



*OutFront Minnesota
Annual Lobby Day – St. Paul, MN
April 7, 2005*

It is a great honor for me to be here today. I don't know how many of you realize it, but this is by far and away the largest lobby day in our nation and that says so much about your dedication and commitment and your extraordinary statewide organization, Out Front, its allies, and its amazing executive director Ann DeGroot. Thank you, Ann.

For years, our national community has looked to Minnesota for inspiration, innovation, and leadership and having so many thousands of people of good will here today is sending a much-needed message of hope to our movement.

I'd like to start by asking everyone here who is not lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender to raise your hand – there's nothing to be ashamed of – and keep your hands up. Now, I want everyone here who is lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender to grab the nearest straight person and give him or her a big hug and say thank you. Thank you for being here for us today in this very frightening time in our history.

Together, all of us here today, need to face some cold, unvarnished truths. Here in Minnesota, and in states all across the country, our lives, our love, our families are under attack. The tip of spear being used against us is marriage – but you and I know it is about much, much more than that. It is about the forces of political and religious intolerance working not only to



push us back, but to advance a broad reactionary agenda including breaking down the wall of separation between church and state, crippling labor, taking away a woman's right to choose, dismantling social security and the list goes on and on. Our lives are merely fodder for the right wing machine.

Their propaganda – and you hear right here in the halls of the beautiful building – is to say that marriage equality for us – or any form of family recognition for that matter - will destroy the family, is an attack on Christianity, Western Civilization, and the fabric of our society and it must be crushed. This is the exact mentality that led our nation into war in Iraq. But, of course, there are no weapons of mass civilization destruction hidden in gay families, they know it, but they are still at war against us.

The reality is that Gay marriage is their new abortion. It's the fattest cash cow they've ever had and they're going to ride it as hard and long as they can to not only trample us into oblivion but to reshape society to fit their dreadful world views.

Some inside our community and some of our allies are saying, in effect, that all of this is our fault - we pushed too hard and too fast and it's now time for us quiet down, shut up about marriage, and set our sights lower. And almost everyone is saying it's up to *us* to reframe the terms of the debate – that we must shift the focus from “moral values” to simpler concepts that polls and focus groups show have the most resonance with the American public.



With all due respect, I disagree.

Rather than reframing the debate away from moral values, each of us needs to embrace them and proclaim them.

Can everyone here who is a person of faith or part of the People of Faith Allies that are here today shout out?

I know it, you know it, and we need to shout it out:

We are giving and caring people. We are people that believe in and fight every day for freedom, justice, and equality. So many of us are people of faith.

Our lives, our families, and the way we love and are loved back are part of God's sacred creation.

We are right and just and moral.

And, at the same time we proclaim our moral values we must never shy away from calling out and speaking the truth about the utter and appalling and disgusting *immorality* of the ongoing and escalating attacks against us, our families, and our very beings.



It is time to *seize* the moral high ground and say simply, directly, and unambiguously that anti-gay discrimination in all its forms is *immoral*.

What our immoral opponents are trying to do here, and have already succeeded in doing in 18 other states – to amend constitutions to enshrine our second class citizenship – is simply astounding. Nothing like this has not happened since our constitution was first ratified in 1791 – namely, a national referendum inviting the public to vote to deprive a small minority of Americans of rights that the majority takes for granted and sees as fundamental.

This is not democracy. This is the tyranny of the majority, the very thing our Bill of Rights was created to prevent.

Our opponents – like your own state Senator Michelle Bachman -- say this is simply the way for the “will of the people” to be expressed. Give me a break. In most states in this country, Americans would not have desegregated schools, the right to marry someone of another race, access to contraception or a woman’s right to choose – let alone the freedoms of press, speech and religion we all take for granted – if those rights were put up to a popular vote.

No, Senator Bachman, this is not about democracy – this is about you using lies, myths, stereotypes and fear to advance your own political career by



debasing, defaming and demonizing gay people. This is not only immoral – it is evil.

So, in the face of all of this, what am I asking you to do here in the great state of Minnesota?

First off, as we claim and never retreat from the moral high ground, we must understand that LGBT people and the wonderful allies we have here cannot win this fight by ourselves, we must have others beside us we can no longer be reticent to ask for help. As the cascade of lies pours forth from the anti-gay industry, we need, we expect, and morality demands that people of God, people of good will, come to our aid and speak out in the same way and with the same vehemence as they would if it was another minority under attack. That means everyone one of us – gay or straight – when we leave here today going home and enlisting one more neighbor, friend, or family member to help.

Second, as we fight on and enlist allies, let's remember that we will not win by relying on intellectual arguments or cataloguing, for example, each of the 1,138 federal rights and responsibilities we lose out on because of marriage inequality. The other side goes for the gut, and so must we. Make it personal, from the heart.

And finally, and I don't want to put too much pressure here, but your national community is looking to you, here in Minnesota, not only to fight



but to win. Stand by and support OutFront, give your time and money, bring in your friends and relatives. Stop the amendment in the Senate, and if it goes to the ballot, unite and stop and defeat the forces of intolerance, bigotry and immorality.

I know you can. I know you will. Thank you.

It is now my privilege to introduce to you one sterling example of why people across the country look to Minnesota. She is the longest serving openly lesbian or gay legislator in the country, and has been a mentor and a source of inspiration to hundreds who have followed her into elected office. Time and again on the floor of the house she has confronted our opponents and been a voice for justice. She was a driving force behind Minnesota's groundbreaking 1993 civil rights law. Your, our voice in the statehouse for 25 years, Representative Karen Clark.