



PROGRESS REPORT: Equality the Floor, Not the Ceiling

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I am fortunate to sit in a unique chair in our movement - that of the executive director of a 35-year-old national LGBT organization. This history brings a perspective that drives my passion, patience, and strategic choices for social and political change.

At the **National Gay and Lesbian Task Force**, we work every day to eliminate the possibility that our lives will be subject to someone else's judgment, someone's condemnation of our humanity, our love, and our inalienable freedom to pursue life, liberty, and happiness. Our vision for what all signs seem to point toward as a new political era, a new era of engagement, is in some ways so simple - that each of us, as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people, will be able to bring our full selves to any personal, professional, or spiritual endeavor we pursue.

We at the Task Force have spent more than three decades pursuing legal and policy equality. But, honestly, we know that in order to reach full equality, this is just the floor and not the ceiling. The future of the LGBT movement will be about moving beyond legal and policy equality toward a transformed society in which we can all experience full equality.

Full equality would mean that all LGBT people, regardless of racial or economic background, would be able to find employment, have a home, and create a family of their choice.

Full equality would mean that any place of worship would understand the bisexual woman to be a valuable and essential member of that faith community, without whom expressions of faith and community would be hollow.

Full equality would mean that the trans mom would not have to fear that her child will be harassed at school because of hatred or misunderstanding of her gender identity.

Full equality would mean that any of us, all of us, can simply be who we are and be valued for it.

How do we get there? To start, we make sure that the way we do our work in this movement, the choices we make actually reflect our lives. We create substantive strategic partnerships with unusual suspects on the local, state, and national levels, specifically non-LGBT organizations who share common goals. We work doggedly to pursue the concrete - often un-sexy - changes that actually affect people's lives for the better, specifically policies and regulations that control the money in our pocketbooks, the access to our healthcare, and the well-being of our communities.

Over the years, as the **Task Force** has worked on and achieved so many of the advances our community has had, we have been able to say "Yes!" and....

Yes, winning the right to visit our partners in the hospital and make life-and-death decisions is precious indeed...and we will pursue public policies, funding streams, and shifts in the service-provision sector that make it so our elders entering into assisted-living programs or nursing homes do not have to go back into the closet after being out for 10, 30, 50 years.

Yes, we celebrated the Supreme Court's overturning sodomy laws and knew we'd be safer in the bedrooms of our own homes...and we will pursue a culture that allows each of us to express the diversity of who we are as sexual beings without shame.

Yes, the **Task Force** and others are pursuing employment protections that also cover transgender members of our community...and, we will work to educate our community and others that we all have a gender identity and that someone is more likely to get fired - not because she is a lesbian - but because she doesn't act or look like what many in society believe a woman should act or look like. That is gender identity.

Yes, we cried tears of joy when marriage became legal in Massachusetts, California, and Connecticut...and, we will work for a day when getting adequate health care or survivor benefits, or even the guardianship of our own children if our partner dies, is not bestowed upon us through marriage or employment, but rather by simply being a member of society.

This is the type of leadership we must all express in our daily lives if we are to truly achieve the promise of full equality.

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