



Change starts at home

NGLTF leader to deliver State of the Movement address at Creating Change Conference

By Sarah Mieras

Originally printed 01/31/2008 (Issue 1605 - Between The Lines News)

In the 25 years **Matt Foreman** has worked as an activist for LGBT equality he has seen many advancements, changes and even a few setbacks. But one constant has been the importance of grassroots organizing and action.

"We know this is the only way to build power and obtain our rights. It is amazing how much you can accomplish when you have people who are willing to pick up the phone and go knocking on doors. It moves more change than any other kind of organizing," said Foreman, executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.

On Feb. 8, Foreman will address an anticipated more than 2,000 LGBT activists during the Task Force's 20th annual Creating Change Conference in Detroit. His speech will serve as the queer nation's State of the Union, summarizing the advancements and set backs of the last year.

Often under attack by the right wing-extremists through ballot measures and constitutional amendments, the LGBT rights movement is often characterized as being on the defensive. With his ear to the ground through the Task Force's national grassroots efforts, Foreman sees positive changes taking hold of the movement.

"In the 2007 legislative session we made more progress than in any year of our movement's history," said Foreman. "Our movement has a history of being under intense and unrelenting attack for more than 30 years. Despite this, we continue to make progress."

These gains follow some of the movement's most devastating blows, like the slew of proposals aimed at banning gay marriage that passed in state elections in prior years. In Michigan, for example, Proposal 2 was narrowly passed by voters in 2004.

"These state anti-marriage Constitutional amendments have been a stain on our country and it will take years to erase them," said Foreman.

Mobilizing the LGBT community for the upcoming election will also take center stage in Foreman's conference speech.

"This is the most critical election of my lifetime," he said. "We can either change the destructive path that this country has been pursuing for years, or we can just fall into the abyss."

Whether it is the election, state non discrimination laws or local issues, Foreman will encourage attendees at the conference to continue doing the one thing the Task Force believes is essential: Talking and organizing on the local level.

"The only way we are going to get anything out of (Washington) D.C. is when we have real grassroots strength," noted Foreman. "The reality is that social change is made by handfuls of people, not by majorities. People who look at the African American Civil Rights Movement note that at its peak, less than 10 percent of African Americans were involved... We have thousands of active people working right now, and they are making a difference in how our system treats LGBT people."

Foreman will address attendants at Creating Change with his State of the Movement speech at 1:30 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 8. To register for the conference, which includes four days of workshops and plenary addresses by Bishop Gene Robinson and NAACP Chairman Julian Bond, visit www.thetaskforce.org/events/creating_change