

Statement Condemning Racial and Religious Bigotry in Movement to Over-Turn Prop 8

The Los Angeles Chapter of the National Lawyers Guild has been greatly encouraged by the spontaneous and, at times, organized out-pouring of support for the right of same-sex couples to marry in California, in the wake of the passage of Prop 8 outlawing such marriages. Despite the understandable outrage and anger over the passage of Prop 8, these protests have been uniformly peaceful. And there have been very few arrests...save for those at the hands of the Long Beach Police Department, a police department not known for its understanding of, or respect for, the Constitutional rights of protesters.

Legal observers from the National Lawyers Guild have been present at most of these protests for the purpose of observing the behavior of the various policing agencies responding to the protests. Our observers have been very impressed with the conduct of the protesters and with the spirit of inclusion and respect for the rights of all that has dominated these protests. However, some news accounts have reported that on a few occasions protesters have expressed bigoted sentiments about African-American people, or people of Latino heritage, apparently in response to the fact that exit polls suggest stronger support for Prop 8 amongst these two demographic groups than amongst the population as a whole. We, of course, condemn such sentiments and hateful expressions. Indeed, the whole battle cry of the "no" vote on Prop 8 movement has been, and should continue to be, "equal rights for all."

Further, since we are strong believers in the need for a clear and complete separation of church and state in our nation, the fact that some religious groups who oppose same-sex marriage attempted, through the expenditure of tax-free church funds, to influence the outcome of the vote on Prop 8 was, from our perspective, wrong. But this is no excuse for bigoted actions or words against any particular individual because of their religious beliefs or affiliations.

We urge all groups and individuals participating in the same-sex marriage movement to join us in condemning all expressions of racism or religious intolerance coming from anyone or any group fighting for the right of same-sex couples to marry. For our part, we will continue to defend those protesting for the right of same-sex couples to marry. But our defense will be limited to those groups or individuals who, like the vast majority of those protesting the passage of Prop 8 so far, conduct their protests with a full regard for the rights of all. Those resorting to ugly racist and anti-religious slurs, hinder rather than advance this movement. They have no place in this movement. We will not defend them.

In Solidarity,
The Board of the Los Angeles Chapter of the National Lawyers Guild
Passed on November 11, 2008