

## STRATEGIC PLANNING IN RESPONSE TO THE PASSING OF CALIFORNIA PROPOSITION 8

Your name has been suggested to become part of a virtual Think Tank of planners and strategists who would like to be involved in planning the most effective strategy now that Proposition 8 has been passed in California, and other anti-gay restrictions on marriage have been passed in other States. This group should draw upon both academic researchers, public officials, legal authorities, and activists. The operating assumption of this group is that the central core arguments favoring passage of these propositions are based on religious ideas, and that the prime institutions that have been pressing for and financing the passage of such propositions are these four religious groups which should be targeted for change:

Roman Catholic Church

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormon)

African American Protestant Churches

White evangelical Protestant Churches

This group is being founded by Walter L. Williams, Ph.D., Professor of Anthropology, History, and Gender Studies, at the University of Southern California, but there is a strong need for others becoming involved and taking leadership roles and contributing particular skills. Please offer your ideas, your contributions to the email exchange, your critique of this and other ideas suggested, and your skills to move this agenda forward in a productive way.

Dr. Williams is the founder and editor of the INTERNATIONAL GAY AND LESBIAN REVIEW [see <http://gaybookreviews.info> online], and the author or co-editor of ten books, including:

“Gay and Lesbian Rights in the United States: A Documentary History”  
(Greenwood Press)

“Overcoming Heterosexism and Homophobia: Strategies That Work”  
(Columbia University Press)

“Homophile Studies in Theory and Practice”  
(ONE Institute Press)

“Two Spirits: A Story of Life with the Navajo” (Lethe Press)

[on the acceptance of same-sex marriage among the Navajo Indians]

“The Spirit and the Flesh: Sexual Diversity in American Indian Culture”

[on the acceptance of same-sex marriage in numerous Native American cultures,  
and the last chapter discusses same-sex marriages in Africa, Asia, and Polynesia]

He has also been an activist since the 1960s, when as a teenager he got involved in the civil rights movement in Atlanta, following Martin Luther King, Julian Bond, Maynard Jackson, and Jesse Jackson. From 1979 to 1982 he was editor of Cincinnati's first gay newspaper, and was the head of the Greater Cincinnati Gay Coalition. He was also the co-founder of the Committee on Lesbian and Gay History for the American Historical Association, an officer of the Society of Lesbian and Gay Anthropologists, and a founder

of the Institute for Gay and Lesbian Strategic Studies. For more information on his background, see “Walter Williams’ Life of Activism in Human Rights” on the left column of the main page at <http://livefully.info>

## AN OPEN LETTER TO LGBT ACTIVISTS

There is no point in attacking those who ran the “No on 8” campaign. We should be thankful to all of those who gave of their time, talents, and money on behalf of our rights. However, there is a need to analyze what went wrong, and how we might improve our response for the next battle. Because we all know that the next battle in this long war by the Christian Churches against homosexuality will surely be coming soon.

It is frustrating to me to see what happened in the campaign against California Proposition 8, because some of the ads violated the principles laid out in my book “Overcoming Heterosexism and Homophobia: Strategies That Work,” which was published in 1997 specifically to provide research-based guidance for activists. But activists do not pay attention to the writings of academics, even though the research that we do can be of great value to activists. Over and over again I and other academics have offered our services and our experience, only to be politely turned away.

What were some of the principles that were violated? Some of the ads were quite good, but others were so vaguely worded as to be a waste of money.

### 1. APPEAL TO THE EMOTIONS RATHER THAN THE INTELLECT

The Yes on 8 campaign understands this principle quite well, and they made very effective ads showing happy families with happy children. How could anyone in their right mind want to vote against anything that would threaten these lovely children? Using this same principle in No on 8, it would have been effective to have an ad showing a happy family of two same-sex parents, and have their kids say things like “Why do those bad people want to keep my family from being legal? I want my daddy and pappas to be able to stay married! I want my family to have equal rights to all other families in California. My daddys have to pay taxes just like anybody else, so why shouldn’t they be able to be married just like anyone else?”

In a short ad, research has shown that it is not possible for the average viewer to connect emotionally to more than one person, so each ad should not try to cover more than one family. Mix some ads with gay males and others with lesbian couples. Keep the focus on a child as a spokesperson.

### 2. DIRECTLY ADDRESS THE ISSUE OF HOMOSEXUALITY, DON’T SKIRT IT

Some of the No on 8 ads were quite good, but others were so vaguely worded as to be a waste of money. Over and over, from Hawaii in 1996 to California in 2008, this same mistake was made. I am appreciative of Diane Fienstein speaking out, but to have a politician saying little more than “Proposition 8 is bad for California” is not a persuasive reason for most people to vote against it.

Activists too often only look toward winning a specific election, and thus become afraid to say “radical” things. So they will try to skirt the heavy issue, the elephant in the room, that many people are not comfortable with the subject of homosexuality and they do not like homosexuals. That prejudice has to be challenged directly.

For example, research shows that among African Americans almost all of the homophobia that exists comes straight out of the Bible. So, an effective ad might have a nelly black male organist, in robes and sitting at the church organ, saying “You know, I really don’t like it when I hear a preacher saying that God does not respect my relationship with my husband. Yes, I know about those five verses in the Bible that have been used to browbeat us for my whole life. But when my preacher said that one time, I asked him about the many more than five verses in the Bible that praise slavery. And I asked him if he agreed with Paul when he told slaves to obey your masters. When my preacher actually read those verses by Paul, or read verses like Kings\_\_\_\_\_, you know, that really shut him up. After that, I never heard him say one word against gay people any more. He told me later that he realized the gays and lesbians are members of this congregation just like anyone else. He complimented me for my organ playing, and knows that I have devoted my life to praising God with the gifts that I have. He even gave me a big hug. You know, honey, in my lifetime I have experienced plenty of racism, and I have experienced plenty of heterosexism, and you know what: they are exactly the same. Discrimination is discrimination. We are all God’s children, and we all deserve equal rights. Vote no on Proposition 8. Don’t discriminate.”

### 3. TARGETED ADS ARE MORE EFFECTIVE THAN GENERIC ADS

Several years ago an activist group came to me with an idea to purchase billboards with the message “Michelangelo Was Gay. Think about that the next time you want to discriminate.” This was a good brief hard-hitting statement. However, I told them purchasing billboards saying this would be a waste of money. One of the principles of attitude change is that to get people to change their mind you have to appeal to someone they admire. If such a billboard were placed outside Dodger Stadium, I suggested, there would be many people who would not even know who Michelangelo was. Or if they did know, they did not care. What would be most effective for a billboard at Dodger Stadium would be an admired baseball player who says something like, “I have gay and lesbian friends and relatives, and I respect their right to have their marriages legally equal to mine and everybody else’s. We’re all on the same team.” I suggested that their Michelangelo ad would be most effective as billboards at the LA County Museum of Art and the Getty Museum, or as an ad within the program guide given out to museum visitors.

Celebrity endorsements are more important in changing peoples’ attitudes than reasoned arguments, sad to say. Elizabeth Taylor and Madonna have been very effective in speaking out against prejudice in the past. People who like Madonna’s music will pay attention to what she says, and people who enjoy Taylor’s movies will do likewise. There are a few political figures who reach celebrity status. Give some quotes from Martin Luther King and Coretta Scott King, wherein she explicitly states that Martin favored equality for LGBT people. Another example is Abraham Lincoln. Building upon this principle, here is the essence of a toast that I made the other day at a dinner celebrating a commitment ceremony of two gay male friends of mine. Everyone was enjoying the day, and it was a pleasure to be at an event where most of the crowd was heterosexual, and that people brought their children to witness the event. But, as much as I enjoyed it, no one was saying anything about Prop 8. I felt this was an ideal opportunity to reach these

people and draw them in as potential allies after they had experienced the lovely ceremony. This is my toast:

I am a historian, and I always try to place events within their historic context. Today we have been privileged to attend an historic event, in that this ceremony is the very first same-sex commitment ceremony that has ever been blessed by the Hare Krishna faith. I thank those representatives of the Hare Krishna who moved us with their beautiful music and fine words, and for their decision to change their policies on same-sex relationships. I remember when Hare Krishna was extremely homophobic, and I congratulate the leaders of this faith for changing their policies. They have grown in spiritual awareness, and made their faith a more inclusive place. In the future they will look back upon this decision and be glad that they did this. This change by the Hare Krishna leaders show that it is possible for religions to change, and I know in my heart that one day those other religions will change as well. They will change because history is moving in our direction, Prop 8 or no Prop 8, and we are on the right side of history.

I also want us to take note of the date. It was this week, 145 years ago, that President Abraham Lincoln left the White House to travel by train to a small town in Pennsylvania, where he was going to speak at the dedication of a cemetery honoring the Union soldiers who had died at the Battle of Gettysburg a few months before. Lincoln began his words by reminding people that:

“Our fathers brought forth upon this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.” He summed up the current situation saying, “Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived, can long endure.” In Lincoln’s time, the forces that were trying to tear apart the nation, were the slaveowners of the South who were against the proposition that black people are equal. Today, the forces that are tearing apart our nation are those who preach that gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people are not equal. I sincerely hope that our current contest does not degenerate into civil war, but let me tell you that, as a historian, I have come to the conclusion that the fundamental conflict is exactly the same. Are all people in this nation equal or not? That is the issue. We are today in a struggle to see if our nation, or any nation so conceived, can long endure as an exemplar of freedom and democracy.

You notice that Lincoln chose to emphasize that the United States was, first and foremost, “conceived in liberty.” And equality. He did not say, “well, I’m sorry, but equality only applies if 51% of the voters approve.” He did not say, “Let’s submit the question of black people’s right to freedom to a vote, and if 51% of the voters agree then we will do it.” No, he issued the Emancipation Proclamation because slavery violated that most fundamental proposition that all men are created equal. When Martin Luther King was leading the civil rights movement, he did not conduct a campaign to get voters in the South to approve equality by a proposition on the State ballots of Alabama and Mississippi. The very idea that a minority has to appeal to the whims of the majority to vote for their rights is, in and of itself, offensive. It is offensive to the idea of liberty. It is offensive to the proposition that all men, all people, are created equal.

Lincoln ended his address by endorsing the dedication of the national cemetery at Gettysburg, “But,” he said, “in a larger sense, we can not dedicate—we can not consecrate—we can not hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world

will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for US, the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for US to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before US—that from these honored dead WE take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that WE HERE [right now, today] highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth.”

And so, as we toast this wonderful new family today, let’s also remember that it is up to each one of us to speak out, to take action, to talk to our relatives and our friends and our co-workers, to do everything we can to make sure that by the time all these little children here today grow up, that they will live in a country where they will be judged by the content of their character and not by the color of their skin, or their sex, or their sexuality. Let’s make sure that we bequeath a country to them wherein “the proposition that all people are created equal” is beyond attack, even by the forces of institutionalized religion that have such a lock-hold on public discourse now.

Let’s make sure that Stan and his partner Joshua and their son Arjuna, and Patricia and her spouse Shannon and their children, and all the couples like them residing in every State of this great land will be able to travel to any place in the country, from the Cathedral of Los Angeles to Jerry Falwell’s Liberty University in Lynchburg Virginia, and from Dade County Florida to the Mormon Tabernacle in Salt Lake City, and from Sarah Palin’s little town in Alaska right up to the Lincoln Memorial in the nation’s capital. And at each of those places we can loudly proclaim Lincoln’s stirring words that America will indeed have “a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, even the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people, for ALL the people, shall not perish from the earth.”

This example is meant to show the power of persuasion when you build upon the ideals and values that people already hold, to show them how this issue is consistent with, indeed central to, their basic values. Most people want to be consistent in their life.

#### 4. CREATE COGNITIVE DISSONANCE

A basic principle of social psychology is “cognitive dissonance” which means that if you can show a person how their attitude on a specific issue is not consistent with their general values, they will usually change their attitude on the specific issue. This principle does not always work, and some people will change their general values while others will be so inflexible that they will refuse to address the inconsistency, but this approach is usually effective.

The above quote is an example of the church organist is an attempt to create cognitive dissonance. Many churchgoers know the anti-homosexual Leviticus quote, because preachers harp on it so much. So, to get them to question that quote, you tell another Bible quote that you know they are likely to disagree with. Not too many people today are likely to support slavery. Here is another example of an ad that can be used right now, after the election:

[a squeaky clean white male in a white shirt and a black tie]

“I was raised in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, and as a little boy I always heard the teachings of our church in favor of marriage. The message I received from the church is that marriage is for everyone. I thought that was a grand notion. But when I got older I realized that my attractions are entirely towards men, and that I just simply do not have the least bit attraction to women at all. I think women are great as friends, but in the love department I’m sorry, but I just don’t feel it. Then, when I was twenty two years old I met another person when we were both doing missionary work in the Philippines, a good Mormon like myself who believed firmly in the teachings of marriage in the Church. Well, we just fell in love. It is the most wonderful feeling of my life. Having always been taught by the Church to tell the truth, we went to our Bishop and told him how we felt. He was very disturbed, closed the door, and told us we must never see each other again. He told us we must choose a woman for a wife, and get married to a woman even if we had no sexual feeling at all. When I told him I thought that was not too fair to the woman, he said the Church will make sure we both will stay together and produce a big family with lots of children. [silence] I just don’t think that is right. [silence] And so, because we refused to go into a fake marriage with a woman, our Church—the Church of our fathers, for many generations back to the 1840s—excommunicated us. Our parents, our brothers and sisters, our aunts and uncles, and all our other relatives refuse to talk to us. They would not even allow me to attend my own beloved grandfather’s funeral. [silence] But, in supporting each other, we survived. We moved in together, and we have been together ever since then. We know that we are right for each other, and that our marriage is just as serious as any man and woman could be. Now, finally, in 2008, we were able to get legally married in the State of California. But, after we thought the Church had done all it could to destroy our lives, now in 2008 they came back, and are trying to break our marriage apart. Please don’t let them do this to us. To every voter who voted Yes on 8, if you can find it in your heart to think about the impact of your vote on people like me, send a donation to challenge Prop 8 in the courts. We are not going to let this issue go away. Our marriage is too important in our lives. That is what we were taught as children, and that is what we believe to today. “

#### 4. DON’T LIE TO THE VOTERS

No on 8 ads said, “no, it is not true that legal same-sex marriage will affect what is taught in the schools.” In response, the Yes on 8 campaign went directly to Massachusetts and interviewed parents who are very upset that their children are being taught in the schools that marriage can be between a male and a male, a female and a female, as well as a male and a female. They showed that the No on 8 position is not true. That ad was a disaster for our side. We have to be forthright and honest. In response to that Yes on 8 ad showing the little girl learning that a princess could marry another princess, we might have more effectively responded with an ad something like this:

[a matronly woman]

“I am a teacher in California schools. Those ads I have been seeing on TV lately, paid for by the Mormon Church and the Catholic Church, really disturb me. They are not educators, but I am. I have my Ph.D. in childhood psychology, and I know a lot about what children need for optimal development. What children need is an honest education that educates them to deal effectively with a diverse society in the future. Because I think

it is important for us to teach our children, as I taught my own children when they were young, that the reality of the world is that for the majority of people men and women love each other, but for some people men love men and women love women. That is the reality of the world. We as educators should be teaching children about the way the world really is, not the way some people might like to think it should be. Even a very young child can easily understand that most people are right handed, but there is nothing wrong with a minority of people who are left handed. And a very young child can easily understand that most men love women, and most women love men, but some men love men and some women love women. It is just that simple. Our students need to be prepared for living in a diverse society where people are different, and we have to work together and get along peacefully if we want our country to advance. Don't let those ads fool you. I am an educator, and I know that children need a real education for a real world."

Please keep in mind that I am coming up with these texts under severe time pressure, in order to get this information out to you right now, so there may be better ways to word these ads, or better approaches that I can think of at this moment, but I am just trying to give you a general idea of the general approach from this theoretical perspective. Individualize, appeal to the emotions of the listeners, and try to get people to rethink positions that they may have reached by faulty reasoning.

#### 5. DON'T ALLOW THE OTHER SIDE TO GET AWAY WITH LIES

Repeatedly the Yes on 8 campaign said "marriage has always been between a man and a woman throughout all of human history" and the No on 8 campaign never once made a single reply to this charge. I published my book "The Spirit and the Flesh" on the acceptance of same-sex marriage among Native American cultures back in 1986. It came out in a second edition in 1992. It is one of the most famous academic books in Gay Studies. Many people know about this book. Yet not once did No on 8 directors draw on the many books that have been published showing that there have been many cultures in the past that accepted same-sex marriages. Here is the essence of what I said when I was interviewed by several TV stations this weekend at protest rallies in Silverlake and at the Catholic Cathedral in downtown Los Angeles:

"I am a professor of history and anthropology at the University of Southern California. I have been doing research on the history of marriage for several decades, and I have written books on this subject. I teach courses that deal with marriage and family in different cultures around the world. When Cardinal Mahoney said that Proposition 8 is 'keeping marriage as it has always been, between a man and a woman, from the beginning of history' that statement is not accurate. He is telling a lie. Throughout the entire election campaign, the church leaders who pushed through Prop 8 repeatedly lied to you the voters. The truth is that many societies around the world, from the earliest evidence of human existence to the present, have accepted and recognized marriages between persons of the same sex. Among the Azande of East Africa, for example, in their traditional culture a man is not considered to be a potential for a good husband until he has spent several years as a wife to another man. Once he showed that he understood what it is like to be a wife, then and only then would a woman consent to become his wife. Marriage varies tremendously. In some cultures like Indonesia the bride and groom

do not even meet until their wedding day, as I discuss in my book “Javanese Lives: Women and Men in Modern Indonesian Society” (Rutgers University Press). Among some Australian aboriginal cultures there traditionally existed brother-sister marriage where a man marries a brother first, shows that he can be a good provider and a good husband, and then only after that will the sister consent to marry him. Among some societies, marriage as an institution does not exist at all.”

#### 6. USE THE OPPOSING SIDE’S OWN ARGUMENTS AGAINST THEM

Over and over we heard the Yes on 8 leaders say “gay activists want to redefine marriage” and that charge likewise was never answered. It would be great to get a former Catholic priest to say these ideas, or also an academic like myself. Here is how I answered that charge in a speech that I gave to the protest rally on Sunday November 9, in front of the Cathedral of Los Angeles. I said:

Cardinal Mahoney accuses us of wanting to redefine marriage. What Cardinal Mahoney did not tell you is that the Catholic Church itself has redefined marriage. They did it in many places around the world, but they especially did it here in southern California. When Catholic priests came to California in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, as part of the colonial effort to conquer the California Indians and make them part of the Empire of New Spain, they violently suppressed same-sex relationships among the California Indians. The priests themselves described in great detail how they beat and tortured the Indians whenever they found any living together as same-sex partners. They worked strongly to suppress any evidence of homosexual marriage. One document that I read from the 1790s reported on a berdache or Two-Spirit person, a transgender person whom the priest thought was a woman. When the priest discovered that this person was actually a male, as the priest secretly spied on the transgender Indian having sex with an Indian husband, the priest tied them both up and lashed them with a whip. A week later the priest wrote in his report that the two Indians escaped from the mission. He worried about the state of their souls.

Everywhere the Catholic priests went, they did everything in their power to wipe out any evidence of same-sex love. In the Spanish conquistador Balboa’s expedition across Panama, he ordered the transgender people to be eaten alive by Spanish trained attack dogs, and the Catholic priests were right there to give the last rites to the bloodied Indians as they died. That was the Catholic Church’s 16<sup>th</sup> century version of “love the sinner, hate the sin.”

In fact, what few seem to realize is that Proposition 8 is only the most recent attack in a two thousand year old war that the Catholic Church has waged against homosexuals. In the Inquisition, they burned us alive at the stake, calling us sodomites. The Catholic Church used the charge that the Native Americans were all sodomites, as a major justification for their conquering the lands of the indigenous peoples, stealing their wealth to take back to Spain, and enslaving the Indians to mine their silver and gold and to build their cathedrals. Do you know that a great percentage of the wealth of the Catholic Church came from the wealth that was stolen from the American Indians, the Filipinos, and every other place where the Catholic Church tagged along with the imperialists. Do you know that? Somehow they forgot to tell you that part in Catechism school. Go and travel through the pueblos of New Mexico, from Taos to Santa Fe, or along the coast of California and look at those romantic old missions, from the mission of San Diego to the mission of San Francisco, and realize that those very buildings were



constructed by Indian slave labor working under the direction of the Catholic priests. Did they tell you about that in your history classes?

And the leaders of the Catholic Church dare to talk to us about morality? What kind of perversion of logic says that it is sinful for two people to experience the supreme joy of erotic union, while they sweep genocide under the rug? The reason they are so skillful at persuading people to their perverted way of thinking is because they have so much practice doing it.

So that is why, once they suppressed same-sex marriages among the American Indians, the Catholic Church redefined marriage to be only between a man and a woman. And that is how this came to be. Learn what happened in the past, because its effects are still with us today. History matters. Know the truth, and the truth shall set you free.

Do you want another history lesson? [cheers from the crowd]

We may have lost last week. But we are not giving up. In 2000 the percentage of Californians who voted in favor of same-sex marriage was thirty-five percent. Last week it was forty-eight percent who supported our rights to equality. Martin Luther King said, 'The arc of justice bends slowly, but it bends on the side of freedom.' So, do not despair, and do not be discouraged by the naysayers, because the future is with us. The church leaders are terrified because they know that our turn is coming, and we will not give up.

Now I want to say something to the teenagers here. When I was a teenager growing up in Atlanta, way back in the 1960s, I was so inspired by listening to the words of Martin Luther King that I joined in with the civil rights protests that he was leading. At the time all my friends told me I was a betrayer of my race, and the principal of my high school warned me that I was going to destroy my future if I got involved with such a disreputable outside agitator as Martin Luther King. But now, all these decades later, I look back on that decision as one of the proudest decisions I ever made in my life. And so I say to the virgin protestors here, how many of you are engaging in the first protest in your life? [cheers] Mark my words, and remember this. I know for sure, as you will learn in the future, that one day you will look back on this time, what you are doing this very moment, as one of the crowning glories of your life.

The Japanese Soka Gakkai Buddhist leader Daisaku Ikeda, who since the 1970s has consistently spoken out against anti-gay discrimination, advised this to youth. In his book "Faith into Action," Daisaku Ikeda writes:

"Everyone has a right to flower, to reveal his or her full potential as a human being, to fulfill his or her mission in this world. You have this right, and so does everyone else. To scorn and violate people's human rights destroys the natural order of things. We must become people who prize human rights and respect others, above all."

"Buddhism thoroughly protects the sanctity of life and the freedom of the human spirit, and this constitutes our mission.... We must be prepared to protect people whose rights are in danger, or who are threatened by tyranny or oppression."

"Human rights are fundamental and must take priority over all else; without human rights, neither peace nor human happiness is possible.... Their violation cannot be permitted, whether by states or by any other force."

"Our schools must teach human rights, our religions must preach human rights, our governments must respect human rights.... Unless we can build a society that regards human beings not as a means to a goal but as THE goal itself, we will remain forever a society of discrimination, unhappiness, and inequality."

“We must stand up for our beliefs and take action. Human rights will never be won unless we speak out, unless we fight to secure them.... Do not say you will do it ‘someday;’ now is the time. Do not say ‘someone’ will do it; you are the one. Now is the time for youth to take full responsibility and courageously pave the way for the people’s triumph.”

Remember this quote the next time you hear some Christian bigot claiming that all religions condemn homosexuality. That is just one more of their many many lies. So let’s hear it for the Buddhists, and the animists, and the Goddess religions, Ishtar, Isis, and all the others that existed in the past, but which the Christians obliterated just as they did to the Native American religions, they are the ones who have redefined marriage, and now we are going to take it back.

So today I proudly accept the charge that we are redefining marriage, back to its original respect for diversity and tolerance and an appreciation for love as the guiding factor in deciding who should be able to marry. But we are not the first ones to redefine marriage in American history.

In 1863, when he issued the Emancipation Proclamation, President Abraham Lincoln redefined marriage when he freed the slaves. Every Southern state had laws prohibiting slaves from getting legally married. If you will learn your history you will know that the oppressor always keeps marriage as part of the system of oppression. And the main justification that the white Southerners used for keeping slaves was to quote from the Bible, when Paul told slaves to obey their masters. But Abraham Lincoln opposed this. Here is what he said. Listen to these words of Abraham Lincoln carefully. He said, “Those who would deny freedom to others, deserve it not for themselves.” This isn’t a homily; think about what the churches would say if an American president addressed them with such bold words today: “Those who would deny freedom to others, deserve it not for themselves.” And so, as a historian I am absolutely confident in saying that if Abraham Lincoln were alive today, he would be joining us in these protest rallies, and he would be here holding the hand of his boyfriend Joshua Speed.

Later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Susan B. Anthony redefined marriage when she led protests against the laws of her time decreeing that whenever a woman got married, she forfeited all of her property that upon marriage went into the name of her husband. It was against the law for a married woman to own property in her own name. And if she later got divorced, even if her husband had beaten her senseless, her property would still remain in his name. In fact, it was because of the severe inequalities of these laws that Susan B. Anthony pushed so strongly for women to get the vote, so that they could defend themselves legally and testify in court against their husband. Now, the Churches opposed her then, and they would oppose her today if they could, but the Church leaders know that by this time the women’s movement has been successful in redefining marriage to be more equitable. So, we can thank feminists for redefining marriage.

As a historian I feel confident in saying that if Susan B. Anthony were alive today you better believe that she would be right here with us. But I’m sure she would NOT be wearing a dress. More probably black leather. She was a tough cookie. Let me tell you, Susan B. Anthony would make a lot of you little butch dykes look like Britney Spears.

So the point I want you to understand is that marriage has been continually redefined, and don’t let the churches browbeat you into thinking there is anything wrong with what we are doing. Most recently, we are simply building on the United States

Supreme Court ruling, in the case of Loving v. Virginia, that said that state governments do not have the right to prevent people of different races from marrying. The Virginia Supreme Court had earlier ruled that, guess what, God created the different races on the different continents so that was proof that God did not mean the races to marry. But in 1967 the Supreme Court reversed that judgment, and redefined marriage, by saying that the right to marry the person of your choice is a fundamental right of human liberty.

So, yes, I am proud to stand here today and say that we are in good company as we redefine marriage. Abraham Lincoln, Susan B. Anthony, the United States Supreme Court, and our straight feminist allies who stuck with us through this entire campaign—we really learned who our allies were this time, didn't we—they all redefined marriage to make it more equitable and open and free. Because that is what freedom is all about, and that is what America is all about.

When Thomas Jefferson was writing the Declaration of Independence, he was reacting against the traditional idea that the purpose of government was to enforce God's rules on earth—precisely the position of the Yes on 8 campaign. They're not saying anything new, they were pounding the exact same message in the 1770s. But when Thomas Jefferson was writing his declaration, though, he explicitly rejected that idea. Instead, what he said was that the most important duties of government were to make laws that promote three things. Not God's rules on earth, not the ten commandments, not Leviticus, nor Paul's judgments. What Jefferson said was most important are three things:

1. Life
2. Liberty
3. The pursuit of happiness.

Think about that phrase, 'the pursuit of happiness.' What could be more appropriate to that great and noble goal than our struggle for equality today? What could be more central to the idea of 'the pursuit of happiness' than people being able to marry whomever they choose? So, yes, even though the Catholic Church itself has redefined marriage far more than anything we are asking for today, I accept the charge of those church leaders who say we want to redefine marriage. And I say it is about damn time.

Join us in this effort, and you too can be proud of yourself for becoming part of the most historic and groundbreaking movement for human rights of our time.

I'm Walter Williams, proud to be from USC, and though I know this will make his holiness Cardinal Mahony upset, I hope you will tell everybody you know to always have some Trojans nearby. "Go Trojans Go Trojans, Go Trojans."

Enjoy your life. Never give up. Fight On!