

Remarks by President Obama on LGBT Rights

It is a privilege to be here tonight and I want to thank the Human Rights Campaign for inviting me to speak and for the work you do every day in pursuit of equality for the millions of people in this country who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender.

For nearly 30 years you have campaigned on behalf of those without a voice. That's not easy, for despite the real advances that we have made, there are still laws to change and there are still hearts to open. There are still fellow citizens who hold fast to outworn arguments and old attitudes and who would deny you the rights most Americans take for granted.

But you are making a difference. And that's the story of the movement for justice and equality: not just for those who are LGBT, but for all those in our history who have been denied the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. It's the story of progress sought by those with little influence or power, by men and women who brought about change through quiet, personal acts of compassion.

This story, this fight continues today. And I'm here with a simple message: I'm with you in that fight. For even as we face extraordinary challenges as a nation, we cannot, and we will not, put aside issues of basic equality. We have made progress and we will make more.

While some may wish to define you solely by your sexual orientation or gender identity alone, you know that none of us wants to be defined by just one part of what makes us whole. You are also parents worried about your children's futures. You are spouses who fear that you or the person you love will lose a job. You are workers worried about the rising cost of health insurance. You are soldiers. You are neighbors. You are friends. And, most importantly, you are Americans who care deeply about this country and its future.

My expectation is that when we look back on these years, we will see a time when we put a stop to discrimination against gays and lesbians. We will see a time when we, as a nation, finally recognized relationships between two men or two women as just as real and admirable as a relationship between a man and a woman. I am committed to these goals and I will continue fighting to achieve them. And that is why I support ensuring that committed gay couples have the same rights and responsibilities afforded to any married couple in this country.

The struggle waged by the Human Rights Campaign is about more than any policy we can enshrine into law: it's about our common humanity. And I am hopeful thanks to the activism I see in this room, because of the compassion I've seen all across America, and thanks to the progress we have made throughout our history, including the history of the movement for LGBT equality.

Tonight, somewhere in America, a young person will struggle to fall to sleep, tormented and alone with a secret they have held as long as they can remember. Soon, perhaps, they will decide it's time to let that secret out. What happens next depends on them, their family, as well as their friends, their teachers and their community. But it also depends on us, on the kind of society we build.

I believe that the future is bright for that young person. For, while there will be setbacks along the way, the truth is that our common ideals are far stronger than the divisions some people try to create. These ideals are what made it possible for someone like me to stand here today. These ideals are what made it possible for the people in this room to live freely and openly when, for most of our history, that would have been inconceivable. That's the promise of America. That's the promise we're called to fulfill. Day by day, law by law, changing mind by mind, that is the promise we are fulfilling.

If we are honest with ourselves, we'll admit that there are too many who still do not know in their lives or feel in their hearts how important this struggle is. That's why I continue to speak about the importance of equality for LGBT families. And that's why it's so important that you continue to speak out, that you continue to set an example, that you continue to put pressure leaders all across America.

That's the story of America, of ordinary citizens organizing and campaigning for change: of hope stronger than hate; of love more powerful than any insult or injury; of Americans fighting to build for themselves and their families a nation in which no one is a second-class citizen, in which no one is denied their basic rights, in which all of us are free to live and love as we see fit.

Thank you for the work you're doing.

(Full text:

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/10/11/obamas-speech-text-transc_n_316844.html)