

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-LGBTQQA 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: