views.<sup>100</sup> After Donald Wildmon's retirement in 2010, his son Tim took over the group, which today boasts of a sizable base of support comprised of 3.5 million online supporters and 180,000 subscribers to its *AFA Journal*.<sup>101</sup> AFA also reaches an even wider audience through broadcasts on nearly 200 radio stations. Through its news division One News Now, which purports to be non-partisan and objective, AFA gives a platform to anti-gay activists.

In 2009, AFA hired Bryan Fischer, former executive director of the Idaho Values Alliance, as director of analysis for government and policy. Known for his extreme anti-LGBT views and controversial statements, Fischer has advocated for the criminalization of homosexuality and forcible “reparative therapy” for homosexuals. But perhaps the most inflammatory was his claim that “Homosexuality gave us Adolph Hitler, and homosexuals in the military gave us the Brown Shirts, the Nazi war machine and 6 million dead Jews.” Furthermore, Fischer claimed that Hitler was an “active homosexual” who recruited gays “because he could not get straight soldiers to be savage and brutal and vicious enough.”<sup>102</sup> Over the years, AFA has perpetuated many other myths and made dubious claims regarding homosexuality, associating it with pedophilia, incest, polygamy, bestiality, and other taboo sexual practices. For instance, the group has alleged that homosexuals are more promiscuous, are more likely to have sexually transmitted diseases, and often transmit these diseases to children. According to AFA of Kentucky’s Dr. Frank Simon, “There are hundreds of children in America who are dying of AIDS because they were sexually abused by homosexuals.”<sup>103</sup> In addition, AFA champions the conspiracy theory that an insidious “homosexual movement” is obsessed with “infiltrating the public school system” to strategically recruit children. In the early 2000s, a direct mailing from Don Wildmon argued, “For the sake of our children and society, we must OPPOSE the spread of homosexual activity! Just as we must oppose murder, stealing, and adultery! Since homosexuals cannot reproduce, the only way for them to ‘breed’ is to RECRUIT! And who are their targets for recruitment? Children!” [emphasis in the original]<sup>104</sup> Thus, AFA spreads anti-gay propaganda to arouse the American public’s fear and disapproval of homosexuality. For this reason, the

Southern Poverty Law Center included the AFA on its 2010 list of anti-gay “hate groups.”<sup>105</sup>

### *Strategies*

Aiming to influence public policy and opinion, AFA utilizes many strategies, including e-newsletters, direct mailings, petitions, and boycotts. Above all, the group pressures businesses to conform to “traditional Christian values,” organizing boycotts of gay-friendly corporations that offer non-discrimination policies, domestic partner benefits, or contributions to gay-friendly causes. AFA has discouraged its followers from patronizing many such companies, including but not limited to: Kraft Foods, Disney, Procter & Gamble, Wal-Mart Stores Inc., Citigroup, PepsiCo, American Airlines, Allstate Insurance, and the Coca-Cola Company. In 2011 the group is boycotting Home Depot, dubbing the company “Homo Depot” because it provides financial support to gay pride rallies. In 2005, AFA called for a national boycott of Ford Motor Co. due to its sponsorship of gay pride events and advertising in LGBT publications. Since then, AFA has taken credit for Ford’s drop in sales.<sup>106</sup> In July 2008, AFA launched a boycott against McDonald’s because one of its executives was on the board of the National Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce. Deferring to AFA, the executive stepped down and the company conceded that it would henceforth be “neutral on same-sex marriage or any ‘homosexual agenda’ as defined by the American Family Association.”<sup>107</sup> McDonald’s remorseful response illustrates the increasingly powerful influence of AFA on corporate policy.

In recent years, AFA has become more directly involved in politics. Many state chapters conduct grassroots organizing on a state and local level, using petitions and referendums to fight LGBT rights. In 2010, AFA joined the campaign to oust the three Iowa Supreme Court justices who had ruled in favor of same-sex marriage, pledging to spend \$200,000 on this cause.<sup>108</sup> On the national level, AFA endorsed Mike Huckabee for president in 2008 and has supported Republican presidential candidate Rick Perry in the 2012 campaign. Through the AFA Radio Network, it has also given a platform to Republican candidates Michelle Bachmann, Newt Gingrich, and Tim Pawlenty.

### *Funding*

Funded entirely by private donors, AFA aggressively solicits donations on its website and generates a massive amount of revenue. The group brought in

\$21.4 million in 2009 and \$19 million in 2010, and regularly donates hundreds of thousands of this revenue to promote anti-LGBT politicians and legislation.<sup>109</sup> However, the donors supporting this financial powerhouse remain a mystery, with no names disclosed on AFA's 990 tax forms or website. One might reasonably speculate that Christian conservative groups are the main donors, since AFA was founded by an evangelical pastor and declares its mission is "to motivate and equip citizens to change the culture to reflect Biblical truth."<sup>110</sup> Only one known donor is listed in Media Matters' Transparency database: the Bill and Berniece Grewcock Foundation, which donated a total of \$90,000 through six grants from 1998 to 2003.<sup>111</sup>

Marshaling tens of millions of dollars each year, AFA has morphed into a power player in the political arena, donating \$500,000 to the Yes on Prop 8 campaign alone. In August 2011, amid much hype, AFA spent \$1 million to fund Republican presidential candidate Rick Perry's rally at a Texas stadium, which was billed as a day of fasting and prayer "to save America."<sup>112</sup> Dubbed "The Response," the event signified that AFA has become much more than just a typical nonprofit group with the more modest goal of fighting indecent television. It has grown into a formidable force in American politics today, a mighty behemoth with the funds and support base to sway not only mass media content, but public policy on a national scale as well.

### Council for National Policy

Though self-described as "...a nonpartisan, educational foundation," the Center for National Policy (CNP) is in fact a secretive and highly influential conservative nonprofit that runs regular convenings of conservative strategists. The CNP does not disclose its membership, but has hosted as speakers Donald Rumsfeld, Dick Cheney, Herman Cain, Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas, and George W. Bush.<sup>113</sup> In its 2009 990-tax form the CNP listed only one person, Jennifer Rutledge, Director of Finance, as a full time employee. Offices are located on K Street in Washington D.C.

The organization hosts a private forum three times a year for right-wing religious, academic, financial, political, and social conservative leaders to discuss a wide range of issues. Some of the

organization's leadership includes Tony Perkins of Family Research Council, Becky Norton Dunlop of Heritage Foundation, and John Kenneth Blackwell, who rose to prominence in 2004 for helping to pass a constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage in Ohio. The CNP maintains a strict anti-LGBT rights agenda in its belief that "The Founding Fathers created this nation based upon Judeo-Christian values and that our culture flourishes when we uphold them."<sup>114</sup> The CNP has also hosted hard-line anti-gay advocate Maggie Gallagher, president of the Institute for Marriage and Public Policy.

Despite the speculation and secrecy that surrounds the CNP, it is safe to assume the organization operates as a fundraising stop for conservative politicians, a think tank of political strategy, and a prominent advocate of conservative policies through its sister organization and lobbying arm, CNP Action, Inc., which publishes and distributes information to its members. In many respects, CNP is a cohort of conservative leadership from every corner of rightwing society. "Three times a year for 23 years," wrote *New York Times* columnists David D. Kirkpatrick in 2004, "a little-known club of a few hundred of the most powerful conservatives in the country have met behind closed doors at undisclosed locations for a confidential conference...to strategize about how to turn the country to the Right."<sup>115</sup>

### The Heritage Foundation

Heritage's rise to prominence has paralleled the rise to power of conservative political thought. Having survived seven administrations, the Washington D.C. think tank's goals have remained the same since its inception: "to formulate and promote conservative public policies based on the principles of free enterprise, limited government, individual freedom, traditional American values, and a strong national defense."

The Heritage Foundation is not really a foundation at all. It accepts no grant proposals and disperses no funds. Instead, many people recognize it for what it is: a major Washington conservative idea broker, although some would call it a well-oiled propaganda machine. With an annual budget of \$40 million and an endowment of over \$100 million, Heritage is overseen by its president, Edwin J. Feulner Jr., who presides over 200 staff people with



offices not only in Washington but in places like Moscow and Hong Kong.

Today, under Feulner's 30-plus years of leadership, Heritage's organization, finances, and output are in their prime. Name recognition is consistently high. Heritage maintains a few dozen books in print, summary position papers called "Backgrounders" on over 2000 topics, extensive customized databases of policy-related information, and stables of researchers who are grounded in conservative approaches to domestic issues from agriculture, the federal budget, health care to education, labor, social security, and welfare, and a full range of foreign policy issues as well.

Heritage supports a set of research fellows that cycle in and out of high-level federal government posts, such as former members of Congress Ernest Istook and James Talent, and Cabinet members William Bennett, Edwin Meese, and Elaine Chao. It maintains a well-developed year-round internship program and hosts hundreds of public events, often held in Heritage's own auditoriums, and trains journalists in how to use Heritage's own computer research models.

Heritage maintains as many PR departments as it does research centers. Over 50 staff work in external and government relations, communications and marketing, media services, or on the extensive website that makes Heritage authors' research and commentary available for free in a variety of formats. Although they do on occasion produce book-length work, Heritage authors maintain, in Feulner's words, a "quick response capability." He established "the briefcase test" for a piece of research: it should be short enough to be read in the time it takes a cab to travel from National Airport to the Capitol. "Backgrounders" are just a few pages long, sometimes condensing a larger work and make use of pithy Executive Summaries. Often material is reduced to tables and charts or to PowerPoint presentations. Heritage's reputation for being influential reflects the fact that its materials get hand delivered to Congressional offices and that it garners more media citations than any other conservative policy center. The formula clearly works, but what Heritage gains in access and influence may be at the expense of accuracy.

While less well known for its work on cultural issues, in June of 2006 Heritage launched a new website, *familyfacts.org*, with the aim of trussing up support for traditional families and the social value of

religion. Enlisting graduate students as researchers, the organization now reviews social science research pertaining to family life and religion, with findings that support a traditional view of the nuclear, religious, heterosexual family as the optimal social unit.

The website *www.familyfacts.org* is a secular cousin to faith-based sites like Focus on the Family's *www.family.org* that overtly promote a Christian value of family life. Unlike these sites, it highlights peer-reviewed social science research suggesting connections among intact heterosexual families, religious practice, and psychological and physical well-being of family members. From Heritage's point of view, citing academic research that supports its agenda is the key to establishing the legitimacy of its claims. The research is paraphrased in single sentence statements, or "findings," written by a group of doctoral students hired as Fellows.

A closer examination of the relationship between the original articles and Heritage's wording of the "findings" reveals an ideological, and not always academically responsible, methodology. While undoubtedly there are social scientists who have ideological biases both towards and against a pro-family agenda, the work cited in this database is presented in a way that reinforces a conservative perspective, no matter what the authors' points of view may be.

In 1996 Patrick Fagan authored a Heritage report, "Why Religion Matters: The Impact of Religious Practice on Social Stability." An update appeared in 2006. And in 2004 Richard DeVos, the successful founder of Amway Corporation and a leading conservative funder, donated almost \$2 million to Heritage for a new Center on Religion and Civil Society. *Familyfacts.org* followed not long after, going "live" in 2006. Although once known as the framer for Reaganomics, Heritage has come to embrace cultural issues as an organizing focus.

### The National Organization for Marriage

#### *History, Leadership, and Goals*

Conservative activist Maggie Gallagher and Princeton professor Robert George launched the National Organization for Marriage (NOM) in 2007. NOM's mission is to defeat same-sex marriage at the polls, in the legislature, and in the courts, from state to state and across the country. The group functions as an organized infrastructure that coordi-



nates state and federal initiatives into a national movement to ban gay marriage. For its first project, NOM worked in tandem with the Mormon Church to funnel money into California's Proposition 8 campaign, which led to suspicions that NOM is a front group for the Mormon Church. NOM has since incurred suspicions that it is actually a front group for the Catholic Church as well, due to its close ties with—and funding from—Catholic groups.

Formerly president of NOM, Maggie Gallagher now serves as chairman of the board, with Catholic conservative Brian Brown recently taking over as president. Gallagher is currently president of the Institute for Marriage and Public Policy, a conservative think tank that lobbies against same-sex marriage. She previously worked for other anti-gay groups such as the Institute for American Values and the Marriage Law Foundation. In her book *The Abolition of Marriage*, Gallagher equates same-sex marriage with polygamy, stating that “for all its ugly defects, [polygamy] is an attempt to secure stable mother-father families for children... [and] there is no principled reason why you don't have polygamy if you have gay marriage.”<sup>116</sup>

### Funding

Despite the economic recession, NOM's revenue has increased exponentially over the past few years, starting out with a modest \$492,500 in 2007 and rising to \$7.4 million in 2009, 14 times its 2007 income.<sup>117</sup> In 2010, NOM raised and spent \$19 million. In 2011 NOM pledged to spend \$20 million and is on track to raise at least \$15 million. The majority of NOM's funding has come from big donors (who donated more than \$5,000 each). In 2009, 77% of its revenue came from 14 big donors who together contributed \$5.5 million. Thus, a small group of extremely wealthy donors is responsible for NOM's funding, giving this handful of privileged individuals an exaggerated influence on the same-sex marriage debate and public policy.<sup>118</sup>

Flouting financial disclosure laws, NOM fiercely protects the anonymity of its donors and thereby encourages them to continue donating large sums of money. The largest known donation came from the Knights of Columbus, a Catholic fraternal society based in New Haven, CT, that contributed \$500,000 in 2008 and \$1.4 million in 2009. Many suspect that the largest donations are coming from the Mormon and Catholic Churches because of their connections to NOM founders and board members.<sup>119</sup> “You've got

this really interesting funnel of tax-free money coming from the Dioceses and the Council of Bishops and the Knights of Columbus directly to these campaigns,” noted Phil Attey, executive director of the pro-gay marriage Catholics for Equality.<sup>120</sup>

NOM leaders claim they maintain this secrecy to protect donors from persecution by gay rights supporters. They even use this policy of anonymity as a fundraising tool, with Brian Brown promising prospective donors that their identities will remain secret: “And unlike in California, every dollar you give to NOM's Northeast Action Plan today is private, with no risk of harassment from same-sex marriage protesters.”<sup>121</sup> Furthermore, NOM frequently defends its non-disclosure by suing states such as California and Maine, challenging their financial disclosure requirements as unconstitutional. In response to a recent ethics investigation from the state of Maine, NOM committed millions of dollars for litigation to delay disclosure in the courts as long as possible.

### Strategies

One of NOM's chief strategies involves campaigning for anti-gay legislators and working to defeat legislators who support marriage equality. In 2011 it vowed to spend \$1 million on these goals in Maryland alone.<sup>122</sup> With fiery rhetoric, NOM demonizes so-called “traitors” against marriage through extensive mailings, robo-calls, and e-newsletters. Prone to fear mongering and hyperbole, NOM's leaders rally their ultra-conservative base to vote the “traitors” out of office and donate to anti-same-sex marriage candidates. For instance, in a July 2011 e-newsletter, NOM president Brian Brown declared that with Senate hearings on repealing DOMA, “President Obama and the hard-left core of the Democratic Party in Washington declared war on marriage, on federalism, on democracy and on religious liberty.”<sup>123</sup> NOM wields hyperbolic rhetoric to distort the pro-same-sex marriage campaign into an all-out war on traditional American principles. Framing same-sex marriage as an insidious threat to such universally accepted American values, NOM galvanizes its target audience and makes it difficult for supporters of equality to argue against them. With their seemingly innocuous claim that they are “protecting families,” NOM's leaders hope to confound and silence opponents.

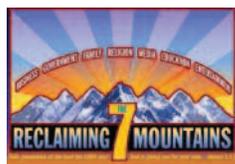
Another fear mongering argument that NOM employs is the notion that redefining marriage would result in religious persecution by the government. NOM's leaders argue that such “persecution” would

include: forcing pro-gay views on children in public schools, forcing churches to perform same-sex marriages, and denying tax breaks to religious institutions that fail to recognize same-sex marriage. For instance, Maggie Gallagher has argued that she and Robert George founded NOM because “if nothing changes, state legislatures are going to begin to pass laws to redefine marriage and...our churches, charities, schools and other organizations were going to be persecuted by state governments as a result.”<sup>124</sup>

In the summer and fall of 2010, NOM sponsored two bus tours to promote its anti-LGBT message, which generated little publicity and small turnouts. Undeterred, the group embarked on another bus tour in August 2011, aiming to sway Iowan voters to select an anti-gay marriage presidential candidate.<sup>125</sup> On the state level, NOM also promotes ballot initiatives to ban gay marriage, heavily funding referendums such as California’s Prop 8 and Maine’s Question 1. In states such as New York that lack a ballot initiative procedure, NOM focuses on lobbying legislators to oppose gay marriage through laws or constitutional amendments. Thus, in the wake of New York’s same-sex marriage legalization in June 2011, NOM now plans a massive campaign to lobby for a constitutional amendment to overturn same-sex marriage by 2015.<sup>126</sup> And with a ballot initiative campaign in Minnesota and millions continuing to flow into its coffers, NOM shows no signs of slowing down any time soon.

### The New Apostolic Reformation

The New Apostolic Reformation (NAR) is a religious phenomenon that connects evangelical pastors who self-designate as “apostles” into a world-wide network of politically-charged Pentecostal and Fundamentalist activists. C. Peter Wagner, the president of Global Harvest Ministries and a former professor at Fuller Theological Seminary, coined the phrase and has been a public spokesperson for the network. In an interview on the Voice of America News, Wagner explained that the strategy of the network is to influence as much as possible various segments of society, including business, media, and politics.<sup>127</sup> Its Pentecostal beliefs are reflected in its vision of banishing the enemy, identified as Satan, which according to Wagner is the source of poverty, racism, homosexuality, and other social ills. While its



idea of engaging in war with demons may sound far-fetched, it is in line with Pentecostal beliefs, held by over 3% of Americans. NAR seeks to expand its influence by using prominent members of the business, arts, and political realms as megaphones for its messages. This use of religion to influence political life in particular has been described as Dominionism, the belief that Christian laws should govern the United States and that the country should reassert itself as a Christian nation.

Members believe a Bible-centered country will occur through focusing on specific geographical regions (spiritual mapping) and conducting (sometimes massive) prayer sessions (designated as “spiritual warfare”). The August 2011 event led by Texas governor and presidential candidate Rick Perry, *The Response*, showcased several members of NAR, and it clearly shows the influence of NAR on the political life of Perry. Perry has been criticized for using a prayer meeting for political ends. This network is aggressively evangelical, targeting Catholics, Mormons, Jews, and Muslims as potential converts as well as other non-evangelical Christians. It is anti-LGBT and anti-abortion, and it actively recruits among conservative faith communities of color.

NAR’s influence is growing. Tony Perkins, Harry Jackson, and Sam Rodriguez have all supported the work of NAR. Sarah Palin and Michele Bachmann also have ties to the network. But it operates “under the radar” of mainstream media, so its potential influence is largely unacknowledged. NAR has been criticized for blocking its information from public view.<sup>128</sup> For instance, it changed its membership site to a members-only section, and after *The Response*, the entire website of the event was removed from the Internet.

This relative invisibility does not diminish NAR’s potential effect on politicians or political parties. As Michelle Goldberg, observer of the Christian Right, has said,

Few of us imagined that someone who actually championed such ideas would have a shot at the White House. It turns out we weren’t paranoid enough. If Bush eroded the separation of church and state, the GOP is now poised to nominate someone who will mount an all-out assault on it. We need to take their beliefs seriously, because they certainly do.<sup>129</sup>

## ENDNOTES

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## The Arsenal of Homophobic Frames

When singer and orange juice endorser Anita Bryant launched the first evangelical, Christian-infused anti-gay campaign in Florida in 1977, she began an approach that proved so successful, its framing elements have remained in circulation ever since. She won a repeal of a newly-passed anti-discrimination bill by claiming that homosexuals are pedophiles and sinners, calling her project Save Our Children. The frame, by then inaccurate though widely accepted in the culture, that “**gay people harm children**” kept generations of responsible teachers, coaches, and other youth workers in the closet.

Frames are ways of describing reality that resonate with groups, populations, or communities. In this case, the frame “gay people harm children” made sense to Bryant’s audience who regarded LGBT people as predators and sinners.

Even though the original objections to gay and lesbian people were framed in secular terms around employment and the presumed vulnerability of closeted workers to blackmail, many of the anti-LGBT frames were designed to appeal to a conservative Christian audience. These frames began to appear when evangelical Christians started to assert political power.

The watchword of the 1990s anti-LGBT campaign was “**no special rights for gays**,” implying that LGBT people as a class did not deserve anything extra, because they already had all the rights they needed. “No special rights” skillfully built on two false images of LGBT people. First is the inaccurate stereotype that gay people were more affluent than others and therefore somehow less in need of legal protection. This representation was cultivated from the combination of skewed marketing statistics from the 1980s collected to encourage advertisers to target the LGBT community and the proliferation on TV of characters who are male, urban, White, and rich. The image of LGBT people as rich endures. Right-wing pundit Ann Coulter’s oft-quoted remarks at the inau-

gural Homocon meeting, a gathering of LGBT conservatives in September 2010, included the following stand-up “comic” lines: “[Marriage] is not a civil right — you’re not black.” Coulter claimed that gays are among the wealthiest demographic groups in the country. “Blacks must be looking at the gays saying, ‘Why can’t we be oppressed like that?’”<sup>1</sup>

Second is the idea that LGBT people did not deserve civil rights protection because they did not suffer the same discrimination as African Americans. The “no special rights” frame thus played on the resentment of those who were angered by and envious of LGBT people whom they thought did not suffer from discrimination in the ways African Americans do. This image could also divide potential supporters of LGBT rights, African Americans, and the “upstart” LGBT community trying to cut into the more “legitimate” demands of those who suffer from racial discrimination.

Four other prominent frames were used by the Right to target gays in the ‘80s and ‘90s, and they are still in use today. 1) The spread of the HIV/AIDS pandemic fueled the opinion that “**gay men and bisexuals are damaged goods**,” spreading disease through immoral sexual acts. Focusing on sex as something to fear continues to be one of the most successful strategies by conservatives who understand the level of anxiety around sex among the American public. 2) The Christian Right refined its stark condemnation of LGBT people as an abomination against God by adopting a newer, gentler judgment: “**LGBT people can be cured of homosexuality**” by coming to Christ and becoming “ex-gay.”<sup>2</sup> 3) By a clever extension of Anita Bryant’s 1970s Save Our Children campaign, parents continue to be told that LGBT teachers in their schools and LGBT-friendly ideas in the curriculum will harm children. Analysts have suggested that TV ads aired during the end of the 2008 for the Yes on Prop 8 campaign constitutional amendment campaign in California were powerful enough to mobilize enough parents to vote against LGBT rights

and secure the passage of a discriminatory law.<sup>3</sup> 4) A tenet of democracy is to “let the people vote.” This kind of appeal to democratic values has worked well for the Right. In a climate where many feel unheard by their government and where public opinion has only just tipped the scales on issues like approving same-sex marriage, ballot initiatives in past years used expensive and misleading public relations campaigns to keep marriage equality from advancing in many states.

Newer frames reflect the ability of Right-wing strategists to respond to the arguments of LGBT activists. An especially active arena has been focused on youth. For instance, when research showed higher risks for suicide and substance abuse among LGBT youth, LGBT activists used the figures to demonstrate the need for youth-focused prevention programs. LGBT activists were frustrated when the opposition responded by claiming that *being* LGBT caused the risky behavior rather than acknowledging that such youth were under such stress from a homophobic culture that they harmed themselves. Tony Perkins, the head of the Family Research Council, has said, “These young people who identify as gay or lesbian, we know from the social science that they have a higher propensity to depression or suicide because of that internal conflict,”<sup>4</sup> At the end of 2011, an associate of Perkins at the FRC, Peter Sprigg, claimed that pro-LGBT activists are to blame. “But it is time for homosexual activists to stop exploiting personal tragedies to advance their political agenda—especially in a way that may cause more such tragedies.”<sup>5</sup>

These well-constructed frames did not emerge organically and spread nationally merely because of volunteer activists in grassroots organizations. Right-wing strategists developed all of these approaches with an eye to what would mobilize conservative or swing voters and what would create effective wedges between potential allies and LGBT causes. Strategists used the existing networks of the Christian Right and developed new ones of their own with the help of conservative funders. Conservative strategists did not invent homophobia, of course, but they took full advantage of its presence in our culture. When stereotypes allow prejudice to flourish, scapegoating becomes more acceptable, and a movement can be built on resentment and fear.<sup>6</sup> These problematic techniques have worked for the Right and should be challenged.

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>3</sup> Dave Fleischer, “The Prop 8 Report,” <http://prop8report.lgbtmentoring.org/>

<sup>4</sup> Barbara Bradley Haggerty, “Religious Undercurrent Ripples In Anti-Gay Bullying,” National Public Radio, October 26, 2010, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=130837802>

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## Promising Practices

Across the United States many LGBT advocacy and activist groups have been working on projects that are larger than the single-issue campaigns described in the case study section. The following articles highlight the role of LGBT organizing within a broader social justice framework. The first chronicles how influential LGBT advocacy groups helped develop a National HIV/AIDS policy. The second offers an argument for investing in the infrastructure of movement building, not only within the LGBT movement but also by contributing to other social justice projects. We include these articles to promote discussion about possible directions for the LGBT movement.

## The Making of a National AIDS Strategy

### A SUCCESS STORY

By Che Gossett

Che Gossett is a black, genderqueer and queer activist and writer who has been involved in political formations for prison abolition and gender self determination and is currently a steering committee member of the HIV Prevention Justice Alliance.

*And one of the important things to remember is that we're very proud and thankful that the President has come out with a strategy, and it's also important to remember that the movement for it grew out of the community.*

– Chris Collins<sup>1</sup>

July 14th 2011 marked the one-year anniversary of the National AIDS strategy (NAS). Campaigns to prevent, treat, and cure AIDS have unfolded across a large and expanding political landscape and have included direct action mobilizations by radical organizations such as ACT UP, organizing for an end to AIDS Drug Assistance Program waiting lists, memorials, national awareness days, and community based interventions. Members of the Coalition for the National AIDS Strategy recognized that while progress had been made in prevention, treatment, and biomedical research, pressing problems remain, and racialized disparities persist. The Coalition for a National AIDS strategy serves as an example of biopolitics from below and from the Left that has suc-

ceeded in shaping federal HIV/AIDS policy. The broad-based coalition for a national AIDS strategy has brought about a reprioritization of groups facing the greatest barriers to care and has enabled existing funding and services to be redirected towards those most affected by the disease.

The Coalition for a National AIDS Strategy came together in 2007. Chris Collins, now vice president of amfAR, the American Foundation for AIDS Research, authored an insightful report which highlighted the imperative for a centralized and coordinated approach to AIDS. Collins called for the diffuse efforts of independent AIDS service and community based organizations and those of the federal government to be in better, more transparent, communication and to develop a principled and audacious national plan to address the continuing AIDS crisis. Collins laid out the racial and economic disparities and structural barriers that have been continuous throughout the course of the epidemic. Some of the most distressing and urgent were:

*The broad based coalition for a national AIDS strategy has enabled existing funding and services to be redirected towards those most impacted by the disease.*

- A significant percentage of people living with HIV/AIDS are tested for infection too late in the course of disease to benefit from early medical care;
- Approximately half of people living with HIV/AIDS are not receiving regular HIV related health care;
- Approximately half of those who meet U.S. government medical criteria for use of anti-retroviral treatment for HIV are not receiving this treatment;
- African Americans and other communities of color bear a severely disproportionate burden in the epidemic.

Though Blacks represent twelve percent of the U.S. population, The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has reported that:

At the end of 2007, Blacks accounted for almost half (46%) of people living with a diagnosis of HIV infection in the 37 states and 5 US dependent areas with long-term, confidential, name-based HIV reporting. In 2006, Blacks accounted for nearly half (45%) of new infections in the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Even though new HIV infections among Blacks overall have been roughly stable since the early 1990s, compared with members of other races and ethnicities, they continue to account for a higher proportion of cases at all stages of HIV—from new infections to deaths.<sup>2</sup>

*Black Americans living with HIV have not seen equal benefits from AIDS treatment.*

Black Americans living with HIV have not seen equal benefits from AIDS treatment: from 2000 to 2004, deaths among Whites living

with HIV declined 19 percent compared to 7 percent for blacks. Survival time after an AIDS diagnosis is lower on average for Blacks than for other racial/ethnic groups.<sup>3</sup>

Activists, service providers, and community based organizations, as well as the CDC and other institutions, had all independently been addressing these issues throughout the previous twenty plus years of the epidemic. Ongoing campaigns to end the housing waiting list in Philadelphia, or to draw attention to waiting lists in thirteen states for ADAP, the federally funded program for HIV medication assistance, are situated within a long history of AIDS

activism in the United States — both inside and outside of prisons. Community HIV/AIDS Mobilization Project, or CHAMP, now dissolved but then located in New York City, was instrumental in creating a mobilization network and activist infrastructure—including Project Unshackle and the HIV Prevention Justice Alliance—that was key to building the base of the Prevention Justice Mobilization (PJM). The founder of the group, Julie Davids, described their achievements:

Although we struggled with issues of capacity and sustainability, CHAMP had a noted impact on HIV prevention advocacy. Entering a realm with little public, strategic conversation and a wide gap between the small but growing body of prevention research and the underfunded, earnest prevention programs at the community level, we found ourselves bridging disciplines and sectors, becoming a trusted “content provider” feeding honest and strategic information to hardworking front-line prevention workers and policy leaders alike, and a leader in strategic campaigns and coalition efforts. Over time we crafted a national network of 12,000 people—many deeply involved in the fight against HIV/AIDS—who were able to take quick action through online alerts, and who were invited to contribute to debate and dialogue at our events, conference calls, and trainings.<sup>4</sup>

The mobilization for prevention justice was a series of events that contributed to building and broadening a base for NAS. A November 2007 call to action issued by the PJM organizers spotlighted the political desires and the assemblage structure of the mobilization:

The PJM is a series of HIV-prevention events and actions around the United States from November 1 to December 15, 2007. It is neither a big city phenomenon nor a rural uprising. It's not a think tank pronouncement, or the story of an individual family fighting HIV/AIDS. It's no single “Face of AIDS,” website, blog, or particular organization's response to the challenge. It's all of these things and more—and we'll show this diversity through affiliated events, as well as at the National HIV Prevention Conference in Atlanta.<sup>5</sup>

One of the most remarkable PMA events was a unity march and rally in Atlanta during the National HIV Prevention Conference in December of 2007. Wielding giant “missing puzzle pieces” to the prevention of the AIDS epidemic, more than 300 people—formerly incarcerated, HIV-positive and -negative, queer, trans, Black, sex workers, Latino/a and White—along with the Atlanta Seditious Orchestra, reached across different experiences and identities to forge a show of cross cutting solidarity and unity in the face of the AIDS crisis and the social injustice that propels it. The PMA rally and march included the singing of a radically redefined HIV/AIDS Christmas carol penned by Julie Davids:

In the AIDS epidemic, the gov'ment gave to me—NO NATIONAL PLAN, antigay bias, a decade of flat funding, a fast track to prison, no decent housing, roadblocks to treatment, silver virginity rings, censorship of science, discrimination, misinformation and a country full of HIV.<sup>6</sup>

Following the release of Chris Collin's Open Society Institute report, Coalition members and HIV/AIDS advocates convened in Washington DC for a congressional hearing, co-sponsored by Maxine Waters (D-CA), on the need for, and prioritization of, a national HIV/AIDS strategy.<sup>7</sup> Panelists at the hearing included Phill Wilson, executive director of the Black AIDS Institute, Marjorie Hill, CEO of Gay Men's Health Crisis, and Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health professor David Holtgrave.<sup>8</sup> In September of 2007 founding members of the Coalition for a National HIV/AIDS Strategy issued a call to mobilize AIDS service organizations (ASOs) and supportive individuals across the nation to endorse a National AIDS Strategy.<sup>9</sup> In their “Call to Action,” the coalition articulated a vision for moving beyond the “management” of the epidemic and towards its “eradication.” The seven guiding principles that the Coalition believed should frame the NAS were:

- Improve prevention, care, and treatment outcomes through reliance on evidence-based programming;
- Set ambitious and credible prevention, care, and treatment targets and require annual reporting on progress toward goals;
- Identify clear priorities for action across federal agencies and assign responsibilities, timelines, and follow-through;

- Include, as a primary focus, the prevention and treatment needs of African Americans and other communities of color, women of color, men who have sex with men, (MSM) of all races and ethnicities, and other groups at elevated risk for HIV;
- Address social, economic, and structural factors that increase vulnerability to HIV infection;
- Promote a strengthened, and more highly coordinated HIV prevention and treatment research effort; and
- Involve many sectors in developing the Strategy, including government, business, community, civil rights organizations, faith-based groups, researchers, and people living with HIV/AIDS.<sup>10</sup>

The Coalition rallied AIDS service organizations, activists, collectives, public health officials, doctors, nurses, and medical researchers to create a broad-based support network. In the “Framework for Developing an Effective National AIDS Strategy,” published in 2008, the coalition stressed the imperative for a domestic AIDS strategy:

However, over 1.5 million HIV infections and over half a million deaths into its 27-year-old HIV/AIDS epidemic, the United States still does not have a comprehensive, strategic national plan to eliminate HIV/AIDS within its own borders.<sup>11</sup>

Creating what Chris Collins termed a “groundswell” around the need for a National AIDS Strategy, Coalition members and supporters participated in congressional hearings, established a presence in national and local news media, and gathered provider and community input on the aims and objectives for a national AIDS strategy. They also reached out to all presidential candidates during the 2008 election about the imperative for the strategy and garnered the recognition and support of presidential candidates. Then-candidate Barack Obama's campaign literature outlined his commitment to the establishment of a National AIDS Strategy:

Obama has pledged that, in the first year of his presidency, he will develop and begin to implement a comprehensive national HIV/AIDS strategy that includes all federal agencies. The strategy will be designed to reduce HIV infections, increase access to care

and reduce HIV related health disparities. His strategy will include measurable goals, timelines and accountability mechanisms.<sup>12</sup>

In September of 2009 over thirty coalition members and allies met with the Office of National AIDS Policy in Washington DC and outlined the role of the coalition in supporting the NAS and made substantive recommendations for its implementation. The coalition's recommendations are salient in that they call for a multipronged NAS that addresses structural inequalities and social drivers as well as interventions in epidemiology and biomedicine:

Elevate prevention in the U.S. response: **Every sector** of government (and beyond government) has a role. Endorse **combination prevention**, and **integrate prevention** in the work of HRSA, CMS, etc. In communities of elevated risk, address an **array of prevention needs** including, but not limited to HIV, emphasize **accountability through targets** (including transmission rate, annual incidence, and knowledge of serostatus), and by ensuring prevention efforts are designed to achieve **population-level impact, legal changes** are required (e.g.: reforming criminal transmission statutes, Syringe Exchange Programs funding).<sup>13</sup>

*The coalition's recommendations call for a multipronged NAS that addresses structural inequalities and social drivers as well as interventions in epidemiology and biomedicine.*

The three central objectives of what became the U.S. National HIV/AIDS Strategy (NHAS)<sup>14</sup> are: “to reduce the number of new HIV infections; increase access to care and improve health outcomes for people living with HIV; and reduce HIV-related health disparities.”<sup>15</sup> Additionally, the NHAS

holds out an ambitious vision for HIV prevention: a 25% reduction in HIV infections by the year 2015, a projected desire that Dr. Holtgrave endorsed in an AIDS journal editorial as achievable and realistic, provided that the strategy is implemented in its entirety.<sup>16</sup> Following the release of the NHAS, the president issued a memorandum instructing six federal departments—Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Justice, Labor, Social Security Administration and Veterans Affairs (VA)—to create operational plans demonstrating how they would proceed in implementing the strategy

within their respective domains.<sup>17</sup> The White House released the NHAS operational plan overview in February of 2011 to document ongoing progress towards strategy goals.<sup>18</sup>

Each department outlined their operational plans. The department of Veterans Affairs, being the largest single provider of medical care to people living with HIV/AIDS in the United States (24,000 veterans, a majority over 50 years old), committed to provide staff in counseling and testing services with support so that newly diagnosed veterans have access to service networks and high quality care.<sup>19</sup> The VA is also working in conjunction with other departments to improve mental health treatment and assessment services for HIV positive veterans. Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA), a program under the auspices of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), devoted \$335 million in FY2010 for housing.<sup>20</sup> As part of their operational plan, HUD is collaborating with other departments to orchestrate access to “nonmedical supportive services (e.g., housing, food/nutrition services, transportation)” and to enhance the level of HIV-related services available at “housing and other nontraditional HIV care sites.”<sup>21</sup> This type of cross-pollination and dialogue between federal departments allows for greater collaboration and expanded access to housing and anti-discrimination services.

AIDS activists have been instrumental not only in advocating for social services, global AIDS treatment, and research funding, but moreover, in demanding a radical reorientation of social values—prioritizing poor people living with HIV/AIDS over large pharmaceutical companies, for instance. As Kiyoshi Kuromiya, a visionary strategist and leader of people with AIDS, articulated, the moral imperative issued in the past by the AIDS activist movement is to “stand with the poor, with women, with people of color.” This value was infused in the political platform of the Coalition for a National AIDS Strategy. While the NHAS does not call for increased funding and is clear about the limited and already established financial parameters in which it is operating, the strategy does redirect the \$19 billion spent on domestic HIV/AIDS programs annually towards African Americans, gay and bisexual men impacted by HIV/AIDS, which marks a move towards a more open recognition of the ways in which communities of color are disproportionately “affected and infected.” It also marks a shift away from prevention messages that either downplay or fail to accent how LGBT

Black, Latino/a and Native people are disproportionately impacted by HIV/AIDS.

It is clear that African Americans overall and gay and bisexual men (irrespective of race or ethnicity) continue to bear the brunt of HIV infections in the United States. ....Blacks comprise the greatest proportion of HIV/AIDS cases across many transmission categories, including among women, heterosexual men, injection drug users, and infants....What is sometimes less recognized is the extent to which the HIV epidemic among African Americans remains concentrated among Black gay men, who comprise the single largest group of African Americans living with HIV. Fighting HIV among African Americans is not mutually exclusive with fighting HIV among gay and bisexual men.<sup>22</sup>

Many LGBT and AIDS news media outlets welcomed the NHAS as an iconic achievement, remembering the stigmatization, suffering, loss, and devastation that accompanied the silence, malign neglect, and active criminalization of HIV/AIDS, a legacy of the Reagan administration. The NHAS spotlights those most vulnerable to HIV/AIDS.

In addition to reducing health disparities, the NHAS aims to lower transmission rates and increase serostatus knowledge:

- By 2015, lower the annual number of new infections by 25% (from 56,300 to 42,225).
- Reduce the HIV transmission rate, which is a measure of annual transmissions in relation to the number of people living with HIV, by 30% (from 5 persons infected per 100 people with HIV to 3.5 persons infected per 100 people with HIV).
- By 2015, increase from 79% to 90% the percentage of people living with HIV who know their serostatus (from 948,000 to 1,080,000 people).<sup>23</sup>

NHAS-recommended activities include the 12 Cities Project which allots federal funding for cities with the highest HIV/AIDS rates which in total account for 44 percent of the total cases of HIV/AIDS since 2007.<sup>24</sup>

Actively coordinating Federally funded programs at the local level in the[se] twelve jurisdictions ...can have huge payoffs and

propel progress toward the Strategy's goals of reducing HIV incidence, increasing access to care and improving outcomes for people diagnosed with HIV, and reducing HIV-related health disparities.<sup>25</sup>

The project also incorporates the Department of Health and Human Services to a fuller extent, including Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Health Resources and Services Administration—both the HIV/AIDS Bureau and the Bureau of Primary Health Care—Indian Health Service, National Institutes of Health, and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.<sup>26</sup> The CDC and HUD have updated their funding formulas to reflect living HIV/AIDS cases, which aim to place a renewed focus areas with most need of services. The Affordable Care Act, which will be fully implemented in 2015, assists in ensuring that people living with HIV/AIDS have access to insurance that's been historically denied and/or inaccessible. Under the Affordable Care Act, Medicaid and Medicare are expected to become more widely accessible for poor people living with HIV/AIDS starting in 2014.

*The NHAS holds out an ambitious vision for HIV prevention: a 25% reduction in HIV infections by the year 2015.*

Beginning in 2014, insurers will not be allowed to deny coverage to anyone or impose annual limits on coverage. People with low and middle incomes will be eligible for tax subsidies that will help them buy coverage from new state health insurance Exchanges. The Affordable Care Act also broadens Medicaid eligibility to generally include individuals with income below 133% of the Federal poverty line (\$14,400 for an individual and \$29,300 for a family of 4), including single adults who have not traditionally been eligible for Medicaid benefits before. As a result, a person living with HIV who meets this income threshold no longer has to wait for an AIDS diagnosis in order to become eligible for Medicaid.<sup>27</sup>

Additionally, the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare are instituting a "fast track" that will allow states to seek waivers specifically for HIV/AIDS patients who either do not have insurance or do not meet the income requirement for Medicaid, to receive Medicaid at the lower income level immediately.

The transition from activist and community-based inspired vision to White House backed governmental policy has not been without challenges, however. While there have been remarkable strides in terms of the a shift in rhetoric and the spotlighting of HIV/AIDS as primarily impacting poor communities of color and the role of stigmatization and discrimination as social drivers of the epidemic, there have been critiques of the NHAS. New research highlighting the increased prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the South as well as structural oppressions preventing predominately Black, poor and rural people living with HIV/AIDS in the Southern states from receiving treatment points towards a need for further policy work.<sup>28</sup> In Mississippi the death rate from HIV/AIDS is 60 percent higher than the national average.<sup>29</sup>

The lack of services, pervasive stigmatization, and the criminalization of disclosure all overlap to create unlivable conditions for many African-American and low-income, queer, and transgender people living with HIV/AIDS. “An ugly truth about the ADAP waiting lists is that they disproportionately impact the South, communities of color, and in many cases, some of the most impoverished areas in the country.”<sup>30</sup> Housing is a crucial indicator of general health and survival and so the growing ADAP wait lists are targets for AIDS activists demanding funding. Brandon Macsata, director of the ADAP Advocacy Association, recently highlighted the need for access to life-ensuring and -prolonging medications for low-income people living with HIV/AIDS:

At the very time we should be celebrating the one-year anniversary of the National AIDS Strategy being released, our attention is focused on the nearly 10,000 people living with HIV/AIDS being denied access to life-saving medications—including over 3,500 Floridians.<sup>31</sup>

The CDC fails to fund transgender specific community-based interventions (yet collectives and organizations of trans women have adapted existing interventions such as TWISTA, a trans politicized adaptation of a CDC intervention created by and for African-American trans women in Chicago).<sup>32</sup>

There is also a need for a change in medical rhetoric and risk categorization, as transgender and gender non-conforming identities are collapsed into

problematic and invisibilizing “Men Who Have Sex with Men” (MSM) demographics. *Injustice at Every Turn*, a path breaking report published by the National Center for Transgender Equality and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, cast a limelight on socially embedded, racialized, and class based transphobia as a social driver of HIV/AIDS.

Transgender people of color, especially African Americans, Native Americans, Latinos, and those of mixed racial identity, are subject to staggering rates of eviction (as high as 37%), job loss (as high as 36%), HIV infection rates (as high as 25%), harassment and denial of equal services.<sup>33</sup>

The study also pointed out the inadequacy of “MSM” categorizations.

Transgender people should not be put in categories such as “men who have sex with men” (MSM) as transgender women consistently are and transgender men sometimes are. Separate categories should be created for transgender women and transgender men so HIV rates and other sexual health issues can be accurately tracked and researched.<sup>34</sup>

Additionally, while the NHAS does recognize that the transgender community’s HIV/AIDS needs have been underserved and unmet—“historically, efforts targeting this specific population have been minimal”—there is no explicit plan outlined as to how to address this gap at the federal level.<sup>35</sup> As coalition member Waheeda Shabazz of Positive Women’s Network stated in a coalition website op-ed on the NHAS:

We need to start with counting women, including transgender women, accurately.... Women are largely invisible in data collection and often report no “risky behavior” even when testing positive. Yet we know women are testing late, progressing to AIDS faster, and having worse health outcomes and higher rates of mortality overall. We need a better understanding of what puts women at risk for HIV in the first place and what keeps HIV-positive women in care.<sup>36</sup>

*The transition from activist vision to White House policy has not been without challenges.*

Additionally, while the federal funding ban on needle exchange, a successful form of harm reduction for IV drug users, was lifted in 2009, it was reinstated at the end of 2011. Julie Davids of the HIV Prevention Justice Alliance and founding member of the Coalition for a National AIDS Strategy argues that the NHAS could do more to support harm reduction.

Sadly, the NHAS perpetuates Bush-era bias against harm reduction, in a time in which those on the front lines believe we could virtually eliminate HIV in injection drug users through concerted, systemic efforts. The absence of these words in the intervention list of this much-publicized new initiative is chilling.<sup>37</sup>

Other discriminatory policies remain. Despite the lifting of the HIV travel ban for international travelers to the United States, sex workers and active drug users—two of the most affected groups—are still denied entry by customs for crimes of “moral turpitude.” This will force them to find alternative ways of having their voices heard at the 2012 International AIDS conference scheduled to be held in Washington D.C. in July 2012.

Finally, while the NHAS does take steps in advocating for the decriminalization of HIV/AIDS at the state level, we can gain insights from a prevention justice analysis of the prison industrial complex. More is needed to combat the harm to people living with HIV/AIDS as a result of criminalization, the “War on Drugs,” and mass incarceration. As Laura McTighe, author of the Project Unshackle Toolkit emphasizes:

Just as the “war on drugs” was gaining speed in the 1980s, the AIDS crisis broke. By targeting the people who are at high risk for HIV, whether because of drug use or sex work, anti-drug policy has dramatically increased the number of people with HIV behind bars.... It’s no coincidence that the communities most impacted by imprisonment also have the highest rates of HIV infection. The same laws and policies that have drastically increased the number of people imprisoned in the U.S. also facilitate the spread of HIV. The connection between these two crises is caused by and, in turn, creates, a web of social, political and economic disparities, showing that HIV is much more than just a virus.<sup>38</sup>

At the time of this writing (Summer 2011), a Congressional deficit debate is coming to a close. As AIDS organizations and founding Coalition for a National AIDS Strategy members David Munar of the AIDS Foundation of Chicago and Chris Collins emphasized in an open letter, the outcome of the deficit debate holds serious implications for HIV/AIDS services and the success of the NHAS.

The stakes in this debate could not be higher for people with HIV/AIDS. Recent research findings from the National Institutes of Health show that effective HIV treatment not only saves the life of the individual with HIV but also significantly reduces HIV transmission. The proposed deep cuts to health care programs, including Medicaid and Medicare, would come at a time when the nation should be doubling efforts to improve HIV prevention and diagnosis and access to HIV care in order to pave the way for long-term savings and an end to the HIV pandemic. Serious cuts to Medicaid would undermine implementation of health reform and make it impossible to achieve the worthy goals of the Administration’s National HIV/AIDS Strategy.<sup>39</sup>

The Coalition for a National AIDS Strategy materialized out of the organizing efforts of service organizations, supportive medical researchers, public health professionals, and community members and activists. While the National HIV/AIDS Strategy is limited in scope and faces financial and resource barriers to its implementation, it also is the product of a larger powerful movement that continues to rally for prevention justice. It boldly challenged the federal government to respond, and it got the attention of the Office of National AIDS Policy and the White House.

*HIV is much more than just a virus.*

# Movement Building

## PAST AND PRESENT STRATEGIES

By Lisa Weiner Mahfuz and Kenyon Farrow

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After Proposition 8 passed in November 2008 banning “same-sex” marriage in the state of California, many White activists blamed Black voters for the outcome.<sup>40</sup> In the wake of the controversy, major LGBT equality organizations have deepened their ongoing struggle to reach out to, and build relationships with, communities of color.

Even before Prop 8, some White LGBT activists in places like Kalamazoo were trying to create new relationships across class and ethnic boundaries. But after Prop 8, it became abundantly clear that more organizations needed to listen to the queer and trans people of color activists who were calling for an “intersectional” analysis of oppression. This was a call to embrace deep and culturally rich organizing strategies that moved beyond campaigns designed to advance a single-issue policy and/or legislative agenda.

An intersectional analysis is rooted in a legacy and history of organizing that looks at how oppression is linked across class, gender, race, gender identity, disability, and sexuality; it sees that there are powerful divisions among LGBT folks that we need to acknowledge and bridge. It allows us to see how the insights and organizing approaches of communities on the margin get pushed to the side using a single-issue frame that dominates the way that mainstream movements operate and are funded. The

focus on short-term legislative campaigns, often led by larger groups, creates a dynamic where these ways of organizing are seen as overly complicated, not results-oriented, and lacking in large-scale impact. Many grassroots LGBT people of color organizations believe that we have to do long-term movement building in order to meet the needs of the full breadth and depth of the LGBT community, particularly communities whose primary concerns do not fit a single-issue frame. The long term survival of the movement depends upon an expansive vision of justice.

While movement building feels new and innovative, it is actually rooted in a history and set of strategies that honor an extensive legacy of queer, trans and allied organizing and thinking across communities of color. Historically, and in this current movement moment, movement building has had a major impact on society as a whole beyond incremental and single-issue policy change.

Almost ten years ago, the Building Movement Project argued that progressive groups in general had lost this insight in pursuit of policy victories.

Movement building organizations have moved from a central place in the nonprofit sector during the 1960s and 1970s to a marginalized position since the 1980s. The need to infuse the sector with values that are promoted by progressive social change groups would be a welcome relief from the relentless emphasis on efficiency and effectiveness based on business principles.

*Many grassroots LGBT people of color organizations believe that we have to do long-term movement building in order to meet the needs of the full breadth and depth of the LGBT community.*

Advocacy by progressive groups is needed to move national nonprofit umbrella groups and local coalitions to address critical issues facing constituents.<sup>41</sup>

Not all change, particularly deep change, comes from electoral, legislative, and policy strategies. An overemphasis on these strategies by LGBT advocacy organizations creates tension with those who focus on grassroots organizing, political education, and movement building of those most marginalized. The divide often falls along race, gender, and class lines, as many smaller organizations are led by people of color who feel as though they and their constituents do not benefit from single-issue organizing. They feel as though their lives are often not improved by the very campaigns that have shaped the LGBT policy agenda over the last 20 years. In challenging homophobia and the Right, the diverse LGBT community is weakened when it doesn't face these internal divisions.

### WHAT CAN BE DONE?

#### What Is Movement Building?

Longtime lesbian organizer and writer Suzanne Pharr has played a powerful role in naming this problem and guiding efforts to come up with a solution. In a March 18, 2010 strategy call organized by Queers for Economic Justice, Pharr gave a definition of movement building:

Movement building occurs when groups of people begin looking in the same direction and working with diverse strategies and methods, to reach a common vision. Movement happens when these groups become linked in some way to form a critical mass to demand sustained change.... We speak from a large framework, which I would call grand dreams. The movement building we work on is multi-issue and intersectional. The movement building we think of is not a single issue, or a single moment, but it is a process. The most difficult thing about the word movement now, is that almost anything is thrown under that name.

She goes on to explain how single-issue campaigns can play a role in movement building:

There's a pressure to just work on a policy, or just a single issue. Policy can be part of

movement building, single-issues can be part of movement building, but they have to be connected to a larger strategy that has a vision and has a base. Community education, organizing, media, culture work, policy campaigns—all of that is movement building. Democratic inclusion is absolutely critical—and I don't mean tokenism, but it has to be democratic in the sense of fully incorporating peoples' voices and peoples' whole selves. We've seen movements to know that movements can, in their very activities represent things that we don't want in this vision of the world.<sup>42</sup>

The risk is to get so focused on campaigning for discrete winnable issues as a way to build power that you lose sight of the bigger picture. In his effort to build power in poor black neighborhoods, the late organizer Saul Alinsky fell into this trap, among others, according to his critics.

Organizers Kim Fellner and Francis Calpotura articulate some of the problems in a 1996 article:

The definition of Alinsky-based organizing championed by Mike Miller, author of *Beyond the Politics of Place*, includes [the following characteristics]: "building units of permanent power, rooted in local communities, led by and accountable to local people." Its goals tend to involve redistributing power away from unaccountable institutions and towards the organization; with a professional organizer who brings the organization into being, and nurtures indigenous leadership from the organization's membership base. Characteristics of this organizing practice have included a pragmatic focus on issues that are "immediate, specific and winnable," and the dominance of White male organizers, albeit ones of tremendous intellect and energy.<sup>43</sup>

As Fellner and Calpotura point out, Saul Alinsky's organizing model is rooted in a particular set of tactics. It also has a particular historical context. It was based on his experience doing local neighborhood-based organizing for economic justice in 1940s Chicago aimed at building a mass base to win victories on very localized issues. It sought, for instance, to make government work for poor people, not to transform the very notion of government. During this period people were already organized into other

local institutions that made mass base-building easier—churches, local neighborhood associations, labor unions, etc. But as deindustrialization and corporate attacks decimate union jobs, and part-time and temp work grows, people are far more transient as workers, and there are fewer community-based institutions through which people are already organized in poorer communities.

The war on drugs, the expansion of the prison industrial complex, urban “renewal,” and gentrification of Black and brown communities further destabilized those social networks and institutions and exacerbated class conflicts. Because of the aggressive dismantling of Black social and political organizations, this Alinsky-style focus on “immediate, specific, and winnable” has in many ways lost its potential as an organizing strategy to radically change conditions. Because of this dissolution, it is most suited for very specific policy and/or legislatively driven campaigns that privilege economic and politically stable constituencies, or constituencies that see themselves as even having any access to state the apparatus.

*The short-term nature of any campaign could benefit from long-term movement building, and vice versa.*

Many grassroots LGBT organizations resist relying solely on a campaign-driven Alinsky model of organizing. From the perspective of movement builders, one organizing strategy should not be privileged over another. What counts in movement building is the context of the organizing landscape including: the goals, the scale of

the organizing effort, what the community needs and wants, the collective vision of justice and what tactics will get at the root of systemic community-based issues over time. Movement building does not look for quick fixes or for a one-size-fits-all organizing approach. As a result, many movement builders use Alinsky tactics but not just for short term gain and not as their only organizing methodology. Movement builders are also interested in large-scale organizing, policy wins and mass mobilization—just as campaign organizers are. The difference is that movement building connects tactics, strategies, and goals to long-term approaches to community building and systemic change and not to short-term outcomes that are narrowly framed.

Just as community organizing can be infused with the power and questions coming from racial justice and LGBT movements, policy-driven LGBT advocacy groups become credible partners with poor

communities of color when they are open to and are transformed by the power and questions of working class and grassroots LGBT activists of color.

Both campaign-driven and movement-building approaches to organizing are focused on building progressive political power and could collaborate in more effective ways. In fact, this collaboration could make large-scale mobilization more sustainable over long periods of time. As a result, the short-term nature of any campaign could benefit from long-term movement building, and vice-versa. Yet, we have to face the deeply philosophical and tactical differences around *how* to build political power, who will lead, and what is the end-goal of the work. There is no doubt that we need the best thinking, strategies, and organizing tools at our disposal to work for justice and liberation.

The movement building strategies and approaches that have the most impact are those that are deeply rooted locally *and* have significant national impact. Take for example the 2011 immigration justice campaign in Georgia that created a broad based alliance between immigration, racial justice, LGBT organizations, and a whole host of other justice based groups. This broad based progressive coalition was organized in response to the anti-immigrant law H.B. 87, and stands in stark contrast to the kinds of organizing work that is commonly seen in the queer community. Queer and trans people of color are an integral part of this broad based coalition and are working in solidarity with organizations and leaders across movements to push back on the intense Right-wing anti-immigration organizing happening throughout the state. This is what the queer movement should be doing by joining forces with other movements to challenge a range of justice issues.

What they discovered in Georgia, and what the legacy of movement building shows us, is that one approach to organizing should not be *valued less* because it focuses on immediately winnable as well as long-term goals. The deeper and more complex the issues of oppression are within communities, the more important longer term organizing strategies need to be. In other words, layers and layers of oppression and violence are not going to be solved in the context of a short term legislative, ballot measure or electoral campaign. Ending systemic violence and oppression requires—even demands—long term strategies. Unfortunately, these don't always produce immediate results.

This is where we get into trouble as a queer movement.

We must ask ourselves not only what we mean by “winnable” but also who gets to define the win. Campaigners often define the win by the numbers: the number of doors that were knocked on, the number of legislative votes that were flipped in our favor, the number of volunteers recruited, the number of votes cast. We agree that we need to have a laser sharp focus on those numbers, and the best organizers around the country knocking on doors and flipping legislative votes. At the same time, we also need dedicated and visionary movement builders working before, during, and after a campaign organizing around the following questions: what are we building political power for? Who benefits? How will we cultivate leadership for the long haul so that when the campaign is over, a multi-racial and inclusive body of leaders is in place and thriving long after a *winning or losing* campaign is over?

Perhaps if we engaged in both the numbers game and intentional, intersectional movement building throughout the Prop 8 fight there wouldn't have been the unjustified backlash against communities of color—particularly the Black community. If we just focus on the numbers, and not the community building, it's easy to get into a politics of blame. If we just focus on a narrow “winnable” LGBT political agenda that resonates with a certain form of institutional politics, then what happens when this handful of policy goals are eventually won? What will the mainstream national LGBT movement work on while the rest of us are knee deep in a couple of decades worth of work on broad-based economic, racial, environmental, reproductive, and disability justice issues?

So rather than push just a single issue that benefits some, how do we fundamentally change the landscape to make the lives of all LGBT people free of violence and economic deprivation? It means we must craft a larger vision of what we're fighting for and build the alliances among communities (in which some of us overlap) and organizations with similar visions.

A long-term vision coupled with cultural work—meaning the production of art, music, writing and poetry—is essential to building a movement that resonates across our communities. Numbers alone don't inspire. Long term relationships, cultural work, and a vision can move people to action, especially when individuals and communities build the vision, pro-

duce the cultural work, and co-create the political agendas. If we are in it for the long haul we must center the experiences of the most marginalized in our society so that everyone benefits.

### THE LEGACY OF MOVEMENT BUILDING

Queers, particularly queers of color, have a long history of doing intersectional organizing because our complex identities provide the road map for organizing strategies that leave no one behind. Queer people of color have always understood this. We continue to break ground by connecting issues, identities, and communities in every movement.

Moving across communities and movements is not easy, but we can look to the organizing brilliance and legacy of Bayard Rustin as a model. Rustin, a Black gay man who was a lead strategist of the Civil Rights Movement and a mentor to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., started doing racial justice organizing in the 1930s in the anti-war/pacifist and labor movements. Over the course of 30 years, he organized, built strategic coalitions, and facilitated racial justice trainings throughout the country. The insights he gained from his travels, training work, community conversations, and organizing efforts eventually became the framework within which the Civil Rights Movement articulated its vision, organizing strategies, and values.

In his book *Lost Prophet: The Life and Times of Bayard Rustin*, historian John D'Emilio chronicles Rustin's life and his movement-building strategies over several decades. D'Emilio painstakingly details example after example of the ways in which Rustin's organizing genius, particularly his tactical mind and relationship building skills, moved multiple movements to reach mass scope and scale. What follows are just a few examples of how deeply intersectional and interconnected Rustin's organizing efforts were:

In 1957 Rustin used his vast network of relationships across movements to organize one of the first youth-led marches in support of the Civil Rights Movement. Rustin drew upon the NAACP youth affiliates along with contacts he developed from touring colleges speaking about pacifism on behalf of the War Resisters League and

*If we are in it for the long haul we must center the experiences of the most marginalized in our society so that everyone benefits.*

the American Friends Service Committee. He also recruited members from the Young People's Socialist League and through his contacts in the labor movement, Rustin was able to secure most of the funding for the march from unions committed to Civil Rights. .... [Stanley] Levinson, shared with [Dr. Martin Luther] King his view that "it definitely triggered a student movement for civil rights on major campuses." He called it "a development of incalculable value."<sup>45</sup>

It took 30 years, but in 1963 Rustin was able to witness his life's work reach mass scope and scale as hundreds of thousands of people flooded the Mall in Washington, D.C. Reaching large scale action didn't happen overnight. It happened through decades of protest, strategic action, the will of the people and a tremendous faith in the possibility of justice.

Another important example of intersectional organizing comes from the Combahee River Collective—a collective comprised of Black feminists, many of whom were queer.<sup>46</sup> Their groundbreaking "A Black Feminist Statement" written in 1977 named why it was so critical for Black women to build political power from their experiences as Black women at the margin of society. The Combahee River Collective had a complex and intersectional understanding about the lives, identities, and experiences of Black women. They connected sexism, classism, ableism, and homophobia (remember this was 1977 and biphobia/transphobia were not part of the queer framework) in ways that were nuanced and deeply rooted in the multiple oppressions Black women face. They understood that organizing from their shared identities and oppressions as Black women not only made all kinds of intuitive sense but also that their collective survival depended upon it. "A Black Feminist Statement" continues to be a call to action for those of us who are committed to intersectionality as an organizing strategy and as a way of building community.

Today we have queer multiracial organizations such as Queers for Economic Justice, Southerners on New Ground, Audre Lorde Project, FIERCE, and Esperanza Peace and Justice Center rooting themselves in and deepening this legacy of working across issue, across strategies, in local, national, and international configurations, while building their local bases of largely poor and working class people of color (see box).

### KEY ALLIES BUILDING OUR CONNECTIVE TISSUE

Queer organizers of color struggled over the years and continue to struggle to develop inclusive and complex movements rooted in the daily lived experiences of queer people. Rather than base their political and legislative agendas on tactical expediency, they do the slow cultural work that bridges communities and nurtures new visions. Here are some important moments in that work.

#### PEOPLE OF COLOR ORGANIZING INSTITUTE

In 1995, the first People of Color Organizing Institute was founded at the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force's (NGLTF) Creating Change conference. Elders such as Carmen Vazquez, Mandy Carter, and Achebe Powell saw it was critical to create a queer people of color space to strategize, build relationships, and bring visibility to our communities in ways that had never happened before on the national level. For 16 years the People of Color Organizing Institute has been a space of both solace and conflict for many of us who have yearned to deepen the bonds of solidarity across our communities. Together we have found common ground; disagreed on strategy; bumped into the hard, painful, and sharp edges of identity politics; learned about cultural experiences and values very different from our own; challenged one another's ideas; and created community even in the toughest of times. The People of Color Organizing Institute was groundbreaking at the time and showed us that it was strategic, necessary, and urgent for us to be in struggle together.

#### AUDRE LORDE PROJECT<sup>47</sup>

Another turning point was the founding of the Audre Lorde Project. Opened in 1994 and named for the Courageous lesbian poet Audre Lorde, the Audre Lorde Project is a community organizing center in New York City for lesbian, gay, bisexual, two-spirit, trans, and gender nonconforming (LGBTSTGNC) people of color communities. It was initiated as a coalition organizing effort by Advocates for Gay Men of Color, a multiracial network of gay men of color HIV policy advocates. The vision for the Audre Lorde Project grew out of the expressed need for innovative and unified community strategies to address the multiple issues impacting LGBTSTGNC people of color communities. Police violence, welfare rights, and access to jobs all became part of Audre Lorde's agenda through the organizing of its members.

The founding of the project was a bold revelation. The founders dared to dream of a multi-racial queer people of color organization that was not rooted in

identity politics or in any one community of color. They set out to envision and engage in organizing strategies that were explicitly focused on connecting issues affecting *all* communities of color. Since 1994, it has become a place of refuge and engagement in sharp strategic thinking for many movement builders of color. Their intentional multi-issue organizing has shown us that when we build relationships and organizing strategies based on our mutual survival and interdependence we build collective political power.

### NEW COALITIONS

In 2007 a community-wide organizing project got underway to revamp the People of Color Organizing Institute and antiracism work for white allies at Creating Change. At the heart of this project was the question, “How do we create spaces that move us to the cutting edge of racial justice organizing?” Part of the challenge was that these two spaces had grown contentious and, after almost a decade and a half of work, ceased to stimulate new thinking, relationships and learning.

When Lisa Mottet was the Director of Capacity Building at NGLTF, she convened a multiracial group of community leaders from Southerners on New Ground, The Audre Lorde Project, Queers for Economic Justice, The Disability Justice Collective, and the First Nations/Two Spirit Collective and together we felt the earth shift! Thanks to the brilliance and insights of the First Nations/Two Spirit and The Disability Justice Collective, we realized that movement building across communities on the margin needed to be rooted in a crosscutting frame. This frame centered our complex bodies and experiences and laid the groundwork for deeper solidarity across communities on the margin of movements. Where we landed was in the connection between indigenous sovereignty and disability access. We came to understand that if one does not have self-determination over his or her own body and land as well as access to spaces and events, then liberation is not possible. These real issues of self-determination and access became crosscutting realities that resonated for everyone in the room across all lines of difference.

Together we went on to train hundreds of queer organizers across movements and communities around a frame and set of strategies we call “Access, Sovereignty, and Liberation.” This organizing project, and quintessentially queer frame, is important to movement building because it showed us what was possible when some of the most marginalized communities in the queer movement—in this case disability justice and Two Spirit people—are deeply embedded in identifying and developing our organizing strategies. Whole new paradigms for our organizing work become possible.

### ROOTS<sup>48</sup>

Finally there is ROOTS, another major turning point in our collective organizing work towards racial justice and liberation. ROOTS, which is formally known as the U.S. Movement Building Initiative (MBI) was founded in 2006 by the Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice. Astraea set a high goal: to provide significant resources for LGBT people of color organizations to build collective power that brings about change inclusive of those whose voices are most seldom heard. Astraea’s Movement Building Initiative has a three-pronged approach:

- To build political and organizational capacity through grantmaking and programmatic support
- To link groups through relationships, political education, and shared strategies
- To amplify individual organizations’ power by building a critical mass of groups to collaborate strategically for national impact

After three successful years of convenings that evolved to include 14 queer people of color-led organizations and collectives, the MBI changed its name to ROOTS and is now a free-standing network dedicated to connecting queer people-of-color-led organizations across the country for the purpose of thinking and acting more intentionally about how to have a coordinated organizing strategy and national voice.

Why is ROOTS so important to this story? For the first time we are beginning to see the makings of queer people of color connective tissue emerging nationally. Many of our organizations and collectives have worked in isolation without having the benefit of one another’s thinking, support, and lessons learned. In fact, our queer people of color leaders/organizations/collectives often do not know who else may be out there doing similar or overlapping work. Because of the institutional racism in the movement and in philanthropy, our opportunities to convene, share resources and information, develop collective strategies and shift the direction of the movement have been minimal. Even in its developing stages, ROOTS has the potential to be a movement-building force to be reckoned with, where national movement-building strategies and relationships can be incubated for the long haul.

This is our history and legacy and we stand on the shoulders of queer people of color movement builders who came before us. Today, what we are witnessing all over the globe is very different from the kind of organizing we see coming out of an LGBT movement that values equality over liberation and justice. These core strategies and values, rooted in building collective power beyond a narrow set of ‘gay’ issues, will ultimately be successful in serving all marginalized people, not just LGBT ones.

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- <sup>39</sup> AIDS Foundation of Chicago, “HIV Groups Deeply Concerned About the Human Costs of Health Care Cuts,” 27 July 2011, <http://www.aidschicago.org/advocacy-home/national-news/355-hiv-groups-deeply-concerned-about-the-human-costs-of-health-care-cuts>
- <sup>40</sup> “Evidence from precinct-level voting returns suggests that African American support for Proposition 8 was in the range of 57 to 59 percent,” not the 70 percent exit polls initially suggested. Patrick J. Egan and Kenneth Sherrill, “California’s Proposition 8: What Happened, and What Does the Future Hold?” National Gay & Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute, January 2009, p. 11. [http://www.ncsu.edu/stud\\_affairs/glb/pdf/Prop%208%20Report.pdf](http://www.ncsu.edu/stud_affairs/glb/pdf/Prop%208%20Report.pdf)
- <sup>41</sup> “Building Movement vs. Building Organization: Summary of Regional Discussions,” Building Movement Project, January 1, 2002. <http://www.buildingmovement.org/news/entry/47>
- <sup>42</sup> From A teleconference call on Movement Building and Queer Organizing, organized by Queers for Economic Justice on March 18, 2010. Audio can be found on their website. <http://q4ej.org/act-queer-teleconference-movement-building-in-queer-organizing>
- <sup>43</sup> Kim Fellner and Francis Calpotura, “Square Pegs Find Their Groove: Reshaping the Organizing Circle,” COMM-ORG, the Online Conference on Community Organizing, Community Organizing Papers, vol. 3, 1997. <http://comm-org.wisc.edu/papers96/square.html>
- <sup>44</sup> For a list of members of the Georgia Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition, see: <http://girrc.wordpress.com/membership/>
- <sup>45</sup> John D’Emilio, *Lost Prophet: The Life and Times of Bayard Rustin* (New York, NY: Free Press, 2003) 273.
- <sup>46</sup> Combahee River Collective Statement can be found at <http://circuitous.org/scraps/combahee.html>
- <sup>47</sup> For information about the Audre Lorde Project, see: <http://alp.org/about>
- <sup>48</sup> More information about ROOTS Coalition can be found at <http://rootscoalition.wordpress.com/>.

## Findings and Recommendations

This study examines the U.S. Right's current level of political influence on issues relating to LGBT rights. Many—although not all—major players are members of the Christian Right. The landscape is dynamic, with groups and individuals playing roles with varying levels of sophistication, visibility, and impact. It is PRA's hope that these findings and recommendations will help LGBT organizers and their allies develop a greater understanding of the current opposition to LGBT rights and equality.

◆ **Conservative religious interests are alive and well, and they continue to transmit homophobic messages.**

The idea that the Christian Right is in decline, although regularly suggested by liberal pundits, is a myth. Although many younger evangelicals are questioning their parents' conservative views, especially on homosexuality, conservative Christians are still the mainstay of the anti-LGBT movement. While some of the original leadership has gone, they have been replaced, and Right-wing multi-issue groups, like the Family Research Council and the American Family Association, retain a focus on homophobia. Older organizations with a specifically anti-LGBT mission, like the Americans for Truth about Homosexuality and the Family Research Institute, are sometimes more influential than their small size or extremist views would suggest. Newer organizations, such as the National Organization for Marriage or One Million Moms, have emerged as new projects of older organizations.

◆ **Although the Christian Right is still influential, the political landscape has changed.**

Since 2009 a new upstart of right-wing populism has brought instability and uncertainty to the conservative movement. Although such energy has erupted periodically in this country since colonial times, recently, top-down forces coupled with grassroots energy hatched the Tea Party movement, the

most current example of insurgent populist energy. The modern Tea Party, virtually all White and politically motivated, is an unsteady coalition of social and fiscal conservatives—reflecting the angry impulses of its Christian Right, libertarian, and anti-tax sectors in an era of economic distress and cultural upheaval. One deliberate choice on the part of Tea Party activists has been to focus on economic issues, downplaying expressly homophobic rhetoric and choosing instead to rely on anti-abortion language to rally the troops. This fragile coalition is unpredictable.

◆ **The use of homophobia as a political tool is still a successful strategy for mobilizing and increasing right-wing political power.**

While many social conservatives maintain sincerely held attitudes about homosexuality, some right-wing strategists will use the socially conservative values of their base for opportunistic reasons. The strategy of introducing a homophobic ballot initiative, a piece of legislation or even a campaign plank continues to be successful in bringing voters to the polls. As we describe in the case studies, Amendment 2 in Colorado is a historical example of this from 1992 as is another ballot initiative in Florida in 2008, the Florida Marriage Protection Amendment.

◆ **The Right has developed a limited, but repeatedly-used, set of homophobic arguments. Many homophobic frames get recycled, especially if they were successful in the past.**

These frames, or ways of presenting political positions, are based on the fundamental beliefs of the Christian Right and are influenced both by the belief that homosexuality is a major sin and their deeply conservative attitudes on gender roles and the family. Conservative Christians cast moral judgments on women and LGBT people who reject these traditional gender roles and ascribe sinfulness to such out-of-

line behavior. Our case studies illustrate the mainstays of these frames, from the claims that gays breed disease, that homosexuality is a shameful sin, that the LGBT movement has a political agenda that threatens the core of American society, and that gays want “special rights.” The development of an anti-LGBT frame, from the generic threat to the family to the more narrowly defined “protect marriage” argument, is an example of the Right’s ability to adapt these frames to fit the circumstances. Secular arguments are usually screens for the tested religious ones, as the shift from frames overtly appealing to Christian conservatives to those adjusted for a broader audience illustrates.

◆ **The Right’s anti-LGBT strategies are complex and sophisticated.**

Although grounded in conservative religious beliefs, the Right’s approach to LGBT issues continues to adapt to new circumstances, sometimes by using tenacious secular arguments. “Traditional family values” has been an enduring frame, partially because it elicits an imagery of patriotism but mostly because it is so accommodating as a frame by including so much of the religious Right’s agenda. Anti-LGBT strategizing takes advantage of current demographics within their conservative base consisting of predominantly White, heterosexual, and working and middle class voters with conservative religious views. Conservative framers use their supporter’s prejudice against the “other,” whether it is based on gender, race, or nationality, to their advantage, but it is not always so obvious at first glance. Appeals to California parents to protect their children from harm at school in the Proposition 8 campaign there reflects the earlier claims by Anita Bryant and John Briggs that children are at risk. The “ex-gay” movement, gained ground in the 1990s with a frame of “calculated compassion,” claiming Christian love for sinners and redemption through confession and forgiveness with misrepresentations of the cause and cure for the spiritual disease of homosexuality.<sup>1</sup>

◆ **The current broad coalition on the Right, including the Tea Party, must be taken seriously, especially in the 2012 elections. Not only could the presidency be held by a conservative, but any number of state or local fights could be swayed towards conservative results.**

The goal of the U.S. political Right at this moment is to usurp any remaining power of the political adversaries, whether that power is found in the White House, Congress, state legislatures, or in the culture. The Christian Right represents about 15% of the vote in the United States, and with party affiliation loosening and greater numbers of voters identifying as Independents, no presidential candidate can win without a major part of this bloc. Roughly half the Tea Party identifies with the Christian Right, exacerbating the struggle between the fiscal and the social conservatives within the Tea Party. Since the socially conservative elements of the Right continue to use homophobic frames and strategies, their ultimate success may be heavily influenced by continuing to cultivate negative attitudes towards LGBT people. In our Florida case study, for example, we see that the opposition was able to garner over 60% of the vote to win an anti-LGBT referendum, an amount far greater than the estimated number of Tea Party or Christian Right voters in the state.

◆ **Some anti-LGBT organizations have surprising levels of influence.**

Virulently homophobic views are cultivated by anti-gay pseudo-research groups like the National Association for Research & Therapy of Homosexuality (NARTH) and the Family Research Institute. Far from being merely a fringe element in the anti-LGBT movement, these researchers draw conclusions which are then taken up by individuals and groups with access to mass media, who amplify the messages, resulting in a disproportionate influence on public opinion.

◆ **Despite clear indications they are losing the war on LGBT rights, the Christian Right core of the anti-LGBT movement will not soon abandon its opposition.**

Social conservatives recognize that they are losing some major battles with the LGBT movement. Since 2009, federal LGBT hate crimes legislation has passed, Don’t Ask Don’t Tell (DADT) has been repealed, The Defense of Marriage Act is losing support, and more states have legalized same sex marriage. In the face of public opinion moving away from them, the anti-LGBT Right must grapple with several strategic questions:

- 1) How will it deal with the growing support for LGBT issues among younger evangelicals, its future base?

- 2) To what extent will the anti-LGBT Right continue to use expensive strategies like state-level ballot initiatives?
- 3) Will it choose to place LGBT issues on the back burner for the 2012 elections?
- 4) How will it use homophobia to reach political goals in the future?

◆ **Funding streams for anti-LGBT campaigns continue to come from many of the traditional foundation and individual sources that fund other Religious Right causes, but there are new developments.**

The issues many of these funders support, such as opposition to abortion, immigration, and the separation of church and state, are all aspects of a continuing culture war in which women, immigrants, and LGBT people are seen as threats to a traditionalist way of life. It makes sense that funders would see these connections or at least support the multiple issues we have come to categorize as socially conservative.

From time to time newly exposed wealthy Rightist individuals and groups gain the notoriety as major funders. The Koch brothers are examples of recently recognized donors, as is the Mormon Church (LDS), although they have been funding anti-LGBT causes for years. A newly visible group is the Roman Catholic Knights of Columbus, a charitable fraternal order that supports anti-abortion and traditional family values.<sup>2</sup> They have supported Maggie Gallagher's National Organization for Marriage, which since 2007 has been a prominent opponent of same-sex marriage.

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A FUTURE LGBT ROAD MAP

As PRA reflected on what we have learned from this project, we recognized that certain ideas have emerged that may be useful for LGBT activists, advocates, and funders. These are summarized below.

**1. Keep the long view.** It is tempting to focus only on the LGBT issue of the moment, whether it be legislative, judicial, or cultural. Such threats necessarily require immediate resources and creative tactics. But it is also necessary to look beyond today's right-wing campaigns and the next election cycle, to consider the overall context of the LGBT movement, including key trends and future possibilities.

**2. Interpret data about the Right to create a solid analysis that fuels strategic opportunities.** So much information is readily available now from a wide array of sources that it is sometimes difficult to separate reliable facts from conclusions based on assumptions. It is vital to screen available information for its dependability, and analyze the data to identify salient issues and frames. Only careful consideration of the Right's use of frames, both within and outside the anti-LGBT arena, will help activists determine their direction and strength. Funders should support LGBT organizations and their allies to undertake this type of research.

**3. Reevaluate the progressive LGBT movement's goals and focus.** Many advocacy groups, including the major LGBT national groups headquartered in Washington, D.C., have focused on legislative or judicial paths to formal equality for LGBT people. This is an essential first step, but it need not be the end goal. *De jure* equality does not guarantee actual equality, and actual equality does not itself guarantee true liberty.<sup>3</sup> Funders should support extended opportunities for strategists to gather to consider revised/supplementary movement goals. These convenings would serve as incubators for an expanded LGBT-initiated, but multi-issue, vision.

**4. Cultivate broader coalitions across issue areas to develop allies, increase support, and contribute to a broader social justice agenda.** LGBT people remain a numerical minority and as we have learned from marriage equality struggles, cannot achieve legislative, judicial, or cultural goals without networks of allies and a commitment to social justice for all. Engage in coalitions with goals that intersect easily with LGBT issues and also with those that don't. A successful effort of cross-community coalition work is the National HIV/AIDS Coalition which, as illustrated in one of our case studies, worked with a diversity of groups towards shared goals. Funding for broadening the diversity of other movements should be shared between LGBT groups and others.

**5. Prepare for the inevitable backlash.** Any push for social or political change against the status quo will necessarily prompt a backlash from opponents and those currently in power. Expect the Right sometimes to use recycled arguments and frames, and sometimes to invent new ones. But they will always mount

a counterattack. Build an expectation of that attack into strategic planning at all levels.

### CONCLUSION

No one report can map the totality of the Right's attempts to thwart LGBT equality and liberty—this project chose a finite number of areas to study. There is much more to be learned. For instance, we do not have a clear enough picture of the future road map of the Right's engagement in anti-LGBT activity to predict with any accuracy how much financial support should be distributed to LGBT activism. We do know from the work of our research allies that the amounts have not increased sufficiently to keep up with the potential growth and needs of LGBT movement organizations, especially LGBT groups that focus on people of color.<sup>4</sup>

Despite the relentless use of homophobia as a political tool and continued strong opposition to dismantling structural homophobia, what we do see is the significant accomplishments of hundreds of LGBT organizations in the United States working against the Right and for the rights of LGBT people. It is their work that gives us hope.

### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Surina Khan, *Calculated Compassion: How the Ex-Gay Movement Serves the Right's Attacks on Democracy*, (Somerville, MA: Political Research Associates) 1998.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.kofc.org/un/en/news/releases/detail/548271.html>;  
[http://www.kofc.org/un/en/news/legislative/detail/defence\\_marrageact\\_en.html](http://www.kofc.org/un/en/news/legislative/detail/defence_marrageact_en.html)

<sup>3</sup> Urvashi Vaid, "Still Ain't Satisfied: Equality and the Limits of LGBT Politics," <http://urvashivaid.net/wp/?p=810>

<sup>4</sup> See *LGBTQ Grantmaking by U.S. Foundations, and U.S./Foundation Support for LGBTQ Communities of Color: Racial Equity Campaign Update* (New York: Funders for LGBTQ Issues) 2008.