



# The Task Force in the News

Media Highlights

July 8 - 18, 2005

Roberta Sklar, Director of Communications

## Table of Contents:

1. Parejas floridanas sufren discriminación legal  
[El Nuevo Herald](#)
2. Articles of Faith  
[Out in the Mountains](#)
3. Vermonters Attend Boston Elders Town Meeting  
[Out in the Mountains](#)
4. Bathroom ambiguity a hot topic with gay, lesbian community  
[Fort Wayne.com](#)
5. Choosing research to prove your point  
[MSNBC](#)
6. California survey finds new info about Latino same-sex couples  
[San Francisco Chronicle](#)
7. Beyond Gay Marriage  
[The Nation](#)



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Parejas floridananas sufren discriminación legal

**DANIEL SHOER ROTH**  
**El Nuevo Herald**

Christian y Ron celebrarán en diciembre diez años de amor y compromiso como pareja en un hogar de La Pequeña Habana. Su relación, no obstante, sería menos frustrante si vivieran en España.

Poder mantenerse juntos en Miami les ha costado \$300,000 porque Christian, costarricense de 28 años, tuvo que obtener una visa de inversionista para quedarse en Estados Unidos legalmente. Como cientos de parejas homosexuales de doble nacionalidad en el sur de la Florida, Ron, un ciudadano americano, no ha podido reclamar a su compañero de vida. Otros menos afortunados viven bajo el acecho de la deportación que amenaza con destruir su nido de amor.

Hace seis meses, Ron, empresario hispano y activista comunitario de 45 años, fue ingresado de emergencia en un hospital de Coral Gables, y a Christian no se le permitió entrar a verlo en el quirófano hasta que los padres del afligido, que residen junto a la pareja, llegaron al recinto médico y le dieron la autorización.

"Me sentí amarrado", me relató Christian, cuyo caso de inmigración está pendiente en la corte y por ello prefirió que su apellido, así como el de Ron, no fueran difundidos. "No entiendo por qué nosotros, que tenemos estabilidad de pareja, no tenemos el derecho a establecernos legalmente".

Miles de gays hispanos en el sur de la Florida como Christian y Ron, que en estos días han admirado las noticias de la legalización de los matrimonios para homosexuales en España, se están dando golpes en el pecho al darse cuenta, con más conciencia, del gueto legal al que la sociedad estadounidense los tiene confinados.

Mientras que las parejas del mismo sexo han estado viendo en el televisor el derroche del champagne en Madrid, muchos de sus vecinos han estado apresurándose para recaudar firmas en aras de colocar en la boleta electoral del 2006 una enmienda constitucional que fulmine eternamente sus sueños de conseguir 1,138 protecciones federales que sus hermanos heterosexuales disfrutan por derecho propio.

**"La mayoría de la gente no se da cuenta de las contrariedades que las parejas gays sufren porque no pueden casarse", me dijo Matt Foreman, director ejecutivo del Nacional Gay and Lesbian Task Force, la principal organización de derechos civiles para los homosexuales en Estados Unidos. "No es un problema político, es una cuestión humana".**

**Estadísticas del Censo del 2000 muestran que en la Florida existen por lo menos 45,000 hogares que se identifican como parejas del mismo sexo. De éstas, 9,000 ó 20 por ciento son hispanas, según un estudio reciente difundido por el Task Force.**

La investigación arrojó que las parejas gay y lesbianas hispanas en la Florida -- en índices similares a parejas latinas heterosexuales -- crían en sus hogares hijos biológicos y no biológicos, incluyen un cónyuge que no es estadounidense, perciben \$15,000 menos en ingresos anuales que las parejas homosexuales no hispanas, y sirven en las fuerzas militares si logran esconder su orientación sexual.

Pero la imposibilidad de casarse bajo la ley les pone trabas para darles un mejor sustento a sus hijos, acumular ahorros, comprar una casa, prepararse para la jubilación o recibir beneficios de pareja como los descuentos fiscales de las declaraciones conjuntas al Tío Sam.

Manny Vega, padre de tres hijos, sabe muy bien lo que es tener y no tener estas protecciones legales.

El director ejecutivo de la Liga Contra el Sida de Miami es divorciado de la madre de sus hijos con quien vivió durante 12 años en una casa en la que compartió el título de la propiedad sin haber pagado un centavo extra por ello. Recientemente, se mudó con su pareja de nueve años, Gerardo Vásquez, y su hijo menor de 14 años, a una casa en Kendall. Durante la compra, tuvo que pagar \$1,500 adicionales para que el inmueble estuviera a nombre de ambos.

"Son \$1,500 ahí, \$2,500 en los taxes, otros \$1,000 por allá, y cuando te pones a sumar, ese es el dinerito que podría usar para comprarle ropa a mi hijo o un carro a mi hija", me explicó Vega. "Mi familia hoy en día tiene las mismas necesidades que tenía cuando estaba casado con mi esposa".

Más allá de las barreras legales, hay casos en los que las parejas latinas homosexuales en el sur de la Florida también sufren la humillación del estigma de quienes todavía castigan la sodomía como un crimen inmoral. Cotidianamente, esos arraigados prejuicios se intentan superar aquí y en otras latitudes.

En España, el acontecimiento, "... constituye un gran avance hacia la lenta, irreversible aceptación por el conjunto de la sociedad -- por parte de la mayoría, al menos -- de la homosexualidad como una manifestación perfectamente natural y legítima de la diversidad humana", escribió Mario Vargas Llosa en una columna publicada la semana pasada en el diario *El País*.

Cuando días atrás diputados españoles aprobaron la ley, un grupo de parejas gay hispanas, entre ellas Christian y Ron, salieron a festejar con sangría en el restaurante Casa Panza de la Calle Ocho. No tanto por la victoria de sus amigos españoles, como por la esperanza de que un día similar pudiera llegar aquí en el futuro.

"Vamos a lograr España en Miami", brindó Ron con optimismo. "El día en que este país me deje casarme con la pareja con quien he compartido diez años, voy a ser feliz".



## Articles of Faith

by *Christian de la Huerta*

The Pride celebrations of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community across the country during June must seem a strange ritual to outsiders. With a wild mix of go-go boys, drag queens and topless lesbians, all throbbing to tribal drumbeats, this seemingly self-indulgent display causes outrage for social conservatives, and chagrin for those in the gay community who would like to see us acting more conventionally. But perhaps there is another way to look at Pride besides as an exercise in hedonism: perhaps it represents the pressing back of cultural boundaries by a people uniquely qualified for spiritual exploration.

Throughout history, people we today label lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender have been honored for their roles of spiritual service and leadership. In many cultural contexts, gay people have been the healers, teachers, shamans, keepers of beauty, mediators and peacekeepers; those who "walked between the worlds." For queer spiritual practitioners, not only is their homosexuality or gender identity not a sin, sickness, or abomination, it is a gift, a blessing, and a privilege. It is the element of their personality that has pushed them outside the realm of comfort and conventionality and into the place of mystery inhabited by those who fulfill roles of sacred service. If there is any doubt about the pervasiveness of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in religious leadership roles, it would be a compelling exercise if, on some weekend, every single queer minister, rabbi, music director, teacher or other spiritual functionary stayed home from religious services.

The term "Gay Pride" barely begins to capture the sense of honor and respect this rich spiritual heritage deserves. According to the Dagara tribe in Africa, certain people Westerners would identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender are uniquely physically and energetically suited to be "gatekeepers," the guardians of the doorways into other worlds, realms and realities. The Dagara believe that much of the pain and woundedness of the world can be traced to a lack of respect for these spiritual gatekeepers. In fact, author and speaker Malidoma Some says that part of the reason the world is in the shape that it is in is because the gatekeepers "have been fired from their jobs."

Similarly, among Native American peoples, the Two-Spirit were thought to have special powers and played key roles in tribal ceremonies. These people, who lived on the edges of tribal life, were associated with the gift of prophecy and the implementation of rituals, and were said to possess healing powers. Today Two-Spirits are regaining their place of honor among many Native American communities after being annihilated or forced to go underground during the European invasion.

Is it any wonder that mystics and saviors of many spiritual traditions can often be found with those on the margins of society? Perhaps, beyond "healing" the poor, the religiously unclean, and the sexually different, these prophets found in these people a spiritual kinship that sustained their ministries. If the historical figures of Elijah, Buddha, or Jesus were to come back today, I would not be surprised to find them in gay bars, with "welfare moms," or with AIDS orphans in sub-Saharan Africa. For it is people in the boundary places of the world who are often closest to the Divine.

All this does not mean that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people are better than straight people. (After all, heterosexuals should not be blamed for not having a "choice" about their sexual orientation!) It does mean, however, that queer people should have a sense of responsibility to continue bringing light, healing, and spirit to the world, even if the world does not yet realize or fully appreciate our value and contributions.

Furthermore, it is time for religious leaders to stop asking queer people to apologize for who we are and to recognize our innate spiritual offerings of service and leadership. Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people have gravitated to and fulfilled spiritual roles throughout history, in numbers that far exceed our proportion to the overall population. We have contributed tremendously to the evolution of humanity.

For those who snicker or cringe at the fabulous excess of Gay Pride festivals, realize this: these are the outsiders, the spiritual warriors, the scouts of consciousness who are integrating spirit and sexuality for much of the rest of society. We owe these modern-day shamans the latitude they need and the respect they deserve to do this crucial work.

And for the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community, the world is crying out for us to speak from a place of real power and pride. We must know, in the deepest recesses of our souls, in the very fabric of our tissues, in every one of our cells in every part of our bodies, that we are blessed in the ways we express our love and our passion. Our blessing is that we know love, and we must love deeply, passionately, and selflessly. It is our calling as a people. It is our calling as human beings.

This spiritual calling is what I celebrate during Gay Pride. I invite all of you who hear this call within you to do the same.

*Christian de la Huerta is a member of the National Religious Leadership Roundtable of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, the author of Coming Out Spiritually, and founder of Q Spirit and Revolutionary Wisdom.*



## Vermonters Attend Boston Elders Town Meeting

*by Robert Wolff*

Boston – Three Vermonters, Peggy Luhrs, Jackie Weinstock and I (Robert Wolff), attended the LGBT Aging Project's Town Meeting for Elders and Boomers, on June 6, 2005. Speakers included U.S. Representative Barney Frank; **Amber Hollibaugh of the National Gay & Lesbian Task Force**; Arline Isaacson of the Massachusetts Gay & Lesbian Political Caucus; David Aronstein of Stonewall Communities; and Lisa Krinsky of the Aging Project. The event, moderated by Dale Mitchell, Executive Director of ETHOS, a Jamaica Plain community service entity specializing in longterm care options, was a Boston Gay Pride event and an official "mini" White House Conference on Aging.

Barney Frank spoke to the roughly 50 participants, reminding them about how far the lgbt cause has come since the 1960s. He also underlined the difficulties of making real progress during a time when the Republicans control the Executive and Legislative branches of the federal government, stressing the importance of working toward long-term goals. The other speakers focused on the work they have been doing to serve lgbt elders and their organizations' plans for future development of services.

The Vermonters sought information for use as we move forward with the Vermont Queer Elder Project at R.U.1.2? Queer Community Center. Luhrs is a longtime Burlington activist and an Americorps Vista Volunteer at the center; Weinstock is an Associate Professor of Integrated Professional Studies at the University of Vermont and member of the SafeSpace board of directors; and I am a theatrical designer, a potter and a member of the R.U.1.2?QCC board of directors. We three are developing a program, which will, among other things, present workshops for health care professionals.

The leaders of the Vermont Queer Elder Project (VQEP) are aware that many lgbtq people entering hospitals, rehabilitation centers, and other institutions providing health care, are treated with less than proper respect and certainly without what could be termed "Queer Awareness." Elders may fear entering these facilities because their partners might not be allowed to participate in their care and support as they would if they were a heterosexual couple, for example.

**The participants from Vermont were particularly interested in the activities and future plans of the LGBT Aging Project and the National Gay & Lesbian Task Force. NGLTF is developing programs that will allow community leaders to learn from programs in other locales through an enhanced communication network.** We also received pointers on specific steps that would assist the development of the Vermont Queer Elder Project and some of the challenges that could retard its growth if not well handled. Lisa Krinsky of the Aging Project strongly suggested focusing our energies on mainstream health service providers and on teaching cultural competency among service leaders and staff.

Posted on Tue, Jul. 12, 2005

## Bathroom ambiguity a hot topic with gay, lesbian community

BY KEN MCLAUGHLIN

Knight Ridder Newspapers

(KRT) - The young and hip in Santa Cruz, Calif., may think they've experienced all the weirdness the city has to offer. Then, they head to the bathroom at the Saturn Cafe.

Suddenly, decisions must be made.

Door No.1 has a huge photograph of Elvis - wait, that's an Elvis impersonator, possibly male, possibly female. Door No.2 features a photo of two women - wait, is that two men in drag?

So, which door to enter?

Either, say employees of the Saturn Cafe.

From Starbucks to gas stations, unisex bathrooms are becoming ubiquitous. But the idea is, one sex at a time. At the Saturn Cafe, owners have taken the concept of "gender neutrality" to new heights - some say out of this world. The idea at the Saturn is, any and all sexes at any time.

The Saturn - a gay-friendly vegan/vegetarian eatery that has been a Santa Cruz institution for a quarter-century - is not just the place to go for the quintessential Santa Cruz dining experience. The Laurel Street restaurant is at the heart of a small but growing movement aimed at making transgender and "intersex" people - those born with genitalia that aren't typically male or female - feel more comfortable using public facilities.

"This is the new wave - to really look at bathrooms," said Deborah Abbott, director of the Lionel Cantu Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex Resource Center at the University of California-Santa Cruz.

**A "new wave" in bathrooms may seem like something that could happen only in Santa Cruz, but the issue is being taken seriously by the mainstream gay and lesbian community. At its huge annual conferences, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force now replaces the "men" and "women" signs with "gender-free" or "unisex" signs.**

Many people who are transgender - an umbrella term that includes transsexuals, cross-dressers and people who consider themselves androgynous - say they often feel threatened in traditional restrooms. "People stare, and the message transgender people get is that they don't belong there," said Bryan Burgess, coordinator of the Safe Bathroom Access Campaign at the Transgender Law Center in San Francisco.

Sometimes, things get uglier. In a 2002 survey conducted by the San Francisco Human Rights Commission, nearly half of all transgender respondents reported having been harassed or assaulted in public restrooms.

A year and a half ago, the Transgender Law Center joined the efforts of a grass-roots group in San Francisco called People in Search of Safe Restrooms. Their goal is to push for unisex restrooms - be they single-toilet or multi-stall. They say the unisex facilities would also meet the needs of disabled people and, often, parents who don't want to send children alone into single-sex restrooms.

The movement scored a big success when the New College of California in San Francisco last summer decided to eliminate the last two "gender-specific" bathrooms on campus. The signs now simply read: "Your Bathroom."

On its Web site, People in Search of Safe Restrooms praises the Saturn Cafe for eliminating the traditional figures in dresses and pants - and opening both bathrooms to all. The 26-year-old eatery has long had unisex restrooms, but they each had only one toilet. Not until the Saturn moved downtown in 1999 did it have a multi-stall restroom.

"I like it," Vanessa Gomez, 20, a Cabrillo College student who lives in Santa Cruz, said of the attempt to present gender as a spectrum, not an either-or. "It makes you think."

But conservative groups have condemned multi-stall unisex toilets as unnecessary and perverse. Some feminist groups side with the conservatives, arguing that many women don't feel safe sharing a public restroom with men. Some call it an open invitation to peeping Toms with camera phones.

Vincent Sandoval, 22, of Modesto, Calif., isn't thrilled about the idea, either. Unlike his friends gathered at a Saturn table earlier this month, Sandoval had to go to the bathroom. He peered at the cross-dressers on the doors and couldn't decide which one to open.

"This isn't right," he said in frustration. "Which is the men's room? Damn. They don't have stuff like this in Modesto."



## Choosing research to prove your point

Both sides in gay-change contest latch onto landmark 2001 study

By Alex Johnson

Reporter MSNBC

Updated: 2:51 p.m. ET June 29, 2005

When advocates of reorientation therapy for gay men and lesbians talk about their discipline, their contentions fly in the face of more than 30 years of research that supports the belief that sexual orientation that cannot be altered.

"The reality is that homosexuality is not an illness. It does not require treatment and is not changeable," according to the American Psychiatric Association, or APA.

But psychologists and researchers who practice reorientation therapy can point to a small number of studies that they say establish just the opposite. The most commonly cited research was conducted in 2001 by Dr. Robert L. Spitzer of Columbia University, one of the leading psychological authorities in sexual orientation.

The research, which was presented at the annual meeting of the APA that year and published in the Archives of Sexual Behavior in 2003, drew on the responses of 200 men and women who reported that they had once been homosexual but now were not.

Although the research relied on the self-reported testimony of the respondents, which Spitzer acknowledged made assessing their accuracy problematic, even critics agreed that he was able to devise a rigorous series of questions to zero in on the central question: "Can some gay men and lesbians change their sexual orientation?"

His answer: "Like most psychiatrists, I thought that homosexual behavior could not be resisted and that no one could really change their sexual orientation. I now believe that to be false. Some people can and do change."

### Heavy-hitting report

Spitzer was a highly credible authority: A professor of psychiatry at Columbia, he was chief of psychiatric research at the New York State Psychiatric Institute. Moreover, he could not be marginalized as a Christian opponent of gays and lesbians.

For one thing, Spitzer has said that he is an atheist, and he was for many years a leader in the movement to regard homosexuality as an innate characteristic, not a psychological condition. In 1973, he prodded the APA to drop homosexuality from its roster of mental disorders.

Reorientation therapists and Christian-oriented reparative therapists alike embraced the report.

"Historic Gay Advocate Now Believes Change is Possible," said a press release from the National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality, a leading secular proponent, which cites Spitzer's study in several dozen articles on its Web site. Other pro-therapy organizations identified Spitzer as a "world-renowned researcher" and noted his influence within the APA.

Reaction from gay and lesbian activists was equally vocal. **The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force called Spitzer's report "snake oil,"** while Wayne Besen, author of "Anything But Straight: Unmasking the Scandals and Lies Behind the Ex-Gay Myth," wrote that Spitzer was either "an over-the-hill stage horse galloping toward the limelight or a court jester hoodwinked by a scheming religious right."

### **What the study really discovered**

Both sides distorted Spitzer's findings. He did not prove that homosexuality could usually be reversed, but neither did he prove that reorientation therapy was invalid.

What Spitzer actually found was that "contrary to conventional wisdom, some highly motivated individuals, using a variety of change efforts, can make substantial change in multiple indicators of sexual orientation" along a 100-point scale. But complete reversal of sexual orientation, he said, "is generally considered an unrealistic goal in psychotherapy [and] is uncommon, particularly in male subjects."

It was Spitzer himself who warned that his sample was not representative of the general gay population. He sought out only people who claimed to have changed their sexual orientation, many of whom were referred to him by prominent ex-gay ministries. A large majority said religion was "extremely" or "very" important in their lives.

Moreover, Spitzer noted, his study relied exclusively on the self-reported outcomes of the subjects — he had to take them at their word. "Of course the big question is, given that these are subjects highly motivated to provide support for the value of reorientation change efforts, to what extent are their reports merely self-deception, or gross exaggerations?" he asked.

But among this "unique sample," Spitzer said he had indeed found that a statistically significant number had "achieved good heterosexual functioning." And while depression was reported to be a common side effect of attempts to change sexual orientation, "this certainly was not the case for our subjects, who were often 'markedly' or 'extremely' depressed BEFORE, and rarely so depressed AFTER."

Accordingly, he concluded, "mental health professionals should stop moving in the direction of banning therapy that has, as a goal, a change in sexual orientation."

### **Giving up the battle**

Two years later, after his report was formally published, Spitzer elaborated in a commentary in *The Wall Street Journal*.

"In reality, change should be seen as complex and on a continuum," he wrote, citing four key indicators — arousal, fantasy, behavior and self-identity — that could be measured. "Change in all four is probably less frequent than claimed by therapists who do this kind of work; in fact, I suspect the vast majority of gay people would be unable to alter by much a firmly established homosexual orientation."

Spitzer again said more research was needed, especially controlled longitudinal studies that tracked self-identified ex-gays over a long period of time. Last April, in an interview with *Christianity Today*, he said he was not the man for the job: The attacks on him by gay and lesbian activist groups had left him feeling "a little battle fatigue."

"The second reason," he said, is that "if somebody proposed that the National Institute of Mental Health do such a study, I think almost certainly any gays in the study section would say this is a total waste of time: They would say, 'We already know it's hokum, so why do it?'"

# San Francisco Chronicle

July 14, 2005, Thursday

## California survey finds new info about Latino same-sex couples

WYATT BUCHANAN

A third of all same-sex couples in California include at least one Latino or Latina, and a higher proportion of Latino same-sex couples are raising children than heterosexual couples of other ethnicities, according to a University of California, Los Angeles study released Wednesday.

The report, based on 2000 Census data, is the first to examine California Latinos in same-sex relationships and sheds new light on diversity within the gay and lesbian community, said Gary Gates, the lead author of the study.

"If you watch TV, most images of the gay community are white, mostly male and wealthy," said Gates, a senior research fellow at the Williams Project on Sexual Orientation Law and Public Policy in the UCLA School of Law. "This is one in a series of studies that is beginning to break down those stereotypes."

In fact, the report shows the lifestyle of gay couples where both partners are Latino is more similar to straight Latino couples' lifestyle - in terms of education, income and geography - than to the lifestyle of interracial and non-Latino gay couples.

"Actually, that makes sense from a cultural perspective; we Latinos tend to gravitate around family," said Monica Taher, People of Color Media Director for the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation. "That's the center of our culture; we stick together and tend to live where our parents and relatives live."

The Williams project plans to release reports on African-American, Asian-American and Pacific-Islander gays and lesbians in California later this summer. Also due soon is a national survey of Latinos from the **National Gay and Lesbian Task Force in Washington**.

The UCLA study found that about 45,000 Latinos and Latinas in the state were identified on census forms as a spouse or unmarried partner in a same-sex relationship, nearly twice as many as in Texas, the state with the second most.

San Francisco, which is both a county and a city, had the highest concentration of Latino same-sex couples of any San Francisco Bay Area county, but it ranked only 10th statewide. The five counties with the highest per capita rate of same-sex Latino couples - Imperial, Tulare, Madera, San Benito and Monterey - also had among the highest proportions of straight Latino couples.

Los Angeles County has by far the largest number of same-sex Latino couples in the state: 7,930.

Same-sex couples with at least one Latino partner are raising 36,000 children in the state, the study found. Of couples where both partners are Latino or Latina, 69 percent are raising children, while only 60 percent of non-Latino heterosexual couples are.

Gates said members of all nonwhite racial and ethnic communities, gay or straight, were more likely to have children than white people are. He also believes most of the children living with Latino same-sex parents were born when their parents identified as straight.

"We're fairly confident the vast majority of kids being raised by same-sex (Latino) couples are likely from heterosexual relationships," he said.

Evidence of the large number of Latino children raised by same-sex couples will put pressure on the larger Latino community to support marriage and other rights for gays and lesbians, said Taher.

"I think this will make people understand that what we're seeking with same-sex marriage is a matter of rights, having the same number and quality of rights," said Taher, who is raising a 7-year-old daughter with her female partner in Southern California. "We need those rights, especially because of the children."

Marriage benefits could mean Social Security payments to a child if one parent dies and would give parents more money through tax benefits, Gates said.

# The Nation.

## ***Beyond Gay Marriage***

by LISA DUGGAN & RICHARD KIM  
[from the July 18, 2005 issue]

In the wake of the 2004 election, the right moved swiftly and decisively to capitalize on its "values mandate." As many as fourteen gay marriage amendments could take effect in the next year or so. But bans on gay marriage may be only the tip of "the great iceberg," as Robert Knight of Concerned Women of America put it after the election. Parlaying anti-gay marriage campaign victories into a larger "pro-marriage" agenda, conservatives have targeted domestic partnership and reciprocal beneficiary recognition through broadly worded state ballot initiatives, launched a grassroots campaign for covenant marriages, imposed new restrictions on sex education, expanded federally funded marriage-promotion initiatives and introduced state legislation to restrict divorce. Such initiatives appeal simultaneously to fiscal conservatives who see promoting marriage as a way to reduce state dependency, anti-gay voters who quail at the notion of same-sex unions, right-wing Christians who seek to enforce biblically determined family law and the mass of voters anxious about the instability of marriage. Conservatives have found a way to finesse their differences through a comprehensive and reactionary program that aims to enshrine the conjugal family as the sole legally recognized household structure.

Democrats and progressives, by contrast, remain perplexed and divided, publicly bickering over the role gay marriage played in the party's defeats. Senator Dianne Feinstein chided San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom and the Massachusetts Supreme Court for moving "too much, too fast, too soon" on the issue and thus energizing Bush's conservative base. **In rebuttal, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF) pointed out that anti-gay marriage initiatives--successful in all states in which they were introduced--had negligible impact on Bush's share of the vote, particularly in swing states like Ohio, Michigan and Oregon.** Nonetheless, many gay leaders expressed deep anguish at what they felt was a surprisingly strident outpouring of homophobia at the polls and pledged to renew neglected grassroots efforts. Meanwhile, the gay movement has continued to pursue its primarily litigation-based strategy on gay marriage, winning some significant if preliminary court rulings in New York, California, Washington and Nebraska, as well as scoring a legislative win for civil unions in Connecticut.

We believe that by engaging the marriage debate only in terms of "gay rights," both the gay movement and the Democratic Party have put themselves in a compromised and losing position. Faced with an aggressive marriage movement that has skillfully stoked and manipulated anxiety about same-sex marriage, progressive Democrats and gays must come together to reframe the issue as part of a larger campaign for household democracy and security, a campaign that responds to the diverse ways Americans actually structure their intimate lives.

The brutal central fact: Ballot initiatives banning same-sex marriage passed easily in all eleven states in which they were introduced this past election, as well as in Louisiana and Missouri earlier in the year. In all, seventeen states have amended their constitutions to ban gay marriage; ten of these extend beyond marriage to eliminate other forms of partnership recognition, including civil unions and domestic partnerships. These initiatives go beyond blocking future progress for "marriage equality." Their attack on domestic partnerships and other civil contracts rolls back decades of success in winning recognition and benefits for couples of all gender combinations who could not or would not marry.

Michigan's Proposition 2 is typical of these broad state constitutional amendments. It mandates that "the union of one man and one woman in marriage shall be the only agreement recognized as a marriage or similar union for any purpose." Although Christian-right activists and Republican politicians insisted during the campaign that the amendment's vague language would only "defend marriage" and not eliminate benefits for unmarried couples, the Republican state attorney general soon announced that Prop 2 "prohibits state and local governmental entities from conferring benefits on their employees on the basis of a 'domestic partnership.'" The governor's office canceled plans to extend benefits to employees in same-sex relationships, and several public employers, from the University of Michigan to the city of Kalamazoo, will be forced, by the end of the year, to retract benefits already given to same-sex couples. Conservatives have even been pushing to have Prop 2 interpreted to bar private businesses that contract with the state from providing benefits to unmarried couples.

Although propositions like Michigan's are aimed at same-sex couples, they will impact all unmarried couples. Many of them could eliminate domestic partnership and reciprocal beneficiary statuses at state, and possibly private, institutions; revoke

out-of-state and second-parent adoptions for gays and straights alike; invalidate next-of-kin arrangements, including those involving life-and-death medical decisions; and imperil joint home-ownership arrangements between unmarried people.

Is this exceedingly narrow vision of kinship and household arrangements what voters endorsed this November? Not if we take their actual living patterns as an indication of their preferences. Marriage is on the decline: Marital reproductive households are no longer in the majority, and most Americans spend half their adult lives outside marriage. The average age at which people marry has steadily risen as young people live together longer; the number of cohabitating couples rose 72 percent between 1990 and 2000. More people live alone, and many live in multigenerational, nonmarital households; 41 percent of these unmarried households include children. Increasing numbers of elderly, particularly women, live in companionate nonconjugal unions (think *Golden Girls*). Household diversity is a fact of American life rooted not just in the "cultural" revolutions of feminism and gay liberation but in long-term changes in aging, housing, childcare and labor.

At the same time, there is increasing support for basic gay human rights. Large majorities favor employment and housing rights for gay people (89 percent in the latest Gallup poll), and a clear majority of Americans support some form of partnership recognition for same-sex couples--either marriage or civil unions (60 percent at the time of the election). In Cincinnati and Topeka, home to infamous homophobe Rev. Fred Phelps, voters defeated anti-gay ordinances, even as both Ohio and Kansas voted in favor of state-level amendments banning same-sex marriage. These victories demonstrate that decently funded and well-coordinated grassroots campaigns that reach out to other constituencies in the name of fairness and equality can secure gay rights even deep within red state territory. They also put into stark relief that gay *marriage* is the single issue trending against increasing support for gay rights. Certainly, outside the electoral arena, the entertainment industry presents lesbian and gay characters and issues as a ho-hum element of everyday life. How does this increasingly widespread acceptance of sexual diversity square with the sensational, overwhelming defeats of this election?

The answer may be that homophobia was not the sole or even central element behind voter support for the same-sex-marriage bans. The vexing, volatile issue may not have been equal rights for gay people so much as household security--the *other* security issue in this election--represented symbolically by the institution of marriage.

The net effect of the neoliberal economic policies imposed in recent decades has been to push economic and social responsibility away from employers and government and onto private households. The stress on households is intensifying, as people try to do more with less. Care for children and the elderly, for the ill and disabled, has been shifted toward unpaid women at home or to low-paid, privately employed female domestic workers. In this context, household stability becomes a life-and-death issue. On whom do we depend when we can't take care of ourselves? If Social Security shrinks or disappears and your company sheds your pension fund, what happens to you when you can no longer work? In more and more cases, the sole remaining resource is the cooperative, mutually supporting household or kinship network.

But if marriage is the symbolic and legal anchor for households and kinship networks, and marriage is increasingly unstable, how reliable will that source of support be? In the context of these questions, the big flap over marriage in this election begins to make a different kind of sense. If voters are not particularly homophobic, but they are overwhelmingly insecure, then the call to "preserve" marriage might have produced a referendum vote on the desire for household security, with the damage to gay equality caught up in its wake.

Indeed, the campaigns against same-sex marriage spewed rhetoric about the importance of "preserving" marriage, often steering away from overtly anti-gay fearmongering. For example, the Alliance for Marriage's Matt Daniels, who spearheaded the push for the Federal Marriage Amendment, has insisted that the marriage agenda is "not organized around homosexuality. Its mission is to see that more kids are raised in a home with a married mother and father." Daniels contends that "no one in the alliance believes that saving the legal status of marriage as between man and woman will alone be sufficient to stem the tide of family disintegration," but he believes that "if we lose that legal status, we lose the policy tool we need to pursue our broader agenda." What constitutes that "broader agenda" was made clear by another marriage movement leader, Bryce Christensen of Southern Utah University, when he said, "If those initiatives are part of a broader effort to reaffirm lifetime fidelity in marriage, they're worthwhile. If they're isolated--if we don't address cohabitation and casual divorce and deliberate childlessness--then I think they're futile and will be brushed aside."

Capitalizing on their clean sweep of November's marriage amendments, pro-marriage forces have taken Daniels and Christensen to heart. Pointing to high divorce rates in red states, social conservatives have revitalized efforts to repeal no-fault divorce and enact covenant marriage laws in Georgia, Arkansas and other Southern states. While firmly rooted in fundamentalist Christianity, pro-marriage leaders also court more secular voters. For example, Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee--who recently remarried his wife in a covenant marriage ceremony before a stadium packed with thousands--touts the financial gains to the state that result from pro-marriage policies. "If you start adding up the various costs--the costs of child-support enforcement, additional costs in human services, how many kids will go onto food stamps--it all adds up," he said.

From a policy perspective, then, the anti-gay marriage initiatives are important to conservatives for a range of reasons beyond insisting upon the heterosexuality of marriage. Aiming to roll back the decades-long diversification of households, conservatives see the marriage amendments as the first step in encoding the conjugal, procreative and, for some, biblically ordained married family as the sole state-sanctioned household. Furthermore, by limiting recognition and benefits to a declining number of married families, marriage advocates are able to appeal to fiscal conservatives who might otherwise be wary of such moral legislation.

This is not to say the pro-marriage movement didn't exploit the Massachusetts Supreme Court decision and the reaction it provoked among anti-gay voters and social conservatives resentful of the so-called "liberal elite." Focusing on marriage-minded gays and lesbians and the "activist judges" who were "legislating from the bench," conservatives found an easy proxy for the decline in marriage. The "threat" of gay marriage enabled them to portray marital households as under assault (from homosexuals and judges) without addressing any of the economic factors that put marital households under stress and without directly attacking any of the related legal and social transformations (no-fault divorce, new reproductive technologies, women in the workplace) that most Americans would be reluctant to reject.

So it seems that the priority given to marriage equality by the gay movement gave the right an opening to foment a backlash that centered on gay marriage (and all that it has been made to stand for). But before gay marriage itself emerged as a viable goal, the gay movement pioneered state and local campaigns for distributing benefits through domestic partnerships and reciprocal beneficiary statuses. These statuses neither secured entitlements like Social Security nor were they portable as people switched jobs or moved, but they nonetheless marked real progress in recognizing household diversity. While some of these clauses applied to straight couples and nonconjugal households (siblings, unmarried co-parents, long-term housemates and the like), they were largely driven by the gay movement. Now, however, they are seen by many in that movement as second-class substitutes for marriage equality. What we're left with is an erratic and unevenly distributed patchwork of household statuses tied all too closely to the issue of gay marriage, with no major social movement--not labor, senior citizens, students or gays--committed to household diversity as a primary political goal.

In order to counter conservative Republican strategy, one that promises to wreak havoc in elections to come, gay activists and progressives will have to come together to reframe the marriage debate. For gay activists, and indeed for all progressive activists, it would be far more productive to stress support for household diversity--both cultural and economic support, recognition and resources for a changing population as it actually lives--than to focus solely on gay marriage. By treating marriage as one form of household recognition among others, progressives can generate a broad vision of social justice that resonates on many fronts. If we connect this democratization of household recognition with advocacy of material support for caretaking, as well as for good jobs and adequate benefits (like universal healthcare), then what we all have in common will come into sharper relief.

Ironically, by overreaching with the state marriage amendments, the right wing may have provided the gay movement and progressives with an ideal starting point for just such a campaign. By showing the sheer number of households affected by such broad constitutional amendments, progressives can demonstrate just how narrow and extremist the pro-marriage agenda is. Defense of marriage amendments not only enshrine discrimination against gays and lesbians in state constitutions; they also severely curtail the freedom of intimate association exercised by Americans in nonmarried households--gay and straight alike. Indeed, a recent decision by a federal judge striking down Nebraska's defense of marriage amendment (the first ever at the federal level) noted that Nebraska's ban violated the rights of same-sex couples, foster parents, adopted children and people in a host of other living arrangements. The ban "imposes significant burdens on both...expressive and intimate associational rights" and "potentially prohibits or at least inhibits people, regardless of sexual preference, from entering into numerous relationships or living arrangements that could be interpreted as a same-sex relationship 'similar to' marriage," wrote Judge Joseph Bataillon.

A campaign to expand and reform family law to account for the diversity of American households could blunt the right's moral panic about marriage and shift the entire debate in a more useful direction. Support for such a campaign might be drawn from a variety of constituencies: young adults, who are the least likely to be married as well as the least likely to have health insurance; single parents, many of whom now choose to live together in order to share housing, childcare and other costs; the elderly, who often live together after the death of a spouse or end of a marriage; caregivers, whose ability to attend to the elderly, sick and disabled is often restricted by regulations that privilege marriage. Major corporations (almost half of which extend benefits to unmarried couples) as well as labor unions have opposed the marriage amendments on the grounds that domestic partnership agreements are necessary to provide for a diverse workforce. The nonpartisan American Law Institute has argued for blurring and eliminating distinctions between married and unmarried couples in order to simplify the laws that govern marriage, divorce and cohabitation.

The gay movement might also do well to broaden its agenda to include Social Security preservation, reform and expansion, along with universal healthcare. **According to Amber Hollibaugh, senior strategist for the NGLTF, most gay people age alone (perhaps as many as 80 percent), rather than in conjugal couples.** The needs of this population are better

addressed through diversified forms of household recognition, guaranteed healthcare and retirement security than through access to one-size-fits-all marriage. More broadly, progressives must lay out a vision of expanded social justice, rather than simply battle conservative initiatives that attack our limited welfare state. For instance, rather than merely criticize Republican plans to privatize Social Security, progressives might advocate reform and expansion of collective retirement provisions to include a wider range of households.

Meanwhile, a quiet social revolution is proceeding apace, as unmarried households of all ages and backgrounds work to forge collective economic and social rights. By drafting novel cohabitation contracts, pressing for state and local legislation, challenging discriminatory laws and urging employers to expand benefits, they have begun to create the kind of household recognitions that befit a genuinely pluralistic society. They have done so without an organized political infrastructure and without any major political party championing their rights. Gays and lesbians were once at the vanguard of this loosely constituted movement. It's time they rejoin it. And it's time for progressives to step forward and champion household diversity by reframing and recapturing the election's other security issue.