

May 19, 2010

We stand united as elected officials and community leaders of color for full equality and justice – *por igualdad y justicia* – for all.

That is why we strongly support the passage of marriage equality for all New Yorkers.

Julian Bond, former NAACP Chairman and civil rights icon, said it best when describing the injustice and unequal treatment of our LGBT brothers and sisters:

It does not matter the rationale – religious, cultural, pseudo-scientific. No people of goodwill should oppose marriage equality. And they should not think that civil unions are a substitute. At best, civil unions are separate but equal. And we all know separate is never equal.

Today, looking back on the states that banned inter-racial marriage just a few decades ago, it seems so implausible that anyone would stand up to defend such injustice. Through the lens of history, people will look back on the fight for marriage equality with the same disbelief.

What we learned from the civil rights movement to end racial discrimination informs our fight to end other discrimination based on who you are. It is a bedrock American value that all are created equal. Our laws must reflect that core belief.

This fight is not just about legal rights. It is about our brothers and sisters, our uncles and cousins, our neighbors and co-workers. It is about the strong families and communities which we ourselves cherish. Why should we rob others of the joys and blessings – and protections -- of one of the most sacred institutions in our society?

We take this strong stance in support of marriage equality mindful that under the U.S. and State Constitutions, as well as explicit language in the legislation itself, that legalizing marriage for same-sex couples cannot force any religious institution to perform such marriages in violation of its religious beliefs or otherwise restrict people's freedom to worship according to the tenets of their faith.

We encourage the Legislature to take this historic opportunity to stand up for all New Yorkers, their families and our future generations. The time has come to guarantee equal rights for all.

Continued...

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**Inez Dickens**  
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State Senator, Brooklyn

**David Dinkins**  
Former Mayor, New York City

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**Freddy Ferrer**  
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**Leticia James**  
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**Bishop Zachary G. Jones**  
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Breaking Ground

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Comptroller, New York City

**Bill Lynch**  
Former Deputy Mayor

**Saul Maneiro**  
County Legislator, Monroe County

**Melissa Mark-Viverito**  
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**Adam McFadden**  
City Councilmember, Rochester

**Lucille McKnight**  
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**Rosie Mendez**  
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**Sam Roberts**  
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