

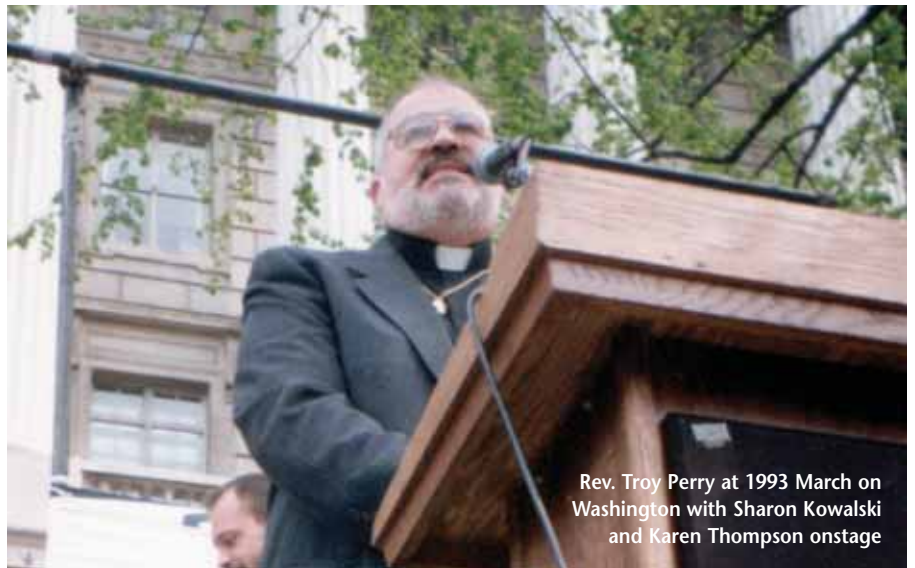
Freedom to Marry Accelerates Its Campaign

BY KAREN OCAMB

There was a real sense of elation after the Supreme Court ruled Section 3 of the Defense of Marriage Act unconstitutional and restored marriage equality in California by overturning Prop. 8, though Protect Marriage is still trying to find some legal curlicue to stop same-sex couples from marrying. Their national counterparts, the House Republican leaders who spent millions of taxpayer dollars defending DOMA, announced July 18 that they will no longer defend the statute.

"The Supreme Court's ruling is clear," House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi told BuzzFeed. "Rather than trying to delay justice for particular married gay and lesbian couples and their families, Speaker Boehner should immediately file motions to end House Republicans' involvement in the remaining cases and stop spending taxpayer dollars to defend unconstitutional discrimination."

"It took a Supreme Court ruling, but House Republicans have finally taken a step toward joining the majority of Americans who have come to understand that marriage does not need defending from committed couples—and that, as Dick Cheney put it, 'freedom means freedom for everyone.' The House leadership spent millions of taxpayer dollars unsuccessfully defending the so-called Defense of Marriage Act that the Supreme Court held is indefensible. They could and should now help



Rev. Troy Perry at 1993 March on Washington with Sharon Kowalski and Karen Thompson onstage

redeem those dollars by doing what Congress is supposed to do—pass the Respect for Marriage Act and get the discriminatory so-called Defense of Marriage Act off the books once and for all," said Evan Wolfson, founder and president of Freedom to Marry.

But right-wingers are not giving up that easily. On July 18, after the Supreme Court ruling, Democratic West Virginia Rep. Nick Rahall signed onto a proposed federal marriage amendment introduced by Republican Kansas Rep. Tim Huelskamp that would define marriage nationally as "only the union of a man and a woman." The proposed amendment now has 39 co-sponsors, none of whom are in the national Republican leadership.

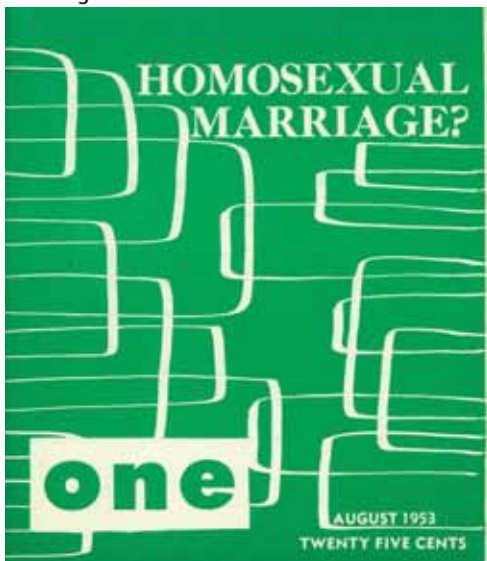
Additionally, on July 10, the National Organization for Marriage announced a five-point "plan" as a "path forward to preserve marriage." Their strategy includes preserving and winning marriage at the state level, fighting for marriage in the courts, fighting for religious liberty, fighting to preserve marriage in the U.S. Constitution and winning the fight in the court of public opinion.

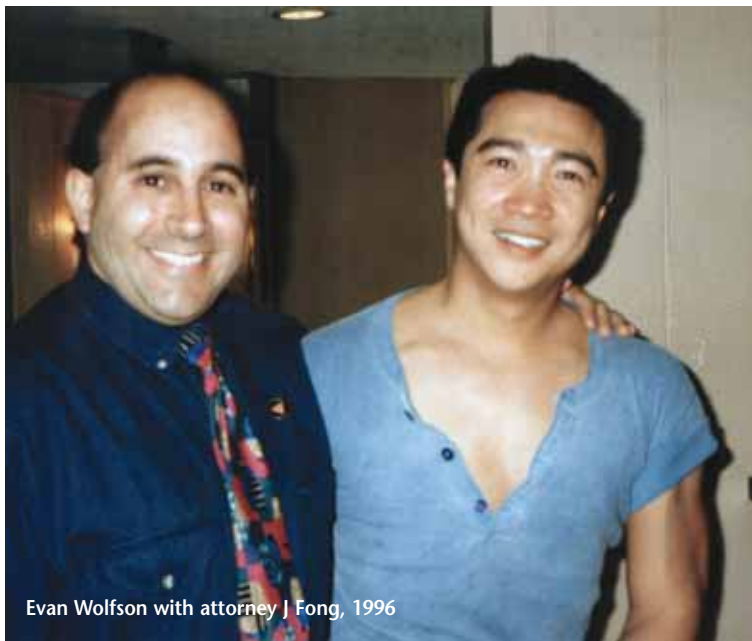
"Same-sex 'marriage' is a lie that runs con-

trary to human nature and God's design for the family," writes NOM President Brian Brown in his strategy fundraising letter. "Firstly, there is no such thing as same-sex 'marriage' since marriage is intrinsically, by definition, the union of one man and one woman. No judge or politician can ever change that reality. Furthermore, it's beyond dispute that children do best when they are raised by a loving mother and father in an intact marriage. Our laws should encourage that reality, yet so-called same-sex 'marriage' turns the paradigm on its head by creating motherless or fatherless children by design. It says to children that they don't matter, because instantly satisfying the demands of adults is more important."

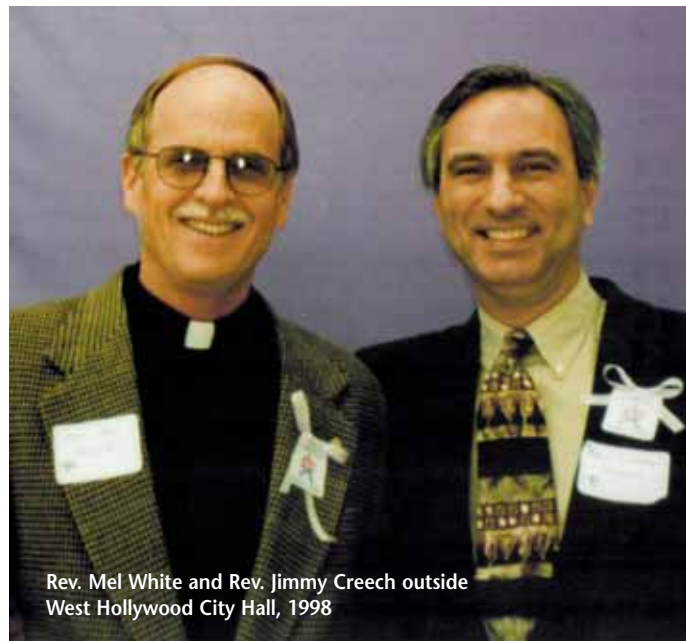
Brown announced that NOM will "work tirelessly with our national and state partners to defend natural marriage whenever and wherever it is under attack," specifically citing legislatures in Illinois, New Jersey and Hawaii, and at the ballot box in Ohio and Oregon. And, he adds, "We join with Governor Mike Pence in calling on the Indiana Legislature to put a marriage amendment on the 2014 ballot, and we will work vigorously to pass

ONE Magazine





Evan Wolfson with attorney J Fong, 1996



Rev. Mel White and Rev. Jimmy Creech outside West Hollywood City Hall, 1998

it. Similarly, we call on states like New Mexico and Pennsylvania to do the same, along with any other state that doesn't yet protect marriage in their state constitution."

Ironically—or perhaps intentionally—NOM's so-called "plan" to preserve "natural" marriage was announced the day after Freedom to Marry announced the acceleration of their national Roadmap to Victory, the pathway to building a critical mass of states by 2016. The organization's plan calls for winning more states, ending federal discrimination and growing and diversifying public support.

"This past year has brought our campaign galvanizing gains: winning seven states, solidifying and diversifying a national majority and delivering a powerful blow to federal marriage discrimination in the Supreme Court," Wolfson said. "This irrefutable momentum confirms that the national strategy we have pursued is the strategy that will bring us to nationwide victory, and that full victory is within reach—within years, not decades. The key to winning is, as it has always been, that when we get to the Supreme Court with the next marriage cases, we go with more states and more support creating the climate for the justices then to do the right thing."

Freedom to Marry outlined its 30-month plan to achieve its goals by 2016 as including getting public support at greater than 60 percent and raising more than \$3 million to win more states, starting with a \$500,000 in state marriage campaigns, \$250,000 of which was invested in the Oregon ballot fight. Additionally, Freedom to Marry hired Richard Carlborn as director of state

campaigns, following his "unprecedented success leading Minnesotans United for All Families to the first-ever victory against an anti-gay constitutional amendment, and then months later, the passage of a freedom to marry law—the first legislative victory in America's heartland."

Carlborn will oversee the strategy and digital support to win in four states by 2013/2014—Hawaii, Illinois, New Jersey and Oregon. Additionally, he will start laying the groundwork to win at least six more states by 2015-2016 (some mix of Arizona, Colorado, Michigan, Nevada, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Virginia).

Freedom to Marry also candidly announced what it would take to succeed. "Based on work to date nationally and in the states, including what it takes to do public education groundwork and build and run successful ballot campaigns, Freedom to Marry estimates the cost of this push to finish the job to be more than \$100 million, of which Freedom to Marry is determined to raise and contribute one-quarter or more, building on its success at becoming the nation's largest funder of marriage work."

More than \$100 million over the next few years seems like a lot of money—until one remembers that the 'No on Prop. 8' campaign raised and spent roughly \$40 million, as did Prop. 8 proponents in 2008.

But while winning the right to marry seems like a new issue, in fact, it has been on the minds of gay Angelenos for at least 60 years. It was August 1953 that the cover story for L.A.-based *ONE Magazine* was "Homosexual Marriage?" And one of the first things Rev. Troy Perry did in founding

his Metropolitan Community Church in his L.A. apartment two years before Stonewall was perform marriages. Perry went on to perform mass marriage at every March on Washington—including one featuring disabled Sharon Kowalski and her partner Karen Thompson, a relationship Kowalski's parents tried to ruin. And L.A. became a favorite fundraising stop for the six couples in Hawaii who wanted to get married—despite the upset raised by the national organizations who argued the nation was not ready for gay marriage.

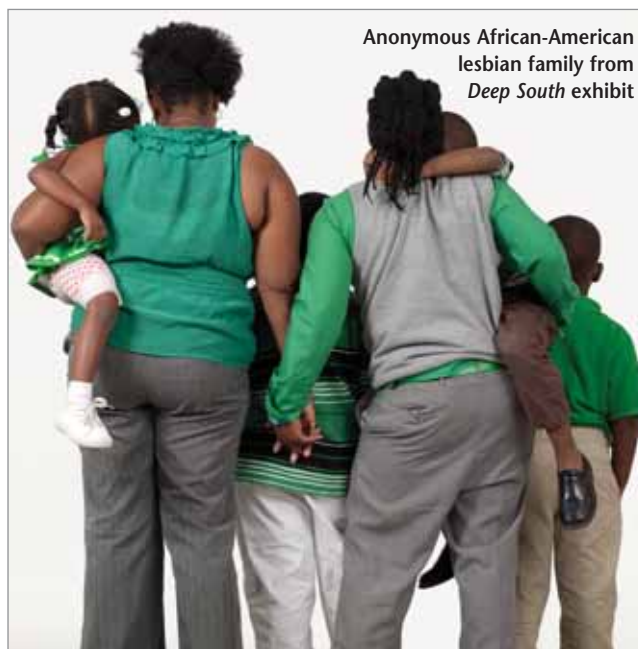
Evan Wolfson, who was with Lambda Legal then, tried to help in the early-to-mid-'90s, eventually leaving to found the Freedom to Marry movement. The L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center worked with Freedom to Marry and other groups and individuals—including the Rev. Mel White and Rev. Jimmy Creech—in coordinating efforts to advance the right. And then there was the joy of marriage equality in Massachusetts and the backlash from President George W. Bush in 2004 that prompted San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom to issue marriage licenses on Freedom to Marry Day in February 2004. The resulting lawsuit led to the first marriage victory in May 2008 in California—and its backlash, Prop. 8. Now, following the Supreme Court victories, even same-sex couples in Mississippi—considered the last state to ever consider granting marriage equality—are asking for marriage licenses as part of the WE DO campaign. But as a recent exhibit of photos by Carolyn Sherer at the West Hollywood Library—"Living in Limbo: Lesbian Families in the Deep South" illustrates, same-sex couples still have a long way to go in red states.

Perhaps lost in the excitement of the recent





Robin Tyler and Diane Olson get married at Beverly Hills Courthouse, 2008



Anonymous African-American lesbian family from Deep South exhibit

✦ Freedom to Marry Accelerates Its Campaign

victories and the longevity of the fight is the fact that Freedom to Marry is actually a national political campaign, not a legacy LGBT organization, despite its declaration at the end of every press release.

Frontiers discussed this with Evan Wolfson in a recent interview where he outlined the campaign strategy.

"When I launched Freedom to Marry, I made it clear that Freedom to Marry is not going to engage in mission-creep," Wolfson said. "We're not going to pretend we're doing things we're not. We're not trying to claim we're everything everyone wants. We're not asking people to give us all the money that needs to go to everything we care about. We have said we are a focused campaign to win the freedom to marry and then go out of business. And we're continuing to drive that success. I believe that success, in turn, helps to make the rest obtainable. But we're not pretending we're doing everything, and we're certainly encouraging others to keep doing the important work that also needs to happen."

Indeed, Wolfson made it clear that the work of Freedom to Marry, in coalition with legal organizations and boots-on-the-ground groups, have been having candid marriage conversations whether the issue is hot or not.

"The Prop. 8 case was a good and important case, and it had the effect of restoring the freedom to marry in California—and that's a big win for all of us. But no one should be under any illusion that that was the only thing going on over

the last four years, because actually the thing that has generated the momentum and the progress and maximized our chances of winning before the Supreme Court—which then resulted in a win—has been the three tracks on this roadmap together," Wolfson said.

"And the good news there is that despite the occasional tension and turf squabble, the organizations have worked pretty well together in fulfillment of this Freedom to Marry strategy for several years," Wolfson continued. "The Task Force and HRC, as well as the ACLU and local organizations and others have all been central parts of the coalitions that Freedom to Marry has been able to pull together in state after state after state—and will continue to be important parts of the work ahead. So I think there's more partnership and collaboration than sometimes meets the eye, and even though some people like to emphasize their piece of the work more than someone else's, the fact of the matter is that most of this work and most of these tactics do in fact connect to and are a fulfillment of the very same strategy that we have been driving all along. There are occasional exceptions and there are occasional bumps, but this strategy is a multi-methodology, multi-partner, multi-state, multi-year strategy. It's always been that. And Freedom to Marry's ability to work with others and to get the best part of everybody's contribution and then fill in the gaps and take it all to a higher place is part of how we, as a movement, have gotten better and better each round. It's part of how we learn from our stum-

bles in Prop. 8 and Maine to be able to go and do what was needed to win in four ballot measures last year.

"[After Prop. 8] we learned from our mistakes," Wolfson said. "Freedom to Marry really ramped up and pulled together the movement's shared knowledge, did some additional research and testing, worked closely with other partners to get everyone to work on it together—groups like Third Way, as well as our usual team—and then worked hard to propagate the messaging and the strategies that we concluded would now work better so that we didn't just keep repeating our mistakes."

But, Wolfson said, like any campaign, victories do not come out of nowhere. "It took a huge amount of work and large amounts of money. So we're laying out very candidly what we believe it's going to take and everyone needs to understand—when they give money to Freedom to Marry, they have the absolute guarantee of knowing that every single dollar they give goes directly and solely to marriage work," Wolfson said.

"The thing that keeps me going is that I know at every turn when people have said that this is too hard or there's a barrier you can't overcome, our movement—our campaign—has been successful at overcoming barrier after barrier after barrier. I absolutely believe we can win."

Go to FrontiersLA.com for the extended interview with Evan Wolfson.