



Creating Change offers powerhouse of speakers

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Julian Bond, Rev. Gene Robinson to address conference

The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force announced a powerhouse lineup of keynote speakers appearing at its National Conference on LGBT Equality: Creating Change, Feb. 6-10 in Detroit. Two thousand lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) rights advocates will converge on the Motor City just one day after Super Tuesday, to strategize and organize for the critical year ahead.

On opening night, Feb. 7, Julian Bond, NAACP chairman and civil rights leader, will address the conference. The next day, Task Force Executive Director Matt Foreman will give the annual "State of the Movement" address. On Feb. 9, Episcopal Bishop V. Gene Robinson will share his unique perspective on faith, equality and social change, and the mother-daughter musical team of Bernice Johnson Reagon and Toshi Reagon will perform at the closing plenary on Feb. 10. The plenaries will be emceed by comic and social commentator Kate Clinton.

Keynote speakers

Julian Bond is the chairman of the NAACP, a distinguished professor-in-residence at American University in Washington, D.C., and a professor of history at the University of Virginia. In the face of a contentious and prolonged national debate over equal rights for LGBT people, Bond has taken an unequivocal position: "...when I am asked, 'Are gay rights civil rights?' my answer is always, 'Of course.'" Bond doesn't just talk the talk. He recently joined a statewide coalition effort in Florida to defeat a proposed constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriage and any other type of partner recognition. As a national civil rights leader, his contribution to the current struggle for equality stands as a beacon of hope in a time when few have shown the courage to face down anti-LGBT political and religious leaders who malign LGBT people for political gain.

As the first openly gay man to be named a bishop in the Anglican Communion, V. Gene Robinson attracted worldwide attention, with some leaders of the Anglican Communion moving to sever relations with the Episcopal Church of the United States. Robinson has not been invited to the 2008 Lambeth Conference, a meeting of bishops and archbishops of the Anglican Communion invited by the Archbishop of Canterbury, which is held every 10 years. In the face of all of this, he has repeatedly called for understanding, love and dialogue with his detractors. At his consecration, he said, "There are faithful, wonderful Christian people for whom this is a moment of great pain and confusion and anger."

Matt Foreman is a fearless leader with a dynamic and uncompromising voice for equality and justice. Foreman, executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, has worked for LGBT rights for 25 years. During the battle for an inclusive Employment Non-Discrimination Act, he unequivocally stated, "No civil rights movement has left part of its community behind as it moved forward, and we're not about to be the first one to do so." Foreman will present the annual "State of the Movement" address.

The mother-daughter team of Bernice Johnson Reagon and Toshi Reagon will perform at the Sunday plenary. For more than 40 years, Bernice Johnson Reagon, who founded the acclaimed African-American women's a cappella ensemble Sweet Honey in the Rock, has been a major cultural voice for freedom and justice; singing, teaching -- speaking out against racism and organized inequities of all kinds. Toshi Reagon is a singer/songwriter/producer and activist. The New Yorker says of her performances: "...her live shows shower retro funk, urban blues, and folk on the audience with evangelical fervor. To hear her is to believe."

The duo has collaborated on many projects, including creating the musical score for the award-winning films *Africans in America* on PBS and *Beah: A Black Woman Speaks* for HBO. Comic and social commentator Kate Clinton will emcee the plenaries. From coast to coast, Clinton provides a witty and comedic political critique about important issues of the day.

To register for the conference visit the web site: www.creatingchange.org