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SUMMER 2011

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

A HISTORIC VICTORY AND OUR NEXT STEPS FORWARD

Following our historic marriage equality win in New York, the Human Rights Campaign is harnessing our momentum to further advance lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender civil rights.

We began laying the groundwork for victory in New York in 2007, 2008 and 2010, by helping to elect Gov. Andrew Cuomo and pro-equality state legislators. HRC then spearheaded one of the most ambitious state legislative campaigns ever waged for LGBT rights, tirelessly lobbying lawmakers, deploying an unprecedented 30 field organizers and aggressively countering the hateful lies of anti-LGBT forces.

This time our persistence and our will to fight brought us victory — more than doubling the number of Americans living in states where LGBT couples have the right to marry. And we could never have done it without the generosity of our more than 1 million members and supporters, including the leading donors recognized in this edition of *Equality*.

Your support is responsible for HRC's growing success in winning hearts and changing minds — by enabling us to reach more fair-minded Americans with real stories of LGBT families. You're also helping us bring more influential straight allies to fight at our side, including sports heroes like the N.Y. Rangers' Sean Avery, rugby superstar Ben Cohen and champion wrestler Hudson Taylor, and political leaders like Gov. Cuomo in New York and Gov. Deval Patrick in Massachusetts — whose contributions to the fight for LGBT rights are featured in this magazine.

On the heels of our victory in New York, HRC is working on multiple fronts to expand marriage equality — passing marriage equality laws in more states, overturning state prohibitions on LGBT couples marrying, defeating proposed state constitutional bans on same-sex marriage and repealing the federal Defense of Marriage Act. We're also continuing the fight for other critical priorities, like ending anti-LGBT workplace discrimination.

We know that we won't win every battle. But we also know that when we stand together, fight smart and refuse to give up on our dreams, we will prevail in the end. Thank you for your continued commitment to securing the full rights and respect that LGBT Americans deserve.

Gratefully,

Joe Solmonese

P.S. While our victory in New York has energized the LGBT civil rights movement, it has also galvanized the right wing, which is bent on halting our progress. Please help HRC continue to prevail in the fight for fairness by sending a generous special gift today or giving online at www.hrc.org/summer. And please consider building a lasting personal legacy of equality by including HRC or the HRC Foundation in your estate plans through the HRC Equality Circle. Visit www.hrc.org/estateplanning to find out more. Thank you!

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HRC's Member Services Team, led by Dana Campbell, works every day to provide HRC's more than 1 million members and supporters with the best membership experience possible. To contact Member Services, e-mail membership@hrc.org or call 800-727-4723.

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ON THE COVER:

HRC organizers in New York.

Photo by Henrik Olund for HRC



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CITY WATCH!

HRC has begun developing the first nationwide evaluation of municipal laws affecting the LGBT community. It will look at how major U.S. cities treat their LGBT employees and how cities' laws and policies affect LGBT people living and working in that municipality. The city-by-city analysis — to launch in 2012 — grows out of the success of the Corporate Equality Index, a rating by HRC's Workplace Project of hundreds of major U.S. companies.

“This law attacks the marriages of loving, committed same-sex couples and places far too many of them into difficult financial circumstances.”

— Joe Solmonese

In July, HRC's Joe Solmonese testified (*below*) before the Senate Judiciary Committee, on the Respect for Marriage Act, a bill to repeal the discriminatory Defense of Marriage Act. It was the first congressional hearing on repealing DOMA since its enactment 15 years ago. DOMA denies federal recognition to legally married same-sex couples.

Also testifying was HRC Federal Club member Ron Wallen of Indio, Calif., who is barred by DOMA from receiving any of his husband's Social Security payments. Wallen and Tom Carrollo, who died of cancer, were together for 55 years. Wallen is now unable to make payments on their family home and may be faced with selling it.

Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., is the lead sponsor of the Respect for Marriage Act; Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., called the hearing.



Photo: Steve Pope / Getty

Photo: Tom Williams for HRC

UP FRONT



THE BACHMANN “MARRIAGE VOW?”

The Human Rights Campaign urged Republican presidential candidates to speak out against the views and activities of fellow candidate Rep. Michele Bachmann, R-Minn., and her husband Marcus who support so-called reparative therapy. The couple has promoted the theory of “ex-gay,” which says homosexuality can be cured or even prayed away. Both the American Psychological Association and the American Psychiatric Association have strongly repudiated the theory.

In July, Michele Bachmann signed her name to a homophobic “marriage vow” pledge pro-

motored by the Iowa Family Leader, a far-right group (as did fellow GOP presidential candidate Rick Santorum).

Her husband, an unlicensed psychologist in Minnesota, whose clinic has received more than \$100,000 in Medicaid funding, reportedly offers reparative therapy. He also has called gay people “barbarians” who “needed to be disciplined.”

More than 22,000 people signed an online HRC petition asking GOP presidential candidates to reject “ex-gay” therapy. HRC's Call It Out campaign is tracking the Bachmanns' anti-gay activities. Check out www.hrc.org/callitout.

35%

of Americans now live in a state where the state-level benefits and responsibilities of marriage, civil unions or comprehensive domestic partnerships are available to same-sex couples. See www.hrc.org/maps.

Does your local healthcare facility fully welcome lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender patients and their families? The latest Healthcare Equality Index report, released by the Human Rights Campaign Foundation, can tell you.

Now, 124 U.S. healthcare facilities get the highest of marks, says the HEI report. What do these facilities do? They protect their LGBT patients and employees from discrimination,

ensure equal visitation access for same-sex couples and same-sex parents through explicitly inclusive policies, and provide training for all personnel on LGBT cultural competency.

The 2011 leaders are: Advocate Illinois Masonic Medical Center AIDS Care; The George Washington University Hospital; Kaiser Foundation Hospitals (36 facilities); Oregon Health & Science University Hospital; St. Luke's-Roosevelt Hospital Center; and UCSF Medical Center. See www.hrc.org/hef for the full list.

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or any other color of the rainbow.

It only cares about how good you are. Which is what matters to us, both in the office and on the playing field. The more diverse our talent, the better we will be. It's why we support an open workplace for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people, and why we support the Human Rights Campaign.



TEXAS GOV. RICK PERRY & THE WORST OF THE FAR RIGHT



“ Gov. Rick Perry recently announced his intention to hold a day of prayer as “The Response” to our nation’s alleged social, economic and moral crises. The Texas governor is positioning the event as a non-denominational, apolitical gathering — but in fact, Gov. Perry is partnering with some of the most virulently anti-gay groups in the nation to put on “The Response.”

“ These folks include the American Family Association, a group the Southern Poverty Law Center identified as ‘one of the most strident voices spreading malicious anti-LGBT propaganda.’ Lou Engle’s TheCall and International House of Prayer — groups that played a role in push-

ing legislation in Uganda that would make being gay a crime punishable by death — are also working with Gov. Perry.”

“ It’s one thing for far-right religious groups to gather — even if their actions are harmful to LGBT Americans — but when this gathering is in partnership with a sitting governor, it is a flagrant and arrogant dismissal of the separation of church and state.”

— Excerpts from an op-ed by HRC Religion & Faith Director Sharon Groves & Soulforce’s Rev. Cindi Love, a member of HRC’s Religion Council, condemning Gov. Perry’s role. “The Response” is in Houston on Aug. 8.

Photo: Gregory Bull / AP

MOMS & DADS!

Candice Banks, who lives on a military base in upstate New York, put a rainbow decal in her kitchen window with the words, “Safe Place.” Over time, Banks’ decal has become a beacon to young soldiers in the West Point area who are looking for solace and peace of mind. Banks (*below*) is also the mother of a transgender son. She and six other moms were selected by the HRC Foundation’s Family Project as winners in its first-ever “Mother of the Year” contest to celebrate LGBT and ally moms nationwide. And how about those dads! HRC also chose six top “Fathers of the Year.” All winners were chosen from submissions from across the country.



AND THE WINNERS ARE...

- Melissa Ball**, Pacifica, CA
- Candice Banks**, West Point, NY
- Stephanie Graham & Kay Cox**, Hiram, GA
- Gretchen Hamm**, Dallas, TX
- Linda Mecca**, Roanoke, VA
- Pam Thompson**, Fayetteville, TN
- Nelson N Harper**, Columbus, OH
- Kergan Edwards-Stout**, Orange, CA
- Thomas Bowden**, Little Rock, AR
- Philip Reitan**, Eden Prairie, MN
- Rob Parke**, Harrisonburg, VA
- Jose Genis**, San Diego, CA

Photo: Candice Banks

584,591

Number of actions taken so far in the last three months by HRC members and supporters, responding to HRC’s online requests, urging them to contact their representatives about the federal, anti-LGBT Defense of Marriage Act, the New York marriage battle as well as threatened amendments to the repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.”

ACTIONS

HBCU SUMMIT

This fall, HRC will be hosting a Leadership and Career Summit for Historically Black Colleges and Universities’ lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students. The four-day program (Oct. 27-30) will develop student leaders’ skills and build support for LGBT-friendly groups on campus, too. See www.hrc.org/hbcu to register.

47 of 50

HRC stepped up its presence at pride events this year, staffing festivals in 47 of 50 states, and signing up 19,000-plus members — huge increases from last year. By the way, it’s not too late to volunteer with HRC at pride. Still ahead: Las Vegas (Sept. 17), Dallas (Sept. 18), Atlanta (Oct. 8-9) and 45 other pride events, running through November. Check out www.hrc.org/pride for more.



Photo: HRC



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Bryan Dunn, Experienced Associate. At PwC, I immediately felt comfortable revealing the part of me I thought I would have to hide. I’m proud that PwC has an Advisory Board of openly gay partners serving as role models and mentors—we’re the only Big 4 firm that has this. As a gay professional, I’ve been able to network with peers through our local GLBT group. I give 100% to this job. And PwC encourages me to bring 100% of myself to work. To learn more about my personal brand and how strongly we feel about diversity, go to [***pwc.com/diversity***](http://pwc.com/diversity)



AN EPIC WIN

By Kevin Nix

Almost 60 percent of New Yorkers wanted it. Gov. Andrew Cuomo showed a steely resolve to get it. Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender groups united to win it. Four Republican senators joined 29 Democrats and voted for it. And now marriage equality is a reality in the Empire State!

State legislators repeatedly said they needed to hear what their constituents thought of marriage equality. So the Human Rights Campaign spearheaded one of the largest legislative advocacy efforts in New York history and the largest field campaign ever in support of state LGBT rights legislation, spending almost \$1 million. HRC deployed an unprecedented team of 30 full-time field organizers to help generate more than 150,000 constituent contacts.

HRC's field team talked to New Yorkers on commuter train platforms at 6:00 a.m. and at subway stops after work, in shopping center parking lots, at farmers markets, on college

campuses, at places of worship, on Long Island beaches, with shop owners on main streets and folks at Memorial Day, Independence Day and pride celebrations. From Buffalo to Brookhaven, from Howard Beach to Saratoga Springs, from Poughkeepsie to Rochester, HRC's organizers worked tirelessly. The thousands of conversations about love and commitment demonstrated the power of the personal connection. HRC helped create a real conversation about marriage equality across the entire state.

State legislators listened patiently and thoughtfully, soon realizing that the energy, the passion and, yes, the numbers were on the side of equal-

ity. Sen. Joseph Addabbo, D-Queens, reported that the vast majority of his constituent contacts supported marriage equality and that was why, after voting "no" in 2009, he voted "yes" this year. Given the size of the ground game, and the senators' comments about their votes, it's clear that most swing senators were influenced by the outpouring of constituent support for equality.

HRC also brought a diverse set of voices to the debate through the "New Yorkers for Marriage Equality" video campaign, which included more than 50 testimonials of New Yorkers — some iconic, like the New York Rangers' Sean Avery, Barbara Bush, Mayor Michael Bloomberg



IN NEW YORK

and Russell Simmons — and others, everyday people, including a Long Island firefighter and a World War II veteran who wanted to stand up for his gay grandson. These videos, which collectively had 1 million views on YouTube, helped drive public attention and support for the issue. President Clinton added his voice to the effort as well.

Meanwhile, on another front, HRC helped to identify and mobilize small businesses and large corporate supporters of marriage equality statewide. Xerox Corp. announced its support for marriage equality at a press event in Rochester, where the company is headquartered. (In that district, a state senator went from a “no” vote in 2009 to a “yes” in 2011.)

Further, HRC brought in top talent, including Senior Strategist Brian Ellner and SKDKnickerbocker, a premier political consulting and strategic communications firm, which managed New Yorkers United for Marriage — a coalition of LGBT groups including HRC, Empire State Pride Agenda, Freedom to Marry,

continued on p. 13



(Top) In the Senate Gallery in Albany after the vote: the New York organizing team with Marty Rouse, HRC national field director (center); (Bottom, L-R) New York State Sen. Bill Perkins and HRC's Brian Ellner at the pride march in New York City; U.S. Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand thanks HRC's field team for their work; HRC's Christine Sloane, a native New Yorker, and her fiancée Renee Pickard enjoy a moment; an HRC organizer on the street; phone banking at 1199SEIU's offices in Manhattan. (Opposite page, L-R): HRC's David Turley garnering support; celebrating at pride.



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New York Win con't from p. 11

Marriage Equality New York and the Log Cabin Republicans. The coalition was the most unified marriage equality effort in U.S. history. HRC National Field Director Marty Rouse led the campaign's lauded field operations.

It takes time to bake a wedding cake. HRC's campaign for marriage in New York began in 2007, helping pick up a marriage equality supporter in the state Senate. HRC built on that effort in 2008. In 2010, it helped elect three new pro-equality candidates to the state Senate, deploying field staff to do grassroots organizing for a number of the candidates and contributing \$145,000 through the HRC New York PAC to support them, as well. "Without HRC's support, I would not be in the state Senate," said Sen. Tim Kennedy, D-Buffalo.

Taking the time to invest *early* and smart, by working *together*, by working *hard* and smart, HRC and other supporters of marriage equality built a campaign for the history books — and, in particular, were a step ahead of major opponents.

"It was clear the church had been outmaneuvered by the highly organized same-sex marriage coalition, with its sprawling field team," *The New York Times* noted.

What's heartening coming out of New York is that the fears and hysteria whipped up by anti-gay groups did not work. Reason prevailed.

Couple by couple, family by family, marriage becomes less of a talking point and more about

people simply wanting what's best for those they love. That's what happened in New York, that's what the state Senate heard and that's ultimately why marriage equality nationally is a question of "when," not "if." 

Nix is HRC's new media director.

See www.hrc.org/ny4marriage for more details about the New York victory.



(L-R) Celebrate! Mayor Michael Bloomberg, State Sen. Tom Duane, City Council Speaker Christine Quinn and Gov. Andrew Cuomo join the pride march.

HRC'S ROLE IN NEW YORK, BY THE NUMBERS...



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We are proud that Google's spirit of inclusion has been recognized with a 100% HRC Corporate Equality Index rating for five years in a row. We congratulate HRC for all of its work furthering equal rights for the LGBT community and look forward to our continued partnership.

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To learn more, visit us online at www.google.com/diversity



ON THE ROAD HRC'S EQUALITY BUS TOUR



Starting in Salt Lake City, Utah, the Human Rights Campaign is hitting the road in mid-August to educate the American public and empower lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

It's a bus tour to engage some of the reddest of the red states about the importance of equality.

"We're reaching out to people in the country's most conservative states, where legal protections for LGBT people are severely limited and living openly can be incredibly hard," said Human Rights Campaign President Joe Solmonese.

After three days of events in Salt Lake City, including a seminar on LGBT families with national expert Caitlin Ryan at the local pride center and a panel with local faith leaders, the bus

tour heads east to Omaha, Neb., and then on to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's gigantic "Big, Red Welcome" for incoming students and other events. And the bus will then roll through Missouri; Louisiana; Texas; Arkansas; Kentucky; Washington, D.C.; Georgia; and Alabama, ending up in central Florida in late fall.

HRC's broad range of work — from coming out to navigating the workplace to raising a family to getting married — affects every aspect of a LGBT citizen's life, Solmonese noted. And the HRC Foundation's workplace, family and religion and faith programs offer unique resources for everyone.

The bus, wrapped with the simple message of "Road to Equality," will be accompanied by exhibits — and special workshops and seminars

in the local cities where the tour goes — on topics ranging from adoption to bullying to job discrimination.

HRC is collaborating with local groups along the way to bring the resources of HRC to communities with the most need.

Additionally, people will be able to learn what they can do to contribute to the fight for equality.

LGBT and ally groups along the bus itinerary have been in contact with HRC already about getting involved. Bonds are being formed or deepened, Solmonese said. "It's very cool — and also an adventure."

See www.hrc.org/roadtoequality for more. ■

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GOV. DEVAL PATRICK

SITTING DOWN WITH

ON GROWING UP, THE RADICAL RIGHT AND THE NATURE OF PARENTING

By Janice Hughes

BOSTON — It's a bright, clear morning and the sun is glistening off the golden dome of the Massachusetts State House, sitting high above Beacon Hill.

Inside the State House, down the ornate hallways and up the wide stairs, is Gov. Deval Patrick's office. Huge oil portraits line its long lobby — former governors, one by one, peer down. Two of the governor's staff sit at their desks. Phones ring. Some elderly tourists, guidebook in hand, take a few steps in, quietly looking up and around.

Moments later, you're sitting next to the governor at a table in his office, talking. The conversation veers from religion to politics to his new memoir. There's a glint in his eye, he smiles a lot, listens at length and when he talks about social justice, you know he really means it. His record shows it.

Gov. Patrick is among the first elected officials in the country to win statewide office after having actively campaigned in support of marriage equality. He led the effort in 2007, in fact, to block a constitutional amendment in Massachusetts to ban same-sex marriage and that was — as his daughter, Katherine, has proudly pointed out — even before he knew she was lesbian. This spring, he signed an executive order banning discrimination against transgender state employees and nominated the first openly gay justice to the state's high court. Also this spring, he released his book, *A Reason to Believe: Lessons from an Improbable Life*.

The governor, who grew up on Chicago's South Side, was a civil rights prosecutor under President Clinton and also served as general counsel for Texaco and Coca-Cola. And oh yes, he's only the second African American to be elected governor in the United States. He was re-elected in 2010.

Every year, he marches with his family in Boston's annual gay pride parade. "It was the easiest coming-out experience that anyone could possibly have," Katherine later said, after telling her parents. At the time, she was an intern at MassEquality, the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender statewide group. The governor and his wife, Diane, a lawyer, have another daughter, Sarah.

In the lobby, after the interview, an aide points to one of the portraits and smiles. It's Mitt Romney, Gov. Patrick's predecessor, with a volume of his healthcare plan.

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Governor, while growing up, you say you felt like an outsider. As you know, so many LGBT youth, feel the same.

The first time I was conscious that I was around a person who was gay was my freshman roommate in college who was, and still is, a marvelous person and lives here in Massachusetts. I think as he was coming out during that freshman year, there was an incredible sense of loneliness. And there were all kinds of stigma that went with it. ... I think he understood what those feelings were but he wasn't quite sure how he was supposed to be. We were very close. For him, he had a friend who wasn't going to run away. I didn't know what it meant either, but he was still my friend. I think that was a little easier for me to offer him because of the experiences I had as a kid, feeling on the margin. We have stayed friends ever since.

At one time, you considered a calling in the clergy and even applied to a seminary.

My very best friend's father and grandfathers were ministers and I liked their lives. I liked what they did for people. But I think that job is maybe harder than the one I have right now.

In your book, you discuss the radical right's claim on Christianity to advance what you

call a "deeply un-Christian agenda." Can you talk about that? Historically, Scripture has been used to justify all manner of hatefulness and hurt. But I don't understand two things — how the religious right, the radical right, today uses religion to make us turn on each other rather than to each other because for me the lessons of the New Testament are very much the opposite of that. Secondly, I don't understand why good people don't call them out on it. I am a progressive Democrat and I don't think these are particular partisan issues but it just frustrates me that progressive Democrats feel like the language of Scripture and of faith belongs someplace else instead of, in fact, embracing that language as very much supporting the social justice agenda that we are about.

What do you say to ministers who still reject LGBT people in church?

I had all kinds of pushback from black clergy when I was running for the first time and I was very unequivocal in my support for [LGBT equality] and what I would do if I was governor. ... One point I would make is, first of all, I believe in a politics that says you don't need to agree on everything before we work together on anything. I bet that members [of congregations] are more concerned about how to pay the rent and the heat in the same month than about whether the

government gets to say who you and I choose to marry. Truly, we can work together on that. Another phenomenon of modern politics to me is that the right-wing clergy will show up and make common cause with black clergy on this issue but on nothing else. Isn't it ironic that when there are issues of hunger or housing or educational quality, we can't get anyone else to come help us but when it's about inserting the government in very private and very personal positions then they are right there?

So many parents of LGBT youth fail to support their kids. If you could speak to them, what would you say?

We don't know exactly who our children are going to be. We have a lesbian daughter; I didn't know she was a lesbian, but I do know who she is, I know her heart, I know her character. And I love her, I love the memories we had, I still remember holding her. I still love to hug her, that doesn't change. ... Boston has a pride parade every year, and the year that Katherine came out, I remember mentioning it to our chief of staff. I said, "Guess what Katherine told me last weekend?" It was kind of matter of fact for me. He said, "This is news," and I said, "Really? This is just our family." ... The pride parade was right after that, and we were walking and came around the corner. I was with Katherine, Sarah, our other daughter, and Diana, my wife. A woman, she must

"We don't know exactly who our children are going to be. I didn't know she was a lesbian but I do know her character. And I love her."





have been 70 years old, tears welling in her eyes, grabbed my hand and said, "I wish I had a father like you." And I thought to myself how long had she been carrying that around— her old feelings about what she did or did not get from her dad. In my book, there's a chapter about saving a place for your parents and what a blessing it was to have found a reconciliation with my dad before he died. I wouldn't want my children to have to carry around a question about whether I'd love them unconditionally because I know what that feels like.

Earlier this year, you issued an executive order banning discrimination against transgender workers in state government. How

has that gone? Has the sky fallen? [Laughter.] The sky has not fallen. There is a transgender bill that has been pending in the Legislature for a while; it hasn't moved far enough yet. We did the executive order because we wanted to just get off the dime and at least model what we thought the right thing to do was in the state government and in employment.

Your daughter, Katherine, has been out a few years. How has that been? It's been great. You know, I think after all the preparation for telling us, she said it was totally anti-climactic. We have a place in western Massachusetts, and we were organizing a family cookout and were in middle of all that and she said, "I really need to talk to you and I need you to be still." She told us; she wanted us both there at the same time, her mom and I. We gave her a great big hug and then said, "Well, grab the mustard, let's go. ..." You know what they sometimes say about parents: "You're only as happy as your least happy child." It's just the nature of parenting: you want your children to be happy, and she is a lot happier. Probably some of that has to do with the fact that she can be who she is.

Any words of advice for your friend President Obama, especially at re-election time? He is a much more experienced politician than I am. I

am a total supporter and I'm going to work real hard to ensure his re-election because I think he has work he wants to finish — and a lot of us in the country want him to finish — in healthcare, on job creation, on social justice issues. When he ran the first time, I told him, "Run like you're willing to lose," meaning bring your convictions. And when he won, I told him, "Govern like you're willing to sacrifice the second term" because people are hungry for his leadership based on convictions and values. I think he has shown us that a number of times. And in a second term, we would see more of that.

Anything else? I will say this, and it's a point I have made at HRC dinners here and at other events, and in particular, in the immediate wake of winning marriage equality here in Massachusetts: We fought really hard to do the right thing; it's important for the LGBT community. And by the way, the folks who came to that fight were not all members of the LGBT community, but they saw the issue of justice. I think that the LGBT community has to be willing to step up on somebody else's fight ... When it's an issue of how we deal with health insurance premiums, homelessness or social justice for immigrants, my point about that is we have to see our stake in our neighbors' dreams and struggles as well as our own. 🇺🇸

We have a lesbian daughter. know who she is, I know her heart.





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RUGBY SUPERSTAR BEN COHEN TAKES A STAND

Joins HRC's Hudson Taylor, Wrestling Champion, to Fight Homophobia in Sports

by Amanda Moorefield

British rugby superstar Ben Cohen's retirement is anything but usual. After an extremely successful decade and a half in the sport, including earning a 2003 World Cup win, Cohen launched a foundation to battle bullying and homophobia.

The 32-year-old could have easily chosen to settle down on his rural Northamptonshire farm in central England to spend more quality time with his wife and three-year-old twin daughters. Instead, he chose to focus on his StandUp Foundation, recently returning from a tour across the United States to highlight his message. This fall, he heads to Italy and beyond.

Cohen is one of only a handful of straight athletes who have recently begun to combat homophobia in sports. Cohen stopped in at the Human Rights Campaign this summer and met with HRC spokesman Hudson Taylor, 25, an NCAA All-American wrestling champion. (See p. 23.)

Why do it? It's simple, Cohen says. Everyone has the "right to be happy and true to who we really are. Anything else is just second best and why should anyone have to settle for that?"

How has your work been going? Any surprises? The tour was incredible — amazing. We were really surprised at the response that we received in each place that we went. It was very humbling and made us realize that we have a huge responsibility to do a good job and get our anti-bullying messages and work out there as soon as we can.

Why do you think homophobia is so common in sports? Sports people are constantly being judged and are often seen as role models and someone to aspire to. There may be some pre-conceived ideas of "you have to be 'macho,'" especially in the male-dominated sports. One of our main aims is to eradicate homophobia from sports and this is a big task. But they kicked racism out of football in the U.K., so it stands to reason that it is possible to do the same to homophobia. By breaking down the stereotypical view of the masses and with the support of the governing bodies of the individual sports, then it is totally possible. It will take some time but it needs to start at the top and then filter down through.

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Ben Cohen con't from p. 21

Any advice to youth who have to deal with bullying? Talk to someone. Don't let things continue to get worse. It must be so lonely especially if that person is unable to turn to their family or friends. A lot of people think it will get worse if they tell anyone, and this is when the danger starts. They need to talk to someone they trust. Bullying can be so damaging mentally and emotionally. It oftentimes can lead to physical and mental illnesses. So, it is important that they seek out help. It may not be the first person or even the second person they talk to, but there will be someone out there to listen and to help.

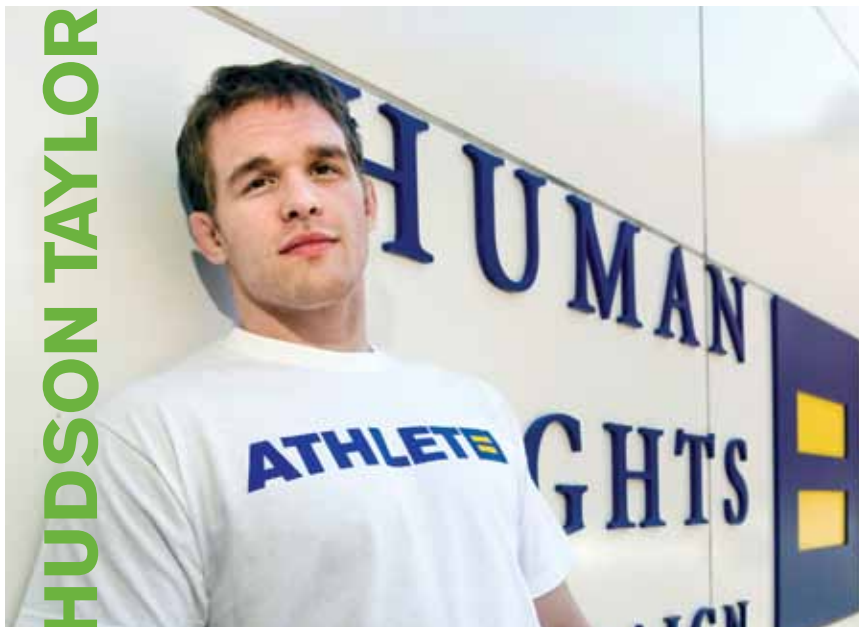
Can you talk about your father ... and his role in your activism? My dad was killed after trying to protect someone who was being assaulted outside a nightclub that we owned. He was an amazing man who did not like to see anyone being treated unfairly. At the time, I really didn't have time to grieve. I just threw all the aggression I felt and everything into my sport. I can see now that my outlet was rugby. Now I am standing up for others myself and it has brought back a lot of feelings and emotions from that time. Partly that this is why I feel so strongly about people being bullied.

How's life back on the farm? The "farm" is mainly stables with some horses, chickens, ducks, sheep and cats and a dog. There's a lot of grass to cut which keeps me busy in down time and there is always the landscaping to do. ... I spend a lot of time with my twin girls as well, especially now that I am not in rugby training.

What's ahead in the fall? Another tour is being organized in the U.S. and a variety of events in the U.K. with anti-bullying organizations. I would also like to be filming some kind of documentary to spread our message, so maybe that will be on the agenda later in the year. One thing is for sure — there is a lot of work to be done.

One last question — what argument would you say resonates the most for you about homophobia and LGBT equality? That's easy really. We all have the right to be happy and true to who we really are. Anything else is just second best. Why should anyone have to settle for that?

Moorefield, an HRC intern, attends Univ. of Louisiana-Lafayette, where she plays Div. 1 soccer.



“HOMOPHOBIA AND TRANSPHOBIA ARE STILL VERY MUCH ALIVE IN ATHLETICS AT ALL LEVELS...”

“I've been an athlete all my life. While wrestling in high school and college, I often overheard crude locker room humor aimed at denigrating gay people. The maddening reality is that homophobia and transphobia are still very much alive in athletics at all levels, and all around us.

“While in college, I met and befriended a number of gay students, some of whom remain my best friends. I'll be honest, a lot of people looked upon that as an odd match: the wrestler jock who grew up in an Evangelical Christian home who hung around with the gays. But to me, it was as natural as could be.

“While wrestling in college, I got so frustrated with the anti-gay comments that I knew I needed to do something about it. I was already a member of the Human Rights Campaign, but I needed to do more. I slapped an HRC sticker onto my wrestling headgear, wore it in practice and in competition, and started to speak out on my team about not tolerating homophobia. Let's just say I raised some eyebrows with that sticker and got into some pretty animated conversations — wrestlers don't make “statements” on their headgear. After I started to speak out, my story got picked up in the media, and since then, I've done

everything I can to encourage straight allies to speak out.

“A few months ago, I founded my own organization, *AthleteAlly.org* — with the mission of educating, encouraging and empowering straight athlete allies to combat homophobia and transphobia in sports. To do so, I've created a pledge for all members of the sports community to sign. The response has been so overwhelming; I'm having a hard time keeping up with the requests.

“But here's the deal. We need many more straight folks to stand up and be vocal, and we need as many people as possible to support HRC. The organization, in fact, was my entry point into activism. I've learned so much along the way.”

NCAA All-American wrestling champion Hudson Taylor, who now coaches at Columbia University, is an HRC spokesman on college campuses, at corporate events and at Federal Club events. Taylor, 25, who graduated last year from the University of Maryland, comes from a long line of missionaries, and is getting married this fall to law student Lia Mandaglio. The two maids of honor are a lesbian couple.



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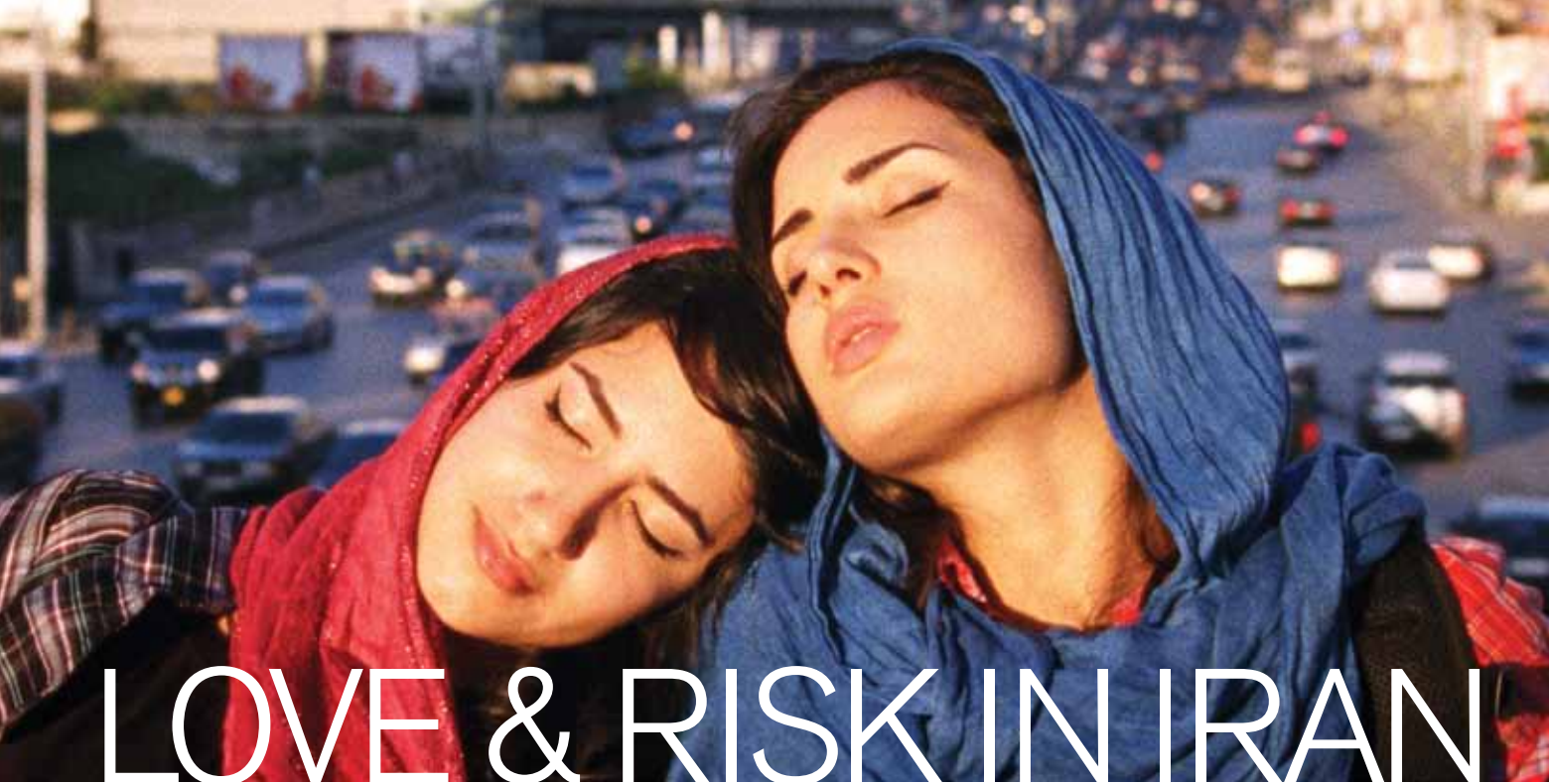
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LOVE & RISK IN IRAN

By Melissa Silverstein

Making an independent film is always tough. But it was even harder for Maryam Keshavarz, the writer and director of *Circumstance* who had to cut off contact with family members in Iran to protect them from the government which condemned her film sight unseen. The film, set in Tehran, was shot in Lebanon in fear of endangering the crew. That's pretty scary business for anyone, let alone a first-time feature filmmaker.

But based on the film's reception since its world premiere at the 2011 Sundance Film Festival, where it received the Audience Award, it was worth it. The film — one of 16 films chosen from 1,102 submissions — tells the story of two teens, joined-at-the-hip, best friends who fall in love. The mainstream appeal of *Circumstance* will be tested when it is released Aug. 26 by Roadside Attractions.

It was a long, hard road for Keshavarz, 35, who grew up going back and forth between Iran and the United States. She saw Iran go from revolution to repression. While there, she lived it, and when in the U.S., she escaped it. She saw the growth of the underground world to which people, especially the youth, escaped — to avoid the government tyranny on the streets. Those

people inspired her because they “were risking that much... there you have so few choices, and if you really want to be true to who you are, you have to fight for it,” she told *Equality* in a recent interview in New York.

That inspiration led Keshavarz to write a film which she fully admits could never have been a documentary “because people would never talk about this stuff on screen.” But she is conflicted about labeling her film. She is uncomfortable with calling it a political film

although she is overt in her statement that “the girls’ relationship is the supreme articulation of the forbidden and what actually happens in Iran that nobody talks about.”

The brilliant and subversive nature of this film is in the way Keshavarz uses lesbian issues to frame the story. At its core, the story is about Atafeh (Nikohl Boosheri) and Shireen (Sarah Kazemy), falling in love. But it is also so much more. It is about one girl who grows up in privilege

and what happens when the rug is pulled out from under her; it is about one girl who grew up with no protectors and what she had to face when confronted with a terrible choice. It's about a family torn apart when progressive parents raise children who cannot be themselves in their own country. And it's about hopes and dreams of two girls who want to walk freely through the streets without covering their bodies or being worried about being constantly harassed just for being girls.

GIVING A VOICE TO THE PEOPLE OF IRAN THROUGH A LESBIAN STORY.

Keshavarz is also reluctant to claim the label of “lesbian film” and that might just be a generational issue. Labels have become less important in social justice movements and the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender rights movement is no different, especially for young people, some observers say. But no matter what the filmmaker continued on p. 33

Photo: Courtesy of Maryam Keshavarz

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Iran can't from p. 25

and marketers do or don't label it, that won't stop others from looking at it on a continuum of lesbian films because so few lesbian films get a mainstream release. LGBT historian Jenni Olson explains: "I very much understand the desire to transcend that label... And yet, in its depiction of two teenage girls grappling with their attraction to one another against the backdrop of an impossibly homophobic society, it is a lesbian film."

Circumstance delves even further into the LGBT world when it uses the award-winning film *Milk* as a touchstone to inspire the youth of Iran. Most foreign films are viewed in Iran through a huge underground DVD market. The *Milk* scene depicts Atafeh and Shireen, along with two male friends (including one who is clearly questioning his sexuality), recording tracks that would be dubbed onto a DVD of *Milk* to be sold on the black market.

Asked why she chose *Milk*, Keshavarz (at right) said she believed that "a gay character is one

the government could not co-opt because gay issues are never discussed publicly." The government has tried to co-opt Gandhi and even Che Guevara, but Harvey Milk would be too much of a stretch for a government that denies homosexuality even exists. Harvey Milk would be proud.

Circumstance is already a success even before it has been released to the public. Its reception at film festivals across the world clearly indicates that the voice of a new young writer/director has arrived on the scene.

While claiming not to be political, Maryam Keshavarz has done the ultimate political act — she has stood up and given voice to the people of Iran through a lesbian story. That takes some serious guts. 🇺🇸

Silverstein, founder and editor of the blog, Women and Hollywood, is the artistic director of the Athena Film Festival.



photo: Fred Hayes / Getty



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Portland (Ore.) Gala, Aug. 13

- Meriwether's Skyline Farms
- Co-Chairs: Annie O'Brien, Serge Ybanez & Michael Long
- portland.hrc.org/dinner

Cleveland Gala, Aug. 27

- The Wolstein Center
- Co-Chairs: Michael Smithson & Alana Jochum
- cleveland.hrc.org/dinner

Orange County/Long Beach Garden Party, Aug. 27

- Home of Robert & Tracy Eglet, Laguna Beach
- Co-Chairs: David Gibson, Catherine Reid, Tedd Lesch & Sandra Hartness
- www.hrc.org/oclbs

Twin Cities Gala, Sept. 10

- The Depot Minneapolis
- Co-Chairs: Beth Meija & Creg Schumann
- www.twincitieshrc.org

Pacific Northwest Gala, Sept. 17

- Westin Seattle
- Co-Chairs: Chris Boone & Bret Tiderman
- www.hrcseattle.org/dinner

SAVE THE DATE

NATIONAL DINNER, OCT. 1

- Washington Convention Center
- Co-Chairs: Alex Ernst & Ashley Smith
- www.hrcnationaldinner.org



St. Louis Gala, Sept. 17

- The Hyatt Regency at the Arch
- Co-Chairs: Michael Dunning & Don Eakins
- stlouis.hrc.org/dinner

San Antonio Gala, Oct. 15

- Grand Hyatt San Antonio
- Co-Chairs: Darrell Parsons, Clarissa Rivas & Rhonda Grimm
- sanantonio.hrc.org/dinner

San Francisco Gala, Oct. 22

- The Fairmont San Francisco
- Co-Chairs: Danielle Daley & Kelly Herrick
- sfbayarea.hrc.org/dinner

Palm Springs Garden Party, Nov. 5

- Home of Doug Hudson & Erich Burkhart, Palm Springs
- Co-Chairs: Raymond Mancini, Tony Morris & Carin Jacobs
- www.hrc.org/oclbs

Dallas Black Tie, Nov. 12

- Sheraton Dallas Hotel
- Co-Chairs: Nan Arnold & Miller Crowe
- www.blacktie.org

Chicago Gala, Nov. 12

- The Fairmont Chicago
- Co-Chairs: Kyle Klatt & Marc Garcia
- chicago.hrc.org/dinner

New England Gala, Nov. 19

- Hynes Convention Center
- Co-Chairs: Deb Taft & Ian Barrett
- www.hrcboston.org

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