



Respect. Empower. Include.

There has never been more opportunity or potential for change and growth in our marriage equality movement. The community realizes that we must be the change we want to see in the world. The grassroots community is literally buzzing with life. Straight allies are joining us shoulder to shoulder, new leaders are teaching the old veterans new tricks, the Milk movie and the real-life stars from the Defeat of the Briggs Initiative are touring the state to remind us that corporate is not always better. It is the homemade - from the heart, sharing our lives and connecting as fellow human beings that will set us free. We are through with running our civil rights movement by focus groups and political consultants. We hereby take back our movement, reclaim our voices, our dignity, our power. Together we march proudly, with heads high knowing that it is our generation's responsibility and honor to right this wrong. The time is at hand. The movement awaits. Join us!

It is time to implement the collective wisdom gathered from across the state, harness the renewed passion and creativity of grassroots power and chart our course towards securing marriage equality that is wiser and stronger than ever before. Our third and final report – Respect, Empower, Include – adopts the Obama field campaign's mission statement as our own mission statement for the marriage equality movement going forward. It embodies what we missed the first time around in the No on 8 Campaign and creates a new vision where everyone is at the table and empowered and encouraged to participate in this civil rights moment of our generation.

During the campaign and after the November 4th election, we witnessed amazing energy, innovation and leadership from other grassroots organizations and individuals who share common goals and values. The community has called for open, transparent operations that are accountable to the larger community. No one organization can, or should, do it alone, but together we can create an unstoppable, talented team of networked grassroots leaders working in coalition with one another to ensure that all Californians are treated equally under the law and that marriage equality is once again a reality in our state.

At the heart of [Marriage Equality USA](http://www.marriageequality.org), we have always believed in the motto “respect, empower, include.” Marriage Equality USA provides an outlet for anyone interested in plugging in with their ideas and vision to collectively build this marriage equality movement. Our organization is volunteer-driven, powered solely by the blood, sweat and tears of people, who care about equality, are willing to contribute their time and have the courage to speak out and make every moment a marriage equality moment. Through our county Chapter Leaders and our Community Outreach Directors, we ensure our message and messengers reflect and represent the diversity of California.





We stand on the shoulders of prior civil rights movements and it is now our generation's responsibility to end marriage discrimination and add yet another chapter in our nation's civil rights history. As President Obama said at his inauguration, "The time has come to reaffirm our enduring spirit; to choose our better history; to carry forward that precious gift, that noble idea, passed on from generation to generation: the God-given promise that all are equal, all are free and all deserve a chance to pursue their full measure of happiness."

And our grassroots movement started the New Year off right! In just two months, partnerships of grassroots organizations have organized strong coordinated efforts at the State Capitol (Equality Action Network), statewide candlelight vigils on the evening prior to the California Supreme Court oral argument on Proposition 8 in 25 cities (www.eveofjustice.com) and a statewide rally is planned in Downtown Fresno for the Saturday following the California Supreme Court decision (Meet In the Middle For Equality.)

To support this collaboration and strengthen our grassroots community, Marriage Equality USA will help organize our first **Statewide Grassroots Coalition Call** to bring together representatives from grassroots organizations and start creating and strengthening regional and targeted community outreach teams. These teams will identify additional supportive organizations and coalition partners within each area, informed by the collective wisdom of the existing leadership and relationships. Marriage Equality USA will assist in providing data from the Proposition 8 vote to assist each regional team in developing a customized public education and visibility plan to build more support for marriage equality. Interested individuals wanting to [register](#) for our first call can do so at http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=CpgsmlQZt1RI2ToMuDhQgw_3d_3d

In addition, we are working with volunteer technology experts from Equality Network, Equality Camp and Join the Impact to create a centralized coalition website, an **Equality Hub** that highlights each organization's contribution and mission, and provides a centralized location and calendar to assist organizations with partnering with one another on projects and campaigns. This statewide clearinghouse and coalition website devoted to securing marriage equality will also provide interested individuals with a menu of all the different organizations working to secure marriage equality so that they can find the best match with where they would like to contribute their time and resources.

Just look at what some of the players on this statewide grassroots team are already doing...



Building off the success of the Obama grassroots field campaign and supported with the veteran activists involved in this successful effort, the [Courage Campaign](#) has created Camp Courage trainings which empower individuals to tell their personal story and equips them with tools to support community organizing, including door-to-door canvassing and phone banking. Courage Campaign created a viral on-line video called "Fidelity" showcasing couples who were married last year and urging viewers to "Don't Divorce Us." This video has been seen by 600,000 people. The next Camp

Courage will be held in the Central Valley, a critical part of the state neglected by the No on 8 campaign. Join Marriage Equality USA members at the next Camp Courage in Fresno on March 7-8, 2009. For more information, go to www.couragecampaign.org.

[Join the Impact's](#) November 15th nationwide simultaneous rallies in over 300 cities revolutionized our movement. Stonewall 2.0, as it is dubbed, illustrated amazing ways we can organize and empower grassroots efforts using tools like Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and texting and reaching out to the blogging community. To ensure the success of our start up Coalition, we can work together to merge our old school grassroots organizing with this new technology. We will open our collective rolodexes and invite friends on Facebook to spread the



word. In addition, we are inspired by Join the Impact’s emphasis on the need to promote other social justice and charitable events to reach out to others in our local community and build relationships through public service to our neighbors. Marriage Equality USA sponsored co-founder Willow Witte’s tour of California to inspire and engage the “netroots” and partnered with Join the Impact for its national marriage counter actions during Freedom to Marry week. Our combined effort resulted in local couples standing up for equality at their local marriage counters in 26 states and 64 cities nationwide.



California Faith for Equality is a network of over 850 supportive faith leaders in California from a wide variety of denominations who focus on marriage equality outreach to the larger faith communities. These leaders signed onto an amicus brief urging that Prop 8 be overturned to ensure religious freedoms and the separation of church and state. We can no longer allow faith leaders who oppose marriage equality to be the only voices heard. We must work together to ensure that supportive clergy and congregations are invited and plugged in with grassroots organizing and visibility events and support outreach to the faith community.

Youth organizations like the **Gay Straight Alliances**, **Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere (COLAGE)**, **Equality Roots**, **Yes on Equality**, **F.A.I.R** and **One Struggle, One Fight** are our future leaders in our community. During the Prop 8 campaign, LGBTI youth and allies were targeted with hate speech and homophobia from the Yes on 8 campaign. We need to include these youth, listen to their new ideas and energy, and ensure their voices are heard as we move forward.



We have a deep bench of marriage equality organizations formed by leaders of color, such as **And Marriage For All**, **Honor PAC**, **Bienestar**, and **API Equality**, Bay Area American Indian Two-Spirits, who are engaged in critical and innovative community outreach and educational work. We must ensure these organizations are fully funded and that they are involved within the core of all future coalition building efforts. There must be institutional changes to ensure that leaders of color and bi-lingual outreach organizers are promoted and supported within the leadership of all of our community organizations.



As Torie Osborn at a recent Camp Courage said, “The marriage equality movement is not owned by gay people.” Securing a community that is fair, equal and just is important to all Californians. The marriage equality movement must involve and include straight allies. We must invite and welcome straight allies to be visible and outspoken leaders in this struggle as well. Organizations such as **Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG)**, elected officials, community leaders, labor unions and our neighbors and friends are eager to help and participate – let’s make sure they can.



As we lamented LGBTI invisibility in the \$40 million dollar No on 8 campaign, organizations like **Love, Honor, Cherish** and **Power Up** have already moved ahead to fill this gap. Power Up has partnered with a new organization called **Get to Know Us First** and created and aired public service announcements during Obama’s inauguration and during the Super Bowl. These ads feature a beautifully diverse cross-section of same-sex couples and their children and illustrate the power of harnessing the passion of talented people willing to contribute their resources and skills towards marriage equality education. For less than \$50,000, they were able to purchase television time in all the counties where a majority voted Yes on 8 to air these PSAs. We need to support and expand innovative work like this.

And this is only a sample of what our grassroots community can provide...

We have a choice on how we move ahead. As marriage equality leaders, we can choose to work collaboratively or go it on our own. The movie *Milk* provides us with a starting point to engage in an intergenerational dialogue, to learn from our past, and remember what can happen when we work together – to courageously fight for our families and promote our truth, and not settle for a fear-based campaign based on political consultants and focus group testing. Pioneers like Cleve Jones, Robin Tyler, Sylvia Rhue, Ron Dellums and Delores Huerta have so much wisdom to share to illustrate how far we have come, the importance of coalition building, how to be a good ally, and how to get through the hard times. We must honor our heroes and return to our grassroots spirit and recognize you don't have to be "gay for pay" to be a civil rights leader in our community.



Every supportive organization has an important, but limited, role to play in collectively securing marriage equality. We have a dream team of legal organizations working in the courts. [Lambda Legal](#), [National Center for Lesbian Rights](#), [American Civil Liberties Union](#), and the [San Francisco City Attorney's Office](#) as well as a network of pro bono attorneys are pressing the California Supreme Court to uphold the Constitutional promise of preventing the tyranny of the majority and to repeal Proposition 8. We have a powerful statewide lobbying organization, [Equality California](#), which has worked with our Legislature to secure full equality under the law in every aspect of our lives and hosted the largest community Lobby Day on February 17, 2009 to urge legislators to pass a resolution in support of repealing Proposition 8. But the legal and legislative organizations cannot do this work alone. The third and critical component of securing marriage equality is the grassroots organizations who must work in the court of public opinion to sustain the gains made in the court and in the legislature. The grassroots organizations are the place where everyone who supports marriage equality can participate in this civil rights moment.

By working together, we cannot only overturn Prop 8 but we can begin to turn our attention collectively to the possibilities of moving forward at the national level. With one in eight Americans living in California, our voices must be organized and heard in the national dialogue with a President and Congress who have pledged to overturn the Defense of Marriage Act and to end the Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy. Collectively we can ensure Gay Americans have a place at the table as we move forward to tackle the many challenges that face our nation. We will work with our national partners, including [Freedom to Marry](#), [National Gay and Lesbian Task Force](#), and [Human Rights Campaign](#), to publicize and coordinate a national calendar of events. By creating visibility events on Freedom to Marry Day, Tax Day, and Veteran's Day and other anniversaries, we can collectively generate earned media sharing our stories that illustrate the harm of being denied federal marriage protections.

And if we ever have to fight another ballot initiative in California, with a strengthened grassroots coalition, we can ensure we have a structure and network in place to support the work we know must be done. Together, we can! Join us today in this next chapter of the movement towards securing equality and justice for all.

We hope you sign up for another tour of duty in the Love Warrior movement! We are here to recruit you...join us by registering for our first [Statewide Grassroots Coalition](#) call at http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=CpgsmlQZt1Rl2ToMuDhQgw_3d_3d.