



National Black Justice Coalition: BLACK LEADERS SPEAK OUT

Carol Moseley Braun, Ambassador

"I believe this is a civil rights issue...My aunt, married a white man in the 1950s when their marriage was illegal in half the states of this country. Indeed, my uncle, had he taken his wife across the wrong state line, would have been guilty of a criminal violation.

It seems to me that if people want to marry a person of a different race that's no different than somebody wanting to marry someone of the same sex." (Democratic Debate, Des Moines, IA, 11/24/03)

Michael Eric Dyson, Author and Professor

"It wasn't that long ago that black folks themselves could be married. We had to jump brooms and do all kind of informal things in slavery to recognize unions that the state failed to recognize, and that the Christian religion failed to acknowledge. In the 20th century as well, when interracial marriages, in some states still banned or looked upon askance. So the thing is is that black people need to be the last people in the world trying to justify theologically any bigotry toward or bias against or even resistance to people who want to be married." (Tavis Smiley Show, NPR, 2/26/04)

Joycelyn Elders, Former Surgeon General

"I see no problem with gay couples marrying. It's a decision between two people – the government has no business interfering.

I remember when it was against the law for blacks and whites to be married – and that wasn't very long ago. The same people who are fighting gay marriage fought black and white marriage and fought school integration." (Elders defends same-sex marriage, Tri-Valley Herald, 03/14/04)

Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Harvard University Professor

"I don't understand why the movement to legitimize gay marriage would bother people so much...We have to fight to educate people and transform that visceral response . . . (because) one of the strengths of the black civil rights movement is that it's served as a model for so many other movements. We who have suffered so much should also be the most compassionate." (St. Petersburg Times, 1/18/04)

Rev. Peter Gomes, Harvard University Chaplain

"If society waited for majority opinion and legislative action, African-Americans, for example, would still be enduring the indignities of separate but equal accommodation and the other manifestations of legal, social, and political segregation. If the decision of the Supreme Judicial Court in Goodridge is "judicial tyranny," let there be more of it...


To extend the civil right of marriage to homosexuals will neither solve nor complicate the problems already inherent in marriage, but what it will do is permit a whole class of persons, our fellow citizens under the law heretofore irrationally deprived of a civil right, both to benefit from and participate in a valuable yet vulnerable institution which in our changing society needs all the help it can get." (Boston Globe, 2/8/04)

Coretta Scott King, Civil Rights Leader

"I still hear people say that I should not be talking about the rights of lesbian and gay people and I should stick to the issue of racial justice. But I hasten to remind them that Martin Luther King Jr. said, 'Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.' I appeal to everyone who believes in Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream to make room at the table of brother- and sisterhood for lesbian and gay people." (Reuters, 3/31/98)

"Gays and lesbians stood up for civil rights in Montgomery, Selma, in Albany, Ga. and St. Augustine, Fla., and many other campaigns of the Civil Rights Movement. Many of these courageous men and women were fighting for my freedom at a time when they could find few voices for their own, and I salute their contributions." (Chicago Tribune, 4/1/98)


Rep. John Lewis (D-GA)



"It is time to say forthrightly that 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." (Boston Globe, 11/25/03)

Rev. Joseph Lowery, Civil Rights Leader



"When you talk about the law discriminating, the law granting a privilege here, and a right here and denying it there, that's a civil rights issue. And I can't take that away from anybody." (ABC News, 03/13/04)


Clarence Page, Columnist



"The president vowed to 'do what is legally necessary to defend the sanctity of marriage.' He did not explain precisely how gays and lesbians are attacking the sanctity of marriage by wishing to be bound by it.


In fact, 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. My wife and I would still be married and so would the president and the first lady--for better or worse, in sickness and in health, 'til death do us part, etc., etc." (Chicago Tribune, 12/03/03)

Rev. Al Sharpton, Presidential Candidate



"I believe in equal human rights, before the law, for all human beings, and race, gender, disability, class or sexual orientation should not be a factor under the law. Even though we live under the law in a secular democratic society, religious groups must still be able to maintain their spiritual and moral option to either give or withhold a religious or sacred blessing to such unions. However, the government should not have that option. It must affirm the human and legal rights of everyone." (HRC Presidential Candidates' Questionnaire, 07/03)

Rev. William Sinkford, President, Unitarian Universalist Church



"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 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." (Unitarian Universalist Church website, 11/18/03)