



## Fall Down Seven Times, Get Up Eight!

February 8, 2009

**Last week LGBT Resource Center Director Milt Ford and I were in Denver for the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force's Creating Change conference.** This event was attended by over 2,300 activists from around the country who pursue equality and justice work on behalf of the gay community. This was my second Creating Change conference and no less life changing than last year's event. **The opening plenary for this conference always features the Executive Director (ED) of the Task Force delivering "The State of the Movement" address. This year new Task Force ED Rea Carey shared her perspectives.**

Understanding the state of the movement is particularly important at this time in history. The November elections were politically significant for the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender communities. The election of Barack Obama marked many firsts for our nation including the fact that his acceptance speech was the first of its kind to acknowledge the gay community. As leaders in the movement, we celebrate the election of an LGBT-friendly President who believes that the United States Constitution applies to ALL Americans.

There were other substantial victories that bright November day. Representing Colorado's 2nd Congressional District, Jared Polis became the first openly gay candidate to run for the U.S. House of Representatives where he handily won victory! A new day also dawned in Michigan.

Our citizens voted in record numbers and loudly rejected the divisive and discriminatory politics that have polarized this state. In an exhilarating rout, Barack Obama won Michigan with 57% of the popular vote changing the political landscape of our state! Additionally, a significant upset occurred when Judge Diane Marie Hathaway unseated Clifford Taylor on the Michigan Supreme Court! The impact of Judge Hathaway's victory is immeasurable, considering Judge Taylor's longstanding opposition to LGBT equality. Judge Hathaway's election provides renewed hope for justice and equality in the LGBT community.

However, the losses were profound. Sadly, Hamtramck no longer has a comprehensive antidiscrimination policy. Additionally, equality suffered devastating blows in California, Florida, Arkansas, and Arizona.

In her "State of the Movement" address Rea Carey commented on these losses, "As we look back on this year, our confidence has been shaken and our anger has been roused — but now is the time to turn our anger into action and our action into long-lasting change. We must now refocus on regaining marriage equality in California and winning across the country. But we need to remember that these anti-marriage ballot measures are fundamentally about the larger rightwing assault on the ever-expanding diversity in the United States, our freedom to live openly and to create and define our sexuality, ourselves and our families. . . As the magnet on my grandmother's fridge says, 'Fall down seven times, get up eight!'"

And so we brush ourselves off and renew our commitments. As we remember President-elect Obama's acceptance speech and his acknowledgement of our community, we remain hopeful that this new President will bring the values of inclusion and equality to our broken nation and help us in the continuing journey on the road to equality.