

RELIGIOUS ENDORSEMENT OF THE FREEDOM TO MARRY

“An Open Letter to Religious Leaders on Marriage Equality” was developed at a colloquium of theologians sponsored by the Religious Institute, an ecumenical, interfaith organization dedicated to advocating for sexual health, education, and justice in faith communities and society, and funded by Freedom to Marry.

Endorsements are only accepted from ordained clergy, professional religious educators, theologians, and staff of religious institutions. Not clergy? You can still help! Sign our Marriage Resolution on the other side of this card and send it in today!

Yes, please list me as endorsing An Open Letter to Religious Leaders on Marriage Equality.* (Please fill out all fields.)

Name: _____

Title:
Rabbi__ Rev. __ Rev. Dr. __ Rt. Rev. __ Father__ Sister__ Dr. __

Organization: _____

Degree: _____ Denomination: _____

E-mail Address: _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____

Zip: _____ Phone: _____ Fax: _____

*** By agreeing to endorse the statement, I understand that I am agreeing to my name being used with this statement in public releases, press materials, brochures, advertisements, and other public formats.**

PLEASE DETACH AT FOLD AND FAX OR MAIL IT IN TODAY!
Freedom to Marry
116 West 23rd Street, Suite 500
New York, NY 10011
Tel: 212-851-8418
Fax: 646-375-2069

loved ones were threatened, wouldn't you want to know that an independent safeguard existed, as our Constitution promises, and that, if needed, you could have your day in court?

Courts are under attack and we can't leave defending the Constitution to judges alone. All of us, gay and non-gay, have to create the climate of receptivity in which judges, legislators, and politicians are emboldened, encouraged, and, indeed, enlightened to do the right thing. The key to this is conversation — asking for support, answering questions, reasoning, telling stories. There is no gay exception to the Constitution, and there is no marriage without engagement. Now is the time to make every voice heard.

“America needs to know that many faith leaders and theologians from diverse religious traditions strongly believe that all people have a God-given right to lead lives which fully express love, mutuality and commitment—including the right to marry.”

*-Reverend Debra W. Haffner
Director of the Religious Institute*

You can download the complete “Open Letter” at www.religioustheology.org.

If we accept and acquiesce in the face of discrimination, we accept the responsibility ourselves. We should, therefore, protest openly everything that smacks of discrimination or slander.

*-Mary McLeod Bethune (1875-1955)
founder of Bethune Cookman College
and the National Council of Negro Women.*

In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.

-Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

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WHY THE
UNAMERICAN
ATTACKS
ON SO-CALLED
ACTIVIST
JUDGES
MUST STOP





Why the attacks on so-called “activist judges” must stop

By EVAN WOLFSON
Freedom to Marry

America’s government rests on a pair of ideas that together make one of our country’s greatest contributions to human freedom. The pair of ideas are as follows:

1) When it comes to most decisions, kings should not decide, but rather the people

should – through democratic votes and majority rule;

2) Equally important, not everything gets put up to a vote – there are certain basic rights and protections that belong to each individual and cannot be taken away even by the majority.

We Americans count on our Constitution and courts to safeguard the inalienable rights guaranteed to all of us. If we wanted legislatures to be able to vote to do anything, or thought majorities should control everything, or believed that politicians never do anything dumb or ill-motivated – then, sure, we wouldn’t need courts. But then there would be no checks and balances; no safe-

guarding against passions of the moment or prejudices of the majority; no requirement that equality, liberty, and justice for all – whether religious freedom, or the basic American commitment to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” – be available to all, including vulnerable or unpopular minorities or each one of us.

Attacks on judges and courts have been a staple of right-wing anti-civil-rights, anti-choice, anti-equality campaigns for decades now. In 2004 we celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education*, the landmark Supreme Court decision overturning laws in many states requiring racial segregation. What followed *Brown*, however, was not unanimous applause, but rather a concerted wave of political attacks, including members of Congress signing resolutions denouncing “activist judges” and politicians across the country denouncing the courts for doing their job. These political attacks have ratcheted up over the past few decades in opposition to decisions upholding women’s reproductive freedom, gay and non-gay people’s personal autonomy, and America’s precious separation of church and state.

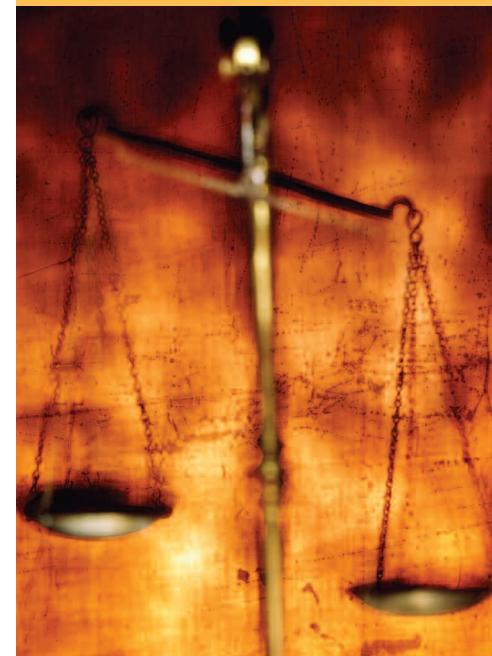
Without the courts, our country would not have made the changes we needed to end legal race discrimination, to advance the equality of women, to ensure freedom of speech, or to protect religious minorities against stigma and oppression. While courts do sometimes get it wrong, they have a vital and legitimate role to play in our American constitutional system of checks and balances.

Committed same-sex couples seeking an end to their exclusion from marriage properly go to court to challenge the unconstitutional and unfair discrimination they suffer.

These couples are asking courts to consider whether it is fair to exclude a minority of Americans from marriage with the legal protections and responsibilities available to others families. The question before the judges is what reason does the government have for withholding civil marriage licenses? The courts’ job is to make the government put up or shut up, give a good reason or stop discriminating. The couples are winning some of these cases and losing others, but even when they lose, advocates of gay equality – unlike our right-wing opponents – have not resorted to attacks on the courts.

Disagreeing with a specific decision on its merits is one thing. But when you hear politicians or pressure-groups attacking the courts for doing their jobs, consider whether

people in other countries without an independent judiciary committed to constitutional guarantees are really more free, equal, or safe. Do we want constitutional standards and protections that apply to all, or simply a rubberstamp for whatever politicians want? If you believed your rights were being denied, or the safety and liberty of you or your



THE MARRIAGE RESOLUTION

Because marriage is a basic human right and an individual choice, RESOLVED, the State should not interfere with same-sex couples who choose to marry and share fully and equally in the rights, responsibilities and commitment of legal marriage.

I/We endorse the marriage resolution. Please feel free to include me/us as a voice in educating the public:

Signature*: _____

Name: _____

(please print legibly)

Title: Mr. ___ Ms. ___ Miss. ___ Dr. ___ Mrs. ___

Organization (if any): _____

Address: _____

Apt/Suite: _____

City: _____ State: _____

Zip: _____ Phone: _____ Fax: _____

E-mail Address: _____

May we add your name and contact information to the Freedom to Marry mailing list? Yes ___ No ___

*** By agreeing to endorse the statement, I understand that I am agreeing to my name being used with this statement in public releases, press materials, brochures, advertisements, and other public formats.**

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