



# We Will Never Go Back

**Grassroots Input on California's No on 8 Proposition 8 Campaign**

**A Compilation of Findings from  
Community Forums and On-Line Survey**

**January 2009**

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# Introduction

*“We’re not going away. The world only spins forward. We will be citizens. The time has come.”*

*Angels in America*

On November 4, 2008, after four anti-gay initiatives were passed, instead of retreating into the closet or giving up, the gay community and straight allies came together, using innovative on-line technology outside the structure of any single organization, and staged over 300 rallies nationwide involving hundreds of thousands of people who stood for equality and fairness. By capitalizing on this unprecedented grassroots energy and innovation, Marriage Equality USA (MEUSA) recognizes the possibility to overturn not only California’s Proposition 8 (Prop 8) and the federal Defense of Marriage Act, but to expand support for marriage equality and relationship protections across the United States.

MEUSA is a national volunteer-driven grassroots organization devoted to securing legally recognized civil marriage equality for all, at the state and federal level, without regard to gender identity or sexual orientation. At the heart of our organization, MEUSA believes we must empower our grassroots community in this marriage equality movement to share their stories in their local communities because it is the only way to win and it is the right thing to do.

MEUSA recognizes the pernicious history of discrimination against the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) community and believes excluding LGBTI individuals from a campaign whose charge is to secure our equality is tantamount to promoting or at least tolerating homophobia. The best spokespeople for our movement are LGBTI individuals and straight allies who demonstrate courage by sharing their personal stories on why marriage equality matters. Empowering these individuals to speak out helps replace stereotypes with real images and stories, chips away at homophobia and builds support for the LGBTI community beyond the freedom to marry.

Concerned that California’s No on Prop 8 campaign didn’t utilize the grassroots community to its potential and recognizing the harm associated with a campaign run by political consultants without sufficient accountability or transparency to the larger community, MEUSA called for community forums across California to come together and heal, constructively examine the Prop 8 campaign and provide input on where we should go from here. In addition, MEUSA created an on-line survey to collect input from individuals unable to participate in these forums and those out of state to get the pulse of where things stand with our national marriage equality movement. Through both the community forums and on-line survey, MEUSA was able to receive grassroots input from thousands of individuals throughout California, in 47 other states and 13 countries; the majority of these respondents were observers or occasional volunteers/contributors and less than 5% were paid No on 8 staff or coalition committee members. Over the month of January, MEUSA will share these perspectives and experiences, thereby empowering our grassroots community, in a series of three reports.

Our first report, presented here, is a constructive examination of California’s No on Prop 8 campaign based on community forum and survey input. Our purpose is to ensure that in future, we determine how to best move ahead and to assure that the mistakes that occurred with the Prop 22 campaign and repeated with the Prop 8 campaign never happen again. Our second report will share the stories of discrimination and harm that resulted from this campaign and mirror similar experiences of our LGBTI community and straight allies who have faced similar constitutional amendment campaigns. By sharing these personal stories, we hope Californians and other citizens across this country can reflect on whether they believe any family should have to endure similar experiences. Our third report will provide MEUSA’s plan for the future on how to win support for marriage equality in all 50 states.

Taking the words of Harvey Milk, “we’re here to recruit you!” We conclude this report with our new year’s resolutions – our pledge to our community that we developed after reviewing the collective wisdom we received from the community forums and on-line survey feedback. If you agree with our resolutions on how we need to move ahead in this marriage equality movement, join us by becoming MEUSA members or member organizations and together we will win marriage equality for all loving, committed couples. For more information, please go to our MEUSA home page ([www.marriageequality.org](http://www.marriageequality.org)).

# Grassroots Input on California's No on Proposition 8 Campaign

## Overview

In June 2008, same-sex couples began to marry in California, following a ruling by the California Supreme Court that marriage was a fundamental right that same-sex couples could not be denied. Sixty years ago, our California Supreme Court became the first court in the nation to end the ban on interracial marriage. Despite over 90% of the public being opposed this decision, interracial couples never had their right to marry placed on the ballot for a popular vote.

However, same-sex couples had to rush to the alter and then fight Proposition 8, a ballot initiative to eliminate that fundamental right and insert discrimination into California's Constitution. On November 4<sup>th</sup>, Prop 8 narrowly passed with 52% of the vote and not only did that halt marriages for same-sex couples in California, Prop 8 proponents made good on their threat to ask the Court to also take away the marriage licenses for the over 18,000 same-sex couples who married in California.

California's Prop 8 campaign was the largest state initiative campaign in history and therefore warrants careful examination and soul-searching on what went right, what should have gone better, and where we go from here. We understand that this setback has created strong emotions but we believe it is important, essential, to listen to members of our community that we represent. This report is intended to provide a voice for the grassroots community. Through this input, we received the collective wisdom from long-time volunteers and new activists, heard their stories of frustration and hope, and gained creative ideas and fresh perspectives that only our community and supporters could provide. We have found this information beneficial and believe it will support others in our community, including the No on 8 campaign and the consultants they will hire to complete their own post-election analysis.

In comparison to California's Prop 22 campaign, voter turnout was not an issue; over 13.4 million Californians voted, representing 79% of registered voters statewide. While the No on 8 campaign experienced initial difficulties competing in fundraising, the latest reports show No on 8 surpassed our opponents by raising \$37 million, compared to their \$35 million. Community input through town hall forums and our survey findings acknowledged this amazing feat, particularly for respondents in the Bay Area, Sacramento and Los Angeles. This funding allowed the No on 8 campaign to produce a series of professional television and radio ads, supplemented by a field campaign that focused on phone banking and house parties. While our review of the grassroots input identified many positive outcomes resulting from the official No on 8 campaign, it also identified the following major concerns and future opportunities:

- Clergy leaders, identified as the most effective messengers for marriage equality, were underutilized in the No on 8 campaign.
- People of color are part of our LGBTI family and we must promote their leadership and inclusion to inform and direct outreach to these communities.
- No on 8 ads lacked heart and inexcusably excluded same-sex couples and their families.
- The official No on 8 field plan lacked visibility and ignored potential volunteers.
- The official No on 8 campaign abandoned our LGBTI community and supporters in the Central Valley.
- Empowering our grassroots community will help advance our national marriage equality movement.

We believe the California Supreme Court should overturn Prop 8 because no community should ever have their fundamental rights eliminated by a popular vote. But if we have to fight an initiative again and if our LGBTI community members face the same struggles in other states, we believe this book of wisdom will help insure we do the right thing and don't repeat the same mistakes.

## Clergy leaders, identified as the most effective messengers for marriage equality, were underutilized in the No on 8 campaign.

Community input rated clergy leaders as one of the most effective messengers to promote marriage equality. As described by one survey respondent from Massachusetts, **“What worked in our state was that a religious coalition formed of supportive communities of faith was very visible and vocal throughout the process.”** In California’s No on Prop 8 campaign, these clergy leaders had a unique perspective to share. Not only had many of them performed marriage ceremonies for same-sex couples, they were the best spokespeople to directly contradict the faith leaders used in the Yes on 8 campaign and their false claims about churches losing their non-profit tax status. Furthermore, over 400 supportive clergy and congregations across California had signed onto an amicus brief in support of marriage equality and these faith communities could be easily identified to tap into visibility events and actions. While supportive congregations and faith organizations were invited to serve as No on 8 coalition partners, their role in this campaign was significantly hindered by an over-reliance on alleged focus group findings.

### How effective are the following types of messengers to promote marriage equality?

(Rating Scale of 1 to 5, with 5 = Very Effective)

	Average Rating
Clergy leaders	4.71
Parents with gay/lesbian children	4.60
Children of same-sex couples	4.57
Same-sex couples	4.35
Statewide elected officials	4.27
Celebrities	4.22
Local elected officials	4.21
Union leaders	3.98

Source: MEUSA Post-Prop 8 On-Line Survey

As described through multiple comments from clergy leaders or members, it was clear the No on 8 campaign staff were not comfortable or prepared to deal with the faith aspect of this campaign. There was an over-reliance on focus group findings that produced messaging, like “loving our neighbor,” that presented a dangerously simplistic understanding of faith. As one Sacramento respondent stated, **“We didn’t need some focus group to tell us how to talk the language of faith.”** Furthermore, when focus groups reacted unfavorably when presented the concept of Yes on 8’s planned prayer vigil in San Diego’s Qualcomm Stadium the weekend before the election, the No on 8 campaign initially discouraged and actively prevented clergy from participating in any visible rallies until the final weeks of the campaign.

For example, five congregations along with the Stanislaus Pride Center in Modesto decided to participate in the national Seven Straight Nights (SSN) for LGBT Equality Rights event scheduled in mid-September. When this concept was presented during a regular faith organizer call, several other clergy groups across California expressed an interest in hosting similar events. However, the SSN national organizers pulled funding for the promotional events after receiving a request to do so from No on 8 campaign officials. Furthermore, MEUSA planned our annual nationwide Bridge Walk for Marriage Equality and decided to highlight supportive clergy as our event spokespeople. However the No on 8 campaign discouraged the participation of people of faith in this event and did not want the event to even be made public insisting that voters didn’t want to see people of faith supporting LGBTI people in San Francisco.

Instead of having clergy create events, like congregational house parties or movie screenings of “For the Bible Tells Me So,” that could have directly reached out to communities of faith, the No on 8 campaign encouraged faith leaders to organize a series of phone banks where they received scripts based on focus group findings that had no religious references or language. A few weeks prior to the election, the No on 8 campaign changed their stance and encouraged faith leaders to invite local media to report on their faith phone bank sessions and also hastily organized faith events in a few cities on the Saturday prior to the election to directly counter the Yes on 8 prayer vigil. While both actions received some media attention, these events were under advertised, had low attendance and ineffective to combat months of neglect. Future marriage equality education efforts must support clergy to be visible and effective leaders both within communities of faith and to the public at large.

**MEUSA CALL TO ACTION:** With President-Elect Obama’s selection of Pastor Rick Warren, an outspoken advocate for Prop 8, for the Presidential inauguration invocation, we call on our supportive clergy to share their voices and



perspectives on why marriage equality matters for everyone and express hope that California will once again support religious freedom and marriage equality through sermons and interfaith outreach to local congregations and faith gatherings and to the public through print, on-line, radio, and television perspectives.

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## **People of color are part of our LGBTI family and we must promote their leadership and inclusion to inform and direct outreach to these communities.**

The LGBTI community is naturally diverse – we are every color, age, religion, gender and socio-economic class. When our leadership does not reflect and represent our community’s diversity, any campaign or initiative generated is at risk of not adequately understanding and properly representing our entire LGBTI family. While organizations representing communities of color were included as coalition partners, this diversity was not demonstrated in the visible No on 8 campaign spokespeople or leadership other than during specific targeted outreach rallies held once in the large cities.

Several Community Forum participants noted how the framing of the message failed to present marriage equality as a social justice and economic justice issue, particularly to point out the disparate impact that marriage discrimination has on economically disadvantaged families thereby reinforced the image and impression that marriage is a white and upper-class concern. By not highlighting the impact of marriage discrimination and showing real-families harmed by the inability to marry, the analogy to other civil rights struggles rang hollow with many undecided voters.

An African American respondent commented, **“I have not been impressed by the outreach to minority population because I have found some of the assumptions behind the outreach insulting. They remind me of the types of things my religious friends say when they are trying to explain how they love gay people but not gay behavior.”** At a “Post-Prop 8 and Race” community forum in San Francisco, Supervisor Bevan Duffy stated **“the No on 8 campaign was not culturally competent.”** As a result, much of No on 8 messaging and advertising did not resonate with or reflect communities of color. For example, one Alameda County survey respondent commented, **“I feel that some of the language used in the ads, particularly ‘unfair and wrong,’ was very Caucasian centric. Most people of color live in a world that is unfair and wrong, so this washed right over.”** Furthermore, it wasn’t until the last two No on 8 advertisements – the Ugly Betty and Samuel Jackson ads - that issues related to and images of communities of color were presented.

Finally, our survey revealed the importance of Spanish and Asian language No on 8 materials, phone banking scripts and advertising and the frustration by many community members about not having access to this information in a timely manner. Yes on 8 actively targeted these communities with print and radio advertisements and door-to-door canvassers who could speak and had access to multi-lingual handout materials. While the central campaign eventually produced No on 8 Spanish and Asian language handouts, these were primarily available for download via the web without funding or distribution plans and the No on 8 Spanish and Asian rally signs were distributed a couple weeks before the election.

As articulated by an Alameda County resident, **“We needed to engage with all people and not just people like us. The people who are in the racial majority always need to check themselves to make sure they are not acting in unintentionally marginalizing or discriminatory ways.”** It was another instance of too little, too late. We knew that targeted outreach was critical, but we didn’t put our money where our mouth was. There were many leaders of color who felt left out and underutilized by the campaign. As one notable civil rights leader within the Latino community commented, **“I made all kinds of suggestions about opportunities for No on 8 outreach, but no one from the campaign seemed capable or truly committed to following up and making contact. It was very frustrating.”**



Following ineffective and late organizing and outreach to communities of color, when some members of our own community unfairly blamed communities of color for the failure of Prop 8, it revealed examples of racism within our own LGBTI community that must be addressed and challenged. One Latino forum participant described an incident in a gay bar in San Francisco where a bar patron pointed at him angrily and said, **“This is your people’s fault.”** As described by one of our Oakland community forum participants, **“As a gay African American, I feel alienated by both my LGBTI and African American communities and this has a devastating negative effect on me.”**

As will be seen later in our report, outreach to people of color was cited as the most effective strategy to promote marriage equality within our local communities. There is a deep bench of leaders of color, both straight allies and LGBTI who are available and interested in participating but are not sufficiently driving the messages, strategies and outreach priorities. We need to re-structure our LGBTI leadership to not just “invite” communities of color – but to fund, support, foster and follow our leaders of color as we engage in the hard work of healing the divisions that existed prior to and continued throughout the No on 8 campaign as we structure a vision for moving forward.

In addition, our outreach efforts also need to better encompass immigrant communities. In the Central Valley, an organization called Mobilize the Immigrant Vote (MIV) held several meetings to determine whether or not to take a stance on Prop 8. The Yes on 8 campaign targeted these communities, while the No on 8 campaign did not. However, local Central Valley activists advocated that there is opportunity to build support for marriage equality with immigrant communities. As reported on by MIV, **“When they brought a human face to the discussion, partner organizations reported higher rates of shifts from Yes on 8 to N on 8 positions within the immigrant community.”**

**MEUSA CALL TO ACTION:** There are several marriage equality organizations formed by LGBTI leaders of color that must be funded and supported. And Marriage for All, Bienestar, Honor PAC and API Equality are examples of organizations focused on targeted outreach to the African American, Latino and Asian Pacific Islander community. Individuals and other organizations supporting marriage equality should consider making a donation to support their ongoing efforts. Also, while MEUSA has active outreach directors for our Asian Pacific Islanders, Native American, and Latino communities, we are seeking an African American outreach director position and interested community member can contact us at [coordinator@marriageequality.org](mailto:coordinator@marriageequality.org).

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## **No on 8 ads lacked heart and inexcusably excluded same-sex couples and their families.**

Community input reaffirmed the critical role of paid advertising and found the No on 8 ads professional, somewhat effective, and a contributing factor in bringing this issue to the national stage. However, community forum participants and survey respondents expressed multiple concerns that the messaging “lacked heart,” was reactive and weak, and critically and inexcusably failed to show same-sex couples and our families.

Many community members expressed the No on 8 commercials did not have a clear and confident message. Instead of presenting our position, the No on 8 campaign was “swift boated” by Yes on 8 messaging. Too often the official campaign ads reacted to and repeated the Yes on 8 campaign messaging and framing of the issue. For example, when No on 8 ads stated Prop 8 had “nothing to do with schools,” they repeated and reinforced Yes on 8 campaign message. As communication strategist Professor George Lakoff has advised when you say “don’t think of an elephant,” all you can think of is an elephant. Many respondents also stated the messaging was too abstract and not personal enough. One survey respondent from Illinois stated, **“The personhood was taken out of the campaign. It was a human/civil rights debate without the humanity.”**

Again, while clergy leaders were rated the most effective messengers for promoting marriage equality, parents and children of same-sex couples, followed by same-sex couples themselves were next on the list. In addition, when we presented a series of official No on 8 and other marriage equality messaging, survey respondents rated personal stories from same-sex couples as the most effective way to build support for marriage equality.

Despite the fact that stories and images of same-sex couples getting married flooded the airwaves in June and July, the No on 8 campaign decide to put them back in the closet when it came to official campaign commercials. Community forum participants and on-line survey respondents expressed extreme disappointment that same-sex couples and our families were not a visible part of the No on 8 campaign advertising. One Sonoma County respondent stated, **“The decision not to use any gay people (other than celebrities) in the ads was a gross mistake; the decision to ‘hide’ gay people was unacceptable. If the people running the campaign think gay people are a liability, why should anyone vote in their favor? This issue was about gay people, damn it, and the ads should have least reflected that. We did that in 1978 (with the Briggs Initiative) and we won; what does that say?”** Though respondents supported the ad showcasing real parents and their personal story, the failure to also show their lesbian daughter rather than just a flash to an ambiguous photo was felt to be a missed opportunity. **“The absence of gay and lesbian faces, voices and stories was preposterous! It makes me disinclined to want to contribute money to future campaigns!”**

<b>How effective would the following message be in building support for marriage equality in your community?</b>	
(Rating Scale of 1 to 5, with 5 = Very Effective)	
<i>Messaging in italics denote official No on 8 messaging used.</i>	
	Average Rating
Personal stories from same-sex couples who have been denied the right to marry.	4.55
Personal stories from same-sex couples who have gotten married.	4.46
We should never vote on the fundamental right of a minority group.	4.43
Marriage equality is a civil right.	4.33
<i>Prop 8 would mandate, under the laws of our state, that one group of people would be treated differently from everyone else. That's just unfair.</i>	4.32
Eliminating marriage for same-sex couples is discrimination.	4.21
<i>Lets remember gays and lesbians are our neighbors, co-workers, friends and family. We should no hurt same-sex couples by eliminating their right to marry.</i>	4.17
<i>Domestic partnerships are not the same as marriage. Domestic parnterships are only legal documents. They don't provide the same dignity, respect and legal protection as a marriage.</i>	4.14
<i>Regardless of how you feel about this issue, we should not eliminate rights for any Californian.</i>	4.13
Marriage equality is an issue of basic fairness.	4.08
<i>It's not the government's place to tell couples who have been together for year whether or not they can marry.</i>	3.86

Source: MEUSA Post-Prop 8 On-Line Survey

Respondents affirmed that including the children of same-sex families as part of the campaign would have been effective in helping to reach persuadable voters, especially in response to the Yes on 8 ad that showcased a child bringing home a storybook. We should have shown the impact of intolerance and discrimination on our families. As described by one Contra Costa County resident, **“My six year old, the day after we lost Prop 8, asked me, with tears running down his face, if we were still a family. I think there would have been a lot of people who might have voted, not so much to protect my right to protect my partner, but to help my children feel safe and feel like they were full citizens, with married parents, just like so many of their friends.”**

<b>How effective were the following official No on 8 television advertisements?</b>	
(Rating Scale of 1 to 5, with 5 = Very Effective)	
	Average Rating
Samuel Jackson: Proposition 8 is Discrimination	4.32
Ugly Betty Cast: America Ferra, Tony Plana and Ana Ortiz Speak Out Against Prop 8	4.18
Senator Dianne Feinstein: Vote no on 8	4.08
California State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell: Prop 8 has nothing to do with schools	4.06
Newspaper/Organizational Endorsments: Why are Californians saying vote No on 8	3.99
Conversations: Regardless of how you feel about marriage, it's wrong to eliminate rights	3.92
Sam and Julia Thoron: Don't eliminate marriage for anyone	3.85
TV Sets: Proponents of Prop 8 are using lies	3.84

Source: MEUSA Post-Prop 8 On-Line Survey

After personal stories, our survey respondents rated messaging that emphasized how Prop 8 eliminated fundamental rights and is discrimination, and that marriage equality is a civil right was most effective. Our survey respondents stated the most effective advertisements were those issued in the last few days of the campaign, specifically, the Samuel Jackson ad that described Prop 8 as discrimination, compared it to other civil rights struggles, and presented an image of a same-sex couples was rated the most effective campaign ad, followed by the Ugly Betty cast and Senator Dianne Feinstein ads that issued similar messages. In



addition, the Ugly Betty ad was also produced in Spanish and included three well-respected Latino actors. Many survey respondents indicated they would have preferred that these messages and ads had come out much earlier in the campaign.

The initial No on 8 ads set a tone of ambivalence towards marriage equality. The top message in ads and printed materials stated that “Regardless of how you feel about marriage, no one should deny a fundamental right” which was a failed strategy reminiscent of the Prop 22 strategy. The Conversations ad which showed two women flipping through family photos and then one woman visibly showing her visible discomfort when she saw a photo of a same-sex wedding reinforced rather than challenged homophobia.

Survey respondents expressed frustration with too many ads that relied on voice-overs, instead of presenting real people; therefore while the Samuel Jackson ad was rated the most effective, we also received a sizable number of comments indicating this ad would have been more effective with his image. Survey respondents also expressed concern that the No on 8 campaign reacted too slow in contradicting Yes on 8 contentions. For many, they said that while Superintendent Jack O’Connell’s ad was effective, it didn’t come out soon enough and then Yes on 8 campaign followed with their bus tour featuring two parents from Massachusetts that contradicted O’Connell’s message and the No on 8 campaign didn’t respond. Additional research has found that the two parents featured actually had deep ties to anti-gay organizing work that was never researched or revealed by the No on 8 campaign.

Community members also indicated that another positive outcome from the No on 8 campaign was the creative Public Service Announcements (PSAs) that were created and distributed on You Tube. While many respondents had seen the Ellen DeGeneres ad and the No on 8 campaign purchased air time to show two PSAs – And She’s the California Constitution and Moms Against Discrimination – most survey respondents were not familiar with these other PSAs. But for those who had seen them, several of these PSAs were rated as more effective than many of the official No on 8 campaign commercials. Also, we receive a significant number of comments about two other ads we didn’t include on our list, specifically the Courage Campaign’s Home Invasion ad and the Prop 8, the Musical which came out after the election. While there was differing opinion on the effectiveness of the first ad, the majority of those submitting comments thought that Prop 8 – the Musical was a humorous attempt to highlight several reasons why Prop 8 should have failed.

<b>How effective were these unofficial No on 8 television advertisements?</b>	
(Rating Scale of 1 to 5, with 5 = Very Effective)	
	Average Rating
Moms Against Discrimination PSA	4.24
Ellen DeGeneres PSA	4.23
Republicans Against 8 PSA	4.21
Hello I'm No on Prop 8 PSA	3.98
Dolores Huerta PSA	3.98
Margaret Cho and Selene Luna PSA	3.97
And She's the California Constitution PSA	3.97
Wilson Cruz PSA	3.95
Camryn Manheim PSA	3.84
Diane Olson and Robin Tyler PSA	3.77

Source: MEUSA Post-Prop 8 On-Line Survey

**MEUSA CALL TO ACTION:** To continue our efforts to share stories of same-sex couples, we need same-sex couples who would like to marry but cannot to come out and share their stories in our Freedom to Marry Day (2/12) marriage counter actions that will take place at County Clerk’s offices across California and throughout the nation. If interested, please contact your local Marriage Equality USA chapter or [volunteer@marriageequality.org](mailto:volunteer@marriageequality.org). There are on-going efforts to tell our stories through additional PSAs and media outreach. If you are interested in telling your story or working on developing PSAs and ads contact [media@marriageequality.org](mailto:media@marriageequality.org)

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## The No on 8 field plan lacked visibility and ignored potential volunteers.

Grassroots community members emphasized the amazing way that so many people got involved in the No on 8 campaign, particularly with the phone banking, election day visibility events, and post-election rallies. However, many respondents expressed frustration on the top-down control of the field campaign that either restricted or prevented volunteers from participating. In the first few months, volunteer participation focused on donating to the campaign or participating in phone banks at central office locations or hosting house parties at home. For too long, it appeared the field campaign’s primary purpose was to raise funds, not to educate undecided voters outside our base. For individuals outside metropolitan areas or with limited funds, the No on 8 campaign was inaccessible to them. Too many potential volunteers expressed complete frustration about never being contacted after their multiple offers to help, while continuing to receive a constant barrage of panicked e-mails asking for funds. One Riverside County resident stated, **“I volunteered my name several times and was NEVER contacted to do anything, so I put up my own lawn sign, stuck my own bumper sticker on my car, and talked to friends about the issue. I think organization was lacking.”**

When asked about the most effective strategies for promoting marriage equality in their local communities, survey respondents – both within California and other states – put phone banking at the bottom of the list. Not only did they believe many people had a negative reaction to receiving these calls, they thought it was yet another example of the LGBTI community and our supporters being invisible partners in this campaign. And while door-to-door canvassing which constituted a major focus of the Yes on 8 campaign wasn’t rated high on the list, it was above phone banking and did provide individuals an opportunity to go out and have a personal, face-to-face conversation with voters across the state.

**How Effective Are the Following Public Education and Campaign Activities/Tools in Promoting Marriage Equality in Your Community?**  
 (Rating Scale of 1 to 5, with 5 = Very Effective)  
 Items in *italics* had more than 10% of respondents that marked no opinion.

	Effectiveness in Promoting Marriage Equality		
	California	Other US States	All US
<i>Spanish-Asian Language Ads/Materials</i>	4.72	3.86	4.49
Outreach to People of Color	4.66	4.12	4.53
Television Advertising	4.55	4.19	4.46
<i>Speakers Bureaus</i>	4.66	3.88	4.46
Outreach to Communities of Faith	4.53	4.05	4.41
Earned Media (e.g., newspaper or radio stories on same-sex couples)	4.48	4.17	4.41
Radio Advertising	4.47	4.03	4.36
Tabling at Community Events, Farmers Markets	4.49	3.92	4.35
Rallies	4.40	4.07	4.32
Newspaper Endorsements	4.35	4.14	4.30
Letters to the Editor	4.33	4.15	4.29
<i>You Tube</i>	4.36	3.97	4.26
<i>Blogs</i>	4.29	3.80	4.16
<i>House Parties</i>	4.25	3.68	4.11
Lawn Signs/Bumper Stickers	4.22	3.69	4.09
Door to Door Canvassing	4.27	3.34	4.04
<i>Targeted E-Mails</i>	4.12	3.41	3.94
Direct Mail	3.88	3.25	3.73
Phone Calling	3.82	2.80	3.58

Source: MEUSA Post-Prop 8 On-Line Survey

Phone banking can be used as an effective tool, particularly for volunteers that are out-of-state or have difficulty with transportation. Many town hall participants that volunteered to phone bank indicated these calls did generate good conversations. But the strict requirement to follow the script hindered volunteers’ ability to have effective personal conversations and asking for funds multiple times in the same conversation felt condescending for some volunteers. Volunteers were also told to not leave voice mail messages, eliminating an opportunity to expand public education or at least awareness on this initiative. Furthermore, too much time was spent phoning individuals on organizational lists or “preaching to the choir,” instead of reaching out to undecided voters or those in less supportive communities. When the No on 8 group finally got the voters lists of undecided voters, they initially restricted access to this information for individuals coming into central offices or those who participated in training. In comparison, the Obama campaign provided volunteers unimpeded access to voter rolls to make calls. It wasn’t until the last month of the campaign, that No on 8 loosened control over this information and expanded calling opportunities to those in their homes or out of state.

While grassroots community members identified visibility actions, like tabling at community events and rallies, as more effective in promoting marriage equality, the No on 8 campaign actively discouraged that type of action because of the focus group input. While the Yes on 8 campaign had a massive door-to-door canvassing program and launched its statewide bus tour to kick off their prayer vigil before election day, No on 8 supporters were huddled inside at phone



banks and invisible to the community at large. It wasn't until the last few weeks before the election that the No on 8 campaign promoted rallies and a door-to-door canvassing day where same-sex couples who had gotten married when out to talk with their neighbors. While these actions generated earned media across the state, many respondents felt it was too little, too late and that this component needed to be much more integrally involved earlier in the campaign.

Finally, the official No on 8 campaign used phone banking information to identify supportive polling sites for election day visibility action, while the Yes on 8 campaign used their door-to-door canvassing data to launch a massive Get Out the Vote action. Although many community forum participants and survey respondents stated this election day visibility action was one of the most memorable of the entire No on 8 campaign volunteer experience, some questioned the effectiveness of this type of action.

**MEUSA CALL TO ACTION:** Visibility actions, coupled with a sustained public education campaign, will help build support for marriage equality. MEUSA, working with other organizations like Join the Impact, will continue to collect stories, develop a calendar of events with anniversaries and actions that will help keep this issue in the public eye and support other legislative and judicial actions. For example, in addition to our February marriage counter action, MEUSA is encouraging community members to participate in the statewide rally at the State Capitol on February 16<sup>th</sup> and Equality California's February 17<sup>th</sup> lobby day in support of Senator Mark Leno's SR 7 and Assemblyman Tom Ammiano's HR 5 that would put the Legislature on record to oppose Prop 8 as an invalid revision of the California's Constitution. If you are interested in participating in these events, please contact your local Marriage Equality USA chapter or [volunteer@marriageequality.org](mailto:volunteer@marriageequality.org).

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## **The No on 8 campaign abandoned our LGBTI community and supporters in the Central Valley.**

The official No on 8 campaign's disregard for the Central Valley was "comparable to the Human Rights Campaign's exclusion of the transgender community from the Employment Non-Discrimination Act."

The Central Valley LGBTI community and allies are passionate and committed; they take personal risks and exhibit bravery to stand publicly in support of marriage equality in a relatively unsupportive region of the state. For local organizers, the No on 8 campaign was a repeat of their experiences with organizers from the No on Prop 22 and Decline to Sign campaigns. When the Prop 8 campaign began, the Central Valley organizers were told they would get assistance which they needed, but nothing materialized. One Central Valley respondent stated, "**The campaign needed to be decentralized, with regional leadership making coordinated decisions and a vigorous county-based grassroots campaign. And any person who uttered the words 'your area doesn't matter' to a prospective volunteer willing to take the emotional punishment of working in a hostile territory should be fired.**" Unfortunately, we received multiple comments from Central Valley residents saying they were told from No on 8 organizers that the Central Valley didn't matter.

It's unbelievable to think that in an election where every vote counted, the No on 8 campaign virtually ignored an area where marriage equality work was needed and where volunteers were available and asking for help. As one Central Valley resident described in an e-mail to the No on 8 campaign officials, "**We are drowning in a sea of yellow Yes on 8 signs and ads. Everywhere we turn there are Yes ads in print media, radio, television and the only thing we hear from the No on 8 campaign is more requests for money.**"

When the No on 8 campaign did send out a sizable shipment of lawn signs, lapel and bumper stickers, and informational handouts at the beginning of the campaign and those supplies were greatly appreciated. In the Central Valley, they were gone immediately but when local organizers called in for additional supplies, they were told none would be provided because they need the funds to support television ads; unfortunately, those ads were not being shown in the Central



Valley. One frustrated Central Valley resident said, **“These ads did not run in the Kern County area. THAT is one of the reasons that 75% of the Central Valley voted Yes on 8. In case you didn’t know, LGBTQ folks live here too!”** Another resident stated, **“We donated all our wedding money to this campaign and got nothing out of it. I feel sold up the river by this campaign.”**

It wasn’t until a few weeks before the election that the first radio ads were played and just three days before the election that the first television ad was aired. But with 42% of Californians voting absentee, it was too little, too late. While decisions have to be made about where to best place ads, the No on 8 campaign should have taken funds to place ads in more supportive regions and used them to place ads in the Central Valley, a less costly region and one where every major newspaper editorial board come out with a No on 8 endorsement.

Concerned about the lack of advertising and support in the Central Valley, MEUSA created a ballot initiative committee to allow local community members and interested donors from outside this region to donate funds to purchase No on 8 visibility and educational materials and to create local No on 8 ads that were printed in the Stockton Record, Modesto Bee, Oakdale Ledger, the newspaper in Calaveras County and the Spanish language paper Vida en el Valle which is distributed to 5 cities in the Central Valley. But the modest funds available could not compete with the full-page ads that the Yes on 8 poured into the Central Valley.

Marriage equality public education work needs to happen in the Central Valley today. As one Stanislaus County respondent stated, **“I feel like the LGBTI community suffered a large setback in the Central Valley. Because we were not visible, the ugly stereotypes rather than our personal stories live on and it makes it hard to live here.”** Another Kern County residents said, **“We are in the fight of our lives and we need you to help us.”**

**MEUSA CALL TO ACTION:** MEUSA will work with the Courage Campaign to co-host a leadership summit in the Central Valley for local organizations and individuals and to continue to support leadership and visibility actions in the Central Valley.

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## **Empowering our grassroots community will help advance our national marriage equality movement.**

What we witnessed on November 15<sup>th</sup>, no one could have ever imagined. A few marriage equality activists came together to organize rallies for those opposed to the passage of Prop 8 and they encouraged others to “Join the Impact.” Within a week, over 300 rallies took place at the same time at City Halls across this nation it what is now dubbed Stonewall 2.0. But we know, our marriage equality movement cannot be advanced with visibility actions alone. We need to merge our old-school grassroots organizing with the power of new technology.

We need to take what we’ve learned in California and share it nationwide so other states don’t re-invent the wheel or start from scratch. With the power of this technology and the freedom for volunteers to participate, we can provide support in all fifty states when any states have to fight upcoming ballot initiatives.

We will not leave anyone in our community alone in our fight for civil rights and we must include our straight allies in our marriage equality movement. As our second report will illustrate, our LGBTI community wasn’t the only ones harmed by the Prop 8 campaign. Many straight allies felt for the first time the discrimination and hate the LGBTI community faces. Their voices are powerful, such as this poignant statement from a straight ally, **“When Prop 8 passed, I felt that something was taken from me, like the right to live in a community that values love, commitment and diversity. It makes me feel ashamed to be able to marry – I can’t enjoy my marriage, it feels so unfair to enjoy something that is denied to others. This isn’t a fight for gay rights; this is a civil rights fight for all of us.”**



We must also work with and care about other social justice movements because we share common goals and similar opponents, and we must come out and support other causes within our community by volunteering at food banks and supporting other charitable acts.

We received multiple comments from community forum participants and on-line survey respondents that expressed the need to create a sustained marriage equality movement that promotes a national dialogue. We need a national calendar of visibility actions that provide us a way to continue conversations in our local communities while also illustrating the importance of marriage equality across the nation. We must provide local leaders the support they need but also the freedom to choose local actions are right for their community. And we need to create a place and a space for everyone to come and contribute. Because, when we do...not only will we be able to overturn Prop 8 and eliminate the Defense of Marriage Act, we'll be able to advance marriage equality across this nation.

At Marriage Equality USA, we believe in the power of the grassroots community and we know that when empower local members of our community, they step up to the plate and hit a home run. *"We are amazing creatures, each and every one of us. The world only spins forward. And we will be citizens."*

**MEUSA CALL TO ACTION:** MEUSA has created a series of New Year's resolutions that reflects what we've learned from our grassroots input and our pledge on how we plan to move forward in our marriage equality movement. Later in January, we will also be issuing our plan for the future. If you believe in our goals and direction, as an individual or an organization, we'd like you to join us by becoming members or member organizations. For more information, please go to our website at [www.marriageequality.org](http://www.marriageequality.org).



# Marriage Equality USA's New Year Resolutions

## Our Pledge to Our Community

Tapping into the collective wisdom of our grassroots community, MEUSA has compiled the following fundamental principles which emphasize the importance of winning the freedom to marry by promoting dignity and respect of our community members.

**To End Homophobia, We Must Not Practice It.** As Harvey Milk once said “they’ll vote for us two to one if they get to know one of us.” The LGBTI community must be visible in our campaign to secure marriage equality because we know our real images and stories are the only way to replace stereotypes. We must share our stories through earned media, door to door canvassing, and other visibility actions.

**We Must Focus on our Families.** We will never allow LGBTI families to be pushed into the closet. Our families are raising children and serve as our front line ambassadors with other families. Our lives and experiences, including the fear and harm their children face from these anti-gay campaigns, like Prop 8, must be shared to increase understanding and support. We must work with family-focused organizations, both LGBTI and other family-focused groups.

**We Must Challenge Institutionalized Privilege within LGBTI Organizations.** It’s not just about outreach; it’s about inclusion in our marriage equality movement. We will promote, support, involve and fund leaders and organizations of color and create messages and messengers that reflect all communities as a priority, early and often, not as an afterthought.

**We Must Engage in all 50 States and in California, in all 58 Counties.** Just as it was wrong to exclude the transgender community from the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, it was wrong to exclude the Central Valley from California’s No on Prop 8 campaign. Same-sex couples live everywhere; therefore we must campaign in every community and not ignore less supportive communities where there is so much room to gain and where the marriage equality outreach and education is essential.

**We Must Empower Communities of Faith.** We believe faith leaders and faith communities, not focus groups or consultants, should determine the messages and the best way to engage other people of faith in this movement. We can’t oversimplify and restrict our faith leaders and other faith based allies to talking points that don’t adequately give space to reflect their diverse beliefs or limit their participating to phone banks that keep these leaders out of the public eye. We need these faith leaders to be visible and vocal in building bridges to other faith communities. They are uniquely situated to respond to some of our most ardent opponents.

**We Must Ensure our Straight Allies Have a Larger Voice in our Movement.** Our marriage equality movement must not be restricted to the LGBTI community. We must embrace and incorporate our straight allies as leaders in our movement by providing outlets and invitations for them to join us in fulfilling our collective Constitutional promise of equal justice and treatment for all people.

**We Must Recognize the Interconnectedness of our Lives and the Broader Social Justice Movement.** We cannot just ask for support for LGBTI equality and not step up for other social justice movements. Our goals and our opponents are similar and by participating as good coalition partners, we can support the broader progressive movement for equality and justice.

**We Must Commit to a National Grassroots Infrastructure and Strategy.** We must have a proactive, sustained marriage equality educational movement and national dialogue to create the environment necessary to be able to overturn the federal Defense of Marriage Act and promote support for marriage equality nationwide. When these ballot measures arise, each state should not reinvent the wheel or have to start from scratch. We need to create effective modes of communication within the grassroots structure and share good ideas and practices. By capitalizing on technology, we can allow every state or volunteers in supportive communities to effectively participate in building our national vision.



**We Must Provide a Place and a Space in this Movement for Everyone.** Our community must be invited to do more than check writing and organizing house parties. We must be engaged in organizing and educating our communities, being visible, contributing our voices and sharing our unique talents and resources to assist the movement. We will allow anyone of any educational background and economic class to participate to the extent they are interested and we will provide materials, training and assistance to maximize and plug in all available talents and resources to promote volunteer-grassroots leadership and participation during this watershed civil rights movement for LGBTI equality.

# Methodology

MEUSA collected grassroots input through a series of community forums and a national on-line survey which we used to produce this summary and calls to action.

Community forums were held across California and this summary includes input specifically from the forums held in Alameda County (Albany and Oakland), Contra Costa County (Concord and Walnut Creek), Los Angeles County, Marin County, Orange County, San Mateo County, Sonoma County, and San Francisco County. Local organizations collaborated on setting up each forum that reflected the unique needs and interest of each community. For example, in San Francisco County, a small panel provided an overview of the election results and the court case and then forum participants split up into smaller groups to allow everyone an opportunity to respond to a series of questions about the Prop 8 campaign and where we go from here. In Los Angeles County, a panel introduced the discussion and then every forum participant was able to express their questions or comments at an open microphone where all participants could hear. In Orange County, participants celebrated the campaign accomplishments as a group, and then each participant wrote down their thoughts which some shared openly and written responses were collected. This session ended with an hour of ritual and sharing of personal stories and faith and participants then marched with candles to a location where they held a silent vigil. MEUSA participated in many of these forums and received summaries from others so that we could incorporate the input of thousands of community forum participants across California.

In addition, over 3,100 individuals responded to MEUSA’s on-line survey that included both quantitative questions, most involved a rating scale that examined effectiveness of messaging, messengers, and strategies. The five point scale ranged from a low end of harmful, a midpoint of no impact, and a high end of very effective; it also allowed survey respondents to mark no opinion and those responses were excluded from the rating analysis but examined to determine whether the number of respondents that provided input on ratings was sufficient.

Furthermore, MEUSA received very valuable input and stories through a series of open-ended survey questions. Chris Vanderstouwe, a Linguistic major graduating from San Francisco State University and a community forum participant in San Francisco, analyzed the open ended questions to identify patterns in responses and highlight quotes that best exemplified other responses.

As indicated in the table below, this report truly summarizes input from the grassroots community. The majority of respondents were either observers or occasional volunteers or contributors to the official campaign and unofficial campaign activities in their local communities. Less than 5% of respondents were No on 8 paid staff members or coalition committee members.

## MEUSA Survey Respondents by Participant Type

Observer	21%
Occasional Volunteer/Contributor to Official No on 8 Campaign	26%
Occasional Volunteer/Contributor to Unofficial No on 8 Campaign Activities in my Community	20%
Active or Frequent Volunteer/Contributor to Official No on 8 Campaign	15%
Active or Frequent Volunteer/Contributor to Unofficial No on 8 Campaign Activities in my Community	16%
No on 8 Coalition Committee Member	3%
No on 8 Paid Staff Member	1%

MEUSA survey respondents came from 47 states and 13 countries. Almost 75% of respondents were from California, with the remainder from other US states and countries. In our analysis, US regions were based on groupings used by the



US Census and California counties were grouped into regions based on those used by the California Public Policy Institute.

### MEUSA Survey Respondents by Geographic Region

California Respondents		Other US States/International	
Northern CA	3%	Northeast	37%
Bay Area	36%	South	23%
Central Coast	7%	Midwest	20%
Central Valley	30%	West	16%
Los Angeles	13%		
Southern CA	10%	International	5%
CA Total	2289	Other US/Intl Total	823

As for sexual orientation, almost 75% identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual or queer (GLBQ) and the remainder as heterosexual, with higher concentrations of GLBQ individuals in Los Angeles and the Bay Area. In terms of gender, 57% indicated they were female, 41% male, 2% transgender and less than one percent intersex. Higher concentrations of female respondents were concentrated in could be found in Northern California, the Central Valley, Midwest, and Northeast. Higher concentration of male respondents is in Los Angeles County, the South and West.

### MEUSA Survey Respondents by Sexual Orientation and Gender and by Geographic Location

	California Respondents						Other US States by Region					
	Northern CA	Bay Area	Central Coast	Central Valley	Los Angeles	Southern CA	Northeast	Midwest	South	West	Intl	Total
GLBQ	64%	78%	61%	75%	83%	67%	69%	54%	68%	66%	71%	73%
Heterosexual	36%	22%	39%	25%	17%	33%	31%	46%	32%	34%	29%	27%
Female	68%	55%	61%	67%	40%	55%	63%	65%	45%	51%	50%	57%
Male	27%	43%	38%	31%	59%	44%	37%	35%	52%	47%	50%	41%
Transgender	2%	3%	1%	2%	1%	1%	0%	0%	3%	2%	0%	2%
Intersex	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

In terms of ethnicity, 79% were White, 8% Hispanic/Latino, 5% Asian Pacific Islander, 3% African American, 2% Native American and the remaining 3% as other. Higher concentrations of Hispanic/Latino respondents could be found in Los Angeles and the Central Coast; higher concentrations of Native American respondents could be found in Northern California; and higher concentrations of White respondents could be found as International, our other US States by region and then Northern California and the Central Coast.

### MEUSA Survey Respondents by Ethnicity and Geographic Location

	California Respondents						Other US States by Region					
	Northern CA	Bay Area	Central Coast	Central Valley	Los Angeles	Southern CA	Northeast	Midwest	South	West	Intl	Total
African American	2%	3%	0%	2%	2%	4%	6%	0%	3%	5%	0%	3%
Asian Pacific Islander	2%	8%	2%	3%	8%	5%	1%	2%	4%	3%	0%	5%
Hispanic/Latino	5%	6%	12%	9%	13%	11%	6%	6%	1%	7%	0%	8%
Native American	7%	2%	1%	4%	1%	1%	1%	2%	3%	5%	0%	2%
White	84%	77%	84%	78%	73%	76%	84%	86%	86%	79%	93%	79%
Other	0%	3%	1%	2%	2%	3%	2%	5%	3%	0%	7%	3%

Lastly, respondents covered all age groupings; just over 38% were between 35-49, 32% were between 18-34, 23% were between 50-64, 5% were over 65 and 2% were under 18. Higher concentrations of respondents under 18 were in the



Midwest; for 18-34 year olds could be found in the other US States by region; for 35-49 year olds could be found in Los Angeles County; for 50-64 year olds could be found in Northern California.

**MEUSA Survey Respondents by Age and Geographic Location**

	California Respondents						Other US States by Region					Total
	Northern CA	Bay Area	Central Coast	Central Valley	Los Angeles	Southern CA	Northeast	Midwest	South	West	Intl	
< 18	0%	1%	4%	0%	2%	3%	4%	8%	5%	2%	0%	2%
18 - 34	32%	25%	36%	30%	26%	23%	50%	57%	43%	46%	64%	32%
35 - 49	23%	42%	30%	38%	56%	41%	33%	21%	34%	32%	36%	39%
50 - 64	41%	27%	25%	26%	14%	29%	11%	11%	12%	20%	0%	23%
Over 65	5%	5%	4%	6%	3%	5%	2%	3%	5%	0%	0%	4%

MEUSA’s on-line survey was conducted over a four-week period after the November 2008 election. On two occasions, MEUSA contacted our organization members to participate and contacted several list serves, including the Repeal 8 and No on 8 campaign list serves, to increase input across California. Other national organizations were contacted to help obtain input across the United States. For example, Join the Impact featured MEUSA’s survey on one of their top-5 websites of the week and sent out an action alert to their members seeking input. Finally, in order to ensure we received input from a cross section of our population, MEUSA contacted organizational officials, including but not limited to And Marriage for All, API Equality, California Faith for Equality, California NAACP, Colage, PFLAG, and United Farm Workers.