



Task Force honors life, legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Coretta Scott King

January 16, 2007

The **National Gay & Lesbian Task Force** issued the following statement.

Today is the federal holiday honoring the life and legacy of civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr.

Statement by Matt Foreman, Executive Director, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force

"Today we honor and reflect on the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. as well as Coretta Scott King, who died last January. In their lives, Dr. King and Mrs. King bent the arc of history toward racial and economic justice. In the years following her husband's murder, Mrs. King became an unwavering supporter for equal rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people and she was a keynote speaker at our own Creating Change Conference in 2000.

"Those who walked beside them have continued their vision, including Mrs. King's belief in justice for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Americans. We hold up with gratitude the members of Dr. King's family and those who fought beside Dr. King while he was alive:

'Homophobia is hate, and hate has no place in the beloved community.' - Martin Luther King III, August 2003, at the 40th anniversary of the 1963 March on Washington

'When I am asked, "Are gay rights civil rights?" my answer is always, "Of course they are." Civil rights are positive legal prerogatives - the right to equal treatment before the law. These rights are shared by all. There is no one in the United States who does not - or should not - share in these rights.' - Julian Bond, chairman of the NAACP, **National Gay and Lesbian Task Force** 10th Annual Miami Recognition Dinner, November 4, 2006

'Rather than divide and discriminate, let us come together and create one nation. We are all one people. We all live in the American house. We are all the American family. Let us recognize that the gay people living in our house share the same hopes, troubles, and dreams. It's time we treated them as equals, as family.' - Representative John Lewis in the Boston Globe, October 25, 2003

"At the same time, we call upon all lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Americans to recommit ourselves to the Kings' work of ending racial and economic injustice. That work is far from over; in fact, scant progress has been made in many areas. As reported by the NAACP, in 1958, the typical African-American family had 60 percent as much income as the typical white family; 46 years later in 2005, that figure was - shockingly - just 61 percent. At this slow rate it will take more than 100 years to close the black-white income disparity. Unemployment among African-Americans is more than twice the rate for whites - a greater gap than in 1972. One-third - more than 6 million - of working African-Americans lack health insurance coverage during all or part of the year. Educational opportunities remain vastly unequal, and the progress toward truly integrated schools has not only stalled, but is going backwards. Steps to remedy the legacy of slavery and racism remain under attack on many fronts, including voters in Michigan overwhelmingly approving a ban on affirmative action in November.

"Clearly, we can and must do better. For Dr. King and Mrs. King, for Bayard Rustin, for those in the broader civil rights movement who have stood beside us for so long, and for all of us and our nation, let us renew and redouble our work."