



PRESS RELEASE

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MARRIAGE EQUALITY USA'S SAN FRANCISCO AWARDS: CELEBRATING OUR HEROES AND HISTORIC MOMENTUM

San Francisco · 28 May 2014 — Marriage Equality USA's 2nd Annual San Francisco Awards Reception, celebrated at San Francisco's Chambers Eat + Drink near the Civic Center where so much marriage equality history has been made, brought together leaders and grassroots heroes of the marriage equality movement at a time of historic momentum for the freedom to marry nationwide. Participants enjoyed cocktails, delicious food, and the festive opportunity to honor some of their own. The event was emceed by San Francisco's community activist and spokesmodel Donna Sachet.

"Since 2012, MEUSA has helped lead 11 winning state campaigns, bringing marriage equality to over 130 million people!" said MEUSA Executive Director, Brian Silva. "What a tremendous privilege to honor those who are making historic change a reality, from Judge Vaughan Walker to Kate Kendall and the National Center for Lesbian Rights, to Arnold & Porter LLP. Thanks to heroes and activists just like these, our programs have enabled hundreds of volunteers to make almost 100,000 phone calls and knock on thousands of doors to share our stories on why marriage matters. Thanks to them we continue to empower others to take the action which changes the hearts and minds of neighbors, family, friends, and government and community leaders."

"As the nation's oldest and largest grassroots organization working on the issue of marriage equality, Marriage Equality USA's grassroots work has been a key part of bringing marriage equality to over 130 million Americans in 19 states and the District of Columbia. We are proud to support their work at the San Francisco Awards Reception!" said Kate Kendall, National Center for Lesbian Rights Executive Director.

"It's less than a year since the U.S. Supreme Court's historic marriage rulings restored marriage equality in California," said MEUSA Board Member René Alvarez. "With the momentum from last week's wins in Oregon and Pennsylvania, we are more energized than ever before to let wedding bells ring in all 50 states."

"Marriage Equality USA has a long and proud history that documents our growth from an idea in 1996 to the vigorous, national grassroots movement it is today," concluded MEUSA Communications Director Stuart Gaffney. "At this moment of historic change, our community came together to celebrate and to honor the leaders and stories that are making marriage equality a reality."

2014 Gala Honorees:

Ally Honoree: U.S. District Judge Vaughn R. Walker (Ret.)

Acknowledged and honored for his landmark federal ruling which helped pave the way for the eventual demise of

Proposition 8. Hon. Vaughn Walker served as a district judge in the United States District Court for the Northern District of California from 1989 to 2011. Walker has been referred to as an "unorthodox" and "independent-minded conservative" judge. Walker is famous for ruling, on 4 August 2010, that Proposition 8 was unconstitutional "under both the Due Process and Equal Protection Clauses."

Community Partner Honoree: National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR) – Kate Kendell, Executive Director

The National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR) has been advancing the civil and human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people and their families through litigation, legislation, policy, and public education since it was founded in 1977. NCLR has worked for many years in partnership with MEUSA. NCLR has been, and is, actively involved in a number of marriage equality cases, including the current cases *Kitchen v. Herbert* in Utah, *Pareto v. Ruvin* in Florida and *Courage v. Wyoming* in Wyoming.

Kate Kendell is a nationally recognized spokesperson for LGBT rights and has an active voice in major media. Despite the national success of NCLR under her tenure, her most rewarding responsibilities still include fostering alliances on the community and organizational levels, and advocating from a grass-roots perspective on issues concerning social justice.

Corporate Honoree: Arnold & Porter LLP

Recognized for their corporate leadership in advancing the issue of marriage equality nationwide. With roots in the days of the New Deal and an outstanding record of commitment, excellence, and innovation, Arnold & Porter LLP stands today as a preeminent international law firm. They are the successor to the firm Howard Rice Nemerovski Canady Falk & Rabkin PC, who provided huge pro bono support to the California marriage case *In Re Marriage Cases* that won at the California Supreme Court in 2008.

The event was supported by partners:

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Founded in 2001, Marriage Equality USA® (MEUSA™) is a volunteer-driven national grassroots organization whose mission is "to secure legally-recognized civil marriage equality for all, without regard to sexual orientation or gender identity, at the state and federal level through grassroots organizing, education, action and partnerships". We are a registered 501(c)(3) and all donations are tax deductible. For more information please go to www.marriageequality.org.

MEUSA™ on **Facebook** <http://www.facebook.com/marriageequalityusa>, on **Twitter** <http://www.twitter.com/meusa>, on **Google+** <https://plus.google.com/+MarriageEqualityOrg>, on **YouTube** <http://www.youtube.com/marriageequalityusa>.