

How To Marry and Make a Difference In The Struggle for Equal Rights

After you marry, there are many ways in which you can use your marriage as a tool to forward the equal marriage rights movement:

- ***Send Your Wedding Announcement With a Photo to Your Local Paper.*** When people see same-sex couples in their own community getting married, it can help them to understand the personal importance of equal marriage rights. If the paper doesn't publish your announcement, consider sending a letter to the editor about the wedding and its significance to you.
- ***Talk About Your Wedding.*** Talk with friends, family, co-workers and neighbors. Make sure they know why being able to marry your partner is so important to you. You might want to throw a wedding reception for your neighbors, friends and co-workers to celebrate your marriage.
- ***Use Your Invitation as a Political Tool.*** It takes forever to make the wedding invitation list and chase down everyone's address. Don't let that great list go to waste. When the time is right, contact the same people and ask them to urge their legislators to support equal marriage rights and to oppose any effort to change the state constitution and take away marriage rights from same-sex couples.
- ***At Work.*** Use your marriage to try to obtain benefits for your spouse, such as health insurance coverage. If your employer won't provide benefits and you belong to a union, advocate with the union that they fight for these benefits in the next contract. Organizations like GLAD, the Lambda Legal Defense & Education Fund and the Human Rights Campaign can provide information about how you can best advocate for these rights at work.

- ***In Your Community.*** Use your marriage to try to obtain a family membership at the Y, a family discount on your auto insurance, or any of the many benefits married couples are provided.
- ***Have a Religious Ceremony.*** This is another way to celebrate your marriage and build support for equal marriage among the members of your house of worship.
- ***Band With Others to Form Local Organizations That Advocate for Equal Marriage Rights.*** Join the local chapter of an equal marriage organization, if it exists. If there isn't one in your community, find other like-minded people for support and discover ways that this group can advocate for equal marriage rights—by writing letters to editor, forming a political action group, etc.
- ***Support the Organizations That Are Fighting for Equal Marriage Rights.*** Many organizations like GLAD, Mass Equality, Lambda Legal Defense & Education Fund, the Human Rights Campaign, Freedom to Marry, Marriage Equality, the National Center for Lesbian Rights and the ACLU are fighting for equal marriage rights. Give your time and money to support the work of these organizations.

Finally, a word about what to do if you find that your marriage is not respected. Married same-sex couples serve as “ambassadors” to the non-gay world, demonstrating that gay families exist and explaining why gay families need the protections of law many other families take for granted. How couples respond to the disrespect of their marriages must be strategic and calibrated to the situation at hand if the couples hope to fulfill their responsibilities as ambassadors for lasting change.

Many effective options exist to advocate for equality, and you need to decide wisely about what to do (and when) in order to gain marriage rights and keep them. Particularly, when it comes to filing a lawsuit to deal with the disrespect of your marriage it is essential to weigh the chances of success or failure in court because bad results in lawsuits can have effects reaching far beyond your particular situation and affecting other families

too. There are good reasons why groups, like GLAD, working on equality for LGBT people have not just gone into court everywhere to remove discriminatory laws that affect married same-sex couples. Lawsuits brought at the wrong time, in the wrong place, or with the wrong focus can do far more harm than good to the LGBT community.

If you are discriminated against or have questions about your marriage, please contact GLAD if you live in New England. If you are outside New England, contact organizations like Lambda Legal Defense & Education Fund (www.lambdalegal.org), the National Center for Lesbian Rights (www.nclrights.org) or the ACLU Lesbian & Gay Rights Project (www.aclu.org).

As time goes by, you will hopefully find increasingly effective ways to use your marriage as a tool for moving forward the equal marriage rights movement in the United States. Congratulations on taking this very important step to legally recognize your relationship!

GLAD
equal justice under law

www.glad.org 1-800-455-GLAD (4523)