

National Gay and Lesbian
Task Force



The Task Force
**National Religious
Leadership Roundtable**



A Time To Build Up

ANALYSIS OF THE NO ON PROPOSITION 8
CAMPAIGN AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR
FUTURE PRO-LGBTQQIA RELIGIOUS ORGANIZING

By Rev. Rebecca Voelkel

National Gay and Lesbian Task Force's National Religious Leadership Roundtable



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Ecclesiastes 3:1, 3

...For everything in life there is a season,
and a time for every purpose under the heaven...
a time to break down, and a time to build up.

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Executive Summary:

THE PRO-LGBTQQIA MOVEMENT HAS A “RELIGION PROBLEM”

Following the passage of Proposition 8 in California, a clear need emerged to digest and analyze all that transpired during the campaign. In particular, analyzing the role of pro-LGBTQQIA¹ religious organizing has become critical, given that weekly religious participation was significantly correlated with support for Proposition 8.²

Stated another way, the pro-LGBTQQIA movement has a problem with religion. In recent years, 30 states witnessed marriage amendment battles that successfully took away the legal rights of LGBTQQIA persons to marry. The 2008 election cycle saw no less than four anti-LGBTQQIA measures, including a particularly difficult ballot initiative in Arkansas banning “non-married” couples from adopting or fostering children. In all of these, the primary voice and face of opposition to LGBTQQIA families is a religious one. Additionally, the primary anti-LGBTQQIA organizing strategies utilize the language, culture and strong networks of local religious congregations. In other words, the primary opposition to LGBTQQIA people and families is religious — in language, culture, strategy and organizing.

At the same time, some of the most groundbreaking support of pro-LGBTQQIA equality is among people of faith. Religious figures such as Bishop Gene Robinson, Revs. Phil and James Lawson, Bishop Yvette Flunder, the majority of the rabbinical leadership in California, all of the Episcopal Bishops of California and countless other religious leaders spoke publicly on behalf of the LGBTQQIA community and received media coverage for it.

Given these realities, identifying and possibly adopting religious strategies and principles for ongoing campaign and legislative work on pro-LGBTQQIA measures is both timely and necessary. Although the larger LGBTQQIA movement continues to have an ambivalent relationship to religion as an organizing focal point and religious institutions as an organizing entry point, getting to the finish line on marriage equality, employment non-discrimination and other pro-LGBTQQIA issues will require speaking to voters who consider these issues in a language that is familiar to them. This often means setting essential information within religious contexts and having it come from religious leaders.

To meet this challenge the Arcus Foundation funded the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force’s National Religious Leadership Roundtable to convene a two-day gathering of 32 California and national experts in religious communities and pro-LGBTQQIA religious organizing. These experts were asked to complete a preparatory survey that solicited their individual analyses. The survey questions were then used to shape the convening — which took place in Pasadena, California, at All Saints Episcopal Church on January 15-16, 2009.

This document represents a comprehensive review and analysis based on both the survey data and the convening of religious and secular leaders. Below is a summary of **key learnings**, which were identified by participants as critical to future pro-LGBTQQIA work, and an analysis, including concrete strategies. We seek to address three distinct, yet overlapping, audiences: **Pro-LGBTQQIA funders**, **pro-LGBTQQIA secular organizers** and **pro-LGBTQQIA religious organizers**.

1) Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex and ally. Participants in the Pasadena convening spoke eloquently about the importance of including all of the members of the pro-LGBTQQIA movement in our work and organizing. Because this document seeks to widen the circles of inclusion, we chose to use a more inclusive term (LGBTQQIA) for the community. However, even as we do this, we recognize that we have work to be done around language. For example, same-gender-loving and two-spirit are not included in this term.

2) Egan, Patrick J. and Kenneth Sherrill, *California’s Proposition 8: What Happened, and What Does the Future Hold?* Commissioned by the Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Foundation and released under the auspices of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force’s Policy Institute, January 2009 and Jones, Robert P. and Daniel Cox, *Marriage Equality: Findings from the Faith and American Politics Study*, Public Religion Research with funding from the Human Rights Campaign, February 2009. A release on the Egan and Sherrill report noted, “More than 70 percent of voters who were Republican, identified themselves as conservative, or attended religious services at least weekly supported Proposition 8.”

KEY LEARNING 1

Proposition 8 and most anti-LGBTQQIA measures are rooted in conservative religion, therefore religious opposition requires a religious response.

Conservative religious voices influenced the debate and outcome of Proposition 8: Proposition 8 is an example of a public debate that was influenced by conservative religious leadership. Conservative religious leaders have demonstrated a willingness and ability to:

- shift the debate from legal and civil rights to one that focuses on morality and religious rights; and
- strategically create a conservative platform from which conservative religious leaders dominate public debate on LGBTQQIA issues within communities of color.

Religious opposition requires a religious response:

It is naïve to believe that rights-based arguments can trump the value-based arguments of conservative religious leaders. It is also naïve to ignore the power and influence of the moral authority given to religious leaders within communities of faith. The voices of conservative religious leaders must be responded to by the voices of progressive faith leaders whose religious beliefs and traditions allow them to speak to people of faith as moral equals, within the context of their faith traditions and racial/ethnic cultures.

KEY LEARNING 2

Pro-LGBTQQIA secular-religious partnerships are critical to future success.

The established LGBTQQIA advocacy community appears significantly limited in its ability to work in partnership with religious leaders: The secular LGBTQQIA leadership appears unable or unwilling to incorporate the leadership and resources of pro-LGBTQQIA religious leaders. This barrier may be a result of several factors: an absence of significant working relationships with faith-based pro-LGBTQQIA advocates; a devaluing of the religious beliefs held by religious communities and, by extension, by pro-LGBTQQIA faith-based leaders; and the perception that because of their religious beliefs, faith-based advocates have little to contribute to the LGBTQQIA movement.

Pro-LGBTQQIA faith-based leadership is a major resource and a required leader in future change efforts: Pro-LGBTQQIA faith-based leaders and leadership structures bring significant resources to the fight — the ability to speak with moral authority to large numbers and through a variety of communication vehicles. Faith-based advocates share a “common platform” built on values of dignity of human life and a commitment to justice. These common values present the opportunity to build advocacy agendas across denominations and faith traditions in support of coordinated strategies.

There is an urgent need to establish alliances, cooperation and coordination between LGBTQQIA advocates and pro-LGBTQQIA religious leaders:

Pro-LGBTQQIA faith-based leaders need to be at the table. The pro-LGBTQQIA movement needs to support the establishment of respectful, collaborative relationships between secular and faith-based leaders. One resource in this endeavor is the national pro-LGBTQQIA religious organizations that have demonstrated understanding of religious values and structures and are able to establish leadership partnerships with faith-based LGBTQQIA persons.

KEY LEARNING 3

A narrow political campaign frame hinders pro-LGBTQQIA religious work.

The ability of the LGBTQQIA advocacy community to engage with religious communities was limited by a reliance on a political campaign framework: The Proposition 8 campaign goals focused on political change, were narrowly focused, and quickly defined faith-based communities as expendable. The initial strategy deliberately chose not to engage with religious-based opposition and, subsequently, minimal resources were dedicated to outreach and education efforts focusing on communities of faith and communities of color.

Pro-LGBTQQIA faith-based leadership and the communities they serve were limited in their ability to work within the defined campaign framework:

Timelines utilized by the campaign did not allow for religious leaders to significantly engage allies and other religious leadership. Additionally, these timelines did not take into account the comparatively slow pace at which most religious communities are able to act. Standard campaign “messages” restricted the ability of religious communities to communicate within the context of their faith traditions and racial/ethnic communities.

We need to develop a vision and framework to guide future advocacy efforts that is value-based and that reflects the beliefs and values of both religious and secular LGBTQQIA advocates: This vision and framework could be built on our shared desire to create a community whose mores, culture and laws reflect the dreams of our forbears — life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness and justice for all.

Introduction

As you read *A Time to Build Up*, two points warrant articulation.

1 *A Time to Build Up* is based upon three sources:

- survey data from national and California religious organizers, national and California secular organizers and LGBTQQIA¹ funders,
- a convening of thirty-two California and national religious and secular organizers, and LGBTQQIA funders held in Pasadena, CA January 15-16, 2009, and
- numerous conversations with secular and religious organizers between June, 2008 and February, 2009, including at the National Conference on LGBT Equality: Creating Change held in Denver in January of 2009.

At different points throughout this report we refer both to “research” and the “Pasadena convening.” When we say this, it is to these that we are referring.

2 The starting point for this report, and all the work it represents, is the assumption that **pro-LGBTQQIA religious organizers and pro-LGBTQQIA secular organizers share a common vision and set of values.**

We all strive for a country whose mores, culture and laws reflect the dreams of our forebears: life, liberty and genuine justice for all — including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning and intersex people and families. Although uncertainty and lack of understanding between pro-LGBTQQIA religious and secular organizers remains, these shared visions and values provide us with a solid foundation upon which to build strong partnerships.

The spirit of this document, and the movement we hope to inspire with its publication, is one of collaboration and deep respect — for the wisdom of those who direct, work or participate in campaigns, and for the experience and depth of knowledge and influence of those who organize and work within religious communities.

Those gathered at the Pasadena convening spoke several times about the honor and privilege of being there. Being proud pro-LGBTQQIA religious people within this movement is a gift. It is also a gift to have colleagues in all aspects of our movement, particularly those who work on campaigns. They often work tirelessly, anonymously and in places in which many of us don’t venture. All that is shared in *A Time to Build Up* is done so out of the desire to build a more powerful, expansive, inclusive movement that can transform our world. Where there are criticisms, they are raised to help us do better next time, not to tear down our colleagues. Where there is analysis, it is shared to better our strategizing and actions. Our deepest desire is to work together, to draw upon the strengths of each, so that all of us might enjoy the fruits of a more just, equitable and loving world.

1) Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex and ally. Participants in the Pasadena convening spoke eloquently about the importance of including all of the members of the pro-LGBTQQIA movement in our work and organizing. Because this document seeks to widen the circles of inclusion, we chose to use a more inclusive term (LGBTQQIA) for the community. However, even as we do this, we recognize that we have work to be done around language. For example, same-gender-loving and two-spirit are not included in this term.

Analysis

The following analysis, presented as key learnings and discussion, emerged from the Pasadena convening and the pre-convening survey.

KEY LEARNING 1

Proposition 8 and most anti-LGBTQQIA measures are rooted in conservative religion, and religious opposition requires a religious response.

Conservative religious voices influenced the debate and outcome of Proposition 8: Proposition 8 is an example of a public debate that was influenced by conservative religious leadership. Conservative religious leaders have demonstrated a willingness and ability to:

- shift the debate from legal and civil rights to one that focuses on morality and religious rights; and
- strategically create a conservative platform from which conservative religious leaders dominate public debate on LGBTQQIA issues within communities of color.

Religious opposition requires a religious response: It is naïve to believe that rights-based arguments can trump the values-based arguments of conservative religious leaders. It is also naïve to ignore the power and influence of the moral authority given to religious leaders within communities of faith. The voices of conservative religious leaders must be responded to by the voices of progressive faith leaders whose religious beliefs and traditions allow them to speak to people of faith as moral equals, within the context of their faith traditions and racial/ethnic cultures.

DISCUSSION

1a: Yes on Proposition 8 rooted in conservative religion

Proponents of Proposition 8 rooted their efforts religiously. Studies clearly indicate that the primary funding for the Yes on Proposition 8 campaign came from religious sources.² Additionally, religious attendance was one of the primary indicators of support for Proposition 8. It is undeniable that religion, particularly conservative Christianity, formed the backbone for the Yes on Proposition 8 campaign. This is true for both the field campaign and the media and messaging efforts to

support Proposition 8. Yes on Proposition 8 campaign organizers utilized conservative church networks for volunteers, organized campaign efforts that fit with conservative religious culture (for example — worship services, and the Qualcomm stadium event in early November, which was akin to a Promise Keepers event) and placed conservative religious leaders in the media.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Funders**
Support campaign work that analyzes and recognizes the power of religious opposition.
- **Secular Organizers**
Monitor anti-LGBTQQIA religious messaging and field tactics. Partner with pro-LGBTQQIA religious leaders who have experience in combating these.
- **Religious Organizers**
Draw upon your experience with anti-LGBTQQIA organizations such as the Institute on Religion and Democracy and intra-religious conflicts to anticipate and counter religious opposition.

1b: Religiously-rooted opposition necessitates a religiously-rooted strategy

Although the No on Proposition 8 campaign was convinced, based upon the research it did with focus groups, that creating a situation in which there was conflict between pro-LGBTQQIA religious people and anti-LGBTQQIA religious people would be detrimental, this was not the case with other concurrent campaigns within California.

In particular, participants in the survey and convening identified Proposition 4, the parental notification measure, as a powerful example of how religious organizing could

2) Egan, Patrick J. and Kenneth Sherrill, *California's Proposition 8: What Happened, and What Does the Future Hold?* Commissioned by the Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Foundation and released under the auspices of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force's Policy Institute, January 2009 and Jones, Robert P. and Daniel Cox, *Marriage Equality: Findings from the Faith and American Politics Study*, Public Religion Research with funding from the Human Rights Campaign, February 2009. A release on the Egan and Sherrill report noted, "More than 70 percent of voters who were Republican, identified themselves as conservative, or attended religious services at least weekly supported Proposition 8."

be utilized when the opposition is especially religiously-rooted. The California Council of Churches was invited to take an organizing role, religious language and messaging were employed, and religious communities were mobilized to defeat it.

“Since it is a conservative faith voice that dominates the anti-gay movement, moderate to progressive faith voices must be an integral part of campaigns from day one. It is vital that campaigns have at least one credible, politically savvy faith leader as part of the core strategy team.”

– Participant in Pasadena Convening

“It is vital for progressive faith communities to be giving clear direction in how to mobilize around issues such as marriage equality in order to have an impact on our communities.”

– Participant in Pasadena Convening

RECOMMENDATIONS

■ Funders

Support campaigns with an articulated plan regarding religious organizing that has been crafted in collaboration with religious organizers.

■ Secular Organizers

Ensure that any campaign is rooted in collaboration with religious organizers from the beginning. Field and media strategies should be built with their consultation and be tailored to the communities in which the campaign is working.

■ Religious Organizers

Utilize the wisdom and strategies that have been gained from internal denominational struggles with conservative leadership on the messages, the concrete actions, the networking, etc.

1c: Campaigns as critical components of building a movement³

One of the key reasons that pro-LGBTQQIA religion and pro-LGBTQQIA religious communities need to be part of the overall structure of any campaign is the interrelated nature of campaigns and the building a larger pro-LGBTQQIA movement.

In order to build any social movement, three interrelated components are necessary:

- campaigns
- infrastructure-building, and
- dissemination of a worldview. (A worldview the pro-LGBTQQIA movement seeks to articulate is one in which life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness apply to *all* families. It is one in which liberty and justice for *all* really means *all*, including LGBTQQIA persons. Put another way, it lifts up the interconnectedness of all persons.)

In the best-case scenario, the work that is done, the relationships that are built, and the worldview that is disseminated during a campaign are the groundwork for the larger social movement. This is true whether the campaign is won or lost. If campaigns are woven with the larger goal of building a more integrated, vibrant and diverse social movement that includes people of faith, the infrastructure that is built and the worldview that is disseminated flow into the work that continues after election day. (Within the pro-LGBTQQIA movement, there remains a tension between campaign organizing and movement-building organizing. The Pasadena convening emphasized the importance of overcoming this tension.)

The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force articulates it this way: “Build — Win — Build.” Building a movement helps lead to campaign wins, and those wins can in turn build more infrastructure and disseminate the worldview of the movement — reshaped and advanced based on the lessons learned throughout. Even if a campaign loses, when a movement model is advanced, such losses can be a source of growth and development.

Overall, campaigns should not harm the larger movement-building strategy and, in fact, the various strategies employed must ultimately work in tandem.

Both in our research and at the Pasadena convening, many voices questioned how well-integrated the No on Proposition 8 campaign was within the larger pro-LGBTQQIA movement. Many pointed out that for

³ The following data draws heavily upon the work of Beth Zemsky and the work of the Grassroots Policy Institute. But participants took each of these areas and deepened and broadened the understanding and evidence.

several years prior to the No on Proposition 8 campaign, a successful “pre-campaign,” entitled Let California Ring, was waged. This pre-campaign employed a much broader understanding of the importance of movement building, and successfully organized within religious communities, people of color communities, LGBTQQIA families, and in more rural communities.

“The LGBTQQIA community needs to know that there are powerful, progressive faith-based voices who are welcoming and supportive, carry political cache, and are at the ready to support equality for all.”

– Participant in Pasadena Convening

“The LGBTQQIA community needs to know the enormous influential role of religion in American public life and the social capital that religious leaders have with their congregants...”

– Participant in Pasadena Convening

RECOMMENDATIONS

■ Funders

Approach campaigns as movement-building opportunities with religious leaders as a core component.

■ Secular Organizers

Set as goals not only winning a given campaign, but also ensuring that campaign messaging matches our worldview and that we are building long-term relationships for the future.

■ Religious Organizers

Recognize that campaigns offer concrete opportunities for helping to build many different levels of religious organizing, including:

- Multi-faith coalitions
- Experience in pro-LGBTQQIA organizing that can lead to more intra-religious pro-LGBTQQIA organizing
- Establishing or strengthening relationships with secular LGBTQQIA advocacy organizations

1d: Campaigns rooted in particular cultural contexts

When campaigns are interwoven with a larger movement-building strategy, they take into account the particular context of the pro-LGBTQQIA community in the locale in which the campaign is taking place. That is to say that organizing in Maine is different than organizing in California, organizing in rural contexts is different than organizing in urban ones, organizing within one religious community is different than organizing within another, and organizing within one community of color differs from organizing within another.

Participants raised a critique that while the “Let California Ring” campaign seemed to employ different strategies for different locales, the No on Proposition 8 campaign sought to impose a more standard approach that was not nearly as inclusive or effective — particularly in religious communities and communities of color.

Concrete examples of this might be:

Field

- worship services
- making announcements or putting information in the bulletins of different congregations
- preachers doing public speaking at rallies, marches and town hall meetings
- choirs representing different congregations singing about justice and abundance on the steps of the Capitol before lobbying for a just budget
- using religious rites such as giving religious communities the opportunity to bless couples in public ways
- employing religious symbols such as lighting candles for justice
- caroling at home of legislators (if the Legislature is your primary audience)

Media

- place religious leaders in the media
- draw upon the language of religious communities for talking points
- claim the Bible and other scriptural texts as ours
- follow the example of “Homophobia and the Black Church” (on page 9)

- employ methods like those used by the National Religious Leadership Roundtable in San Francisco in October. We held a press conference, and included religious leaders from many traditions. During the press conference, a rabbi from a major Reform synagogue spoke of Kristallnacht, whose anniversary was only a few weeks away. He said that the lessons of Kristallnacht have taught his community that when injustice begins to take root and be institutionalized, we must never be silent.

“As Christian Evangelicals we have a distinct understanding of how the evangelical community works and thinks. I find it somewhat offensive and/or crazy that some of these national organizations think they know how to deal with the Evangelicals, Mormons or Catholics better than those from those backgrounds. ... I’d like to see the national organizations sit down with Evangelical leaders (gay) and talk to them on best strategy. Ditto for gay Catholics and gay Mormons.”

– Participant in Pasadena Convening

“We gained the support of 258 California rabbis — they signed our clergy statement and allowed us to publicize their names/affiliations in ads and on the Web.”

– Participant in Pasadena Convening

“The strength of a faith community is the diversity of skills offered by its membership (even if it’s just cooking a meal for No on Proposition 8 volunteers!), the culture of volunteerism, and the ability to inspire even those who are not people of faith.”

– Participant in Pasadena Convening

“Campaigns need to do more to empower and facilitate the faith voice (as opposed to focusing primarily on managing it), arming it with key campaign messages and encouraging faith to do a variety of events.”

– Participant in Pasadena Convening

RECOMMENDATIONS

■ Funders

Support campaign efforts whose plans include a multi-faceted approach to tailor strategies for particular communities.

■ Secular Organizers

Create templates that allow for flexibility based on diverse cultural and religious contexts. Local leadership should be empowered to use their expertise to translate and contextualize the material. In particular, field organizing should examine the different ways local communities organize themselves and craft organizing efforts around that (see 1f below).

■ Religious Organizers

Bring a clearly articulated understanding of the religious context in which you wish to do political organizing, with concrete messaging and field organizing strategies that draw upon that understanding.

1e: The larger framing endeavor in this “Movement Moment”⁴

One of the most important pieces of movement building is the dissemination of a worldview. It is critical that this worldview be articulated in a manner that allows the various communities within the pro-LGBTQQIA movement to find a voice and participate.

Social movements come in “waves,” and the “progressive” waves are inversely related to the “conservative” ones. These waves are usually in 30-40 year cycles and each wave has a meta or master frame.

The progressive wave shaped by the frame of “Rights” began in the late 1940s (scholars point to the adoption of the United Nations’ “Universal Declaration of Human Rights” as its beginning), peaked in 1964-1968 (the years in which election exit poles showed that “rights” was listed as the number one issue) and hit its nadir sometime in the last few years. Our pro-LGBTQQIA

4) Zemsky, Beth and David Mann, “Building Organizations in a Movement Moment,” Social Policy, Spring-Summer 2008.

movement marked a critical moment with the Stonewall Riots in 1969, after the peak of the “Rights” master frame. Because of this historical reality, our larger pro-LGBTQQIA movement has been employing a master frame whose resonance has been descending.

Conversely, the beginning of the latest conservative master frame — that of “Individuality, Security and Values” — began with the 1964 elections and reached its peak between the 2000 and 2004 elections. As the master frame of “Rights” has been losing more and more resonance, our Pro-LGBTQQIA movement has also been faced with a very powerful, ascendant conservative frame. Thus, as our movement has sought to articulate the importance of “marriage rights” or “equal rights,” the Radical Right needed only to utter “family values” and they drew upon the cultural cache of the ascendant frame.

The convening spent much of its time exploring how a more expansive, inclusive master frame — one that resonated beyond the pro-LGBTQQIA movement and had space for religious language — could better further the pro-LGBTQQIA movement. Drawing upon the wisdom and success of the Obama campaign, the themes of interdependence, common good and interconnectedness emerged as powerful ones, with language that emphasizes our community as connected to the whole human family and to all of creation.

The power and effectiveness of this emerging frame is that it has cultural resonance with the movement against global warming, with the re-emergence of a larger progressive movement, with the myriad of communities within the larger Pro-LGBTQQIA movement, and with religious values and traditions.

“We need to recognize that we will never win our ‘rights’ without the progressive faith community because the secularist argument doesn’t work.”

– Participant in Pasadena Convening

RECOMMENDATIONS

■ Funders

Support campaigns whose framing is in line with the emerging “interdependence” frame.

■ Secular Organizers

Use the emerging framework of interdependence, interconnectedness and common good to help articulate campaign messages.

■ Religious Organizers

Recognize that one of the strengths of religion is the ability to root messaging in the interconnectedness of all persons and life. This is an area of strength to be used.

1f: The role of the Radical Right in creating “wedges” and the need to weave religion, race and family

When ascending and descending social movement waves, and their concurrent master frames, cross, there is often appropriation of the descendant frame by the ascendant frame. As the “Individualism, Security and Values” ascendant frame crossed the “Rights” descendant frame, this appropriation happened.

This was most starkly demonstrated in the ballot initiative in Cincinnati, Ohio, in the early 1990s, which successfully sought to remove from the human rights ordinance a clause protecting LGBTQQIA citizens. As part of the campaign to remove protection for LGBTQQIA persons, the Right made a film entitled “Gay Rights, Special Rights.” This film placed a wedge between the African American community — particularly African American churches — and the LGBTQQIA movement. By labeling LGBTQQIA rights as “special rights,” the film successfully planted the idea that the work of other civil rights movements, particularly the African American Civil Rights Movement, was categorically different from LGBTQQIA work. The Right successfully laid the groundwork for the argument that the LGBTQQIA movement is trying to co-opt that which is not its own.

The Right’s success in this is part of its strategy. Often, they seek to pit different parts of the pro-LGBTQQIA

community against one another. And, as several participants at the Pasadena convening noted, we play right into the Right's strategy when we make the following errors:

- our frame is too small,
- we don't organize within communities of color,
- we don't organize within religious communities,
- we don't place LGBTQQIA families in the media, and,
- we buy the faulty media analysis that blamed the loss on one community. In the case of post-Proposition 8, fingers were pointed at the African American community. The LGBTQQIA backlash, filled with racism, plays right into the hands of the Religious Right and threatens to break apart our movement instead of build it up.

The failure of any campaign or movement-building effort to work strategically and effectively with people of color communities (both LGBTQQI and allies) is a significant error. Even if the goal is purely legislative, not recognizing that African American religious leaders hold a particular moral authority *because* of the wedge the Right has created can prove to be costly.

One concrete example of a campaign that successfully employed the power of religion, communities of color and families occurred in Cincinnati in 2004. It took the pro-LGBTQQIA movement in Cincinnati 11 years to recover from the Right's success in stripping coverage of LGBTQQIA persons from its human rights statutes. But when it did, movement leaders were able to engage in a very successful, expansive, inclusive campaign that employed movement-building wisdom, faith leaders, families and people of color.

In their film "A Blinding Flash of the Obvious," People for the American Way illustrate how including people of faith, people of color and families in a campaign can produce wins at the ballot box and move the wider movement forward in powerful ways.

Participants in Pasadena emphasized that the success in Cincinnati lay in the campaign's ability to draw upon the resources of each of the different parts of the movement. Both for Cincinnati and for future campaigns, religious communities bring the following resources and more:

- articulating the spiritual worth of every member of the human family,
- raising the need for justice, respect and love between all peoples, and

- claiming the power of love to transform situations of dire oppression and violence, including successfully challenging oppressive regimes in South Africa, the Philippines and Poland, to name only three examples from the 20th Century.

There was some pro-LGBTQQIA religious organizing during the No on Proposition 8 campaign that offers good examples of weaving religion, race and family.⁵ California Faith for Equality did very successful work within Asian American and Pacific Islander communities, and People for the American Way ran a campaign entitled "Homophobia in the Black Church."

"Homophobia and the Black Church" was a highly effective, educational 501(c)3 effort. Featuring Rev. Kenneth Samuel and collaborating with numerous African American religious communities, this campaign hosted worship services, panel presentations and public speaking appearances. In each of these, the particularity of the cultural context was lifted up and drawn upon and the intersections of race, class and religion were highlighted. Jones Memorial United Methodist Church held a panel presentation by Bishop Yvette Flunder, Rev. Kenneth Samuel, Dr. Sylvia Rhue and Rev. Phil Lawson. It featured gospel singers, personal testimonies, honoring of the NAACP and an offering — all hallmarks of the African American church experience.

"The [LGBTQQIA] community can no longer afford to ignore faith communities, friends or foes. Clergy are considered to be among the most trusted spokespeople on many topics, including marriage. People listen to clergy and consult their faith when they are confused, afraid or unsure."

– Participant in Pasadena Convening

"[We need] overt depictions of LGBTQQIA people as people of faith; as parents; as good neighbors; as caring spouses and family members."

– Participant in Pasadena Convening

5) It is important to highlight that the original field organizing plan for the No on Proposition 8 campaign included both people of color and religious organizers. However, due to budgetary constraints, an early decision was made not to hire these "focused" organizers. The broader campaign relied upon the work of California Faith for Equality, UUA Legislative Action and volunteer organizers to coordinate the pro-LGBTQQIA religious work.

RECOMMENDATIONS

■ Funders

Support the work of campaigns with clearly articulated plans of action for working within communities of color and, in particular, with organizations whose leadership are people of color. Focus on organizations that do religious organizing within communities of color.

■ Secular Organizers

Recognize the power of the Religious Right and ensure that all plans — both field and media — take into account the power of the Right’s “wedge-building” tactic. In particular, draw upon the wisdom of religious leaders of color and those who deal directly with the Religious Right. (Soulforce is one example.) When crafting campaigns, ask how every level of the media campaign (TV and radio ads, op-eds, editorials and other earned media; volunteers talking with voters face-to-face, door-to-door, or over the phone; speakers at organizational meetings and church services, etc.) depicts families, people of color and people of faith. How does the field campaign organize in each of those communities and work with existing leadership in those communities?

■ Religious Organizers

Utilize networks that have been established through anti-racism, immigration and other justice issues to challenge the idea that LGBTQQIA justice is removed from other justice issues. Encourage people of faith to make the connection between LGBTQQIA issues and other justice issues in their field work and messaging.

pro-LGBTQQIA religious leaders. This barrier may be a result of several factors: an absence of significant working relationships with faith-based pro-LGBTQQIA advocates; a devaluing of the religious beliefs held by religious communities and, by extension, by pro-LGBTQQIA faith-based leaders; and the perception that because of their religious beliefs, faith-based advocates have little to contribute to the LGBTQQIA movement.

Pro-LGBTQQIA faith-based leadership is a major resource and a required leader in future change efforts:

Pro-LGBTQQIA faith-based leaders and leadership structures bring significant resources to the fight — the ability to speak with moral authority to large numbers and through a variety of communication vehicles. Faith-based advocates share a “common platform” built on values of dignity of human life and a commitment to justice. These common values present the opportunity to build advocacy agendas across denominations and faith traditions in support of coordinated strategies.

There is an urgent need to establish alliances/cooperation/coordination between LGBTQQIA advocates and pro-LGBTQQIA religious leaders:

Pro-LGBTQQIA faith-based leaders need to be at the table. The pro-LGBTQQIA movement needs to support the establishment of respectful, collaborative relationships between secular and faith-based leaders and national groups with religious focus. Partnerships that combine the resources of secular and religious LGBTQQIA leaders present great potential for future efforts.

DISCUSSION

2a: Relationship-building and accurate understanding are critical

As articulated in the analysis regarding Key Learning 1, building relationships prior to a campaign is absolutely critical to success. However, there is a kind of chasm between the secular and religious communities within pro-LGBTQQIA work, which often translates into three misperceptions on the part of secular campaigns:

- Religion is largely monolithic in its opposition to LGBTQQIA organizing and, therefore, does not require attention.
- Those few pro-LGBTQQIA religious leaders and communities are always “with us” and, therefore, do not require attention.

KEY LEARNING 2

Pro-LGBTQQIA secular-religious partnerships are critical to future success.

The established LGBTQQIA advocacy community appears significantly limited in its ability to work in partnership with religious leaders: The secular LGBTQQIA leadership appears unable or unwilling to incorporate the leadership and resources of

- Pro-LGBTQQIA religious organizations represent very small, relatively insular and politically ineffective networks.

These three misperceptions endanger our pro-LGBTQQIA secular-religious partnership and must be addressed in order for the larger movement to be successful at the ballot box.

Nuance is necessary

Religious communities are very nuanced. The official stance of any given religious community does not translate into complete support or complete opposition to LGBTQQIA issues from the people in the pews. (However, the official stances of denominations do matter, and religious leaders' public opinions impact the members of their religious communities.) The reality, therefore, is that there is a significant minority within conservative religious institutions to whom our campaigns could be messaging.

Welcoming Movement strong and growing

A welcoming church movement within Christianity and Unitarian Universalism has existed since the early 1980s. It consists of local congregations that have engaged in a process of study and reflection and taken a public vote to name themselves welcoming of lesbian and gay persons (some congregations include bisexual and transgender persons as well). Within Judaism, no such official program exists, although pro-LGBTQQIA Jewish leaders currently are creating one. To date, 3,300 congregations in the United States have named themselves Welcoming. This number represents well over 5 million people, the vast majority of whom are straight allies. Since 2003, the number of Welcoming congregations has nearly tripled, and there are now Welcoming congregations in all but one U.S. state (Mississippi).

These congregations are affiliated with national "Welcoming Church" programs in many denominations, and their leaders and constituencies gather regularly. Additionally, these programs are connected through active, growing ecumenical and multi-faith networks (Welcoming Church Program Leaders, Bishops and Elders Council, National Religious Leadership Roundtable, to name a few). Many of these organizations engage in faith-based community organizing training to increase the numbers of Welcoming congregations and to help congregants become involved in other advocacy work.

Particularly in regards to campaign work, however, two facts are important: these congregations are not monolithically pro-LGBTQQIA, and they do not automatically translate their work within their religious community to political advocacy.

Pro-LGBTQQIA Religious Capacity

It is important to highlight that the "capacity" that many secular organizers and organizations bring to our shared endeavor — including members, donors, contacts and a rich knowledge of running campaigns — is paralleled by pro-LGBTQQIA religious organizations. The organizations that collaborated against Proposition 8 and participated in the Pasadena convening include local, state and national faith-based advocacy organizations listed in Addendum 2. They touch the lives of millions of Americans. Furthermore, these organizations bring to the table at least six very important resources:

- Their member and affiliate communities meet at least once every week.
- They have a network of donors whose impetus for donating is spiritual and/or religious.
- The vast majority of their members and affiliates are straight allies.
- Race and religion are interwoven in that many LGBTQQIA people of color are members of faith communities.
- Most, if not all, have run legislative campaigns within their own religious traditions.
- Their core values support justice and equality.

As we look toward the future, these resources are critical for our success as a pro-LGBTQQIA movement.

2b: Preparatory work within supportive congregations and traditions matters

Those religious communities that had done preparatory work (both theologically and practically) to equip themselves for a secular/political campaign formed the backbone of the No on Proposition 8 religious work, particularly the Unitarian Universalist Association, many United Church of Christ and Episcopal congregations, and Reform, Reconstructionist and Renewal Jewish congregations. Two rabbinical associations came out against Proposition 8, as did Bishops in Episcopal, Lutheran, Methodist and several Black church traditions and other Christian leaders. The importance of relationship-building in the context of this work cannot be overstated. It is particularly relevant to establishing

the role of religious communities in the public square, and to building a pro-LGBTQQIA infrastructure within religious communities.

Additionally, when relationships existed between local religious leaders, their national pro-LGBTQQIA organizations and the No on Proposition 8 religious organizers on the ground, mobilizing the local faith community proved much easier. However, when preparatory work had not been done — particularly around the role of religious communities in the public square and relationship-building with the wider pro-LGBTQQIA religious movement — it was very hard to mobilize even officially Welcoming congregations to participate in the No on Proposition 8 campaign.

“Faith communities are islands of meaning, sustenance, renewal, moral challenge and emotional safety to be treated with respect. They do not quickly move into taking stands on issues that could cause dissension internally. But given time to study, reflect and pray, once they are with you, they have enormous resources to offer — gifts of the spirit as well as tangible help.”

– Participant in Pasadena Convening

RECOMMENDATIONS

■ Funders

Support pro-LGBTQQIA religious work that help religious communities work both within their denominations and prepare for political advocacy.

■ Secular Organizers

Recognize the nuance within religious communities regarding pro-LGBTQQIA issues and draw upon existing networks of pro-LGBTQQIA religious organizations. Create media opportunities that help pro-LGBTQQIA religious leaders make the religious case for secular activity.

■ Religious Organizers

Deepen the work that is done around LGBTQQIA issues to include political and secular ramifications. In particular, in those traditions where it is possible for a congregation or community to be “welcoming,” ensure that there are conversations and continual work that helps prepare the congregation for advocacy work.

2c: Respect and collaboration between pro-LGBTQQIA religious leadership

Although much work remains to be done between secular and religious pro-LGBTQQIA organizers, the good news is that a model for such collaboration exists. Throughout the Proposition 8 campaign, those who worked in the faith departments of national pro-LGBTQQIA organizations and those doing religious organizing on the ground in California exhibited a high degree of respect and collaboration. Examples include weekly planning calls, list-sharing and using each other’s networks to publicize events and mobilize constituencies. If the pro-LGBTQQIA movement can capitalize on these models, we will have made great strides.

RECOMMENDATIONS

■ Funders

Create opportunities to establish and/or strengthen collaborative working relationships between pro-LGBTQQIA religious advocates and secular LGBTQQIA advocates.

Support the collaboration between national pro-LGBTQQIA religious work and state and local pro-LGBTQQIA religious work.

■ Secular Organizers

Assess not only the local and state capacity for pro-LGBTQQIA religious work, but also the depth of relationships with national pro-LGBTQQIA religious work when making field and media/messaging plans.

■ Religious Organizers

Know the landscape of pro-LGBTQQIA religious organizers on the local, state and national levels. Draw upon intra-religious networks as well as those set up for campaign work.

2d: Multi-faith collaboration and respect

Multi-faith organizing is another example of progress that can be used as a model for bridging the secular-religious divide. Participants in the Pasadena convening spoke glowingly about the respect and admiration they built with their multi-faith colleagues during the No on Proposition 8 campaign. They shared examples of inter-

faith events, especially the worship services on November 1, 2008; of the collegiality and relationship-building that resulted from rigorous strategizing during the campaign; and of the multi-faith press conferences. All of this has created critical infrastructure and relationship-networks — both keys to building a movement.

“The interfaith worship service entitled ‘Standing on the Side of Love’ held at Glide Memorial Church in San Francisco was a great success in terms of community participation and media coverage.”

– Participant in Pasadena Convening

“The other religious leaders I worked with on the No on Proposition 8 campaign — particularly those from different religious traditions — have become lifelong friends.” – Participant in Pasadena Convening

“The colleagues with whom I worked in this campaign have become like family to me. I look forward to the next opportunity to be in the trenches together.”

– Participant in Pasadena Convening

RECOMMENDATIONS

■ Funders

Support the links and collective actions that reach across religious traditions.

■ Secular Organizers

Utilize and encourage both field work and messaging work that draws upon multi-faith organizing. In particular, remember the power of multi-faith worship services and press conferences that utilize multi-faith voices.

■ Religious Organizers

Make plans to balance work within your particular religious community with multi-faith work. This is especially true if you are having difficulty gaining traction within your own community.

KEY LEARNING 3

A narrow political campaign frame hinders pro-LGBTQQIA religious work.

The ability of the LGBTQQIA advocacy community to engage with religious communities was limited by a reliance on a political campaign framework: The Proposition 8 campaign goals focused on political change, were narrowly focused, and quickly defined faith-based communities as “expendable.” The initial strategy deliberately chose not to engage with religious-based opposition and, subsequently, minimal resources were dedicated to outreach and education efforts focusing on communities of faith and communities of color.

Pro-LGBTQQIA faith-based leadership and the communities they serve were limited in their ability to work within the defined campaign framework:

Timelines utilized by the campaign did not allow for religious leaders to significantly engage allies and other religious leadership. Additionally, these timelines did not take into account the comparatively slow pace at which most religious communities are able to act. Standard campaign “messages” restricted the ability of religious communities to communicate within the context of their faith traditions and racial/ethnic communities.

We need to develop a vision and framework to guide future advocacy efforts that is value-based and that reflects the beliefs and values of both religious and secular LGBTQQIA advocates: This vision and framework could be built on our shared desire to create a community whose mores, culture and laws reflect the dreams of our forbears — life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness and justice for *all*.

DISCUSSION

3a: Moveable Middle Strategies

From the beginning, the No on Proposition 8 campaign focused on the “moveable middle” and rooted its organizing in a “50 percent plus 1” strategy. This strategy resulted in a decision not to focus on religious messages or messengers, on communities of color or leaders, or on LGBTQQIA families. This decision arose from at least two factors:

- The No on Proposition 8 leadership that was present as the strategy was being formulated did not have reli-

gious organizing experience. Perhaps most importantly, those hired to run the campaign and create the messaging did not have experience in, or a recognition of, the importance of religious organizing, people of color organizing, or LGBTQQIA family organizing.

- The experts hired were campaign experts and not necessarily grounded in the LGBTQQIA movement or its values and ethics. During campaign research — focus groups in particular — questions were not asked about pro-LGBTQQIA religious messaging, etc. (Later, when concerns were raised, there was an attempt to integrate some pro-LGBTQQIA religious questions. However, those conducting the research did not have faculty in this area and so results did not produce pro-LGBTQQIA religious messages.)

Research on the moveable middle showed that those in this category were unsure of LGBTQQIA people in general and same-gender marriage in particular, and that they were uncomfortable with the topic of children and LGBTQQIA people. It also showed that this demographic did not want to see “religious people fighting with each other.” And, it showed that the racial make-up of this category was predominantly white. Therefore, the media campaign that followed did not use very many, if any:

- LGBTQQIA people
- people of color
- voices of faith
- LGBTQQIA couples or families

Instead, a “Rights” frame was employed, and the images were primarily of straight white people using the language of “fairness.”

Initially pro-LGBTQQIA religious leaders were told not to speak too publicly, to use “Rights” frame language when they did speak, and not to use the religious language of their traditions. When later that shifted and they were encouraged to come out as people of faith — as at the Nov. 1 interfaith services all over the state — it was simply too late.

Conversely, from the beginning the Right used the Bible, the family, love and other religious themes as their own. This was deeply problematic when pro-LGBTQQIA religious leaders sought to reach their communities.

Although focusing on the moveable middle isn’t necessarily in opposition to a movement-building strategy, in this case it resulted in many parts of the LGBTQQIA community experiencing marginalization within the campaign. This marginalization is problematic in the larger efforts to build a vibrant, diverse pro-LGBTQQIA movement.

“When faith issues create reactions among the ‘moveable middle’ movement leaders tend to shy away from the topic rather than find effective messages and strategies.”

– Participant in Pasadena Convening

“Focus groups may need to be rethought when it comes to issues that are deeply related to faith — both in terms of how to approach moving people, and in terms of giving clergy room to preach as they see fit rather than conform to talking points.”

– Participant in Pasadena Convening

RECOMMENDATIONS

■ Funders

Support campaigns that engage in more than a “50 percent plus one” strategy but also take into account the importance of movement building.

■ Secular Organizers

While focus groups and “50 percent plus one” organizing is critical, develop (with religious leaders and others) strategies that go beyond focus groups. In particular, mobilize supporters to persuade the moveable-middle.

■ Religious Organizers

When participating in campaigns, emphasize the larger framing endeavor and mobilize pro-LGBTQQIA religious constituencies.

Steps Moving Forward and Conclusion

In addition to the recommendations related to each area of analysis throughout this report, we highly recommend a convening of those campaigns and ballot initiatives that successfully used multi-faith organizing. In particular, we recommend examining the Oregon campaign on Measure 9 — the so-called “Student Protection Act” prohibiting the mention of gay people or issues in the classroom — the 2004 Cincinnati campaign that restored LGBTQQIA citizens to the city’s human rights ordinance, and the Massachusetts Religious Coalition for the Freedom to Marry participation in the Massachusetts marriage struggle.

The pro-LGBTQQIA movement has an enormous resource in the pro-LGBTQQIA religious community. The capacity, moral authority, spirituality and inspirational power that the pro-LGBTQQIA religious community brings are all deeply important assets, which the pro-LGBTQQIA movement cannot and should not do without.

As we go about the work of building a movement whose roots are the desire for life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness and justice for all — including LGBTQQIA persons and families — we are less successful if we fail to collaborate between secular and religious communities. If we succeed in collaborating, our movement and our world will be a more just, more loving and better place to call home.

Addendum 1:

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Funders

- Create opportunities to establish and/or strengthen collaborative working relationships between pro-LGBTQQIA religious advocates and secular LGBTQQIA advocates.
- Support campaigns with articulated plans regarding religious organizing that have been crafted in collaboration with religious organizers.
- Approach campaigns as movement-building opportunities with religious leaders as a core component.
- Support campaign efforts whose plans include a multi-faceted approach to tailor strategies for particular communities.
- Support campaigns that include an analysis of this “Movement Moment” and whose framing is in line with the emerging “interdependence” frame.
- Support the work of campaigns with clearly articulated plans of action for working within communities of color and, in particular, with organizations whose leadership are people of color. Focus on organizations that do religious organizing within communities of color.
- Support pro-LGBTQQIA religious work that help religious communities work both within their denominations and prepare for political advocacy.
- Support the collaboration between national, state and local pro-LGBTQQIA religious work.
- Support links and collective actions that reach across religious traditions.
- Support campaigns that engage in more than a “50 percent plus one” strategy and take into account the importance of movement building.

Secular Organizers

- Ensure that any campaign is rooted in collaboration with religious organizers from the beginning. Field and media strategies should be built with their consultation and be tailored to the communities in which the campaign is working.
- Set as goals not only winning a given campaign, but also ensuring that campaign messaging matches our worldview and that we are building long-term.
- Create templates that allow for flexibility based on diverse cultural and religious contexts. Local leadership should be empowered to use their expertise to translate and contextualize the material. In particular, field organizing should examine the different ways local communities organize themselves and craft organizing efforts around that.
- Use the emerging framework of interdependence, inter-connectedness and common good to help articulate campaign messages.
- Recognize the power of the Religious Right and ensure that all plans — both field and media — take into account the power of the Right’s “wedge-building” tactic. In particular, draw upon the wisdom of religious leaders of color and those who deal directly with the Religious Right. Soulforce is one example... When crafting campaigns, ask how every level of the media campaign (TV and radio ads, op-eds, editorials and other earned media; volunteers talking with voters face-to-face, door-to-door, or over the phone; speakers at organizational meetings and church services, etc) depicts families, people of color and people of faith. How does the field campaign organize in each of those communities and work with existing leadership in those communities?

Secular Organizers (continued)

- Recognize the nuance within religious communities regarding pro-LGBTQQIA issues and draw upon existing networks of pro-LGBTQQIA religious organizations. Create media opportunities that help pro-LGBTQQIA religious leaders make the religious case for secular activity.
- Assess not only the local and state capacity for pro-LGBTQQIA religious work, but also the depth of relationships with national pro-LGBTQQIA religious work when making field and media/messaging plans.
- Utilize and encourage both field work and messaging work that draws upon multi-faith organizing. In particular, remember the power of multi-faith worship services and press conferences that utilize multi-faith voices.
- While focus groups and “50 percent plus one” organizing is critical, develop (with religious leaders and others) strategies that go beyond focus groups. In particular, mobilize supporters to persuade the moveable middle.

Religious Organizers

- Utilize the wisdom and strategies that have been gained from intra-religious struggles on the messages, concrete actions, networking, etc.
- Recognize that campaigns offer concrete opportunities for helping to build many different levels of religious organizing, including:
 - Multi-faith coalitions
 - Experience in pro-LGBTQQIA organizing that can lead to more intra-religious pro-LGBTQQIA organizing
 - Establishing or strengthening relationships with secular LGBTQQIA advocacy organizations
- Bring a clearly articulated understanding of the religious context in which you wish to do political organizing with concrete messaging and field organizing strategies that draw upon that understanding.
- Recognize that one of the strengths of religion is the ability to root messaging in the interconnectedness of all persons and life. This is an area of strength to be used.
- Utilize networks that have been established through anti-racism, immigration and other justice issues and challenge the idea that LGBTQQIA justice is removed from other justice issues. Encourage people of faith to make the connection between LGBTQQIA issues and other issues in their field work and messaging.
- Deepen the work that is done around LGBTQQIA issues to include political and secular ramifications. In particular, in those traditions where it is possible for a congregation or community to be “welcoming,” ensure that there are conversations and continual work that helps prepare the congregation for advocacy work.
- Know the landscape of pro-LGBTQQIA religious organizers on the local, state and national levels. Draw upon intra-religious networks as well as those set up for campaign work.
- Make plans to balance work within your particular religious community with multi-faith work. This is especially true if you are having difficulty gaining traction within your own community.
- When participating in campaigns, emphasize the larger framing endeavor, and mobilize pro-LGBTQQIA religious constituencies.

Addendum 2:

PARTICIPANTS

Religious Organizers: California

Louise Brooks, LEB Media
Kerry Chaplin, California Faith for Equality
Rabbi Denise Eger, Congregation Kol Ami
Douglas Hunter, Affirmation (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints—Mormon)
Rev. Scott Imler, Crescent Heights United Methodist Church
Steve Krantz, Jews for Marriage Equality
Rev. Dr. Jonipher Kwong, California Faith for Equality
Rev. Debra Peevey, No on Proposition 8 Faith Organizer
Rev. Lindi Ramsden, Unitarian Universalist Association Legislative Ministry, CA and No on Proposition 8 Faith Organizer
Rev. Dr. Rick Schlosser, California Council of Churches
Stephanie Stolte, Faith Outreach Director, Marriage Equality USA
Rev. Roland Stringfellow, Center for Lesbian & Gay Studies in Religion & Ministry
Rev. Dr. Neil Thomas, Metropolitan Community Church Los Angeles

Religious Organizers: National

Dr. Michael Adey, More Light Presbyterians
Ann Thompson Cook, Author of LGBT religious resources including *And God Loves Each One*
Ann Craig, Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) Religion, Faith and Values Program
Todd Ferrell, The Evangelical Network
Rev. Ruth Garwood, United Church of Christ Coalition for LGBT Concerns
Harry Knox, Human Rights Campaign Religion and Faith Program
Dr. Joel Kushner, Institute for Judaism and Sexual Orientation, Hebrew Union College

Rev. Troy Plummer, Reconciling Ministries Network (United Methodist Church)
Dr. Sylvia Rhue, National Black Justice Coalition Religious Affairs Program
Rev. Susan Russell, *IntegrityUSA* (Episcopal Church USA)
Rev. Michael Schuenemeyer, United Church of Christ Wider Church Ministries
Nicole Sotelo, Call to Action (Roman Catholic)
Rev. Rebecca Voelkel, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force's National Religious Leadership Roundtable
Erin Weller, Progressive Christians Uniting

Secular Organizers: California

Alice Kessler, Equality California

Secular Organizers: National

Sharon Lettman, People for the American Way
Dennis Nelson, People for the American Way
Sarah Reece, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and Lead Field Organizer for No on Proposition 8

LGBT Funders

Tom Kam, Arcus Foundation
Dr. Randall Miller, Evelyn & Walter Haas, Jr. Fund

Facilitators

Rev. Deborah Johnson, Inner Light Ministries and Facilitator
Beth Zemsky, Shir Tikvah Congregation and Facilitator

Addendum 3:

PARTICIPANTS' FINAL REFLECTIONS

Final Reflections from the No on Proposition 8 and Faith De-brief Convening

All Saints Episcopal Church
January 15-16, 2009
Pasadena, California

1 What does the LGBTQQIA community need to understand about people of faith and how they relate to their faith communities?

2 How would this impact the movement?

- 1 The LGBTQQIA community needs to know that there are powerful, progressive faith-based voices that are welcoming and supportive and carry political cache, and are at the ready to support equality for all.
- 2 These voices can counter the religious-based opposition and change hearts and minds if they are allowed to get out there.
- 1 The enormous influential role of religion in American public life and the social capital that religious leaders have within their congregants needs to be recognized.
- 2 Communities of faith would not be ignored and more time would be spent engaging clergy who could lead their congregants toward acceptance of LGBTQQIA issues.
- 1 It's important to understand how people relate to their faith community. Progressive faith leaders must be mobilized to address the religious right wing. Progressive people of faith are ready to be mobilized, and understand the themes of the Old Testament and New Testament are justice, love and compassion. They are motivated to support equality for LGBTQQIA people because of their faith/religion, not in spite of it.
- 2 Faith leaders would help in a campaign from the beginning — be at the table. Messaging for people of faith would be a priority. Faith leaders would be empowered to create effective events to counter conservative faith voices.

- 1 Few people are willing to be mavericks. They will look for peers and collegiality, for a sense of solidarity and support for taking a public stand (or casting a vote) on an issue.
- 2 Creating collegiality among leaders and building support within faith communities requires strategic relationship building, out front and behind the scenes.
- 1 Many people relate to faith community as their primary connection, that supersedes superseding their political connection/affiliation. We who organize in religious communities have experience using language of faith and success in having people be transformed in their views of LGBTQQIA.
- 2 You need to deal at parish level and speak to what that religion is preaching and teaching.
- 1 Many of us have been abused by religious institutions. The difference is that we didn't pick up our marbles and go home, but stayed to fight the good fight — often times at great personal and professional risk.
- 2 Perhaps understanding would make LGBTQQIA folks less indiscriminate in their shotgun denunciations of religion and I wouldn't get spit at wearing a clerical collar to the post Proposition 8 rally.
- 1 We will never win our "rights" without the progressive faith community because the secularist argument doesn't work.
- 2 It would change the message and educational campaign; it should change strategy, as well as who is at the central decision making. It requires not just spiritual values to win but to move the moderate communities' faith — the middle 1/3.
- 1 People are tied to their faith communities by belief, habit, family history and practice, geography and personal relationships. It can be difficult for a person of faith to separate from his or her faith community — even when there are substantial personal costs for staying — because those ties are deep and multiple.
- 2 Movement and campaign leaders would not dismiss faith traditions that appear to be consistently in favor of or opposed to any particular position.

- 1 In Christianity, in general, getting clergy support is good — but insufficient to gaining support for movement change.
- 2 Identifying key lay leaders — who often have deeper roots and longer-term vision — will result in a stronger coalition over time.
- 1 I've been out as a Christian longer than as LGBTQQIA and it, my faith, gives meaning to life and love.
- 2 This may impact a campaign by including faith as a part of making a campaign choice.
- 1 Iconic, distinguished religious leaders have a great influence on their constituents, especially those affiliated with their congregations.
- 2 We would create a permanent database of such leaders and use public relations professionals to help publicize those who support our cause.
- 1 Religious tradition has shaped cultures from the beginning of time. Therefore this movement has to be about changing hearts and minds, not about winning a campaign!
- 2 If this were understood, the LGBTQQIA community would address the root of the faith community's struggles with homosexuality, which is homophobia.
- 1 People of faith feel that God trumps reason, so even though I should not discriminate legally against someone, I may think God has set down certain higher laws that say I should vote against marriage equality.
- 2 This would impact our movement builders to use faith leaders to speak out in name of God for marriage equality.
- 1 People relate to their faith communities through a deep connection to their faith and to their values.
- 2 Once the LGBTQQIA community realizes that they can seek out the right leaders to speak to those people, and move them.
- 1 People of faith are motivated by multiple issues of justice at all times, not just one of the hot ones at the moment.
- 2 If we understand, we will build broader coalitions with the leadership and the help of faith leaders, and have more and more diverse and better educated allies in the future.
- 1 People understand their local communities best, whether that means their local community of faith, or their own town. It is better to ask these questions: Who are you? What symbols and language do you use? What do you want to do? How can I help you? Rather than to come from the outside and say: This is what I/we want you to do.
- 2 Local leaders will be empowered. There will become a multitude of voices to help expand the conversation.
- 1 Having an "If we build it, they will come" approach will not work with communities of color. Many POCs LGBTQQIAs are turned off or feel excluded by majority white movements in gay liberation.
- 2 I hope that organizers would put money towards specific outreaches to African-Americans, API and Latino communities of faith. If they want to have an impact upon communities of color, then partner with their issues first and build the relationship so they will come to help with the gay rights movement.
- 1 We engage in critical thinking... we use our brains and our hearts.
- 2 There could be invitations to the table to create plans, campaigns, strategies — at the beginning.
- 1 Faith is not rational, it is based on a set of beliefs we strive to achieve. The idealism can only be challenged with examples and goodness to impact an individual's heart and soul. We must meet folks where they are.
- 1 LGBTQQIA people need to know that they can have a personal relationship with God, and that they need not be secretive about it.
- 2 If they knew that more people would be vocal about their faith and faith would not be such an uphill battle in our community. It possibly could diffuse some of the rhetoric.
- 1 Most religious people don't wake up with the intention to hurt someone but may do it because it fits neatly, sometimes adamantly, into their belief system. They feel if you are hurt by their words or actions you deserve it.
- 2 It helps to know the psychologies of your opponents.

- 1 One size does not fit all. Each faith community or tradition has unique dynamics and successfully relating must be done through someone who understands/is culturally competent with that community.
- 2 Multi-approach working with faith communities individually — would be much more successful.

- 1 If we realize they're not naturally political, we will take more time and energy to build coalitions before the issue at hand becomes political, i.e. before campaign time.
- 2 Communities of faith are not by nature political animals (usually there are glorious exceptions.)

- 1 People of faith don't just vote on issues, but vote based on deeply rooted and ingrained theological beliefs and assertions — some of which are so foundational and fundamental to who they are, they're never going to change.
- 2 Approach people of faith from a more generic angle, or common ground, and engage in convicted-ability conversations.

- 1 Faith communities are an island of meaning, sustenance, renewal, moral challenge, and emotional safety net to be treated with respect. They do not quickly move into taking stands on issues that could cause dissension internally. But give time to study, reflect, pray, once they are with you they have enormous resources to offer — gifts of the spirit and of tangible help.
- 2 GLBT leaders might consider attending faith communities to get a feeling from the inside out, and need to give long term advance notice for any activities, events.

- 1 People of faith are seeking to do what they believe is right.
- 2 Change the way we approach communicating more respect than disrespect — as well as provide greater opportunities for engagement.

National Gay and Lesbian
Task Force



The Task Force
**National Religious
Leadership Roundtable**

