

FROM DEBATE TO ACTION: A STATEMENT FROM FAIR

July 24, 2009

FAIR is committed to securing marriage equality in the State of California.

Since our group's inception in November of 2008, we have worked diligently to lay the foundation for the next campaign, beginning with the November 15th rally at City Hall. We have focused our efforts on creating a sustainable funding source for the burgeoning grassroots movement that has emerged and building a strong new media presence to disseminate information to our peers. As a group of young activists, we have pushed ourselves to focus on areas where we can add value, not opinions.

Our guiding light has always been the promise of a future - an imminent future - in which we would once again enjoy the right to marry here in our home State. And we understand the reality of our position—we have a lot of ground to make up and a tremendous amount of work to do...*together*. Our opponents have an extensive network which is millions strong and powered by a well-funded combination of faith and fear. In contrast, we realize that our community is in the early stages of learning how to organize ourselves and connect with communities outside of our own to do the work we have failed to do in the recent past—going door-to-door, constructively engaging those that may have opposed us in the past, using our own stories to change hearts and minds, and forging new relationships with individuals and organizations.

We too believe that to accomplish this work, which our opposition has already mastered, we must harness the passion that has been unleashed by the passage of Prop 8. But it is essential that we also nurture and sustain this energy because marriage equality is not our first battle and certainly won't be our last. The fight for marriage equality, to us, is much bigger than the fight for marriage alone. Californians do not believe that we should be treated equally under the law and that sentiment will continue to pervade our schools and homes, where LGBT kids will still be bullied and forced out on the streets long after a narrow victory at the ballot box has been achieved. The work we are doing now—the slow, expensive, and unglamorous work of changing hearts and minds grassroots style—is what will ultimately change the culture of hate and allow us not only to win back marriage, but ultimately to live free from discrimination of any kind. We believe that this is very meaningful long-term work and our commitment to it is what informs our stance on the campaign timeline to repeal Prop 8.

We have participated in countless meetings, summits, soul-searching sessions, and debates with experienced leaders, new activists, political consultants, and labor, faith, and POC groups in an attempt to gain a real understanding of the battle ahead from those who are best equipped to interpret the political and social landscape.

The facts from our extensive research are quite clear: As a movement, we have not made the critical inroads with many of the groups that would yield a victory for us in 2010. Thus, the leadership of FAIR is unanimously agrees that our best shot at restoring our fundamental right to marry in this State will come in 2012, when we will have had the time necessary to change enough hearts and minds and organize ourselves into an effective campaign. As a community, we cannot be seduced by the passions of the moment because the foundation we are in the process of building will determine when and how we achieve full equality in the future, and we cannot afford to get it wrong this time.

While FAIR is proud to have a board that is professionally diverse and politically informed, we are aware of our own limitations as campaign organizers. We know that we are not the experts and we are humble enough and self-aware enough to listen to those that come to us with unmatched expertise.

We are also aware of what these campaigns do to our community's social service organizations. We no longer live in a State of economic abundance, and the bankrupt nature of California's State and local governments is jeopardizing the lives of our community's most vulnerable members. We believe strongly in the need to fundraise for marriage equality, in fact it is one of FAIR's main priorities, but we take this task seriously and with the knowledge that these funds are being directed away from social services. It is not without great consideration to our larger community that we would participate in raising the tens of millions of dollars it will take to win back marriage equality.

While FAIR favors going to the ballot in 2012 - a view not just shared by but inspired by the political professionals and the people with their fingers on the pulse of the faith and POC communities - we are fully committed to supporting actions that will move us toward our goal of equality for all Californians. We are building a movement, and we plan to work every day to support our community until we achieve equality – whether that is in 2010 or 2012. We have faith that those who feel as passionately as we do in this fight will do the same and will not go into hibernation. We have interminable respect for those in our community advocating for a campaign timeline that ends in 2010, but we urge those that do not stand with us on this issue to listen to the political and community experts and to consider the bigger picture.

In Solidarity,

FAIR

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