



African American Leaders Support Marriage Equality

Current and Former Elected Officials and Political Leaders

...The government's exclusion of our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters from civil marriage officially degrades them and their families. It denies them the basic human right to marry the person they love. It denies them numerous legal protections for their families.

This discrimination is wrong. We cannot keep turning our backs on gay and lesbian Americans. I have fought too hard and too long against discrimination based on race and color not to stand up against discrimination based on sexual orientation. I've heard the reasons for opposing civil marriage for same-sex couples. Cut through the distractions, and they stink of the same fear, hatred, and intolerance I have known in racism and in bigotry.

...In 1948, when I was 8 years old, 30 states had bans on interracial marriage, courts had upheld the bans many times, and 90 percent of the public disapproved of those marriages, saying they were against the definition of marriage, against God's law. But that year, the California Supreme Court became the first court in America to strike down such a ban. Thank goodness some court finally had the courage to say that equal means equal, and others rightly followed, including the US Supreme Court 19 years later.

...We hurt our fellow citizens and our community when we deny gay people civil marriage and its protections and responsibilities. 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.¹

—Rep. John Lewis (D-GA), one of the original speakers at the 1963 March on Washington

Human rights for all human beings is why gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered Americans deserve the same rights and protection under the law as other Americans. Gay and lesbian couples who make a life-long commitment to one another should receive the same legal rights and benefits of marriage that other couples receive. Gay and lesbian couples in long-term committed relationships deserve to be able to visit each other in the hospital, share health insurance coverage and get equal pensions and other survivor benefits if one spouse dies.

There are those who want to make gay and lesbian civil unions or civil marriages a moral and religious issue only...but in our secular society, religious institutions are under no moral, religious or legal obligation to perform or bless gay unions.²

—Rep. Jesse Jackson Jr. (D-IL)

¹ Lewis, J. (2003, October 25). At a crossroads on gay unions. *The Boston Globe*. Retrieved December 11, 2003, from

http://www.boston.com/news/globe/editorial_opinion/oped/articles/2003/10/25/at_a_crossroads_on_gay_unions

² Jackson Jr., J.L. (2003, November 15). Building a more perfect union through human rights & equal protection under law. Prepared remarks for the 14th Michigan Dinner of the Human Rights Campaign. Detroit, MI. Retrieved December 11, 2003, from <http://www.365gay.com/opinion/Releases/Releases.htm>

If you do not believe that civil marriage for same-sex couples should be made available to same sex couples on the same basis as opposite sex couples, is there any legal construct you do embrace that would extend legal recognition to same sex couples? The concept of "separate but equal" was properly rejected as inherently problematic by the Supreme Court in the landmark school desegregation case, *Brown v. Board of Education*. While I applaud the Vermont civil unions law, I am convinced that ultimately inequities will arise if there is one set of laws governing marriage commitments for heterosexuals and another set of laws governing marriage commitments for homosexuals.³

—*Sen. Carol Moseley Braun (D-IL), 2004 Democratic Presidential Candidate*

I think it's a human rights issue. When I'm asked, "Do I support a gay marriage? Do I support Greek marriages? Do I support Latino marriages? Do I support black marriages?" Are we prepared to say that gays and lesbians are less than human? If we're not prepared to say that, then how do we say that they should not have the same human rights and human choices of anyone else?⁴

All human beings should have equal access to civil rights and institutions, including the right to marry.⁵

—*Rev. Al Sharpton, 2004 Democratic Presidential Candidate*

African American Columnists & Religious Leaders

...Same-sex marriages are not likely to have any impact on the sanctity of the president's marriage or my marriage or any other heterosexual's marriage... In fact, if anyone is undermining the sanctity of marriage these days, it is my fellow heterosexuals. Look at our statistics: Somewhere between 40 and 50 percent of first marriages end in divorce. More than half of births to women under age 25 are out of wedlock. We make light of the institution with quickie Las Vegas marriages, quickie divorces and weird catch-a-man shows like "The Bachelor" that elevate gold digging almost to an Olympic sport... some gay couples are staying together longer than many of their 'hetero' counterparts. Maybe the rest of us could learn something from them.⁶

—*Clarence Page, Two-time Pulitzer Prize Winning Journalist and Editorial Board member of the Chicago Tribune*

The Unitarian Universalist Association has a long-standing and deeply held religious commitment to support full equality for bisexual, gay, lesbian, and transgender people, and today's ruling is a significant step forward in guaranteeing that the rights enjoyed by heterosexual couples in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts are also available to its bisexual, gay, lesbian and transgender citizens....Unitarian Universalists today celebrate this ruling, and

³ Braun, C.M. (2003, December 1). 2004 presidential questionnaire. *Human Rights Campaign*. Retrieved December 11, 2003, from http://www.carolforpresident.com/pdf/q_hrc.pdf

⁴ Sharpton, A. (2003, November 24). Democratic presidential candidates' debate sponsored by MSNBC and the Democratic National Committee.

⁵ Sharpton, A. (2003, November 24). Candidates stand on gay marriage. The Associated Press.

⁶ Page, C. (2003, December 3). A modest gay marriage proposal. *Chicago Tribune*. Retrieved December 11, 2003, from <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/printedition/chi-0312030117dec03.1.6727157.story>



we again dedicate ourselves to work for justice, grounded in faith, which calls us to support everyone's full humanity, everyone's ability to love, and everyone's value in the world.⁷

—*Rev. William Sinkford, President, Unitarian Universalist Church*

Key Black Leaders Who Support Marriage Equality⁸

- The Hon. Willie Brown, Mayor of San Francisco
- Dr. Joycelyn Elders, former U.S. Surgeon General
- The Rev. James Forbes, Senior Minister, Riverside Church, Harlem, New York
- Whoopi Goldberg, Actor/Producer
- Coretta Scott King, Civil Rights Activist
- Ron Oden, Mayor of Palm Springs, CA
- Ken Reeves, City Councilor, Cambridge, MA
- Byron Rushing, State Representative, MA
- Reverend William Sinkford, President, Unitarian Universalist Church

⁷ Sinkford, W. (2003, November 18). UUA president issues statement on Massachusetts court decision in support of same-sex marriage. Unitarian Universalist Association. Retrieved January 13, 2004, from <http://www.uua.org/news/2003/031118.html>

⁸ National Black Justice Coalition. (2003). Retrieved January 13, 2004. from <http://hometown.aol.com/nbjcoalition/blackleaders.html>