



PROP 8 HURT MY FAMILY ASK ME HOW

**A Compilation of Findings from
Community Forums and On-Line Surveys**

January 2009

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Introduction

In January 2009, the American Psychological Association (APA) released three separate studies that described the psychological distress associated with anti same-sex marriage amendments. One study using national survey responses of LGBTI individuals found that those who live in states that have passed marriage amendments experienced increased psychological stress not due to other pre-existing conditions but as “a direct result of the negative images and messages associated with the ballot campaign and the passage of the amendment.” Furthermore, participants reported feeling “alienated from their community, fearful they would lose their children, and concerned they would become victims of anti-gay violence.” These studies also reported that this harm extends to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) family members and straight allies who experience a form of “secondary minority stress.” Finally, “although many participants displayed resiliency and effective coping with this stress, some experienced strong negative consequences to their mental and physical health.”

Marriage Equality USA, through a series of town halls held across California and a national on-line survey of over 3,100 respondents, collected community input regarding the homophobia and other harm experienced through initiative campaigns, like Proposition 8, and received personal stories that mirror these APA findings. In our report “Prop 8 Hurt My Family – Ask Me How,” we collected almost 1,200 individual experiences which illustrate how:

- LGBTI people experience increased verbal abuse, homophobia, physical harm and other discrimination associated with or resulting from the Prop 8 campaign;
- Children of same-sex couples express fear due to direct exposure to homophobia and hate and concerns that the passage of Prop 8 means they could be taken from their families and targeted for further violence;
- LGBTI youth and their supporters experience increased bullying at schools as Prop 8’s passage fosters a supportive environment for homophobic acts of physical and emotional violence;
- Straight allies experience the impact of homophobia firsthand and express shock and fear for their LGBTI family members and friends and the danger they may experience if they were perceived as gay or an ally;
- Families are torn apart as relatives divide on Prop 8; and
- Communities are destroyed from the aftermath of abusive behavior towards them during local street demonstrations, neighborhood divisions, and the impact of “knowing your neighbor” voted against your family.

Despite the harm and discrimination that opponents of Prop 8 experienced, LGBTI people, their families and friends, and supportive community members stated that they are more resolved and determined to fight until every family receives the same dignity and protection that only marriage can provide. But the report also documents the inherent unfairness and strife that comes from putting the fundamental rights of some of the community up for a popular vote and points out the lasting harm and fear that is generated from these campaigns.

We conclude this report with stories that describe why some believe it is important for the California Supreme Court to overturn Prop 8. Our hope in sharing these stories is that all Californians, including those who voted Yes on 8, can reflect on the harm that has resulted from this initiative campaign and come to the conclusion that we don’t want to repeat this experience. We hope California lives up to our ideals and that our Constitution remains intact and continues to serve its role in protecting the minority from the tyranny of the majority. In the words of President and Chief Justice William Howard Taft, ***“Constitutions are checks upon the hasty action of the majority. They are self-imposed restraints of a whole people upon a majority of them to secure sober action and a respect for the rights of the minority.”***

At the end of the report, MEUSA has provided a listing of counseling and community resources for LGBTI community, their children, and straight allies.

Prop 8 Hurt My Family – Ask Me How

Prop 8 Hurt Real People

“I think the LGBTI community has been under constant stress for the last eight years. We have been used as a political punching bag. The anxiety affects all of us and most of us just want to live our lives quietly with the same rights and responsibilities as everyone else. We are a tiny minority, but our well-being is at the mercy of a still homophobic majority.” Contra Costa County

Not only did LGBTI people lose their right to marry, but they were verbally assaulted, had property vandalized and destroyed, received death threats, and several people reported being terminated from their jobs because they were gay and/or due to their opposition to Prop 8.

Anti-gay initiative campaigns promote an environment that fosters discrimination, rejection and homophobia. Marriage Equality USA’s on-line survey found that over 40% of all respondents, the majority being LGBTI individuals, indicated they faced homophobia, hate speech, violence or threats resulting from California’s Prop 8 campaign. Many town hall participants and survey respondents described the whole ballot initiative process as homophobic, starting with the failed effort to encourage Californians to decline to sign the proposed initiative followed by being forced to endure Yes on 8 advertisements, media coverage and letters to the editor that reinforced negative stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination, and finally suffering the brutal realization that California voters would not support their right to be treated as equal citizens.

LGBTI community members expressed pride and felt empowered through participating in rallies, phone banking, wearing No on 8 buttons or having No on 8 bumper stickers or lawn signs; however this involvement also increased their exposure to glares, obscenities, harassment, threats, and violence as demonstrated by the following examples:

- **“One day, I was called a faggot four times in Oakland while wearing my No on 8 button.” Alameda County**
- **“We put up a No on 8 lawn sign and people would drive by our house just to give us dirty looks and flip us off, even in front of our daughter.” Fresno County**
- **“While in my car at a red light, four men came up to my window and started yelling threats because of my No on 8 bumper sticker. One man yelled, ‘I will kill you bitch. I will follow you home.’ I had to call the police and they escorted me home.” Sacramento County**
- **“Every rally included a day long barrage of classic slurs being shouted from passing cars. One man drove by several times with four boys in the car shouting ‘fuck you faggots’ and flashing their middle fingers. It was like the adult was modeling, teaching and celebrating gay bashing behavior.” San Diego County**
- **“My employer received anonymous threats about me and implying personal risk for the children I teach. I was suspended with pay while the school district assessed the threat. My home was vandalized with anti-gay slogans and slurs. Our car was destroyed when someone put sugar in the tank. All this because of an article about our marriage.” San Bernardino County.**

Prop 8 was not a school bond or redistricting initiative, it was an effort to eliminate the fundamental right of marriage for same-sex couples. As one San Luis Obispo respondent described, **“Marriage never was hugely important to me, so it came as quite a shock when I read the [California Supreme Court marriage decision] and started to sob. Someone had finally said I was a decent human being and deserved equal protection under the laws.”** Marriage matters and for those personally affected, Prop 8 was a personal attack on our lives and families. Living through this campaign exerted a high toll on the sense of well-being and connection within the larger community that affected everyone. As one

Santa Clara County respondent stated, **“It is frustrating and exhausting to go through the course of each day feeling like we somehow have to defend our marriage. It weighs on a person and on a couple.”** Another resident from San Francisco described, **“The psychological trauma of having my civil rights debated by people who do not even know me has been astounding. I didn’t realize the effect this vote would have on me until after it happened.”**

For same-sex couples who were unable to marry before November 4th, they expressed despair over the passage of Prop 8. As one Alameda County respondent described, **“I don’t want to wait until I have gray hair to marry my girlfriend. I deeply regret not having the money to do it while I had the chance. I never thought Prop 8 would pass.”** Many same-sex couples who were married also expressed concerns their marriages were at risk, and their fears were validated when Prop 8 proponents filed papers to have their marriage licenses take away.

For other LGBTI community members, the passage of Prop 8 has resulted in increased anxiety and fear. As one Sonoma County resident described, **“There’s a quiet rift between my friends, family and I now – gay and straight. This is painful. I wonder who hates me. Am I in danger in this situation? How about this one? Who voted against my rights?”** Another Santa Clara County resident shared, **“Since Prop 8 passed, my wife had developed significant anxiety. She feels like at any moment we will be hate crime victims. When she heard about the lesbian in Richmond who was gang raped, it was as if they were coming for us next. I think a lot of the LGBTI community feels that way.”** And a Sonoma County resident summed up, **“Every time an anti-gay measure passes, it makes the LGBTI community more vulnerable. I have been physically threatened before because I am gay, and that fear is always in the back of my mind, particularly when there is a general feeling that the majority of the people in my state (or country) are systematically stripping us of rights.”**

Despite all the homophobia and hate that LGBTI community members faced, we received many comments that demonstrate the courage and resolve to continue our fight for marriage equality, including this one from San Joaquin County, **“This election has been very emotional and hurtful for me. Although at the same time, it has made me stronger to fight for what I believe in.”**

Prop 8 Frightened Children of Same-Sex Couples

“My six-year old, the day after we lost Prop 8, asked me, with tears running down his face, if we were still a family.” Contra Costa County

The hatred and homophobia leveled at same-sex couples also struck the children they raise. As one Contra Costa parent described, **“It exposed homophobia to our 8-year old that she hadn’t experienced previously.”** Another parent from San Joaquin County shared, **“It has been so sad for all of us, but I feel the worst for our oldest daughter. She is 13. She was raised knowing that there are different types of families and that is ok. Our family was just normal to her because that is what she knew. Then Prop 8 came. For the first time, it was pointed out to her that our family was not okay with everyone, that people all around us felt we were not equal. Hate was everywhere. I wish she did not have to go through that.”**

Many parents described how their children wanted to support their families by participating in No on 8 rallies, but this involvement often resulted in them being the target of offensive comments and hate. In Santa Barbara County, one parent described, **“During a rally, my son and I were called ugly names. He is eleven and I don’t know how calling him a faggot is acceptable.”** In San Bernardino County, another parent shared this rally experience, **“Several groups of ‘Yes on 8’ people repetitively came up and proceeded to scream obscenities and terrorize the children. One person even got into my face and stated, ‘If it were up to me, I’d kill all the fags.’ This scared the children so much, we had to leave.”**

But children of same-sex couples didn't have to participate in rallies to experience the stress and strain associated with the Prop 8 campaign. Another Contra Costa parent explained, **"My eight year old daughter heard many of those radio and TV ads, I can tell she is still reeling inside. We talk about it as she brings it up, but she just ran smack into discrimination, aimed at her on TV. That is a lot for me, it is way more than she needed to see."** Another parent shared, **"My 7 year old son asked, 'If the Yes people win, will you and Mama have to break up?'"** Prior to this campaign, my children had no real understanding that we live in a culture that condemns our family, as our immediate community and their schools are supportive. **It's not gay parents that hurt our kids, it is homophobia."** Lastly, a Riverside County parent explained, **"My children were devastated. They don't understand why people want to take away their parent's right to be married."**

Our children are our future and stories like this one from a parent in Kern County provide us hope and inspiration. **"My 6-year old daughter was very active in this election, and I am VERY proud to say she stood up to her OWN grandma and told her 'mean people vote Yes on 8.' My daughter was very upset when she was told she could not vote. I received so much criticism for having my daughter involved, but that was completely her choice. If a six year old child will stand up to the people she loves, and teach her friends about equality, then I can do the same."**

Prop 8 Promoted Bullying in Schools

"I work in a high school and the students have begun gay bashing openly now. They feel the majority has voted that being gay is not ok, thus they can make fun of them." Merced County

Marriage Equality USA's on-line survey found that youth were more likely to be the targets of homophobia, hate speech, threat or violence. The comments we received across California further supported these findings and illustrated the hypocrisy of Yes on 8 proponents and their claims of wanting to protect school children. As one Ventura County parent argued, **"They said that the 'rights of children are more important than the desires of adults.'** But here's a question: **"What if your child is gay?"** Every day children in schools get harassed and teased just because there is something different about them. **Many teens are so ashamed as they get bullied or ostracized just because of their sexuality. Some of this is violent, some are even killed. So tell me, how would Prop 8 protect these children? Do people not realize that this Constitutional ban is making some children feel ashamed of themselves? Not to mention the children of gay parents who may feel that they don't belong after this. What about their rights?"**

During this campaign period, did you personally experience any homophobia, hate speech, threats or violence?

| Age | % Yes |
|-----------------|-------|
| < 18 | 45% |
| 18 - 34 | 39% |
| 34 - 49 | 38% |
| 50 - 64 | 36% |
| Over 65 | 35% |
| All Respondents | 38% |

Source: MEUSA Post-Prop 8 On-Line Survey

Prop 8 helped spread homophobia across schools throughout California and promoted bullying of LGBTI youth and other youth who were opposed to Prop 8. As one administrator at a Kern County school described, **"I see Prop 8 harming my Gay Straight Alliance students every day. And now that Prop 8 has passed, students are much, much, more bold about bullying our gay and perceived gay students."** In Tulare County, a substitute teacher explained, **"I saw and heard a lot of junior high and high school kids get into very heated arguments over the issue. I also saw a lot of kids assuming everyone agreed with them, who would walk into a room and shout 'Yes on 8' for no apparent reason before sitting down."** One Alameda County teacher shared, **"At the elementary school where I work in Fremont, several students and a few parents and teachers made homophobic comments and /or said to my face that they voted Yes on Prop 8."**

Students across California sent in stories to illustrate the homophobia and fear they faced because of the Prop 8 campaign, including these following examples:

- **“Students at my high school often harassed me for being No on 8. I would hear people saying, ‘She must be gay’ and taunting me with Yes on 8 stickers. It was scary sometimes; one time I was afraid I was going to be cornered by a group of rambunctious boys who mad a point of following me as long as possible through the hallways while they yelled ‘Yes on 8’ and called me derogatory names.” San Diego County**
- **“A student in my class expressed homophobic fears, and a hate crime occurred on campus, visually threatening with a noose and confederate flag and warning students if they were black, queer or hippie that they were not welcome. It was disturbing.” San Luis Obispo County**
- **I’m only 16 years old and straight. While protesting outside my high school, many people gave me ‘the finger,’ while this is something I see often, it was hard to see it from my friends’ and classmates’ parents. Prior to the election, signs on my backpack gave way to much rude name calling and just purely rude and ignorant comments thrown at me.” Orange County**

Despite the hatred and homophobia these youth faced, they also described healthy ways to move ahead. For example, the student in San Luis Obispo County stated that as a result of the campus hate crime, **“We organized a rally that was well attended and brought students together to discuss racism and homophobia on campus, revealing how ignorant and hateful this message was. The administrators did not resolve the matters to students’ satisfaction, but at least our concerns were heard during an open forum.”** The Orange County student cited above commented, **“I feel like this campaign needed more teaching about how normal homosexuality really is and how little this would affect those who are not homosexual.”**

Prop 8 Caused Straight Allies to Experience Homophobia

“Homophobia is more common than we realized.” San Mateo County

While the majority of individuals who experienced homophobia, hate speech, threats or violence resulting from the Prop 8 campaign were LGBTI, straight allies were not immune with over 25% indicating that they experienced similar harm. One father from San Luis Obispo County described, **“I am the loving parent of two magnificent, awesome, fantastic young women who happen to be gay. But my opposition to Prop 8 led to my home being vandalized. The police ignored it and some neighbors slandered me.”** A resident from Sacramento County was exasperated describing her experience, **“Oh dear, the list was endless. I, being a straight female, was called a faggot and a slut countless times. Someone snuck up on me and placed a bullhorn right next to my ear and yelled I’m an abomination and I will be going to the fiery pits of hell. I left a rally and when I got back to my car, Yes on 8 was painted all over it, even on the windshield so I was unable to drive away.”**

During this campaign period, did you personally experience any homophobia, hate speech, threats or violence?

| Sexual Orientation | % Yes |
|---------------------------|--------------|
| Gay/Lesbian/Bi/Queer | 42% |
| Heterosexual | 27% |
| All Respondents | 38% |

Source: MEUSA Post-Prop 8 On-Line Survey

In addition to sharing stories of personal harm, many straight allies and parents expressed sadness and concerns for their LGBTI friends and family after the passage of Prop 8, including these stories.

- **“Our neighbors upstairs got married a month ago. When I saw Lisa the week before the wedding, she said she hadn’t thought marriage was that big of a deal. But now that she is married, she said it is the happiest days of her life. You should have seen the happiness in her face – she was simply beaming. I was so saddened to see**

Prop 8 pass and I wondered, ‘How must they feel, to have their marriage taken away from them?’” San Francisco County

- **“My 20 year old son (who is gay) and I started rallying at visible corners around Sacramento back in August. I cannot tell you how many times I was told I was going to hell and that my son was an abomination. My son was spit on, called names, told he was a demon, a freak of nature, and a pedophile. All I could see was pain in my son’s face. It was hard for me, but my son was hurt the most. Now he is scared to walk down the street alone...depressed because half of the people he runs into voted to keep him from ever knowing what it is like to be a husband.” Sacramento County**

As one Nevada County resident shared her frustration, **“I cannot believe how hurtful we can be towards each other, especially when it involves marriage. I’m really torn up about this. I can’t imagine how same-sex couples are feeling right now. I am happily married with children in a heterosexual marriage and it pisses me off that the neighbor down the street, who has been married and divorced three times, who has made a mockery of marriage has the gall to hand Yes on 8 campaign signs all around her yard and can decide who can and cannot get married.”**

Prop 8 Tore Apart Families

“My father and brother voted Yes on 8. It was a stab wound to my heart.” Yolo County

Families were torn apart as family members took sides on Prop 8 and same-sex couples were stunned to realize some relatives did not support their fundamental right of marriage. One San Luis Obispo County resident stated, **“The passage of Prop 8 has harmed me, my family and my friends. I personally felt anger and resentment that I was held as a second class citizen. Prop 8 has created tension within my family who voted Yes. I still love my family but I could never look at them the same way knowing they voted Yes on 8.”** Again the harm of Prop 8 has extended to children of same-sex couples as described by this Fresno County parent, **“This issue has placed a deep divide between my family and me by forcing us to take sides. My 9-year old internalized the confusing message that the passage of Prop 8 was the equivalent of criminalizing our family.”**

Some same-sex couples question if this wound will ever heal. As one Contra Costa County resident described, **“Prop 8 has split our family apart. My husband’s sister and her husband voted Yes on 8 and they told us they hoped it won’t affect our relationship while staying in our home for a week over Thanksgiving. We have been a foursome for vacations and holidays for 13 years. I was astounded by their confession; I am no longer their family and they will no longer be part of my life. We will not attend the same family gatherings now or ever again. People in my family are hurt by this division, I cannot budge. Our relatives are on the sidelines crying. Prop 8 was hateful and destructive to families everywhere.”** Another family member expressed similar disbelief and sadness, **“My sister and I had a very painful argument when I found out she voted Yes on 8. This was two weeks after she said very loving words about my wife and me at our wedding reception. The issue has created a split in my family as each person takes sides – it’s just devastating.”**

Prop 8 Destroyed Neighborhoods

“The large presence of Yes on 8 lawn signs in my neighborhood and the abundance of Yes on 8 bumper stickers in my community left me with a hostile feeling (and I’m not gay). I can’t imagine how unwelcoming that atmosphere must have felt to any gay neighbors.” Placer County

As expected, exposure to homophobia, hate speech, threats and violence varied depending on where you lived. Individuals living in Northern California, Central Coast and Valley, and Southern California were more likely to experience that type of discrimination compared to those living in the Bay Area or Los Angeles.

| During this campaign period, did you personally experience any homophobia, hate speech, threats, or violence? | | | |
|--|--------------|-------------------------|--------------|
| Region - CA | % Yes | Region - US/Intl | % Yes |
| Northern California | 54% | West | 9% |
| Bay Area | 35% | Midwest | 16% |
| Central Coast | 52% | Northeast | 11% |
| Central Valley | 50% | South | 23% |
| Los Angeles | 38% | Oth US Total | 16% |
| Southern California | 52% | | |
| CA Total | 44% | International | 13% |
| All Respondents | 38% | | |

Source: MEUSA Post-Prop 8 On-Line Survey

Many same-sex couples described how they felt personally violated and unsafe as the Prop 8 campaign churned up homophobia and hate in their local neighborhoods, sometimes their own front yard. Even when some campaigned to their local neighbors, they were treated as outsiders as illustrated in this Contra Costa story, **“While standing on a corner with my No on 8 sign, and within the community where I live and work, I was approached several times and told to go home. I replied that I am home. I feel the pain of knowing that my neighbors, from perhaps across the street or down the block, thought that I was so...what...different, bad, not worthy...that they couldn’t bear the fact that I lived among them.”** One Orange County resident shared her story, **“My partner was in the hospital and I came home after 2AM to find Yes on 8 stickers and fliers covering my front door. A neighbor saw them coming through the neighborhood and said we were a married gay couple and that the Yes on 8 people were not welcome on our street. They covered my door and then left.”** And with the election so close to Halloween, the Prop 8 campaign affected same-sex couples with children in the annual ritual of trick or treating as described by this San Joaquin County resident, **“We live in a very family-friendly neighborhood. Our community is a quiet, safe place. We never felt any different until Prop 8 when the signs started going up around us. When we took our kids trick or treating, we skipped the houses with Yes on 8 signs to avoid conflict. At one house, we didn’t see the sign until our kids had reached the lady with the candy bowl. She gave us a dirty look and then handed our kids religious reading material that she put in their candy bags.”**

Yes on 8 lawn signs became a symbol of hate. In some neighborhoods, the battle of the lawn signs was fierce and affected LGBTI community members in a variety of ways as highlighted through these stories:

- **“I felt that I was being attacked every time I went outside and saw that every house in my community had not just one “Yes on 8” sign, but multiple on their lawns.” Ventura County**
- **“My next door neighbor as a proponent of 8 expresses his opinion loudly and often for my benefit. He places signs and messages as close to my property as possible. There is an element of fear of being retaliated against because of who I live by. I am out but I do fear consequences around my home more so than in my community at large.” Mendocino County**

For Central Valley residents, those opposed to Prop 8 not only felt betrayed by their local community but also by the No on 8 campaign:

- **“My experience from Prop 8 ranges from being betrayed and essentially abandoned by my own campaign to having my own community vote heavily Yes despite my efforts go get them to vote No. I try to be a good**

neighbor. But I have lost my desire to be good to the 70 percent of my neighbors because I frankly detest them right now. It doesn't matter who I really am when a \$40 million smear campaign is launched against me and my family. I don't want to live here anymore, but we are stuck here living in a community that has turned smugly against us." Stanislaus County

- "The No on 8 campaign has made us even more invisible in the Valley. We are angry at the lack of respect by the big city LGBTQ community for us that live in smaller cities and rural areas. It is hard to look anyone in the face sometimes because you feel that 75% of your neighbors think that your love is wrong." Kern County
- "I repeatedly called the No on 8 campaign headquarters in LA, San Diego, San Francisco and Sacramento to plead for No on 8 airtime locally. Unanimously, I was informed that the decision had been made to target the larger metropolitan areas. So the Yes on 8 people were able to flaunt their homophobia to me every single day with their TV ads, Yes on 8 signs, and even the Yes on 8 billboard on the highway in Kern County." Tulare County

The harm and ill will resulting from these campaigns lingers within communities well after Election Day. As one resident of Massachusetts described, "Through the 'Know Thy Neighbors' website, we know many individuals in our local community who supported ballot initiatives and referenda on Massachusetts' marriage equality. It was painful and extremely disappointing to see the names of people whom we have known socially and professionally support a ballot initiative because these individuals have not done this openly to us." One Florida resident expressed similar despair, "Most of my neighbors signed the petition to put Amendment 2 for a vote, and we have lived here 12 years and always been friendly to neighbors. I don't think it will ever be the same." And in Fresno County, "Because I had a No on 8 sign in my yard for months, my next door neighbors won't allow their children to have anything to do with us. We are a heterosexual grandparent aged couple, married for 40 years."

As one Solano County survey respondent expressed concerns about the future, "Two-thirds of my neighbors voted to take away my right to marry and that hurts. But now, I worry that other civil rights will be taken away from me and my family."

Prop 8 Must Be Overturned

“I don’t want to live in a state in which the majority of voters are so biased and fearful that they codify discrimination into the State Constitution. Revising the founding document of this State should not be so easy for one group to manipulate.” San Benito County

As illustrated through these stories and validated by APA research, anti-gay initiative campaigns, like Prop 8, incur great harm and stress and even result in violence directed at LGBTI adults, children of LGBTI people, LGBTI youth, and straight supporters. School grounds become less safe for LGBTI youth, families are torn apart, and communities are destroyed.

Despite all this harm, same-sex couples, their children and other supporters have made it clear they will continue to fight for the same dignity, rights and security that only marriage can provide. A few of these stories are depicted below:

- **“I was deeply hurt, and later outraged, at the passage of Prop 8, especially since it happened in California, the state that we have long looked to as our only safe haven in the world. It galvanized my friends and me to attend rallies, and to look for a way to overturn this hateful measure and finally gain equality as Americans.” San Mateo County**
- **“I will not sit idly by and allow gay people to continue to be treated as second class citizens. And I will fight to see that loving couples will be afforded the same dignity and respect as anyone.” San Francisco County**
- **“My daughter is just a toddler; I’m glad I don’t have to explain this to her yet. If we can turn it around within a couple years, maybe no one will ever have to say to her, ‘Mommy and Mom can’t get married.’” San Mateo County**

After the November 4th election, over 300 rallies across the nation brought hundreds of thousands of individuals into the streets in opposition to Prop 8, and some Californians who voted Yes on 8 already wish they hadn’t. It is clear that marriage equality will be a reality in the future. The question is how we get there.

Our hope is that as Californians, including those who may have voted Yes on 8, reflect on these stories, they will come to the conclusion that no individual and no family should ever have to go through these painful experiences. Overturning Prop 8 will not only restore dignity and respect to LGBTI people, but it will send a message that it is wrong to strip a minority of their fundamental rights by a simple majority vote.

Our Constitution is there to protect minority groups from the majority. Sixty years ago, the California Supreme Court ended the ban on interracial marriage despite the fact that interracial marriage was opposed by over 90% of the United States at that time. However, interracial couples never had to fight a ballot initiative that would take those rights away because the court’s opinion and role in protecting minorities was understood and respected. Today, no one would ever consider voting to ban interracial marriage and the opposition has all but disappeared. We are hopeful that if we continue to stand strong and engage with fair-minded people – even those who may have voted yes in November 2008, tomorrow, our children will look back and wonder how we could ever have voted to take the fundamental right of marriage from same-sex couples.

Research indicates that people who consider themselves more religious were more likely to vote for Proposition 8. Our community needs to engage with the supportive community of faith and seek to implement the Golden Rule, “Do Unto Others As You Would Have Them Do Unto You.”

Furthermore, due to the significant reports of harassment, verbal assault and physical violence experienced by LGBTI people and straight allies, we are including a list of counseling and community services at the end of this report.

Marriage Equality USA hopes the California Supreme Court upholds its duty to overturn Prop 8 and that Californians will stand in support of that decision.

Methodology

MEUSA collected grassroots input through a series of community forums and a national on-line survey which we used to produce this summary and calls to action.

Community forums were held across California. This summary includes input specifically from the forums held in Alameda County (Albany and Oakland), Contra Costa County (Concord and Walnut Creek), Los Angeles County, Marin County, Orange County, San Mateo County, Sonoma County, and San Francisco County. Local organizations collaborated on setting up each forum in ways that reflected the unique needs and interest of each community. For example, in San Francisco County, a small panel provided an overview of the election results and the court case and then forum participants split up into smaller groups to allow everyone an opportunity to respond to a series of questions about the Prop 8 campaign and where we go from here. In Los Angeles County, a panel introduced the discussion and then every forum participant was able to express his or her questions or comments at an open microphone for all to hear. In Orange County, participants celebrated the campaign accomplishments as a group, and then each participant wrote down their thoughts which some shared openly and written responses were collected. This session ended with an hour of ritual and sharing of personal stories and faith, then participants then marched with candles to a location where they held a silent vigil. MEUSA participated in many of these forums and received summaries from others so that we could incorporate the input of thousands of community forum participants across California.

In addition, over 3,100 individuals responded to MEUSA's on-line survey that included both quantitative and qualitative questions, including the two open-ended survey questions examined in this analysis: (1) During this campaign period, did you personally experience any homophobia, hate speech, threats, or violence? and (2) Please share your story on how the passage of these anti-gay amendments has harmed you, your family and/or friends. Chris VanderStouwe, a Linguistic major graduating from San Francisco State University and a community forum participant in San Francisco, analyzed the open ended questions to identify patterns in responses and highlighted quotes that best exemplified other responses.

As indicated in the table below, this report truly summarizes input from the grassroots community. The majority of respondents were either observers, occasional volunteers, or contributors to the official campaign and unofficial campaign activities in their local communities. Less than 5% of respondents were No on 8 paid staff members or coalition committee members.

MEUSA Survey Respondents by Participant Type

| | |
|--|-----|
| Observer | 21% |
| Occasional Volunteer/Contributor to Official No on 8 Campaign | 26% |
| Occasional Volunteer/Contributor to Unofficial No on 8 Campaign Activities in my Community | 20% |
| Active or Frequent Volunteer/Contributor to Official No on 8 Campaign | 15% |
| Active or Frequent Volunteer/Contributor to Unofficial No on 8 Campaign Activities in my Community | 16% |
| No on 8 Coalition Committee Member | 3% |
| No on 8 Paid Staff Member | 1% |

MEUSA survey respondents came from 47 states and 13 countries. Almost 75% of respondents were from California, with the remainder from other US states and countries. In our analysis, US regions were based on groupings used by the US Census and California counties were grouped into regions based on those used by the California Public Policy Institute.

MEUSA Survey Respondents by Geographic Region

| California Respondents | | Other US States/International | |
|------------------------|------|-------------------------------|-----|
| Northern CA | 3% | Northeast | 37% |
| Bay Area | 36% | South | 23% |
| Central Coast | 7% | Midwest | 20% |
| Central Valley | 30% | West | 16% |
| Los Angeles | 13% | | |
| Southern CA | 10% | International | 5% |
| CA Total | 2289 | Other US/Intl Total | 823 |

As for sexual orientation, almost 75% identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual or queer (GLBQ) and the remainder as heterosexual, with higher concentrations of GLBQ individuals in Los Angeles and the Bay Area. In terms of gender, 57% indicated they were female, 41% male, 2% transgender and less than one percent intersex. Higher concentrations of female respondents could be found in Northern California, the Central Valley, Midwest, and Northeast. Higher concentrations of male respondents were located in Los Angeles County, the South and West.

MEUSA Survey Respondents by Sexual Orientation and Gender and by Geographic Location

| | California Respondents | | | | | | Other US States by Region | | | | | | Total |
|--------------|------------------------|----------|---------------|----------------|-------------|-------------|---------------------------|---------|-------|------|------|-----|-------|
| | Northern CA | Bay Area | Central Coast | Central Valley | Los Angeles | Southern CA | Northeast | Midwest | South | West | Intl | | |
| GLBQ | 64% | 78% | 61% | 75% | 83% | 67% | 69% | 54% | 68% | 66% | 71% | 73% | |
| Heterosexual | 36% | 22% | 39% | 25% | 17% | 33% | 31% | 46% | 32% | 34% | 29% | 27% | |
| Female | 68% | 55% | 61% | 67% | 40% | 55% | 63% | 65% | 45% | 51% | 50% | 57% | |
| Male | 27% | 43% | 38% | 31% | 59% | 44% | 37% | 35% | 52% | 47% | 50% | 41% | |
| Transgender | 2% | 3% | 1% | 2% | 1% | 1% | 0% | 0% | 3% | 2% | 0% | 2% | |
| Intersex | 2% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | |

In terms of ethnicity, 79% were White, 8% Hispanic/Latino, 5% Asian Pacific Islander, 3% African American, 2% Native American and the remaining 3% as other. Higher concentrations of Hispanic/Latino respondents could be found in Los Angeles and the Central Coast; higher concentrations of Native American respondents could be found in Northern California; and higher concentrations of White respondents could be found internationally, in our other US States by region and in Northern California and the Central Coast.

MEUSA Survey Respondents by Ethnicity and Geographic Location

| | California Respondents | | | | | | Other US States by Region | | | | | | Total |
|------------------------|------------------------|----------|---------------|----------------|-------------|-------------|---------------------------|---------|-------|------|------|-----|-------|
| | Northern CA | Bay Area | Central Coast | Central Valley | Los Angeles | Southern CA | Northeast | Midwest | South | West | Intl | | |
| African American | 2% | 3% | 0% | 2% | 2% | 4% | 6% | 0% | 3% | 5% | 0% | 3% | |
| Asian Pacific Islander | 2% | 8% | 2% | 3% | 8% | 5% | 1% | 2% | 4% | 3% | 0% | 5% | |
| Hispanic/Latino | 5% | 6% | 12% | 9% | 13% | 11% | 6% | 6% | 1% | 7% | 0% | 8% | |
| Native American | 7% | 2% | 1% | 4% | 1% | 1% | 1% | 2% | 3% | 5% | 0% | 2% | |
| White | 84% | 77% | 84% | 78% | 73% | 76% | 84% | 86% | 86% | 79% | 93% | 79% | |
| Other | 0% | 3% | 1% | 2% | 2% | 3% | 2% | 5% | 3% | 0% | 7% | 3% | |

Lastly, respondents covered all age groupings; just over 38% were between 35-49, 32% were between 18-34, 23% were between 50-64, 5% were over 65 and 2% were under 18. Higher concentrations of respondents under 18 were in the Midwest; 18-34 year olds in the other US States by region; 35-49 year olds in Los Angeles County; and 50-64 year olds in Northern California.

MEUSA Survey Respondents by Age and Geographic Location

| | California Respondents | | | | | | Other US States by Region | | | | | | Total |
|---------|------------------------|----------|---------------|----------------|-------------|-------------|---------------------------|---------|-------|------|------|-----|-------|
| | Northern CA | Bay Area | Central Coast | Central Valley | Los Angeles | Southern CA | Northeast | Midwest | South | West | Intl | | |
| < 18 | 0% | 1% | 4% | 0% | 2% | 3% | 4% | 8% | 5% | 2% | 0% | 2% | |
| 18 - 34 | 32% | 25% | 36% | 30% | 26% | 23% | 50% | 57% | 43% | 46% | 64% | 32% | |
| 35 - 49 | 23% | 42% | 30% | 38% | 56% | 41% | 33% | 21% | 34% | 32% | 36% | 39% | |
| 50 - 64 | 41% | 27% | 25% | 26% | 14% | 29% | 11% | 11% | 12% | 20% | 0% | 23% | |
| Over 65 | 5% | 5% | 4% | 6% | 3% | 5% | 2% | 3% | 5% | 0% | 0% | 4% | |

MEUSA's on-line survey was conducted over a four-week period after the November 2008 election. On two occasions, MEUSA contacted our members to participate and contacted several list serves, including the Repeal 8 and No on 8 campaign list serves, to increase input across California. Other national organizations were contacted to help obtain input across the United States. For example, Join the Impact featured MEUSA's survey on one of their top-5 websites of the week and sent out an action alert to their members seeking input. Finally, in order to ensure we received input from a cross section of our population, MEUSA contacted organizational officials, including but not limited to And Marriage for All, API Equality, California Faith for Equality, California NAACP, COLAGE, PFLAG, and United Farm Workers.

Counseling and Community Resources

Gaylesta is the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Psychotherapists Association of the greater San Francisco Bay Area. We were founded in 1987, established as an unincorporated association in 1988, and incorporated as a non-profit organization in 1997. For more information, go to <http://www.gaylesta.org/aboutus.html>

Our Family Coalition – a Bay Area LGBTI family organization that promotes the civil rights and well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) families with children and prospective parents through education, advocacy, social networking and grassroots community organizing. For more information, go to <http://www.ourfamily.org/>

Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians & Gays (PFLAG) is a national non-profit organization with over 200,000 members and supporters and over 500 affiliates in the United States. This vast grassroots network is cultivated, resourced and serviced by the PFLAG national office, located in Washington, D.C., the national Board of Directors and 13 Regional Directors. For more information, go to <http://www.pflag.org/> which includes a listing of local chapters nationwide.

COLAGE is a national movement of children, youth, and adults with one or more lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and/or queer (LGBTQ) parents. We build community and work toward social justice through youth empowerment, leadership development, education, and advocacy. COLAGE produces monthly activities for youth ages 8-18 with LGBTQ parents, including monthly meetings. For more information on the Bay Area chapter, go to www.colage.org/bayarea or contact monica@colage.org and for those in the greater Los Angeles area, contact la@colage.org. On January 18th from 2-4pm at The Village at Ed Gould Plaza, the Los Angeles COLAGE is hosting a conversation for youth and their parents to share their Prop 8 experiences, vent frustrations and brainstorm on next steps in a safe space. For more information, please call 323.860.7320 or send email to familyservices@lagaycenter.org.

Family Matters, a program of the San Diego LGBT Community Center, enhances and sustains the health and well-being of families with one or more parents who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender and to provide information, resources and support for those considering parenthood. For more information, go to <http://www.thecentersd.org/familymatters.php>

Family Equality Council works to ensure equality for LGBT families by building community, changing hearts and minds and advancing social justice for all families. For more information, go to <http://www.familyequality.org/>.

Founded in 1979, **Community United Against Violence (CUAV)** is the nation's first LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning) anti-violence organization. Our mission is to prevent and respond to violence against and within our diverse LGBTQ communities. We accomplish this through peer-based counseling, direct assistance, education and outreach, grassroots organizing, and policy advocacy. For more information, go to <http://www.cuav.org/>.

New Leaf: Services For Our Community is the nonprofit multi-purpose counseling center for the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) communities of San Francisco and the surrounding Bay Area. For more information, go to <http://www.newleafservices.org/>

For more information on **LGBT Community Centers** in California, go to Stanislaus PRIDE Center (<http://www.stanislauspridecenter.com/>), San Francisco LGBT Community Center (<http://www.sfcenter.org/index.php>), Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Center (<http://www.lagaycenter.org/>), Sacramento Gay and Lesbian Center (<http://www.saccenter.org/>), San Diego Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Community Center (<http://www.thecentersd.org/>), Billy DeFrank Center (<http://www.defrank.org/>), Gay and Lesbian Center of Greater Long

Beach (<http://www.centerlb.org/>), Desert Pride Center (<http://www.desertpridecenter.org/>), Lighthouse Community Center (<http://www.lgbtlighthouse.com/>), and The Pacific Center (<http://www.pacificcenter.org/>).