

## Diversity in Marriage Fight

### Coalition Seeks Greater Visibility of People of Color in Movement

By Bob Roehr  
Contributing Writer

Five LGBT organizations have launched a coalition effort to increase the visibility of people of color as supporters of marriage equality.

It was launched in conjunction with Freedom to Marry Week, February 12-18, and will run indefinitely.

The organizations involved are Lambda Legal, National Black Justice Coalition, Asian Equality, National Latina/o Coalition for Justice, and Freedom to Marry.

The immediate focus is a \$13,000 purchase of banner ads on websites that serve people of color ([www.lambdalegal.org/mem](http://www.lambdalegal.org/mem)) that show the wide range of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and allies who support marriage equality.

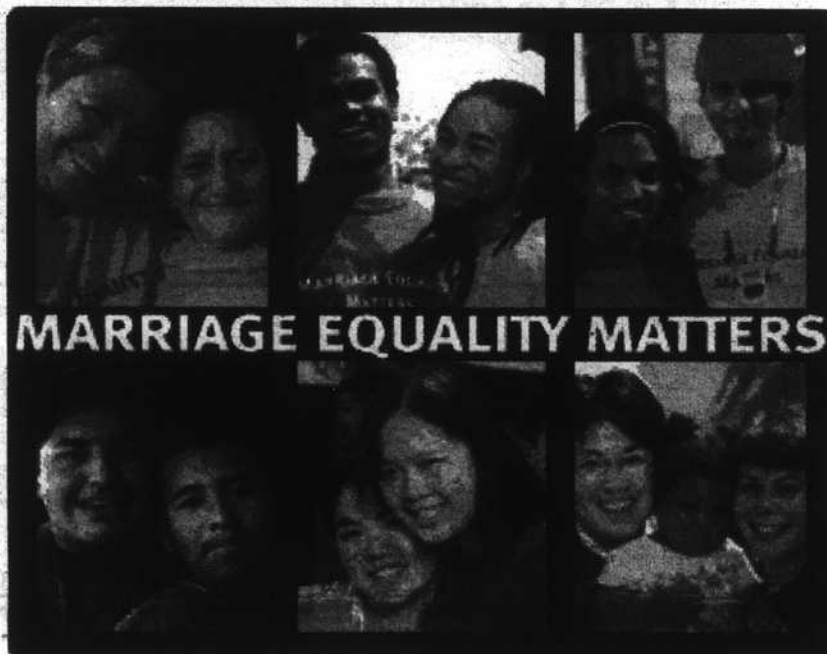
The photos were taken at pride events last summer.

Lambda field organizer Rene Hill said the goals are "to provide a forum for people of color to share their images" and to debunk the appearance that marriage equality is only a concern of white gays and that people of color either oppose the idea or are not involved.

A second phase of the program will take place in June with the launch of traveling exhibitions of many of those same photos along with commentaries as to why marriage is important to them.

Public service advertising also may be developed.

Andy Wong, coalition manager with Asian Equality, said, "Marriage equality confers important protections for our families, and nothing is more important to our communities than making sure our families are safe. For many Asian/Pacific American same sex



couples, the struggle for equality is as much about challenging our second class status as it is about safeguarding our families and children."

He enumerated the many Asian/Pacific American groups that support same sex marriage equality.

Alexander Robinson, executive director of the National Black Justice Coalition, outlined the long struggle for justice and equality by the African American community within the United States.

He saw marriage equality as "a logical extension" of that struggle.

"If we waited for society and majority opinion to come around, African Americans would still be enduring the indignities of separate but equal accommodations and legal and political segregation." Robinson said it is important to change hearts and minds as well as laws.

"Family comes above everything else" for the Latino community, said Marta Donsyre, with the National Latina/o Coalition for Justice. And those "are not the same family val-

ues that are being espoused by the fundamentalist right wing. Strong families imply the inclusion of all."

Lambda Legal executive director Kevin Cathcart said their plaintiffs in marriage lawsuits around the country "are as diverse as the LGBT community nationwide. It is important to break through the mythology that the LGBT community is a white community and that people of color don't support marriage equality."

He said, "Part of the challenge has been how small, understaffed, and underfunded many of our community organizations, particularly communities of color, have been." Previous activity has focused on states where there was an active legal or ballot measure on marriage.

Robinson echoed that sentiment. He saw the effort as the start of an ongoing national education campaign by the organizations of the coalition, working together and on their own.

People wishing to learn more about scheduling the traveling exhibition should contact Rene Hill at [rehill@lambda.org](mailto:rehill@lambda.org).

## New HIV Drugs May Be On Way

By Bob Roehr  
Contributing Writer

The development of new drugs to treat HIV continues at a torrid pace, unmatched in any other area of disease. Ten drugs have been approved over the last decade and more are in the pipeline. That was apparent at the Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections (CROI), the world's premier meeting on HIV science, in Denver, February 5-8.

Integrase inhibitors are likely to be the next major advance in therapy. They stop HIV from inserting itself into the DNA of the cell. HIV cannot replicate by itself and must hijack the cell's DNA in order to reproduce.

"The programs to discover integrase inhibitors began over ten years ago. Today we saw the fruition of those efforts in very impressive results in both naïve and experienced patients," said John Mellors. He is a researcher at the University of Pittsburgh and vice chair of the conference.

The drug that is in the most advanced stage of development is compound 0518 by the pharmaceutical giant Merck & Co. Data in naïve patients, starting their first regimen of therapy, showed a 1.7 to 2.2 log reduction in HIV viral load in a short 10-day trial. The reduction depended on the amount of drug they received. That was first reported at a conference in Europe late last year.



Openly gay Orlando physician Edwin De Jesus presented a study on one new HIV drug in development at the 2006 CROI in Denver

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