

Breaking News: Prop. 8 Upheld IJSO's Call to Action

My name is Joel L. Kushner and I direct the Institute for Judaism and Sexual Orientation at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. Today, I am also a spokesperson for California Faith for Equality and I join 6000 other faith leaders and congregations from across the state of California who support marriage equality.

As a person of faith, I am speaking out because justice was denied today. My faith tradition teaches me that we are all created *btzelem elohim*, in the image of God, not just some, not just a slight majority....but ALL human beings. And this means that we must respect the dignity of every human being or we are disrespecting our creator.

The good news is: today is the first day of a new campaign that will insure “liberty and justice for all” – not for some, but for ALL!

All relationships and families deserve equal protection and equal rights under the law....and people of faith throughout California will stand up and speak out until ALL means every marriage of a same sex couple and every gay or lesbian family are recognized as equal. 78% of Jews voted against Prop 8 initially. We now need to work on the rest of our own and on other people of faith to help them understand what this is really about.

As people of faith, we respect those whose faith traditions differ from ours on the issue of same sex *religious* marriage. They have a right to decide for themselves who gets married in their faith tradition. However, we cannot stand by and let a well-funded percentage of religious voices write their theology into our civil constitution by taking away the right to *civil marriage* from same-sex couples in California.

As someone who leads a faith organization in a seminary, I am here to say that bigotry, exclusion and discrimination are NOT faith based family values and that we are committed to stand together for equality for all Californians – no matter how long it takes.

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther Kings reminded us that the arc of history is long but it bends towards justice. While justice was delayed today by the decision of the California Supreme Court, we know that it will not be denied.

We Jews, like other minorities, know about disenfranchisement, about inequality, and about laws that make me less than my neighbors. Yet, we too know the lesson that the struggle can be long. But for me, with my faith to support me, like my ancestors before me, I will survive this hurt to see justice prevail in the end.

We stand on the right side of history on the issue of marriage equality. We recommit ourselves today to continue the struggle until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like an ever flowing stream. This is just one marker on the journey to ensure that all people are treated as they should be – unique and cherished creations made in the image of God. *Tzedek, tzedek tirdof* – Justice, justice, shall you pursue. (Deuteronomy 16:20)



www.huc.edu/ijso