



# PRESS RELEASE

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### MARRIAGE EQUALITY USA'S 16TH NATIONAL GALA: CELEBRATING OUR HEROES AND HISTORIC MOMENTUM

**New York · 19 May 2014** — Marriage Equality USA's 16th National Gala, celebrated at New York City's famed Copacabana on May 19, 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, dinner, and the festive opportunity to honor some of their own.

"Since 2012, MEUSA has helped lead 11 winning state campaigns, bringing marriage equality to over 120 million people!" said MEUSA Executive Director, Brian Silva. "It was a tremendous privilege to honor those who are making historic change a reality, from Ally Awardee Mayor Bill de Blasio to grassroots leaders like Windsor-Spyer Awardee Cathy Marino-Thomas. 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."

"I am proud that our state has embraced marriage equality and I applaud the work of organizations like Marriage Equality USA that fought to make this goal a reality. I was deeply honored to accept this award, and I look forward to working alongside the LGBTQ community to ensure our city continues to embrace all New Yorkers," said Mayor de Blasio.

"I couldn't be prouder of how far we've come in my 17 years working with Marriage Equality USA," said MEUSA Board Member Cathy Marino-Thomas. "I was moved beyond words to receive the award named for longtime MEUSA activists and national heroes Edie Windsor and Thea Spyer, whose love story inspires this movement and whose case before the U.S. Supreme Court brought federal recognition for our legal marriages across the country."

"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: Mayor Bill de Blasio

Mayor Bill de Blasio is the 109th Mayor of New York City. From his early days as a young City Hall staffer, to serving on his local school board, to his most recent position as Public Advocate for the City of New York, Bill de Blasio has spent his life fighting to ensure that every New Yorker - in every neighborhood throughout our five boroughs - gets a fair shot.

### Corporate Honoree: Love and Pride

Love & Pride is an online destination for premium designer products, geared toward people who believe in equality, diversity and tolerance. With a growing customer base in over 200 countries around the world, this venture was founded to celebrate the transformative powers of passion, creativity and action.

### Windsor-Spyer Awardee: Cathy Marino-Thomas

Cathy Marino-Thomas first volunteered with Marriage Equality New York in 1998, and she has remained an integral part of the organization ever since. In 2011 Cathy helped to create history as a key person lobbying the New York Senate and Assembly and the New York State Governor's Office to pass the New York Marriage Equality Act. Cathy remains a MEUSA Board Member until July 2014, at which time, after 17 years of extraordinary guidance, leadership and successes, she will retire from MEUSA.

### Community Partner Honoree: Imperial Court of New York

The Imperial Court of New York is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization that has raised millions of dollars for worthy causes since its inception in 1986. The New York Court has gained recognition in the tri-state New York City region for the tireless work it has done on behalf of the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community.

### The event was supported by a variety of partners including:

Platinum Partner: [New York Life](#)

Gold Partner: [Barefoot Wine](#), [Something Blue](#)

Silver Partner: [Tito's Handmade Vodka](#), [Skin Spa New York](#), [Miller Coors](#)

Bronze Partner: [Ludlow 6](#), Tom & Co.

National Media Partner: [dot429](#)

Local Media Partner: [Gay City News](#)

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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](http://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>.