



## EQUALITY IN THE CHURCH = EQUALITY IN SOCIETY

---

### The Problem

To be gay in America overwhelmingly means to be denied essential rights and protections. From marriage equality to parental rights, hate crimes to job discrimination, the estimated 30 million Americans who are LGBT, face pervasive social and legal opposition to exercising basic liberties most citizens take for granted.

Nowhere has this opposition been more vitriolic than within conservative segments of the Christian church. The anti-gay agenda has been a top priority for the religious right for more than twenty years and has recently gained disquieting traction in battles for marriage and family equality across the country. Yet, this "God vs. Gay" dichotomy is false, bolstered more by conservatives' organizing success than by uniform Christian opinion regarding LGBT rights.

The religious right's divisive paradigm is paralleled by progressive stances that have resulted in inclusive institutional transformation within secular and religious settings, notably the Episcopal Church's recent lifting of its ban on gay bishops and the Evangelical Lutheran Church's vote to ordain non-celibate gays and lesbians. In California's Proposition 8 battle, 50% of white Mainline Protestants voted for marriage equality.<sup>1</sup> If the level of Mainline votes had risen to just 60%, gay marriage would still be legal in California. Indeed, a recent survey of mainline clergy confirms that a pro-gay Christian movement is not merely feasible, but grounded in a growing base of support: of the 2,700+ responding clergy, 29% are already vocal supporters of LGBT rights and another 41% are a "moveable middle" that could be persuaded to preach and teach in support of LGBT rights.<sup>2</sup>

***Believe Out Loud* seeks to exploit and bolster this increasing level of LGBT acceptance within religious communities, creating a high-profile, trans-denominational Christian movement for LGBT equality – one that both opens religious doors previously shut to the LGBT community and mobilizes people of faith to work for LGBT rights in larger society.**

### The Solution

Born out of more than two years collaborative research, planning and development by the country's leading LGBT advocacy groups, both religious and secular,<sup>3</sup> *Believe Out Loud* combines traditional community organizing strategies with spiritual study and reflection, new technologies and advanced social marketing principles as a means of accelerating the existing Christian movement toward LGBT inclusion.

Launched on Valentine's Day 2010, *Believe Out Loud* targets Mainline Christians (e.g. Methodists, Presbyterians, Episcopalians) – a collective body of some 40 million Americans who hold critical power in shifting perception and policy from a discriminatory status quo to full inclusion and acceptance. Centered around a sophisticated web hub ([www.believeoutloud.com](http://www.believeoutloud.com)), our strategies include advertising (on and offline), community organizing and comprehensive tools and resources for a broad array of stakeholders: clergy, lay leaders, youth, advocates, seekers and the general public.

Designed as a three-year public campaign culminating in a self-sustaining movement, *Believe Out Loud* will:

- Increase the number of Mainline Christian individuals and institutions that are active and vocal supporters for LGBT rights within the church and society
- Empower and resource individuals in the moral, cognitive and spiritual processes necessary for transformative LGBT inclusion
- Empower and resource institutions in implementing policy and structural processes for LGBT inclusion
- Support and enhance existing LGBT advocacy efforts within Mainline Christianity and broader society

Together, we will advance the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people within Mainline Christianity and in so doing, mobilize a compelling and persuasive religious voice to counteract the Christian right and earn justice for the LGBT community.

**To Learn More, visit us at [www.BelieveOutLoud.com](http://www.BelieveOutLoud.com)**

*Contact:* The Rev. Robert Chase, Intersections International, 274 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10001  
212.951.7006 • [rchase@intersectionsinternational.org](mailto:rchase@intersectionsinternational.org)

---

<sup>1</sup> Jones, Robert; Cox, Daniel. Public Religion Research, *Religious Voters & Proposition 8*. <http://www.publicreligion.org/research/published/?id=131>

<sup>2</sup> Jones, Robert; Cox, Daniel. Public Religion Research, *Clergy Voices Survey*. <http://www.publicreligion.org/research/published/?id=167>

<sup>3</sup> Founding partners include: Progressive Christians Uniting, The Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, Public Religion Research, More Light Presbyterians, United Methodist Reconciling Ministries Network, Integrity, United Church of Christ's Coalition for LGBT Concerns, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, Human Rights Campaign and the Gay and Lesbian Alliance for Anti-Defamation.