

New web campaign encourages people to talk about what it means to be LGBT

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by Ron Moore, DC Special Interests Examiner

Join the Impact has partnered with other national LGBT groups to develop a web based public education campaign, Tell3, to encourage LGBT people and their supporters to have three conversations with friends and family to help build support for LGBT equality.

"The passage of Prop 8 in California has motivated LGBT people and their supporters like never before," said Amy Balliett of Join the Impact, a grass roots organization with more than 15,000 members that has helped to organize massive demonstrations throughout the U.S. since the November elections. "Now that we've had some time to get over our anger and sadness, we're ready to act. And the single most important thing we can do to guarantee we don't find ourselves on the losing side of another political campaign is to have conversations with our friends and family about what it means to be LGBT."

Other organizations, including the American Civil Liberties Union; Equality California; the Equality Federation; Freedom to Marry; **the National Lesbian and Gay Task Force**; the National Center for Lesbian Rights; and Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, will be rolling out their own versions of the campaign on their websites. The goal of the campaign is for all LGBT groups and individuals to seize upon the momentum that has been generated since the passage of Proposition 8 in November and work together to tell their stories to build support for all of the issues affecting LGBT people.

"Harvey Milk was right on the money to encourage everyone to come out to their friends and family, but we know now that coming out alone isn't enough," said Matt Coles, Director of the ACLU LGBT Project. "To persuade others to support LGBT equality we need to have personal conversations with people that explain what its like to be LGBT. We need to talk about our relationships, the struggles we face as LGBT people, the ways our lives are the same and the ways they are different."

Visitors to the site can find additional information on who to talk with and how to start these important conversations. There are also resources for those who want to learn more about the issues affecting LGBT people. But, as the website notes, the most important thing is for people to have personal conversations. The website encourages LGBT people to talk about their relationships, about growing up, and about how being LGBT has made them feel different from others in some respects and the same in others. Straight allies are encouraged to talk about their relationships with LGBT people and to speak up when they hear others make homophobic or transphobic comments.

The groups are encouraging everyone – members of national and local LGBT groups, individuals and couples, supportive moms and dads, and allied friends and colleagues – to join the campaign and get people talking. The site makes it easy to spread the word to others to send an e-mail to their friends. Eventually there will also be opportunities for people to share their experiences on the site.

The campaign is also calling on bloggers and videographers to help spread the word by sharing their experiences of having these important conversations. "After Prop 8 passed, we spoke through demonstrations and we made ourselves heard. We need to take our voices beyond the

streets into every home in America, and to do that we need to use every avenue available to sparking conversations," added Balliett.