



The **Opportunity** Agenda

*Building the National Will
to Expand Opportunity in America*

Opinion Research &
Media Content Analysis

*Public Opinion and Discourse
on the Intersection of
LGBT Issues and Race*

Acknowledgments

This research was conducted by Loren Siegel (*Executive Summary, What Americans Think about LGBT People, Rights and Issues: A Meta-Analysis of Recent Public Opinion, and Coverage of LGBT Issues in African American Print and Online News Media: An Analysis of Media Content*); Elena Shore, Editor/Latino Media Monitor of New America Media (*Coverage of LGBT Issues in Latino Print and Online News Media: An Analysis of Media Content*); and Cheryl Contee, Austen Levih-Coon, Kelly Rand, Adriana Dakin, and Catherine Saddlemire of Fission Strategy (*Online Discourse about LGBT Issues in African American and Latino Communities: An Analysis of Web 2.0 Content*). Loren Siegel acted as Editor-at-Large of the report, with assistance from staff of The Opportunity Agenda. Christopher Moore designed the report.

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About The Opportunity Agenda

The Opportunity Agenda was founded in 2004 with the mission of building the national will to expand opportunity in America. Focused on moving hearts, minds, and policy over time, the organization works with social justice groups, leaders, and movements to advance solutions that expand opportunity for everyone. Through active partnerships, The Opportunity Agenda synthesizes and translates research on barriers to opportunity and corresponding solutions; uses communications and media to understand and influence public opinion; and identifies and advocates for policies that improve people's lives. To learn more about The Opportunity Agenda, go to our website at www.opportunityagenda.org.

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Executive Summary

A growing number of advocacy organizations are working at the intersection of racial justice, sexual orientation, and gender identity, challenging the myths and biases that continue to hamper the rights and opportunities of LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people, especially LGBT people of color. The meta-analysis of public opinion research included in this report shows that Americans are more open to issues of LGBT equality than at any time in our history. Some segments of the population, however, including those who can usually be counted upon to support the rights of victims of discrimination, continue to harbor reservations about granting lesbians and gay men full equality, particularly when it comes to marriage equality. Anti-LGBT biases, including within the African-American and Latino communities, have created divisions and stymied collaborative activism and advocacy. The human cost of these divisions is high. Many LGBT people of color experience marginalization from the mainstream as a result of both their race and their sexual identity, as well as a compounding marginalization from within their own racial and ethnic communities because of their sexual orientation and gender identity. The result is a “double-outsider” status in which individuals are systematically separated from the already-diminished opportunities that might exist within their own communities.

Creating a more responsive and supportive media environment — one that conveys the movement’s values, concerns, and solutions, and accurately portrays LGBT people of color — is vitally important in breaking down the barriers that keep people apart and prevent communities of color from wholeheartedly embracing the movement’s goals. Media representations of people and issues have important effects. Research shows that depiction in the media, especially distorted portrayals, affects public perceptions, which ultimately have a real impact on people’s lives every time their fate depends on how they are perceived by others (e.g., Dong & Murrillo, 2007¹ or Entman & Gross, 2008²). Research also provides evidence of the potential of media representation that is fuller, more accurate, and more sympathetic. Political scientist Shanto Iyengar’s influential study³ (among others) of the effects of television news choices on viewers’ attitudes shows that news stories about racial discrimination help reduce the tendency to blame individuals for outcomes. To the contrary, coverage of black poverty focusing on individuals rather than larger trends or forces increases the degree to which viewers hold individuals responsible for racial inequality.

Ethnic and new media play an integral part in the media terrain. According to New America Media, the fastest growing sector of American journalism is ethnic media, with more than 3,000 outlets in the United States.⁴ In addition, a survey shows that African Americans and Latinos are significantly more likely than whites to believe that they can help get the word out about a social issue or cause through online social networks (58 percent and 51 percent, respectively, vs. 34 percent of whites).⁵

1 Dong, Q., & Murrillo, A.P. (2007). The Impact of Television Viewing on Young Adults’ Stereotypes Towards Hispanic Americans. *Human Communication*, 10 (1), 33-44.

2 Entman, R.M., & Gross, K.A. (2008). Race to Judgment: Stereotyping Media and Criminal Defendants. *Law and Contemporary Problems*, 71 (93), 94-133.

3 Iyengar, S. (1991). *Is Anyone Responsible? How Television Frames Political Issues*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

4 New America Media (2011). *National Online Directory of Ethnic Media*. San Francisco, CA. The directory provides the most comprehensive listing of this type of media in the United States and lists over 3,000 ethnic outlets. According to their estimations, these outlets reach over 60 million Americans. <http://newamericamedia.org/network/directory>.

5 Georgetown University, Center for Social Impact Communications and Ogilvy Public Relations Worldwide, “Social Media Plays Greater Role in Cause Engagement For African Americans and Hispanics,” May 31, 2011, at http://csic.georgetown.edu/OPR_SM_GT_Ethnicity_FS_Final.pdf

The research findings described in this report build on other recent research commissioned or supported by the Arcus Foundation: in-depth interviews, a national survey, a series of focus groups of African Americans conducted in 2007-2008, and a study of the relationship between racial justice organizations and LGBT communities completed in 2010. This report takes a close look at the roles ethnic and new media are playing today in both perpetuating and challenging negative stereotypes. The report includes four studies:

1. What Americans Think about LGBT People, Rights and Issues: A Meta-Analysis of Recent Public Opinion;
2. Coverage of LGBT Issues in African-American Print and Online News Media: An Analysis of Media Content;
3. Coverage of LGBT Issues in Latino Print and Online News Media: An Analysis of Media Content; and
4. Online Discourse about LGBT Issues in African-American and Latino Communities: An Analysis of Online Discourse.

Each study has its own Findings section, but there are themes common to all that bear mentioning. These commonalities suggest that although each type of media merits its own specific, culturally sensitive strategy, coordinated strategies may also be appropriate and effective. In no particular order, we present some highlights:

- ▶ Pro-LGBT spokespeople predominate in both the African-American and Latino print media by a wide margin.
- ▶ The storylines in all three types of media tend to focus on LGBT-specific issues like marriage equality, homophobia, and the “down low lifestyle.”⁶ Few articles place LGBT people and issues within a broader societal context.
- ▶ There is some narrative overlap. The clash of values between equality, human rights, and dignity on the one hand, and morality, “natural law,” and God’s will on the other is present in both the African-American and Latino coverage. Both communities are wrestling with this apparent contradiction, and in both instances religious leaders are the primary promoters of homophobic ideology.

The full report takes a close look at current public opinion and the role of ethnic and new media in both perpetuating and challenging myths and biases about LGBT people. Because the meta-analysis of public opinion was based on a synthesis of existing opinion research, we were limited by the data in our ability to analyze the views of all demographic groups on all issues. Whereas surveys often include adequate samples of African Americans and, more recently, Latinos to disaggregate their views, this is generally not the case with Asian Americans, Native Americans, and other groups. Wherever the data allowed, we have analyzed separately and together the views of each identifiable demographic group for this report. There is a paucity of research particularly on Asian-American attitudes towards LGBT issues.

The studies of the discourse in African-American and Latino-oriented media analyze content distributed on the following platforms: print media, including magazines and newspapers, and the internet, specifically online news sites. The study of Latino media analyzes additionally a limited number of broadcast clips from television networks Univision and Liberman Broadcasting as well as four news wire services. Ultimately, the choice of media platforms and outlets, such as *Latina Magazine* and *Ebony*, was guided by the objective of the studies: to shed light on the discourse about

6 “Down low” is used to describe the behavior of African-American men who have sex with other men as well as with women but who do not identify as gay or bisexual

LGBT people of color and their images in the media. At the same time, the studies were limited by the resources available to the authors; for that reason, for example, very limited broadcast media content was analyzed.

Our hope is that this report will contribute significantly to the vital work of organizations that work at the intersection of LGBT and race, in their struggle to overcome the “double-outsider” status experienced by their constituents.

Finally, this report at times uses different terms to describe the same racial categories in an attempt to be consistent with the terminology used in each study that is cited, when applicable. The public opinion research component of the report uses the racial categories utilized by the federal government, which have been largely adopted by opinion research. The categories are defined as follows:

- ▶ White: any person who self-identifies as white only and non-Hispanic
- ▶ Black: any person who self-identifies as black only
- ▶ Hispanic: any person of any race who self-identifies as Hispanic
- ▶ Asian: any person who self-identifies as Asian only

This report also uses the terms “homosexual” and “homosexuality” when those terms are used by public opinion researchers and in the media we analyzed. Similarly, derogatory terms such as “nigger” and “faggot” are used here only as direct or indirect quotations.

Summary of Findings

Public opinion meta-analysis

Recent public opinion surveys and polls show a significant and relatively rapid shift in the direction of greater support for lesbian and gay equality. Some segments of the population, however, including those who can usually be counted upon to support the rights of victims of discrimination, continue to harbor reservations about granting lesbians and gay men full equality, particularly when it comes to marriage equality. Major findings include:

- ▶ **Religiosity and religious affiliation** appear to be critical factors: There are stark differences across religious groups, and those who attend worship services often, regardless of denomination, are less supportive of LGBT equality than those who seldom or never attend services. Only 24 percent of Americans who attend worship services once a week favor marriage equality, compared to 57 percent who attend rarely or never (Pew Research Center/Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, Annual Religion and Public Life Survey, September 17, 2010).
- ▶ Americans are trending towards the belief that **homosexuality is “something a person is born with”** and not due to “upbringing” or “choice.” From 1977 to 2009, the percentage of people who believe it is something you are born with rose by 23 points, from 13 percent to 36 percent (Gallup, May 25, 2010). In December 2010, 63 percent of the public disagreed with the statement, “Homosexual orientation can be changed,” and only 27 percent agreed, with 10 percent unsure (Public Religion Research Institute, Religion & Politics Tracking Survey, December 9-12, 2010). These views are strongly correlated with support or opposition to expanding LGBT rights: 65 percent of those who think people are “born gay” support marriage equality compared to 15 percent among those who say “being gay is a personal choice” (Quinnipiac University Poll, April 21-27, 2009).
- ▶ Blacks are more likely than some other groups to think that “being gay is a choice”: 47 percent think “being gay is the way some people choose to live,” as compared to 36 percent of the total.

Hispanics are more likely to believe that “people are born gay or lesbian”: 53 percent think so, compared to 42 percent of the total. And women are more likely than men to agree that “people are born gay or lesbian”: 46 percent agree compared to 37 percent of men (Pew Research Center, August-September 2010).

- ▶ More than half of all Americans think that **“homosexuality should be accepted by society,”** representing a 10-point shift in a positive direction in just the past six years (Gallup). Religious affiliation and religiosity are closely correlated with views on the moral acceptability of homosexuality and likely explain the differences that exist among racial and ethnic groups (Public Religion Research Institute, Religion & Political Tracking Survey, September 2010). Sixty-eight percent of Latinos in the United States are Catholic, and Catholics are less likely to believe homosexuality is a sin than the rest of the general population (Robert P. Jones and Daniel Cox, “Catholic Attitudes on Gay and Lesbian Issues: A Comprehensive Portrait of Recent Research, Public Religion Research Institute, March 2011). African Americans stand out as the most religiously committed racial or ethnic group in the nation, and 63 percent self-identify as evangelical (Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, “A Religious Portrait of African-Americans,” January 30, 2009). Evangelical Americans tend to be conservative on social issues, including LGBT rights (Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, “US Religious Landscape Survey,” 2008).
- ▶ A majority of Americans (64 percent) perceive that LGBT people face “a lot of **discrimination**” and the public is therefore supportive of a range of anti-discrimination laws (2009 Religion and Public Life Survey, Pew Research Center). However, the public is evenly split on whether or not marriage inequality is a form of discrimination (Quinnipiac University Poll, April 21-27, 2009).
- ▶ Support for **marriage equality** is at an all-time high, with slightly more than 50 percent of the general public on board (ABC News/Washington Post Poll, March 18, 2011). The biggest supporters are women (54 percent approval), younger people (61 percent approval), white mainline Protestants (53 percent approval), Catholics (57 percent approval), and Jews (76 percent approval) (Pew Research Center/Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, August-September 2010). A number of statewide polls also show growing support for marriage equality.
- ▶ In a survey exploring attitudes towards “New Family Types,” **gay/lesbian couples raising children** was viewed as no worse (and no better) than people living together without being married and unmarried couples raising children (Pew Research Center, “The Decline of Marriage And Rise of New Families,” November 18, 2010). The softening of attitudes about same-sex couples raising children is reflected in rising support for gay adoption rights. Support for gay adoption rose by eight points between 2007 and 2009, from 46 to 54 percent (Gallup, September 7-8, 2007; May 7-10, 2009). Latinos are more likely than whites or African Americans to support adoption by same-sex couples: 62 percent compared to 53 percent of whites and 48 percent of blacks (Quinnipiac University Poll, April 21-27, 2009).
- ▶ The repeal of **“Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell”**⁷ was very much in line with public opinion. Polls in 2010 showed that support for allowing openly gay people to serve in the military stood at about 75 percent (CNN Opinion Research Poll, May 21-23, 2010).
- ▶ **African Americans do not equate the struggle for LGBT rights with their own struggle for civil rights.** When given a choice of terms to describe “the struggle facing gays and lesbians” around hate crimes, housing and job discrimination, and bullying, a majority of 55 percent chose “equal rights” as the best term (Arcus-commissioned research by Cornell Belcher of Brilliant Corners Strategies and Donna Victoria of Victoria Research & Consulting, for the Arcus Operating Foundation, 2008).

7

The recently repealed 17-year-old law that banned openly gay men, lesbians and bisexuals from military service

Coverage of LGBT people and issues in the African-American print and online news media

African Americans consume all kinds of media: mainstream, ethnic, cultural, popular, and niche. This analysis, however, is limited to African-American community newspapers, magazines, and popular online news sites. The National Newspaper Publishers Association, which describes itself as “a federation of more than 200 black community newspapers,” claims a combined readership of 15 million.⁸ Eighty-six percent of African Americans read magazines, consuming an average of 11 issues per month (compared to 8 issues per month for the total U.S. population), and African-American magazines are among their top choices.⁹ And African-American news websites are growing in influence in terms of the number and loyalty of the unique visitors they attract. AOL’s *Black Voices*, for example, has 4.3 million visitors per month.¹⁰ Our objective is to understand the kinds of messages and images these media are communicating to their readers about the lives, experiences, struggles, and concerns of LGBT people of color. Whose voices are being amplified, either as commentators or spokespeople, in the African-American media coverage of LGBT issues? Is there an overarching narrative that is being communicated to consumers of African-American print media? To answer these questions we conducted a broad search and analysis of the content of 20 African-American community newspapers, five national magazines, and three online news sites.

- ▶ African-American media cover LGBT issues to some extent, and some outlets have reporters or columnists who write about them frequently.
- ▶ The most prevalent storylines in community newspapers are HIV/AIDS, homophobia, bullying and discrimination, and culture (celebrities and depictions of LGBT individuals in books, films, and television). In African American-themed magazines they are marriage for same-sex couples and culture. The most prevalent storyline in online news media is homophobia, bullying, and discrimination.
- ▶ Pro-LGBT voices in the form of commentators and quoted sources outnumber anti-LGBT voices in all three media. Openly gay African Americans and LGBT rights advocates are among the most frequently quoted sources. Also notable are a smaller number of civil rights and religious leaders who are promoting a pro-LGBT position.
- ▶ Most of the anti-LGBT voices were African-American ministers in the context of the passage of a marriage equality law by the Washington, D.C. City Council.
- ▶ There is not much in-depth coverage of the day-to-day struggles of LGBT people of color, especially low-income people, and the challenges they face in society at large and in their own communities and families.
- ▶ African American-themed online news sites do a better job of integrating coverage of LGBT issues into their mix of news and commentary than do more traditional print outlets. African American-themed magazines have the least coverage of LGBT issues, especially in their printed versions.
- ▶ The frequent coverage of HIV/AIDS in community newspapers is problematic in that it focuses attention on health risks perceived to be related to the LGBT experience and exaggerates the role of “living on the down low” in causing new infections, thereby further stigmatizing men of color in general and gay and bisexual men of color in particular.

8 The National Newspaper Publishers Association (NNPA), also known as the Black Press of America, is a 69-year-old federation of more than 200 black community newspapers from across the United States, http://www.nnpa.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=15&Itemid=44

9 “African-American/Black Market Profile,” Magazine Publishers of America (MPA), May 2008, http://www.magazine.org/advertising/categories/African_American_Black_Profile.aspx

10 Sources: Omniture; comScore Media Metrix

- ▶ News reports and commentary reflect an ongoing dialogue and debate about the relationship between LGBT rights and civil rights, and between racism and homophobia. Also reflected is the struggle within the African-American faith community over the “acceptability” and “morality” of being gay.
- ▶ African-American print media are communicating two dominant narratives in “telling the LGBT story.” One narrative, which we call the “clash of values” narrative, encompasses two conflicting ideas: that discrimination against any group is wrong and, at the same time, that being gay is wrong and immoral. Since the African-American community tends to be united in its condemnation of discrimination of any kind, the fact that they are split on LGBT rights is a story in and of itself. Through the second “real world” narrative, readers are being confronted with the reality that LGBT African Americans exist, live and work among us, are in our families and our communities, and are not going away.
- ▶ With a concerted effort, advocates can make headway in the current African-American media environment. LGBT issues are considered newsworthy by many media outlets, and there is a cadre of reporters and commentators who are knowledgeable and motivated to carry a coherent narrative that serves to unite LGBT and African-American interests.

Coverage of LGBT people and issues in the Latino print and online news media

Latinos in the United States are consumers of a range of Spanish-language, bilingual, and English-language media. Forty percent read a Spanish language newspaper and 60 percent read English newspapers. Thirty-three percent spend some time each day reading Spanish magazines. Overall, 66 percent of Latinos watch some Spanish language TV, and 47 percent spend some time each day on Spanish-language websites.¹¹ This analysis is based on content from 38 Latino print and online media outlets, including both national and regional newspapers, four Spanish-language wire services, and a limited number of broadcast clips from Spanish-language TV networks. Twenty-five of the media outlets included were Spanish-language media, nine were bilingual, and four were English-language media. Overall, we found that LGBT issues are under-reported in Latino print and online media coverage and that there is an absence of real debate between pro- and anti-LGBT voices. However, California’s Proposition 8,¹² outlawing marriage equality, did serve as a catalyst for more coverage of LGBT issues than in the past.

- ▶ Generally, LGBT rights in Latino media are discussed through a positive lens. The predominant view is that LGBT rights are considered human or civil rights, and LGBT people deserve the same rights afforded to all human beings. The less echoed argument against LGBT rights is based on a religious belief that homosexuality goes against God’s will.
- ▶ Stories about LGBT issues tend to be framed thematically, focusing on the overall problem of discrimination and comparing the struggles of the LGBT community with those of other communities that have experienced discrimination.
- ▶ The most prevalent storylines are marriage equality, “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,” LGBT individuals in the larger community (as immigrants, in the media, in sports), anti-gay violence, and celebrity.
- ▶ Nearly all of the anti-LGBT rhetoric, slurs, and derogatory language found in this media scan come from users’ online comments, not from the media themselves. However, the media shies away from confronting expressions of homophobia and does not address machismo or gender roles in a meaningful way.

11 America’s Radio News Network, “Neilson details Hispanic Media Usage in the U.S.” <http://www.rbr.com/media-news/research/27520.html>

12 Also known as “Prop 8,” this state referendum passed by voters in 2008 banned marriage for same-sex couples. On February 7, 2012, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit overturned the ban, ruling that it violated California’s State Constitution.

- ▶ Pro-LGBT voices in the form of commentators and quoted sources outnumbered anti-LGBT voices by a wide margin. The majority of pro-LGBT rights spokespeople are Latino while the majority of opposition spokespeople are white.
- ▶ Two narratives are dominant in the Latino media’s coverage of LGBT issues and people. The first is that gay rights are, paradoxically, both controversial and mainstream. Half of the articles in the scan focus on the controversy over “same-sex marriage.” At the same time, the pro-marriage equality editorials in major newspapers coupled with the dominance of pro-LGBT voices make the issue mainstream (i.e., non-threatening). The second narrative is that LGBT Latinos are part of the larger Latino population. In spite of the efforts of some religious leaders and others to portray LGBT Latinos as “outsiders,” the weight of the coverage conveyed a different narrative. Ricky Martin’s message that there is “nothing wrong with being gay,” carried by heavily viewed talk shows on Univision, and the fact that the great majority of spokespeople in the scan were Latino LGBT rights advocates and individuals are all part of this narrative.

Online discourse about LGBT issues in African-American and Latino communities

African Americans and Latinos are significantly more likely than whites to believe that they can help get the word out about a social issue or cause through online social networks (58 percent and 51 percent, respectively, vs. 34 percent of whites), according to a new survey by Georgetown University and Ogilvy Public Relations.¹³ Nearly one in three African-American adults (30 percent) and four in ten Hispanics (39 percent) say they are more likely to support a cause or social issue online than offline today — both significantly higher percentages than whites (24 percent). Both African Americans and Latinos are significantly more likely than whites to look to social media as an additional source of information, and they are also more likely to say that supporting causes makes them feel like a part of a community.¹⁴ Given these trends, it is vital that the LGBT people of color movement takes full advantage of the communications opportunities offered by existing and new social media. This analysis of online discourse is based on scans of the most widely used platforms on the social web: blogs, YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter.

- ▶ Three of the platforms — blogs, YouTube, and Twitter — carry some content about policy issues that affect LGBT people of color. There is more content about and for LGBT African Americans than there is about or for LGBT Latinos. The content on Facebook is more limited.
- ▶ **Blogs:** During the time frame we studied, pro-LGBT bloggers dominated those blogs that regularly cover the intersection of racial justice, sexual orientation, and gender identity. The discourse took place not only on blogs that prioritize those audiences but in the mainstream blogosphere as well.
 - ✓ The most common themes on blogs covering LGBT issues and African Americans were racism within the mainstream LGBT community; homophobia within the African-American community; sexuality, culture, and the African-American experience; African-American opposition to marriage equality; tension between LGBT rights and African-American civil rights; and men on the “down low.”
 - ✓ The most common themes on blogs covering LGBT issues and Latinos were entertainment and the media, the family, and the potential impact of the increasing Latino voting power on LGBT rights.

¹³ Georgetown University, Center for Social Impact Communications and Ogilvy Public Relations Worldwide, “Social Media Plays Greater Role in Cause Engagement For African Americans and Hispanics,” May 31, 2011, at http://csic.georgetown.edu/OPR_SM_GT_Ethnicity_FS_Final.pdf

¹⁴ Georgetown University, Center for Social Impact Communications and Ogilvy Public Relations Worldwide, “Social Media Plays Greater Role in Cause Engagement For African Americans and Hispanics,” May 31, 2011, at http://csic.georgetown.edu/OPR_SM_GT_Ethnicity_FS_Final.pdf

- ▶ **Facebook:** Much of the content in our sampling of Facebook Groups and Pages was only tangentially related to LGBT policy issues. Overall it did not appear that Facebook was being widely used to inform and activate LGBT people of color around the issues that affect them.
- ▶ **Twitter:** The conversation on Twitter touching on the intersection of African Americans, gender identity, and sexual orientation was relatively lively and dominated by LGBT-rights advocates and advocacy organizations, with celebrities and bloggers also wielding significant influence. The most common themes were marriage equality, tension between LGBT rights and African-American civil rights, and HIV/AIDS and “Down Low Black Men.” The conversation connecting LGBT issues with Latinos was much more limited and tended to focus on celebrities and other notable individuals.
- ▶ **YouTube:** The videos on YouTube connecting LGBT issues to the African-American and Latino communities were dominated by pro-LGBT videos of celebrities and LGBT individuals relating personal stories. We also found videos posted by advocacy organizations and public affairs and news broadcasts presenting both pro- and anti-LGBT views.
 - ✓ The most common themes connecting African Americans with LGBT issues were “being black and gay,” the role of the black church, tension between LGBT rights and African-American civil rights, marriage equality, “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,” and HIV/AIDS and “down low men.”
 - ✓ The most common themes connecting Latinos with LGBT issues were “being Latino and gay,” LGBT immigrants, and marriage equality.

As illustrated above, this report provides important insight into the public opinion and discourse about LGBT people of color and their rights, and reveals challenges and opportunities for improving the media content. Based on this insight, The Opportunity Agenda has developed a set of recommendations which can be found at http://opportunityagenda.org/lgbt_report_2012.

Introduction

A growing number of advocacy organizations today are working at the intersection of racial justice, sexual orientation, and gender identity, confronting the myths and biases that continue to hamper the rights and opportunities of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) community, people of color and, especially, LGBT people of color. The meta-analysis of public opinion research included in this report confirms that Americans are more open to issues of LGBT equality than at any time in our history. Nineteen percent of Americans report that in the last five years they have become “more supportive” of rights for gay and lesbian people while only six percent say they have become “more opposed.”¹⁵ Some segments of the population, however, including those who can usually be counted upon to support the rights of victims of discrimination, continue to harbor reservations about granting lesbians and gay men full equality, particularly when it comes to marriage equality. Anti-LGBT biases, including within the African-American and Latino communities, have created divisions and stymied collaborative activism and advocacy. The human cost of these disconnects is high. LGBT people of color experience marginalization from the mainstream as a result of both their race and their sexual identity, and compounding marginalization from within their own communities. The result is a “double-outsider” status in which individuals are systematically separated from even what little opportunity might exist within their own marginalized community. Phill Wilson, the CEO of the Black AIDS Institute, has poignantly described his own feelings of exclusion:

For Black gay men and lesbian people, we need our community to protect us against the bias of racism. Where do I go when I’m called a nigger? I go to my church. I go to my mama and my papa. But where do I go when I’m called a faggot? I don’t have anywhere else to go. And particularly if the people who are calling me a faggot are my mamma, my papa and my church.¹⁶

Creating a more responsive and supportive media environment — one that conveys the movement’s values, concerns, and solutions, and accurately portrays LGBT people of color — is vitally important in breaking down the barriers that keep people apart and prevent communities of color from wholeheartedly embracing the movement’s goals. Media representations of people and issues have important effects. Research shows that depiction in the media, especially distorted portrayals, affects public perceptions, which ultimately have a real impact on people’s lives every time their fate depends on how they are perceived by others (e.g., Dong & Murrillo, 2007¹⁷ or Entman & Gross, 2008¹⁸). Research also provides evidence of the potential of media representation that is fuller, more accurate, and more sympathetic. Political scientist Shanto Iyengar’s influential study¹⁹ (among others) of the effects of television news choices on viewers’ attitudes shows that news stories about racial discrimination help reduce the tendency to blame individuals for outcomes. To the contrary, coverage of black poverty focusing on individuals rather than larger trends or forces increases the degree to which viewers hold individuals responsible for racial inequality.

15 Seventy-three percent report “no change” (Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, 2011 March Political Typology, February 22-March 14, 2011)

16 George E. Curry, “HIV Infections Increasing Only Among Gay Men,” *Washington Informer*, October 15-21, 2009. NB: As noted in the Executive Summary, derogatory terms such as “nigger” and “faggot” appear in this report only as direct or indirect quotations.

17 Dong, Q., & Murrillo, A.P. (2007). The Impact of Television Viewing on Young Adults’ Stereotypes Towards Hispanic Americans. *Human Communication*, 10 (1), 33-44.

18 Entman, R.M., & Gross, K.A. (2008). Race to Judgment: Stereotyping Media and Criminal Defendants. *Law and Contemporary Problems*, 71 (93), 94-133.

19 Iyengar, S. (1991). *Is Anyone Responsible? How Television Frames Political Issues*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Recent research undertaken by the Arcus Foundation indicates that there are powerful openings for building support for LGBT rights within the African-American community: focusing on issues of discrimination, tapping themes of community and family, and characterizing the struggle for LGBT rights as a struggle for equal rights rather than civil rights.

According to New America Media, the fastest growing sector of American journalism is ethnic media, with more than 3,000 ethnic media outlets in the United States.²⁰ Although African Americans and Latinos read a wide variety of media including mainstream newspapers, magazines, and online news sources, their own “indigenous” media play a special role in the formation of individual and community attitudes. African Americans and Latinos read ethnic media because they know both intuitively and experientially that the mainstream media does not cover all the stories and issues that are vital to them, their families, and their communities. By the same token, if a story or issue is ignored by ethnic media, readers will not see that story or issue as their own. If there is an absence of coverage of LGBT people and issues, or alternatively if ethnic media perpetuates negative myths and stereotypes, African-American and Latino support for LGBT rights will be eroded.

The good news is that segments of the ethnic media are covering LGBT issues, and their coverage presents a number of strong entry points. We found substantial interest, for example, in covering stories on homophobic violence and bullying. The marriage equality issue is being actively debated on the pages of African-American and Latino print and online media. We also found that pro-LGBT voices are quoted more frequently than anti-LGBT voices and that there are a number of journalists and columnists who are ready, willing, and able to present pro-LGBT positions on the issues of the day. There are many opportunities for the LGBT of color movement to engage ethnic media in a meaningful way.

This report consists of four main studies:

1. What Americans Think About LGBT People, Rights, and Issues: A Meta-Analysis of Recent Public Opinion;
2. Media Content Analysis: Coverage of LGBT Issues in African-American Print and Online Media;
3. Media Content Analysis: Coverage of LGBT Issues in Latino Print and Online Media;
4. The Online Discourse of LGBT Issues in African-American and Latino Communities.

Each study includes a description of the methodology used by the author, and each of the media analyses is based on a digital scan of numerous media outlets over a specific period of time using a series of search terms designed to identify relevant stories. The studies of the discourse in African-American and Latino-oriented media primarily analyze content distributed on the following platforms: print media, including magazines and newspapers, and the internet, specifically online news sites. The study of Latino media analyzes additionally a limited number of broadcast clips from television networks Univision and Liberman Broadcasting as well as four news wire services. Ultimately, the choice of media platforms and outlets, such as *Latina Magazine* and *Ebony*, was guided by the objective of the studies: to shed light on the media discourse about LGBT people of color and their images in the media. At the same time, the studies were limited by the resources available to the author; for that reason, for example, very limited broadcast media content was analyzed.

²⁰ New America Media (2011). *National Online Directory of Ethnic Media*. San Francisco, CA. The directory provides the most comprehensive listing of this type of media in the United States and lists over 3,000 ethnic outlets. According to their estimations, these outlets reach over 60 million Americans. <http://newamericamedia.org/network/directory>.

In the meta-analysis of existing public opinion, we were limited by the data in our ability to analyze the views of all demographic groups on all issues. Whereas surveys often include adequate samples of African Americans and, more recently, Latinos to disaggregate their views, this is generally not the case with Asian Americans, Native Americans, and other groups. Wherever the data allowed, we have analyzed separately and together the views of each identifiable demographic group for this report. There is a paucity of research particularly on Asian-American attitudes towards LGBT issues.

Common themes

The media content and online analyses each have their own findings section, but there are themes common to all that bear mention at the outset. These commonalities suggest that although each type of media — African-American and Latino, both print and online — merits its own specific, culturally sensitive strategy, coordinated strategies may also be appropriate and effective. We present some highlights:

- ▶ As noted above, LGBT issues are considered newsworthy by a segment of the ethnic media, particularly the African-American newspapers and online news sites.
- ▶ Pro-LGBT spokespeople predominate in both the African-American and Latino print media by a wide margin. This finding applies to commentaries and news stories. Openly gay African Americans and Latinos and their advocates are the most frequently quoted spokespeople in news stories, and an overwhelming majority of published commentaries are pro-LGBT. It appears that at this juncture, anti-LGBT advocates do not consider the ethnic media to be a priority.
- ▶ The storylines in all three types of media tend to focus on LGBT-specific issues like marriage equality, homophobia, and the role of “down low” men in spreading HIV/AIDS to African-American women; few articles place LGBT people and issues within a broader societal context. There is little coverage of LGBT people in business or community service, for example, thus accentuating their “separateness” from the larger community. There is also little coverage of the challenges confronting low-income LGBT people of color.
- ▶ There is some narrative overlap. The clash of values between equality, human rights, and dignity on the one hand, and morality, “natural law,” and God’s will on the other is present in both the African-American and Latino coverage. Both communities are wrestling with this fundamental contradiction, and in both instances religious leaders are the primary promoters of homophobic ideology.

These common themes are also present in the much more free-wheeling African-American and Latino online discourse. The clash of values and the role of the church in fighting marriage equality are being actively discussed on African-American and Latino blogs, Facebook, and Twitter. It is noteworthy that our analysis of online discourse found that there is a community of African-American LGBT advocates that is posting content rebutting the idea that *all* African Americans are against marriage equality. We also found that as in the case of print media, pro-LGBT voices outnumber anti-LGBT voices in the blogosphere and on Twitter.

The full report takes a close look at current public opinion and the role of ethnic and new media in both perpetuating and challenging myths and biases about LGBT people. On The Opportunity Agenda’s website (opportunityagenda.org/lgbt_report_2012), we make a series of recommendations about how to improve the ethnic media environment based on these findings. Our hope is that this report will contribute significantly to the vital work of LGBT of color organizations in their struggle to overcome the “double-outsider” status experienced by their constituents.

Public Opinion Meta-Analysis

Executive Summary

Recent public opinion surveys and polls show a significant and relatively rapid shift in the direction of greater public support for lesbian and gay rights. Some segments of the population, however, including those who can usually be counted upon to support the rights of victims of discrimination, continue to harbor reservations about granting lesbians and gay men full equality, particularly when it comes to marriage equality.

This meta-analysis examines the public's views on a number of key indicators, including what causes people to be gay or lesbian, whether or not being gay is "morally acceptable," the extent of discrimination against lesbian and gay people, views on the changing American family, and, of course, attitudes towards marriage equality. Very little research has been conducted on attitudes towards transgender people and we did not find any extant research on attitudes towards bisexuals or bisexuality.

Because this meta-analysis of public opinion is based on a synthesis of existing opinion research, we are limited by the data in our ability to analyze the views of all demographic groups on all issues. Whereas surveys often include adequate samples of African Americans and more recently, Latinos, to disaggregate their views this is generally not the case with Asian Americans, Native Americans, and other groups. Wherever the data allowed, we have analyzed separately and together the views of each identifiable demographic group for this report. There is a paucity of research on Asian American attitudes towards LGBT issues.

Major findings include:

- ▶ **Religiosity and religious affiliation** appear to be critical factors: There are stark differences across religious groups, and those who attend worship services often, regardless of denomination, are less supportive of gay and lesbian rights than those who seldom or never attend services. Only 24 percent of Americans who attend worship services once a week favor marriage equality, compared to 57 percent who attend rarely or never (Pew Research Center/ Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, Annual Religion and Public Life Survey, September 17, 2010).
- ▶ Americans are trending towards the belief that **homosexuality is "something a person is born with"** and not due to "upbringing" or "choice." From 1977 to 2009, the percentage of people who believe it is something you are born with rose by 23 points, from 13 percent to 36 percent (Gallup, May 25, 2010). In December 2010, 63 percent of the public disagreed with the statement, "Homosexual orientation can be changed," and only 27 percent agreed, with 10 percent unsure (Public Religion Research Institute, Religion & Politics Tracking Survey, December 9-12, 2010). These views are strongly correlated with support or opposition to expanding LGBT rights: 65 percent of those who think people are born gay support marriage equality compared to 15 percent among those who say being gay is a personal choice (Quinnipiac University Poll, April 21-27, 2009).

- ▶ Blacks are more likely than some other groups to think that being gay is a choice: 47 percent think being gay “is the way some people choose to live,” as compared to 36 percent of the total. Hispanics are more likely to believe that “people are born gay or lesbian”: 53 percent think so, compared to 42 percent of the total. And women are more likely than men to agree that “people are born gay or lesbian”: 46 percent agree compared to 37 percent of men (Pew Research Center, August-September 2010).
- ▶ More than half of all Americans think that “**homosexuality should be accepted by society**,” representing a 10-point shift in a positive direction in just the past six years (Gallup). Religious affiliation and religiosity are closely correlated with views on the moral acceptability of homosexuality and likely explain the differences that exist among racial and ethnic groups (Public Religion Research Institute, Religion & Political Tracking Survey, September 2010). Sixty-eight percent of Latinos in the United States are Catholic, and Catholics are less likely to believe homosexuality is a sin than the rest of the general population (Robert P. Jones and Daniel Cox, “Catholic Attitudes on Gay and Lesbian Issues: A Comprehensive Portrait of Recent Research, Public Religion Research Institute, March 2011). African Americans stand out as the most religiously committed racial or ethnic group in the nation, and 63 percent self-identify as evangelical (Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, “A Religious Portrait of African-Americans,” January 30, 2009). Evangelical Americans tend to be conservative on social issues, including LGBT rights (Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, “US Religious Landscape Survey,” 2008).
- ▶ A majority of Americans (64 percent) perceive that LGBT people face “a lot of **discrimination**” and the public is therefore supportive of a range of anti-discrimination laws (2009 Religion and Public Life Survey, Pew Research Center). However, the public is evenly split on whether or not marriage inequality is a form of discrimination (Quinnipiac University Poll, April 21-27, 2009).
- ▶ Support for **marriage equality** is at an all-time high, with slightly more than 50 percent of the general public on board (ABC News/Washington Post Poll, March 18, 2011). The biggest supporters are women (54 percent approval), younger people (61 percent approval), white mainline Protestants (53 percent approval), Catholics (57 percent approval), and Jews (76 percent approval) (Pew Research Center/Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, August-September 2010). A number of statewide polls also show growing support for marriage equality.
- ▶ In a survey exploring attitudes towards “New Family Types,” **gay/lesbian couples raising children** was viewed as no worse (and no better) than people living together without being married and unmarried couples raising children (Pew Research Center, “The Decline of Marriage And Rise of New Families,” November 18, 2010). The softening of attitudes about same-sex couples raising children is reflected in rising support for lesbian and gay adoption rights. Support for lesbian and gay adoption rose by eight points between 2007 and 2009, from 46 to 54 percent (Gallup, September 7-8, 2007; May 7-10, 2009). Latinos are more likely than whites or African Americans to support adoption by same-sex couples: 62 percent compared to 53 percent of whites and 48 percent of blacks (Quinnipiac University Poll, April 21-27, 2009).
- ▶ The **repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell”¹** was very much in line with public opinion. Polls in 2010 showed that support for allowing openly gay people to serve in the military stood at about 75 percent (CNN Opinion Research Poll, May 21-23, 2010).

1

The recently repealed 17-year-old law that banned openly gay men, lesbians, and bisexuals from military service

- ▶ **African Americans do not equate the struggle for LGBT rights with their own struggle for civil rights.** When given a choice of terms to describe “the struggle facing gays and lesbians” around hate crimes, housing and job discrimination, and bullying, a majority of 55 percent chose “equal rights” as the best term (Arcus-commissioned research by Cornell Belcher of Brilliant Corners Strategies and Donna Victoria of Victoria Research & Consulting, for the Arcus Operating Foundation, 2008).

Introduction

Public opinion research exploring American attitudes towards lesbians and gay men shows a significant and relatively rapid shift in the direction of greater support for lesbian and gay rights — to equal job opportunities, to serve openly in the military, to be protected from hate crimes, and, increasingly, to marriage equality. Nineteen percent of Americans report that in the last five years they have become “more supportive”² of rights for gay and lesbian people (Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, 2011 March Political Typology, February 22–March 14, 2011). In a single decade, gay and lesbian relations have gone from being considered “morally wrong” to “morally acceptable” by a majority of Americans. Overall support for marriage equality increased by 13 points in just three years, from 38 percent in 2008 to 51 percent in 2011 (Pew Research Center/Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, July 21–August 5, 2010; Public Religion Research Institute, Religion & Political Tracking Survey, May 2011). This is an unusually rapid shift for what has long been considered a “hot button issue.” Moreover the shift “has been broad-based, occurring across many demographic, political and religious groups” (Pew Research Center/Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, *Support for Same-Sex Marriage Edges Upward*, October 6, 2010).

TABLE 1. MAJORITY SUPPORT FOR EIGHT GAY & LESBIAN RIGHTS ISSUES

	Support	Oppose
1. Legal protection against hate crimes	73%	25%
2. Laws that protect gay and lesbian people against job discrimination	68%	27%
3. Homosexuality should be accepted by society	58%	33%
4. Allow gay/lesbian couples to adopt children	56%	37%
5. Same-sex couples should have the right to the same government benefits as married couples of the opposite sex	58%	38%
6. Repeal of federal law denying spouses in same-sex marriages eligibility for federal benefits	54%	39%
7. Allow gay/lesbian couples to get married	53%	44%
8. Repeal of the Defense of Marriage Act	51%	32%

Source: Based on various surveys and polls described in more detail below. Percentages may not add up to 100 because those who responded “do not know” or “no opinion” are not shown in the table.

The diminishing stigma attached to being lesbian or gay has allowed for greater openness, and one result of this development is that a majority of Americans today (63 percent) from all backgrounds — Republicans, Democrats, Independents, white, African-American and Latino — say they have close friends or relatives who are gay or lesbian (Washington Post-ABC News, February 4–8, 2010; Quinnipiac University Poll, April 21–27, 2009). And nearly eight in ten Americans say they know someone who is gay or lesbian, a percentage that has increased by 35 points since 1992 (CBS News Poll, May 20–24, 2010). This fact is noteworthy because research also shows that knowing someone who is gay or lesbian is positively correlated with support for gay rights (Quinnipiac University Poll, April 21–27, 2009).³

² Seventy-three percent report “no change,” and 6% say they have become “more opposed” (Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, 2011 March Political Typology, February 22–March 14, 2011)

³ Americans under thirty are even more likely to know someone who is gay or lesbian (84% say they do), and even a majority of those over 65 know someone (66% say they do) (CBS News Poll, May 20–24, 2010)

Some segments of the population, however, including those who can usually be counted upon to support the rights of victims of discrimination, continue to harbor reservations about granting lesbians and gay men full equality, particularly when it comes to marriage equality. As will be explored in more depth below, religiosity and religious affiliation appear to be critical factors: there are stark differences across religious groups, and those who attend worship services often, regardless of denomination, are less supportive of gay and lesbian rights than those who seldom or never attend services. Only 24 percent of Americans who attend worship services once a week favor marriage equality compared to 57 percent who attend rarely or never (Pew Research Center/Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, Results from the 2010 Annual Religion and Public Life Survey, September 17, 2010).

This meta-analysis examines the public's views on a number of key indicators, including what causes people to be gay or lesbian, whether or not being gay is "morally acceptable," the extent of discrimination against lesbian and gay people, views on the changing American family, and, of course, attitudes towards marriage equality. Very little research has been conducted on attitudes towards transgender people and we did not find any extant research on attitudes towards bisexuals or bisexuality.

Methodology

This meta-analysis is based on a synthesis of attitudinal tracking surveys and recent public opinion studies by nationally known and reputable research organizations, media outlets, and issue groups. Most of the data examined are publicly available; some come from proprietary research, which was made available to The Opportunity Agenda for the purposes of this report.

We reviewed original data from more than twenty public opinion polls and studies that address LGBT issues. We looked at attitudinal surveys that have tracked opinion changes and trends in the United States over a number of years. The majority of information, though, was provided by surveys conducted within the past two years, through March 2011. These studies meet The Opportunity Agenda's standards and best practices for quality and objective public opinion research, including appropriate sample size, a methodologically sound design and research instrument, and inclusion of a balanced questionnaire for surveys. The studies are listed at the conclusion of this section.

Because this scan investigates existing opinion research, we are limited by the data in our ability to analyze the views of all demographic groups on all issues. Whereas surveys often include adequate samples of African Americans and more recently, Latinos, to disaggregate their views this is generally not the case with Asian Americans, Native Americans, and other groups, except where intentional "oversampling" of these populations is conducted. Wherever the data allowed, we have analyzed separately and together the views of each identifiable demographic group for this report.

Since opinion research has largely adopted racial categories utilized by the federal government, this section uses these categories as appropriate. The categories are defined as follows:

- ▶ White: any person who self-identifies as white only and non-Hispanic
- ▶ Black: any person who self-identifies as black only
- ▶ Hispanic: any person of any race who self-identifies as Hispanic
- ▶ Asian: any person who self-identifies as Asian only

This report also uses the terms "homosexual" and "homosexuality" when those terms are used by public opinion researchers and in the media we analyzed.

Findings

Being gay

Americans today are trending towards the belief that homosexuality is “something a person is born with” and not due to “upbringing” or “choice.” From 1977 to 2009 the percentage of people who believe it is something you are born with rose by 23 points, from 13 percent to 36 percent (Gallup, May 25, 2010). In December 2010, 63 percent of the public disagreed with the statement, “Homosexual orientation can be changed,” and only 27 percent agreed, with 10 percent unsure (Public Religion Research Institute, Religion & Politics Tracking Survey, December 9–12, 2010). These views are strongly correlated with support or opposition to expanding LGBT rights: 65 percent of those who think people are born gay support marriage equality, compared to 15 percent among those who say being gay is a personal choice (Quinnipiac University Poll, April 21–27, 2009). As the chart below shows, blacks are more likely than some other groups to think that being gay is a choice, and Hispanics are more likely to think it is something you are born with. Women are more likely than men to agree that it is something you are born with.

TABLE 2. WHAT CAUSES SOMEONE TO BE GAY OR LESBIAN — DO YOU BELIEVE THAT PEOPLE ARE BORN GAY OR LESBIAN, OR THAT PEOPLE BECOME GAY OR LESBIAN BECAUSE OF THE WAY THEY ARE BROUGHT UP, OR IS IT JUST THE WAY THAT SOME PEOPLE CHOOSE TO LIVE?

	TOTAL	MEN	WOMEN	WHITE	BLACK	HISPANIC
BORN	42%	37%	46%	43%	29%	53%
BROUGHT UP	6%	19%	14%	17%	15%	9%
CHOOSE	36%	37%	35%	35%	47%	29%

Source: Pew Research Center/Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, “Support For Same-Sex Marriage Edges Upward: Same-Sex Marriage Table,” August–September 2010.

In response to the question, “Can homosexual orientation be changed?” only 27 percent of the overall public said it could, and 63 percent said it could not. The same demographic differences were found, with 65 percent of women saying homosexual orientation could not be changed compared to 61 percent of men, and 65 percent of whites compared to 51 percent of blacks (Public Religion Research Institute, Religion & Politics Tracking Survey, December 2010).

A survey of African Americans found similar results: 58 percent of the respondents agreed with the statement, “People who are gay can choose to change and become straight” (Arcus-commissioned research by Cornell Belcher of Brilliant Corners Strategies and Donna Victoria of Victoria Research & Consulting, for the Arcus Operating Foundation, 2008). There is some variation based on education and income levels, with better-educated and higher-income African Americans more likely to believe people are “born gay.” And a significant percentage (15 percent overall) responded that they weren’t sure. But age, which is often a significant factor, with younger people holding more progressive views than their elders, did not appear to make a difference on the issue of what makes people gay: 55 percent of African Americans between the ages of 18–39 agree that “people who are gay can choose to become straight,” compared to 52 percent of African Americans between the ages of 39 and 49, and 58 percent overall.

Responses are more evenly divided when African Americans are asked whether they agree or disagree with the statement, “People are born gay; we cannot condemn them for an identity they were born with.” Forty-four percent of African Americans agreed (30 percent strongly), and 45 percent disagreed (35 percent strongly) (Arcus-commissioned research by Cornell Belcher of Brilliant Corners Strategies and Donna Victoria of Victoria Research & Consulting, for the Arcus Operating Foundation, 2008).

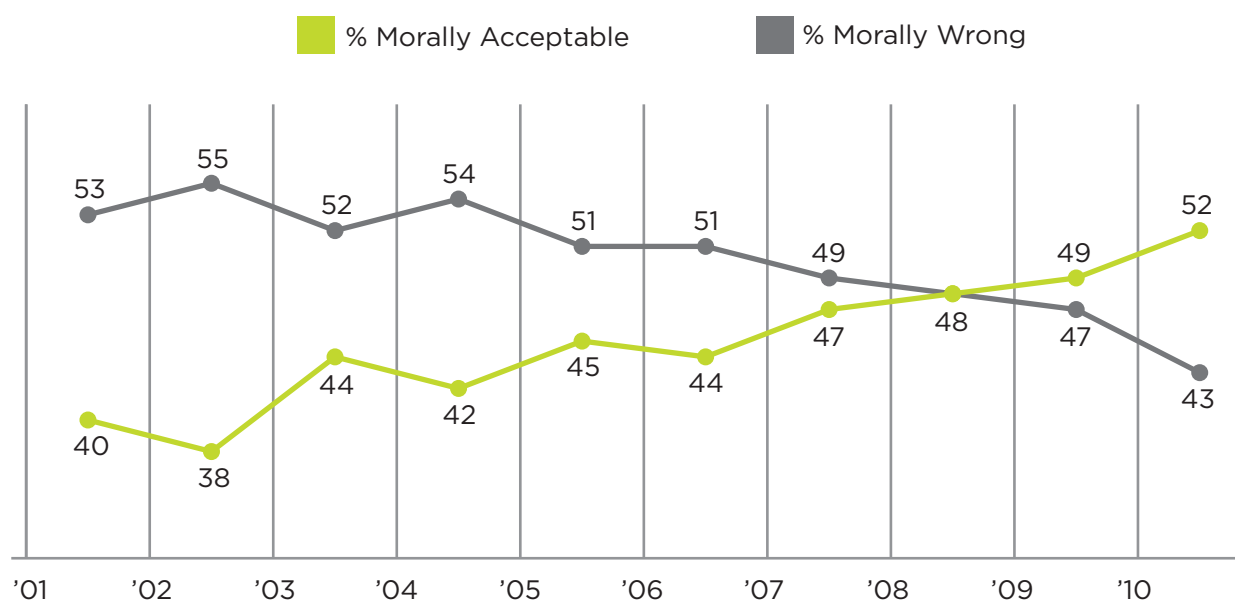
In this case, the outliers were African Americans earning under \$20,000 a year: 54 percent agreed with the statement (38 percent strongly).

The views of Hispanics on this issue are consistent with Catholic attitudes towards LGBT issues (see next section on “Moral Acceptability”). According to a recent survey, nearly seven in ten Catholics (69 percent) disagree that sexual orientation can be changed compared to 63 percent of Americans overall (Robert P. Jones and Daniel Cox, *Catholic Attitudes on Gay and Lesbian Issues: A Comprehensive Portrait of Recent Research*, Public Religion Research Institute, March 2011).

Moral acceptability

According to Gallup’s longitudinal polling, Americans’ support for the moral acceptability of gay and lesbian relations crossed the symbolic 50 percent threshold in 2010. At the same time, the percentage calling these relations “morally wrong” dropped to 43 percent, the lowest in Gallup’s decade-long trend. The big favorable shift between 2009 and 2010 shown in the chart below was driven mostly by men younger than 50 (+7).

FIGURE 1. PERCEIVED MORAL ACCEPTABILITY OF GAY/LESBIAN RELATIONS



Source: Gallup longitudinal polling, 2001-2010.

The Pew Research Center’s political typology survey, conducted in February and March of 2011, indicated that 58 percent of the overall American public thought that “homosexuality should be accepted by society,” 45 percent strongly, while 33 percent thought “homosexuality should be discouraged by society,” 28 percent strongly (Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, 2011 March Political Typology, February 22–March 14, 2011).⁴

Religious affiliation and religiosity are closely correlated with views on the acceptability of homosexuality and likely explain the significant differences that exist among racial and ethnic groups. The PRRI Religion and Political Tracking Survey found that 74 percent of Catholics agreed that gay

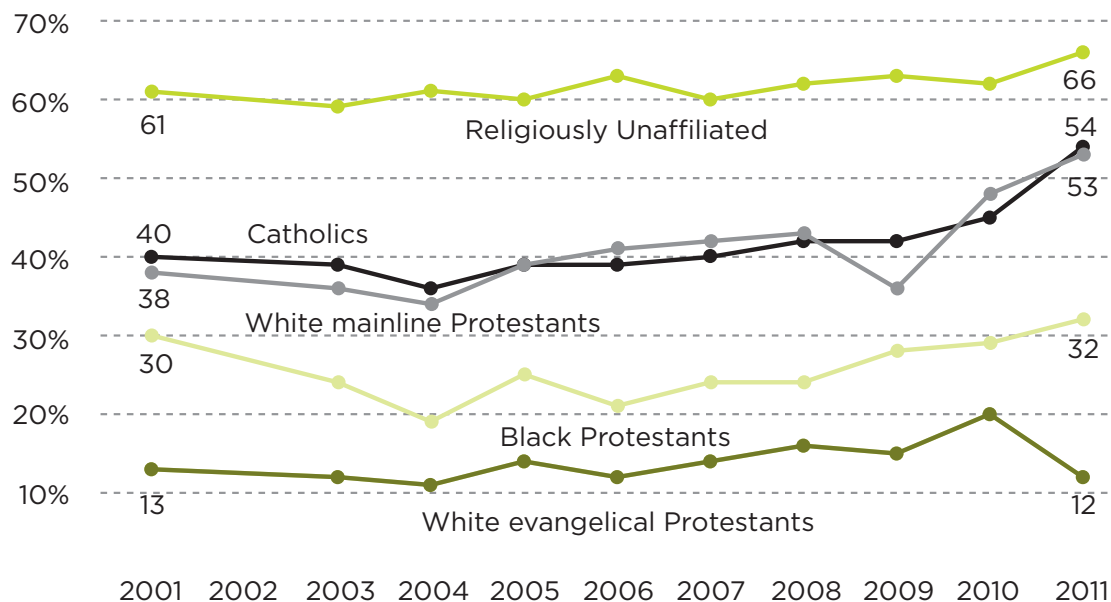
⁴ The higher approval found by the Pew survey might be at least partly due to the fact the question did not refer in any way to morality but used the word “accepted” without qualification. In September 2010 the Public Religion Research Institute asked the same question, “should gay and lesbian relationships be accepted by society?” and in that survey 62 percent said it should, and 36 percent said it should not (Public Religion Research Institute, Religion & Political Tracking Survey, September 2010).

and lesbian relationships should be accepted by society (compared to 68 percent of white mainline Protestants) (Public Religion Research Institute, Religion & Political Tracking Survey, September 2010). Sixty-eight percent of Latinos in the United States are Catholic (compared to 20 percent of Americans at large), and Latinos are more likely to say “homosexuality should be accepted by society” than other groups: 64 percent of Latinos say so compared to 58 percent of whites and 49 percent of African Americans (Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, 2011 March Political Typology, February 22–March 14, 2011). Fifty-six percent of U.S. Catholics do *not* believe homosexuality is a sin, compared to 46 percent of the general population. When it comes to marriage equality, Catholics are more supportive than the general public, and only 27 percent of Catholics cite religion as the biggest influence in their thinking about marriage for same-sex couples, compared to 62 percent of white evangelicals and 46 percent of African-American Protestants (white mainline Protestants come in at 30 percent). Interestingly, Catholics report that they are less likely to hear about the issue of homosexuality from their clergy than other religious groups, and although the messages they hear from clergy are mostly negative, Catholics are more likely than other groups to express displeasure about how their place of worship “handles the issue of homosexuality” (Robert P. Jones and Daniel Cox, *Catholic Attitudes on Gay and Lesbian Issues: A Comprehensive Portrait of Recent Research*, Public Religion Research Institute, March 2011).

African Americans stand out as the most religiously committed racial or ethnic group in the nation. Nearly eight in ten say religion is very important in their lives compared to 56 percent of Americans overall, and they attend religious services more frequently than the general population (Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, *A Religious Portrait of African-Americans*, January 30, 2009). Seventy-eight percent are Protestant (compared to 51 percent of all Americans), 63 percent identify as “born-again” (compared with 39 percent of white Americans), and a majority belong to historically black churches (Gallup, Religion & Social Trends, 2003–2004). Evangelical Americans tend to be conservative on social issues including LGBT rights. Whereas 58 percent of the public overall believes homosexuality should be accepted by society, 26 percent of Americans who identify themselves as evangelical and 39 percent who attend historically black churches think so (Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, U.S. Religious Landscape Survey, 2008). When asked whether their clergy “speak out about laws regarding homosexuality,” 54 percent of African-Americans Protestants answer in the affirmative — the highest percentage of all the groups surveyed (compared to 44 percent of the total).⁵ Of those who report hearing about homosexuality from clergy, 72 percent report that their clergy say it should be discouraged, while only 8 percent say it should be accepted (*Religion and the Issues: Results from the 2010 Annual Religion and Public Life Survey*, Pew Research Center/The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, September 17, 2010). The graph below shows the influence of religious affiliation on attitudes towards marriage equality over a 10-year period.

⁵ However, most African Americans deny that they “rely on my minister’s views to make my political decisions about whether things like gay marriage should be legal.” Only 25 percent agree with that statement (Arcus-commissioned research by Cornell Belcher of Brilliant Corners Strategies and Donna Victoria of Victoria Research & Consulting, for the Arcus Operating Foundation, 2008).

**FIGURE 2. TEN YEARS OF CHANGING ATTITUDES ON GAY MARRIAGE
(% WHO FAVOR GAY MARRIAGE)**



Source: *Religion and the Issues: Results from the 2010 Annual Religion and Public Life Survey*, Pew Research Center/The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, September 17, 2010.

Age is also a significant marker and younger Americans are more accepting of LGBT people and their rights than older Americans. Seventy-two percent of those between the ages of 18 and 34 agree that gay and lesbian relationships should be accepted by society, compared to 62 percent of 35-to-49-year-olds, 58 percent of 50-to-64-year-olds, and 51 percent of those over 65 (Public Religion Research Institute, Religion & Political Tracking survey, September 2010).

Research probing the public's attitudes towards transgender people is very sparse and most of it focuses on the narrow issue of employment discrimination (see below). One survey of New York voters commissioned by the Empire State Pride Agenda posed the question, "Do you believe it is wrong for a person to be transgender, or do you believe it is okay?" A majority of 57 percent responded that it was "okay," and only 15 percent said it was "wrong" with another 27 percent responding that they didn't know. Among those who said it was "wrong," a plurality said the reason was that it is "against the Bible" (32 percent) or "against my beliefs" (10 percent).⁶ Among those who said it was "okay" a plurality of 47 percent said "people have the right to be what they want" and 19 percent said "they are born that way"⁷ (Global Strategies Group, February 20–14, 2008).

Discrimination

A majority of Americans perceive that LGBT people face "a lot of discrimination." African Americans are especially sensitive to this problem: 64 percent of the general population agrees that "there is a lot of discrimination against gays and lesbians" while 82 percent of African Americans agree with that statement (compared to 66 percent of Latinos) (2009 Religion and Public Life Survey, Pew Research Center).⁸ The public is therefore supportive of LGBT anti-discrimination laws. By the time of its repeal

⁶ Other responses included, "I don't know" (18 percent); "I just think it's wrong" (10 percent); "It's not normal" (10 percent)

⁷ Other responses included, "It's nobody's business what someone else does" (12 percent); "I don't know" (10 percent); "I have no right to judge others" (6 percent)

⁸ According to a survey done one year earlier, in 2008, 76% of African Americans agreed that gays and lesbians were discriminated against, 52% "a lot" and 24% "somewhat" (Donna Victoria and Cornell Belcher for the Arcus Operating Foundation,

in late-2010, the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy was opposed by a large majority of the public (see below for more discussion of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell"). Sixty-eight percent of the public support laws that would protect gay and lesbian people against job discrimination (Public Religion Research Institute, American Values Survey 2010, September 1–14, 2010). A slim majority of voters (54 percent) think that a federal law denying spouses in same-sex marriages eligibility for federal benefits should be repealed; 60 percent of African Americans and 62 percent of Latinos think so (Quinnipiac University Poll, April 21–27, 2009). And a majority thinks couples of the same sex should be entitled to "the same government benefits as married couples of the opposite sex" (58 percent, up from 51 percent in 2008) (The AP-National Constitution Center Poll, August 11–16, 2010).⁹ A poll of Utahns suggests that even in conservative states anti-discrimination laws have public support. A February 2011 survey showed that 71 percent of registered voters, and 73 percent of Mormons in Utah, favored a bill that would ban employment and housing discrimination for LGBT people (UtahPolicy/Opinionology, February 16–19, 2011).

Statewide polls to measure support for a Gender Expression Non-Discrimination Act (GENDA) show strong support for laws that would prohibit discrimination against transgender people. Seventy-eight percent of New Yorkers say they would support a law "to protect transgender people from discrimination in employment, housing and public accommodations," 51 percent strongly (Global Strategies Group, February 20–24, 2008). In Massachusetts, 73 percent of voters said they wanted their elected representative to support GENDA legislation (Lake Research Partners, November 4–8, 2009).

Large majorities of African Americans favor giving gays and lesbians legal protection against job discrimination (77 percent in favor) and giving them legal protection against housing discrimination (73 percent in favor). An overwhelming majority of African Americans agree that "gay couples deserve the same legal protections as other people" (88 percent agree, 73 percent strongly). As is often the case when more specific survey questions are posed, that support drops: When asked if gay and lesbian couples should be able to give access to healthcare and pension benefits to their partners 61, percent were in favor (Arcus-commissioned research by Cornell Belcher of Brilliant Corners Strategies and Donna Victoria of Victoria Research & Consulting, for the Arcus Operating Foundation, 2008).

Is marriage inequality a form of discrimination? Voters are split on this question: 45 percent agree that it is, and 51 percent disagree. For African Americans, views are aligned with the general public: 45 percent think marriage inequality is a form of discrimination and 48 percent do not. Most Latinos (57 percent), on the other hand, agree that it is discrimination (Quinnipiac University Poll, April 21–27, 2009).

Marriage equality

On March 18, 2011 *ABC News* and *The Washington Post* announced the results of their latest poll in a press release headlined "Support for Gay Marriage Reaches a Milestone." The opening paragraph stated:

More than half of Americans say it should be legal for gays and lesbians to marry, a first in nearly a decade of polls by ABC News and The Washington Post. This milestone result caps a dramatic, long-term shift in public attitudes. From a low of 32 percent in a 2004 survey of registered voters, support for gay marriage has grown to 53 percent today.¹⁰

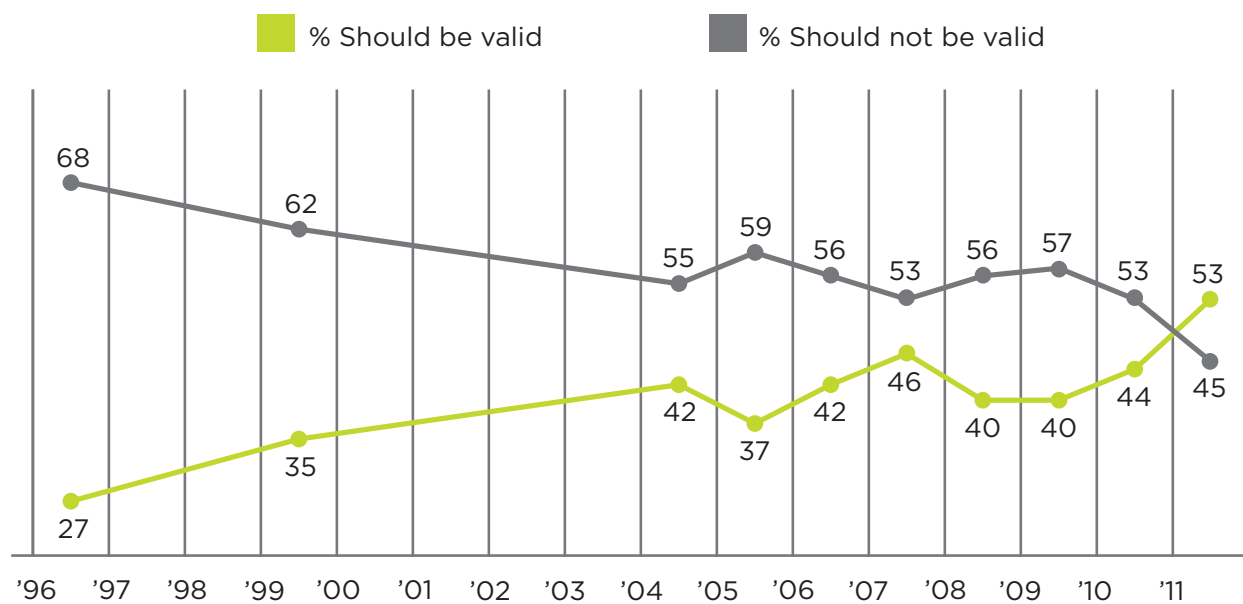
⁹ "LGBT Rights and Advocacy: Messaging to African American Communities," December 2009)

⁹ See also, Harris Interactive, "Out & Equal Workplace Survey," August 9–16, 2010

¹⁰ "ABC News/Washington Post Poll: Gay Marriage," press release, March 18, 2011. The poll question was worded as follows: "Do you think it should be legal or illegal for gay and lesbian couples to get married?"

The poll showed major and rapid shifts among several demographic groups. Among people in their 30s, support for marriage equality rose “a remarkable 23 points” in just five years, from 42 percent in 2005 to 65 percent today. Although adults over 50 remain more skeptical, 33 percent now say gay marriage should be legal, up from 18 percent five years ago. All religious groups, including white evangelicals, show an increase in support, especially white Catholics whose support has gone from 40 percent to 63 percent, another remarkable 23-point change.¹¹ Gallup’s longitudinal tracking for the question, “Do you think marriages between same-sex couples should or should not be recognized by the law as valid, with the same rights as traditional marriages” shows the same favorable trajectory.¹²

FIGURE 3. DO YOU THINK MARRIAGES BETWEEN SAME-SEX COUPLES SHOULD OR SHOULD NOT BE RECOGNIZED BY THE LAW AS VALID, WITH THE SAME RIGHTS AS TRADITIONAL MARRIAGES?



Source: Gallup longitudinal polling, 1996-2011. Trend shown for polls in which same-sex marriage question followed question on gay/lesbian rights and relations 1996-2005 wording: “Do you think marriages between homosexuals ...”

There are significant demographic differences on this issue. Women are more supportive of marriage equality than men and younger Americans are more supportive than older Americans. White mainline Protestants, Catholics, and Jews are more supportive than Evangelicals and black Protestants. And whites and Latinos are more supportive than African Americans. African Americans are also more likely than other groups to agree that “same-sex marriage is a threat to traditional marriage between a man and a woman” (45 percent of blacks agree as compared to 28 percent of Hispanics, 39 percent of whites) (Quinnipiac University Poll, April 21–27, 2009). In response to the question, “Would you support or oppose a law in your state that would allow same-sex couples to get married?” 38 percent of voters overall said yes, compared to 27 percent of blacks and 52 percent of Hispanics (Quinnipiac University Poll, April 21–27, 2009). It is clear that African-American support for marriage equality is increasing. In 2008, only 20 percent of African Americans said they favored “allowing gays and lesbians to marry legally” (Arcus-commissioned research by Cornell Belcher of Brilliant Corners Strategies and Donna Victoria of Victoria Research & Consulting, for the Arcus Operating Foundation,

11 The poll had an insufficient sample size to evaluate individual racial minority groups reliably

12 See also, the Public Religion Research Institute’s Religion & Political Tracking Survey showing 51 percent in favor of “gays and lesbian couples being allowed to legally marry” (May 2011); The AP-National Constitution Center Poll showing 52% support for the Federal Government giving “legal recognition to marriages between couples of the same sex,” (Associated Press/Roper/GfK, August 11–16, 2010 ; and “CNN Opinion Research Poll” showing 49% approval for gays and lesbians having “a constitutional right to get married and have their marriage recognized by law as valid” (August 6–10, 2010).

2008). By 2010, according to the Pew Research Center, African-American support stood at 30 percent (see table below). According to Pew’s March 2011 Political Typology, 38 percent of African Americans supported “allowing gays and lesbians to marry legally,” and the Public Religion Research Institute’s survey in May 2011 showed African American support for “gay and lesbian couples being allowed to legally marry” at 45 percent, compared to 51 percent of whites.

TABLE 3. % IN FAVOR OF “ALLOWING GAYS AND LESBIANS TO MARRY LEGALLY”

	1996	2008-09	2010	2011	
TOTAL	27%	38%	42%	51%	+24
SEX					
MEN	23%	33%	38%	49%	+26
WOMEN	32%	43%	46%	54%	+22
AGE					
18-29	42%	52%	53%	61%	+19
30-49	27%	39%	46%	57%	+30
50-64	22%	34%	38%	54%	+32
65+	15%	23%	28%	30%	+15
RELIGION					
WHITE MAINLINE PROTESTANTS	27%	40%	49%	53%	+26
CATHOLICS	32%	42%	46%	57%	+25
JEWS	—	75%	76%	—	
WHITE EVANGELICALS	13%	17%	20%	22%	+9
BLACK PROTESTANTS	23%	27%	27%	—	+5
RACE					
WHITE, NON-HISPANIC	27%	39%	44%	51%	+24
BLACK, NON-HISPANIC	26%	28%	30%	45%	+19
HISPANIC	32%	39%	41%	—	+9

Source: Pew Research Center/Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, “Support For Same-Sex Marriage Edges Upward: Same-Sex Marriage Table,” August–September 2010 and Public Religion Research Institute, Religion & Political Tracking Survey, May 2011.

There is a paucity of research on Asian American attitudes towards LGBT issues, but the Proposition 8 ballot initiative in California in 2008 provided an opportunity to measure their support for or opposition to marriage equality. Drawing on data from the Los Angeles County Registrar of Voters Office and the 2008 Southern California Voter Survey, the Asian Pacific American Legal Center documented the fact that a slim majority of Asian American voters in Los Angeles County (54 percent) voted in favor of Proposition 8, *i.e.*, against marriage equality.¹³ Equal numbers of Asian Indians, Chinese, and Vietnamese supported and opposed the measure, but a clear majority of Filipinos and Koreans voted against marriage equality. The analysis by the Asian Pacific American Legal Center posits that religion played a key role: Koreans and Filipinos attend religious services much more frequently than the other ethnic groups (Asian Pacific American Legal Center, *Asian Americans at the Ballot Box*).

13 Nearly 1.4 million Asian Americans live in Los Angeles County, more than in any other county nationwide (United States Census Bureau 2008 Population Estimates)

A number of recent state polls reflect the nationwide trend in the direction of supporting marriage equality. The one outlier is Michigan, where marriage equality is opposed by an 11-point margin. In the other five states, marriage equality is favored by a slim majority or, in the case of Virginia, a plurality (note that the question in the Minnesota poll was about a constitutional amendment and not a straight up and down vote on “same-sex” marriage).

Maryland

Would you favor or oppose a law in Maryland allowing same-sex couples to marry, giving them the same legal rights as heterosexual married couples in areas such as tax exemptions, inheritance and pension coverage?

Favor	51%
Oppose	44%
No answer	5%

(Gonzalez Research & Marketing Strategies, January 13–19, 2011)

Michigan

Do you support or oppose allowing gays or lesbians to get married?

Support	39%
Oppose	50%

(Glengariff Group for Detroit News, January 2–4, 2011)

Minnesota

Please tell me if you favor or oppose amending the Minnesota constitution to ban same-sex marriage.

Favor	39%
Oppose	55%

(Star Tribune Minnesota Poll, May 2–5, 2011)

New York

Do you support or oppose making same sex marriages legal in New York State?

Support	54%
Oppose	42%

(Siena Research Institute, May 11–17, 2011)

Rhode Island

Do you favor or oppose allowing gay and lesbian couples to marry legally?

Favor	50%
Oppose	41%
Not sure	9%

(Public Policy Polling, February 16–22, 2011)

Virginia

Do you think it should be legal or illegal for gay and lesbian couples to get married?

Legal	47%
Illegal	43%

(Washington Post Poll, April 28–May 4, 2011)

In another hopeful sign, a new survey commissioned by the Human Rights Campaign indicated that 51 percent of voters now oppose the 1996 federal Defense of Marriage Act when described as follows: “The law forbids the federal government from recognizing marriages between gay and lesbian couples legally performed in states where such marriages are legally permitted.” Only 34 percent favor the law, and 15 percent are unsure (Greenberg Quinlan Rosner for Human Rights Campaign, March 8–10, 2011). When DOMA was signed into law by President Bill Clinton, only 27 percent of the public supported marriage equality and the new law had broad support (Gallup Tracking, May 20, 2011).

The changing family

In November 2010 the Pew Research Center published a Social & Demographic Trends Report based on a new nationwide survey: “The Decline of Marriage And Rise of New Families.” The report’s introduction observes that:

Over the past 50 years, a quiet revolution has taken place in this country. Decades of demographic, economic and social change have transformed the structure and composition of the American family. The pre-eminent family unit of the mid-20th century — mom, dad and the kids — no longer has the stage to itself. A variety of new arrangements have emerged, giving rise to a broader and evolving definition of what constitutes a family (Pew Research Center, *The Decline of Marriage And Rise of New Families*, November 18, 2010).

The Pew survey, conducted in association with TIME, probed the public’s views on a range of topics including “New Family Types.” Seven “trends” in new family arrangements were tested: (1) single women having children; (2) people living together without being married; (3) unmarried couples raising children; (4) gay/lesbian couples raising children; (5) mothers of young children working outside the home; (6) women not ever having children; (7) people of different races marrying each other. By far the first trend, single women having children, was the least acceptable, earning a 69 percent disapproval rating. Interestingly, gay/lesbian couples raising children was viewed as no worse (and no better) than two other trends: people living together without being married and unmarried couples raising children. Increases in all three types of families were rated as a bad thing by 43 percent of the public, as a good thing by between 9 and 12 percent, and as making no difference by between 41 and 46 percent. The report notes that “public attitudes on same-sex couples have softened in recent years. In a 2007 Pew Research Center survey, 50 percent of adults said that gay and lesbian couples raising children was bad for society, compared with 43 percent in the 2010 survey. A growing share — 34 percent in 2007 and 41 percent in 2010 — say this rising trend “doesn’t make much difference.”

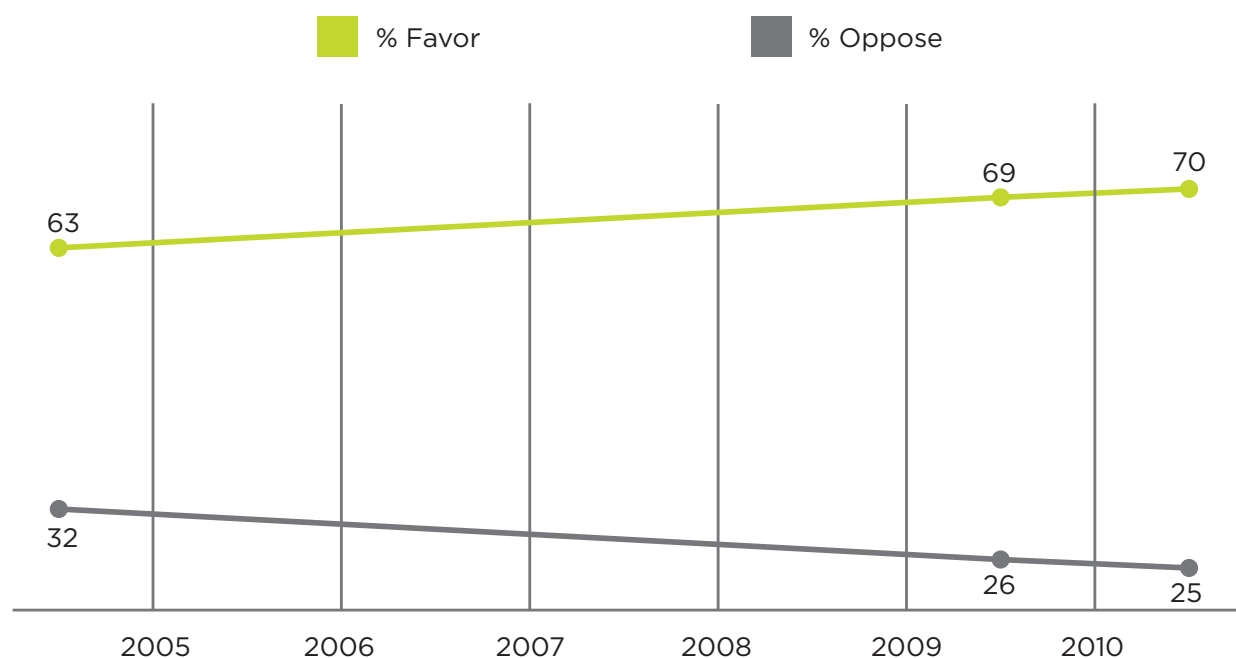
The Pew survey did reveal significant differences based on age and gender in particular, and, to a lesser extent, on race. Americans above the age of 65 are much more negative about gay and lesbian couples raising children (58 percent disapproval rating) than young adults between the ages of 18 and 29 (28 percent disapproval rating). Women are less disapproving than men (35 percent of women think this trend is a bad thing compared to 50 percent of men). And African Americans were slightly more disapproving than whites or Latinos (46 percent, 42 percent, and 42 percent, respectively).

The overall softening of attitudes about same-sex couples raising children is reflected in the rising support for adoption rights for gay men and lesbians. In 2007, 46 percent of the public thought “homosexual couples should be legally permitted to adopt children”; by 2009 support for adoption rights for gay men and lesbians had gone up by eight points to 54 percent (Gallup, September 7–8, 2007 and May 7–10, 2009). And a 2011 survey showed an approval rate of 56 percent (Public Religion Research Institute, Religion & Political Tracking Survey, May 2011). Latinos are more likely than whites or African Americans to support adoption by same-sex couples (62 percent compared to 53 percent of whites and 48 percent of blacks),¹⁴ women are more supportive than men (56 percent to 50 percent), and young people are more supportive than older people (61 percent to 52 percent) (Quinnipiac University Poll, April 21–27, 2009). Catholics are among the strongest supporters of gay adoption rights: 60 percent are in favor compared to 54 percent of the public overall (Robert P. Jones and Daniel Cox, *Catholic Attitudes on Gay and Lesbian Issues: A Comprehensive Portrait of Recent Research*, Public Religion Research Institute, March 2011).

“Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell”

The repeal of the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” (DADT) policy in December 2010 was very much in line with public opinion. Polls had been showing increasing opposition to the policy for some time. According to Gallup, by 2010 support for ending DADT was at an overwhelming 70 percent:

FIGURE 4: DO YOU FAVOR OR OPPOSE ALLOWING OPENLY GAY MEN AND LESBIAN WOMEN TO SERVE IN THE MILITARY?



Source: Gallup longitudinal polling, 2005-2010.

A CNN/USA Today poll conducted in May of 2010 showed an even higher percentage of support for ending DADT, with 78 percent saying they thought “people who are openly gay or homosexual should be allowed to serve in the U.S. military” (CNN Opinion Research Poll, May 21–23, 2010).

14 There appears to be an upward trend in African-American support for adoption rights for gay men and lesbians. A 2008 survey showed that only 36 percent supported “legally permitting gays and lesbians to adopt children” (Arcus-commissioned research by Cornell Belcher of Brilliant Corners Strategies and Donna Victoria of Victoria Research & Consulting, for the Arcus Operating Foundation, 2008).

African Americans tended to be less supportive of ending DADT than other segments of the population. In a 2009 poll, 48 percent of African Americans supported repeal of DADT as compared to 56 percent of adults overall and 73 percent of Hispanics (Quinnipiac University Poll, April 21–27, 2009). African Americans between the ages of 18 and 39 were more supportive of “allowing gays and lesbians to serve in the U.S. military openly” than their elders — 66 percent were in favor (Arcus-commissioned research by Cornell Belcher of Brilliant Corners Strategies and Donna Victoria of Victoria Research & Consulting, for the Arcus Operating Foundation, 2008).

Protection against hate crimes

The most recent general polling on whether crimes against LGBT people based on their sexual orientation or gender identity should be considered a hate crime was conducted in 2007 when the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act/Matthew Shepard Act was pending before Congress.¹⁵ Several surveys showed broad support for the legislation, ranging from 73 percent in favor (Hart Research for the Human Rights Campaign, January 31–February 5, 2007) to 68 percent in favor (Gallup Poll, May 10–13, 2007). According to the Hart survey, support crossed racial and ethnic lines. More recently, African Americans were polled on whether they supported or opposed giving “gays and lesbians legal protection against hate crimes, the same as hate crime laws that protect racial minorities.” Eighty percent favored such a law (Arcus-commissioned research by Cornell Belcher of Brilliant Corners Strategies and Donna Victoria of Victoria Research & Consulting, for the Arcus Operating Foundation, 2008).

Are LGBT rights “civil rights”?

Public opinion research shows that African Americans do not equate the struggle for LGBT rights with their own struggle for civil rights. When given a choice of terms to describe “the struggle facing gays and lesbians” around hate crimes, housing and job discrimination, and bullying, a majority of 55 percent chose “equal rights” as the best term. Only 7 percent chose “civil rights” and 18 percent chose “human rights.” A majority of 53 percent did not agree that “progress on gay and lesbian rights” was “a logical extension of the civil rights movement for African Americans.” Only 32 percent agreed with that statement, and another 15 percent were unsure. Finally, a very large majority of African Americans agreed with the following statement: “Gay rights and civil rights for African Americans are not the same thing; you can hide your ‘gayness’ or gay behavior but you cannot hide the color of your skin.” Eighty-three percent agreed with that statement, 72 percent strongly (Arcus-commissioned research by Cornell Belcher of Brilliant Corners Strategies and Donna Victoria of Victoria Research & Consulting, for the Arcus Operating Foundation, 2008).

Surveys

ABC/Washington Post, April 21–24, 2009

AP/Roper: The AP-National Constitution Center Poll, August 11–16, 2010

CBS News Poll: Views of Gays and Lesbians, May 20–14, 2010

CNN Opinion Research Poll (gays in military), May 21–23, 2010

Field Poll, Pre-Election Survey (Prop. 8), October 18–28, 2008

Gallup

► Values and Beliefs tracking poll

¹⁵ The Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act finally passed on October 22, 2009 and was signed into law by President Obama on October 28, 2009

- ▶ Gay and Lesbian Rights, 1977–2010
- ▶ “Blacks as Conservative as Republicans on Some Moral Issues,” December 3, 2008

Glengariff Group for Detroit News, January 2–4, 2011

Global Strategies Group, GENDA Survey, February 20–24, 2008

Gonzalez Research & Marketing Strategies, January 13–19, 2011

Goodwin Simon Victoria Research for Arcus Operating Foundation, February 2008

Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research for Human Rights Campaign, March 8–10, 2011

Harris Poll/Out & Equal

- ▶ 2009 Out & Equal Workplace Survey
- ▶ 2010 Out & Equal Workplace Survey

Lake Research Partners for Massachusetts Transgender Political Coalition, November 4–8, 2009

The New York Times/CBS News, April 22–26, 2009

Pew

- ▶ 2011 March Political Survey, February 22–March 1, 2011
- ▶ 2010 Religion & Public Life Survey, July 21–August 5, 2010
- ▶ “Majority Continues to Favor Gays Servicing Openly in Military – Support for Same-Sex Marriage Edges Upward,” October 6, 2010
- ▶ “The Decline of Marriage and Rise of New Families,” conducted in association with TIME, October 1–21, 2010
- ▶ Political typology survey, February–March 2011

Public Policy Polling, Survey of Rhode Island Voters, February 16–22, 2011

Public Religion Research Institute

- ▶ American Values survey, September 1–14, 2010
- ▶ PRRI/RNS Religion News Survey, October 14–17, 2010
- ▶ Religion & Public Tracking Survey, September 2010
- ▶ Religion & Public Tracking Survey, December 2010
- ▶ Religion & Public Tracking Survey, May 2011

Quinnipiac

- ▶ “More New Jersey Voters Back Same-Sex Marriage,” April 14–20, 2009
- ▶ “Gays in the Military Should Be Allowed to Come Out,” April 21–27, 2009

Siena Research Institute, May 11–17, 2011

Star Tribune Minnesota Poll, May 2–5, 2011

UtahPolicy/Opinionology, February 16–19, 2011

Washington Post Poll, April 28–May 4, 2011

Asian Pacific American Legal Center, “Asian Americans at the Ballot Box: The 2008 General Election in Los Angeles County”

C. Nicole Mason, PhD, “At the Crossroads: African American Attitudes, Perceptions, and Beliefs toward Marriage Equality – A Report by the National Black Justice Coalition in Partnership with Freedom to Marry,” 2008

Donna Victoria and Cornell Belcher for the Arcus Racial Justice, Sexual Orientation & Gender Identity Program, “LGBT Rights and Advocacy – Messaging to African American Communities,” December 2009

Robert P. Jones and Daniel Cox, “Catholic Attitudes on Gay and Lesbian Issues: A Comprehensive Portrait of Recent Research, Public Religion Research Institute, March 2011

Content Analysis: African-American Media

Executive Summary

This report analyzes how African-American print media — community newspapers, African-American-themed magazines, and online news sites — cover lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people and issues. Our objective is to understand the kinds of messages and images these media are communicating to their readers about the lives, experiences, struggles, and concerns of LGBT people of color. We examined the content of 20 community newspapers, five magazines, and three online news sites between 2008 and 2010.

Major Findings

- ▶ African-American media cover LGBT issues to some extent and some outlets have reporters or columnists who write about them frequently.
- ▶ The most prevalent storylines in community newspapers concern HIV/AIDS, homophobia, bullying and discrimination, and culture (celebrities and depictions of LGBT individuals in books, films, and television). In African-American-themed magazines, same-sex marriage and culture are the most commonly reported-on storylines. The most prevalent storylines in online news media are homophobia, bullying, and discrimination.
- ▶ Pro-LGBT voices in the form of commentators and quoted sources outnumber anti-LGBT voices in all three forms of media. Openly gay African Americans and LGBT rights advocates are among the most frequently quoted sources. Also notable are a smaller number of civil rights and religious leaders who are promoting a pro-LGBT position.
- ▶ Most of the anti-LGBT voices are African-American ministers speaking in the context of the passage of a marriage equality law by the Washington, D.C., City Council.
- ▶ There is not much in-depth coverage of the day-to-day struggles of LGBT people of color, especially low-income people, and the challenges they face in society at large and in their own communities and families.
- ▶ African-American-themed online news sites do a better job of integrating coverage of LGBT issues into their mix of news and commentary than do more traditional print outlets. Of the three types of media considered here, African-American-themed magazines have the least coverage of LGBT issues, especially in their printed versions.
- ▶ The frequent coverage of HIV/AIDS in community newspapers is problematic in that it focuses attention on health risks perceived to be related to the LGBT experience and misrepresents the role of “living on the down low” in causing new infections, thereby further stigmatizing men of color in general and gay and bisexual men of color in particular.

- ▶ News reports and commentary reflect an ongoing dialogue and debate about the relationship between gay rights and civil rights, and between racism and homophobia. Also reflected is the struggle within the African-American faith community over the “acceptability” and “morality” of being gay.
- ▶ African American print media are communicating two dominant narratives in “telling the LGBT story.” One narrative, which we call the “clash of values” narrative, encompasses two conflicting ideas: that discrimination against any group is wrong and, at the same time, that homosexuality is wrong and immoral. Since the African-American community tends to be united in its condemnation of discrimination of any kind, the fact that they are split on LGBT rights is a story in and of itself. Through the second “real world” narrative, readers are being confronted with the reality that LGBT African Americans exist, they live and work among us, they are in our families and our communities, and they are not going away.
- ▶ With a concerted effort, advocates can make headway in the current African-American media environment. LGBT issues are considered newsworthy by many media outlets, and there is a cadre of reporters and commentators who are knowledgeable and motivated to carry a coherent narrative that serves to unite LGBT and African-American interests.

Ultimately, this study offers important insight into African-American media discourse about LGBT people of color and their rights, and reveals challenges and opportunities for improving the media content. Based on this insight, The Opportunity Agenda has developed a set of recommendations which can be found at http://opportunityagenda.org/lgbt_report_2012.

Introduction

African Americans consume a broad range of media — mainstream, ethnic, cultural, popular, and niche. This analysis, however, focuses on a subset of African-American media — community newspapers, magazines, and popular online news sites. Our objective is to understand the kinds of messages and images these media are communicating to their readers about the lives, experiences, struggles, and concerns of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people of color. Are LGBT issues and people receiving any attention at all on the pages of these publications? If so, which issues are receiving the most coverage and whose voices are being amplified, either as commentators or spokespeople? Is there an overarching narrative that is being communicated to consumers of African-American print media about LGBT people of color? The answers to these questions will contribute to a deeper understanding of why African Americans continue to have reservations about full equality for LGBT people.

Public opinion research exploring American attitudes toward lesbians and gay men shows a significant and relatively rapid shift in the direction of greater support for lesbian and gay rights — to equal job opportunities; to serve openly in the military; to be protected from hate crimes; and, increasingly, to marriage equality. But public opinion research also shows that African Americans are less supportive of LGBT equality than other segments of American society. As the National Black Justice Coalition pointed out in a recent report, African Americans are virtually the only constituency in the country that has not become more supportive of marriage equality over the last dozen years, and even among youth who are generally less homophobic than older people, 55 percent believe that homosexuality is always wrong, compared to 36 percent of Latino youth and 35 percent of white youth.¹⁶ African Americans are also more likely than Latinos or whites to believe that homosexuality is a “lifestyle choice,” a belief researchers have found to be correlated with anti-LGBT views.¹⁷

The lack of majority support among African Americans for LGBT equality is a striking departure from that community’s strong traditional stance against discrimination of any kind, and advocates who work at the intersection of racial justice and LGBT rights are working to bring about a shift in African-American public opinion. Developing a communications strategy that challenges the myths and biases that buttress anti-LGBT views among African Americans is a necessary predicate to bringing about change. Understanding how the media currently portrays LGBT issues and people of color is a critical step in developing an effective communications strategy for winning hearts and minds.

To answer these questions, we conducted a broad search and analysis of the content of 20 African-American community newspapers, five African-American magazines, and three African-American online news sites. Between them, they reach millions of African Americans of varying ages, backgrounds, and sensibilities. Our research builds on other recent research commissioned or supported by the Arcus Foundation: in-depth interviews, a national survey and a series of focus groups of African Americans conducted in 2007-2008, and a study of the relationship between racial justice organizations and LGBT communities completed in 2010.¹⁸

16 C. Nicole Mason, “At the Crossroads: African-American Attitudes, Perceptions, and Beliefs toward Marriage Equality — A Report by the National Black Justice Coalition in Partnership with Freedom to Marry”

17 See Quinnipiac University Poll, April 21-27, 2009; 60 Minutes/Vanity Fair Poll, conducted by CBS News, May 6-9, 2010

18 See Donna Victoria and Cornel Belcher, “LGBT Rights and Advocacy: Messaging to the African American Communities,” Arcus Operating Foundation, December 2009; “Better Together: Research Findings on the Relationship Between Racial Justice Organizations and LGBT Communities,” The Applied Research Center, September 2010

Before beginning our research, we spoke to a number of advocates who work at the intersection of race, gender identity, and sexual orientation and asked them their opinions of how the African-American print media were doing in covering LGBT issues. One commonly stated view was, “We’re invisible; we’re not seen or valued as part of the Black community or experience.” Another was that most of the coverage was “presented from a place of pathology rather than normalcy,” i.e., stories about the “down low lifestyle”¹⁹ or the Bishop Eddie Long scandal²⁰ were dominant. Our expectation, therefore, was that we would not find much positive news or commentary in the African-American print media devoted to LGBT issues and concerns. Surprisingly, our research shows that advocates, who have invested a great deal of time and effort into calling attention to LGBT issues, have accomplished a great deal in influencing the discourse.

Although there is much room for improvement, we found more coverage, and more *positive* coverage, than had been predicted. News pieces, op-eds, and columns over the past two years reveal a good deal of discussion and debate on the pages of African-American community newspapers, African-American magazines, and African-American online news sites over such issues as the role of the African-American church in spreading or ameliorating homophobia, the responsibility of African Americans to oppose and expose discrimination in any form, and the role that anti-LGBT stigma plays in contributing to the high HIV-infection rate among African Americans.

We also found that pro-LGBT voices, whether in the form of editorial pieces or quotes in news reports, significantly outnumbered anti-LGBT voices in all three forms of media.²¹ Photographs of and quotes from openly gay African Americans are not as rare as one might have predicted. Several newspapers and online news sites have staff journalists and commentators who write about LGBT issues and their relationship to the African-American experience on a regular basis.

This is not to say that the status quo is satisfactory. In general, there is a paucity of in-depth coverage of the day-to-day struggles of LGBT people of color, especially low-income LGBT people of color, as they confront outsider status in their own communities, in the LGBT movement, and in American society at large. Some of the outlets we examined carry little or no material of substance about LGBT people, focusing instead on gay celebrities or rumors of homosexuality (e.g., the “Is Oprah gay?” rumor still has legs). African-American magazines seem especially timid. For example, although the *Essence* website has carried quite a few pieces, including a breakthrough “Bridal Bliss” feature about a lesbian wedding (discussed herein), we found only one 143-word article in the magazine’s print version, which has a paid circulation of more than one million readers and a high pass-along rate among African-American women. Coverage in African-American newspapers is uneven, with some outlets — such as the *Washington Informer*, the *Philadelphia Tribune*, and the *Los Angeles Sentinel* — carrying LGBT-related news and commentary on a somewhat regular basis, and others (including the *Baltimore Afro-American* and the *Oakland Post*) less so. By and large, African-American online news sites do a better job of integrating coverage of LGBT issues into their mix of news and commentary than do their corresponding print vehicles. This augurs well for what political scientists call “generational replacement” — a marked change in values from one generation to another. There is every reason to believe that younger African Americans will be more supportive of LGBT equality, partially based on what they are seeing and contributing to on these online sites.

19 “Down low” is used to describe the behavior of African-American men who have sex with other men as well as with women but who do not identify as gay or bisexual

20 Bishop Eddie Long is the pastor of an Atlanta-based megachurch who has preached against homosexuality and has been charged with sexual misconduct against several young male congregants

21 The terms “pro-LGBT” and “anti-LGBT” are admittedly (and necessarily) vague. We define “pro-LGBT” as expressing support for LGBT rights or projecting an attitude of inclusivity, acceptance, and support. We define “anti-LGBT” as opposing LGBT rights or projecting a bias against inclusion, acceptance, and support.

Our media content analysis indicates that there are real and identifiable opportunities for African-American LGBT advocates to improve the quality and quantity of coverage of LGBT issues, themes, and people on the pages of African-American print media.

Trends, opportunities, and challenges

This research indicates that African-American media find LGBT issues to be newsworthy. All three types of media we examined — community newspapers, magazines, and online news sites — cover LGBT issues to some extent, and some outlets have reporters or columnists who write about these issues frequently, among them Jasmyne A. Cannick for the *Sentinel*, Victor L. Walker for the *Michigan Citizen*, James Wright for the *Washington Informer*, Boyce Watkins for *Black Voices*, David Kaufman for *The Root*, Edward Wyckoff Williams for *The Grio*, and George Curry, whose syndicated columns and articles are picked up by a number of community newspapers. Although African-American magazine coverage has been relatively sparse, there have been breakthrough articles in *Black Enterprise* and *Essence.com*, e.g., Brittany Hutson’s “The ‘Coming Out’ Challenge” in *Black Enterprise* and Bobbi Misick’s “Bridal Bliss: Love at First Sight,” on *Essence.com*. Moreover, at least some of these publications are not afraid to publish pointed commentary by pro-LGBT African Americans about current controversies like marriage equality and homophobia in the African-American church. All of this suggests that there will be many openings going forward for pitching and publishing articles about LGBT themes, issues, and people.

A major finding from the survey and focus group research commissioned by the Arcus Operating Foundation was that the strongest intersectional issues for building African-American support for LGBT issues were job discrimination, hate crimes, and bullying: “Hate crimes are immediately, viscerally understood as a problem for both African American and LGBT people; many participants [in focus groups] noted that their first experience with an LGBT person was witnessing someone get bullied in school... This is a huge advantage in bringing African Americans along in their support for fairness and equality for LGBT citizens.”²² The good news is that discrimination, hate crimes, and bullying are among the most common storylines in all three types of media, and for online news media they represent almost half of all the articles in our sample. Again, this indicates a strong interest on the part of journalists and commentators in these kinds of stories.

A concern voiced by LGBT advocates of color whom we interviewed at the inception of The Opportunity Agenda’s research on this issue was that LGBT African Americans were invisible in the African-American media. While there is clearly room for improvement, we found that images and the voices of LGBT African Americans were not rare. We’ve included in this report some of the photographs that appeared in the African-American media depicting openly gay individuals. Openly gay African Americans were also the most frequently quoted spokespeople in both the community newspapers and online news media that we studied, and openly gay African-American commentators published pieces on homophobia among African-American religious leaders, the coming-out experience, and marriage equality. The reality that LGBT African Americans exist, live, and work among us, entertain us, are in our families and our communities, and are not going away is one of the dominant narratives we have identified in the media coverage we analyzed.

Coverage of HIV/AIDS is more problematic. On the one hand, articles encouraging awareness and providing accurate information about the epidemic’s impact on the African-American community can be constructive, especially given the criticism earlier in the epidemic that African-American media were in denial about the problem. On the other hand, we found a number of pieces that misrepresented the role of “the down low lifestyle” in causing new infections, especially among heterosexual African-

²² Donna Victoria and Cornel Belcher, “LGBT Rights and Advocacy: Messaging to the African American Communities,” Arcus Operating Foundation, December 2009, pp 12, 17

American women. The substantial space and attention devoted to the topic, especially in community newspapers, can lead to the perception that “living on the down low” is a common practice when in fact there is scant empirical evidence to support the claim.²³ Although columnists like Tony Wafford and Dr. Kevin Fenton have written strong rebuttals to this idea (and GLAAD, the Black AIDS Institute, and the National Black Justice Coalition ran a full-page ad in *Variety Magazine* calling on the media to stop spreading inaccurate information), it has the capacity to become a powerful myth that can lead (and perhaps already has led) to the further isolation and blaming of men of color in general and gay and bisexual men of color in particular.²⁴

Also problematic is the notion, advanced by a minority of commentators, that gay rights and civil rights are competitors in the struggle for a more just and equal society, or that the LGBT movement is co-opting the language and strategy of the civil rights movement. This feeds into the perception, noted by the Applied Research Center in its report, “Better Together,” that there is a split between communities of color and LGBT communities.²⁵

Expressions of division and difference, however, are not going unanswered. We found a number of instances of influential African Americans speaking out on the commonality of the struggles against racism and homophobia. Rev. Eric Lee, the president of the Los Angeles Southern Christian Leadership Conference argues, “Any time you deny one group of people the same right that other groups have, that is a clear violation of civil rights and I have to speak up on that.” Rev. Gilbert H. Caldwell, an African-American leader of the Reconciling Ministries Network,²⁶ acknowledges the uniqueness of African-American history and experience, but argues that “after saying all of that, bigotry, hatred, bias and prejudice are the same and I think we need to focus on the similarities of prejudice rather than the differences in our respective struggles.” Alice Huffman, president of the California NAACP, was quoted as saying, “When we find another group fighting for their rights, we should stand up for that group.” These statements illuminate the second dominant narrative we found in the coverage: the clash of values between equality on the one hand and “morality” on the other.

With a concerted effort, advocates who work at the intersection of race, gender identity, and sexual orientation can make real headway in the current African-American media environment. LGBT issues are already considered newsworthy by many African-American media outlets, and there is a cadre of reporters and commentators who are knowledgeable and motivated to carry a coherent narrative that serves to unite LGBT and African-American interests. An opinion research study by Victoria and Belcher²⁷ showed that “‘discrimination’ is unifying language for African Americans and the LGBT movement,”²⁸ and our media scan indicates that anti-LGBT discrimination, homophobia, and bullying are among the most common storylines in the African-American media in its coverage of LGBT issues. This trend can be built upon. The same study also showed that “there are two groups that have

23 For an in-depth discussion of how the media cover black men who live on the “down low” see Russell K. Robinson, “Racing the Closet,” *Stanford Law Review*, Vol. 61:1463 (2009). Prof. Robinson observed that a central theme of what he calls the “DL discourse” in both the black and mainstream media is that DL men expose their unwitting female partners to HIV, which stems from their secret sex with men. He argued that this discourse misrepresents the facts and applies a racialized double standard to black and white men who engage in similar conduct.

24 Russell Robinson argued that homophobia in the African-American community is not the only, or even the best, explanation for the “down low”: “Although homophobia is certainly a factor, the central flaw in this account is that it denies the existence of genuine bisexuality, even though many men (black and otherwise) attest to experiencing significant sexual attraction to both sexes” (Ibid. at 1487, citing Kenji Yoshino, “The Epistemic Contract of Bisexual Erasure,” *Stanford Law Review*, Vol. 52: 353 [2000])

25 Applied Research Center, “Better Together: Research Findings on the Relationship Between Racial Justice Organizations and LGBT Communities,” September 2010, p.5

26 The Reconciling Ministries Network is a movement within the United Methodists “of all sexual orientations and gender identities to transform our Church and world into the full expression of Christ’s inclusive love”

27 Donna Victoria and Cornel Belcher, “LGBT Rights and Advocacy: Messaging to African American Communities,” Arcus Operating Foundation, December 2009

28 p. 17

the standing in the African-American community to carry on a unique dialogue with other African Americans on LGBT issues: African-American civil rights leaders and LGBT African Americans.”²⁹ Our research shows that individuals from both of those groups are being quoted and published and that among them, pro-LGBT voices significantly outnumber anti-LGBT voices.

For further direction on how to improve the African-American media discourse about LGBT, The Opportunity Agenda has developed a set of recommendations which can be found at http://opportunityagenda.org/lgbt_report_2012.

Methodology

The media content analysis for this section of the report is based on an examination of the content of 20 African-American community newspapers, five magazines, and three online news sites. A complete listing of each of these media outlets can be found in this section. The specific methodologies utilized for each type of outlet follow.

African-American newspapers

The media analysis for this section was based on content from 20 African-American community newspapers representing every region of the United States. The time frame spans December 31, 2008 to December 31, 2010. A final sample of 87 articles was drawn from an overall pool of 666 articles that were identified by searching two databases included in the Nexis service (Ethnic Newswatch database and Ethnic News database) using the following search terms: *gay OR lesbian OR homosexuality OR transgender OR gay rights OR LGBT rights OR gay marriage OR same sex marriage OR don't ask don't tell OR gays in the military OR homophobia OR anti-gay OR men who have sex with men OR MSM OR down low*. The sample was selected by applying a random sequence generator to ensure that it was representative of all articles picked up by the scan.

- ▶ Atlanta Daily World
- ▶ Atlanta Inquirer
- ▶ Baltimore Afro-American
- ▶ Bay State Banner (Boston)
- ▶ Birmingham Times
- ▶ Call & Post (Columbus, OH)
- ▶ Chicago Defender
- ▶ Jackson Advocate
- ▶ Jacksonville Free Press
- ▶ Los Angeles Sentinel
- ▶ Miami Times
- ▶ Michigan Citizen
- ▶ New Pittsburgh Courier
- ▶ New York Amsterdam News
- ▶ Oakland Post
- ▶ Philadelphia Tribune
- ▶ Richmond Afro-American
- ▶ Tri-State Defender (AR, MS, TN)
- ▶ Washington Afro-American
- ▶ Washington Informer

African-American magazines

We conducted a search of African-American magazines with large circulations using the Nexis database, and the online versions using the same search terms as were used in the community newspaper search. The time frame was December 2008 to December 2010. We looked at both the print and online versions of each publication. Since our searches generated a total of only 32 articles, we did not select a sample but used all articles found.

Circulation numbers:³⁰

▶ Black Enterprise	500,000
▶ Crisis	215,000
▶ Ebony	2,241,000
▶ Essence	1,082,000
▶ Jet	930,000

African-American online news media

This search used a one-year time frame, from December 31, 2009 to December 31, 2010. We searched each website using the same terms as in our previous searches. The search yielded a total of 38 articles, all of which were included in the final sample.

- ▶ Black Voices
- ▶ The Griot
- ▶ The Root

30 “African-American/Black Market Profile,” Magazine Publishers of America (MPA), May 2008, http://www.magazine.org/advertising/categories/African_American_Black_Profile.aspx

African-American Community Newspapers Analysis

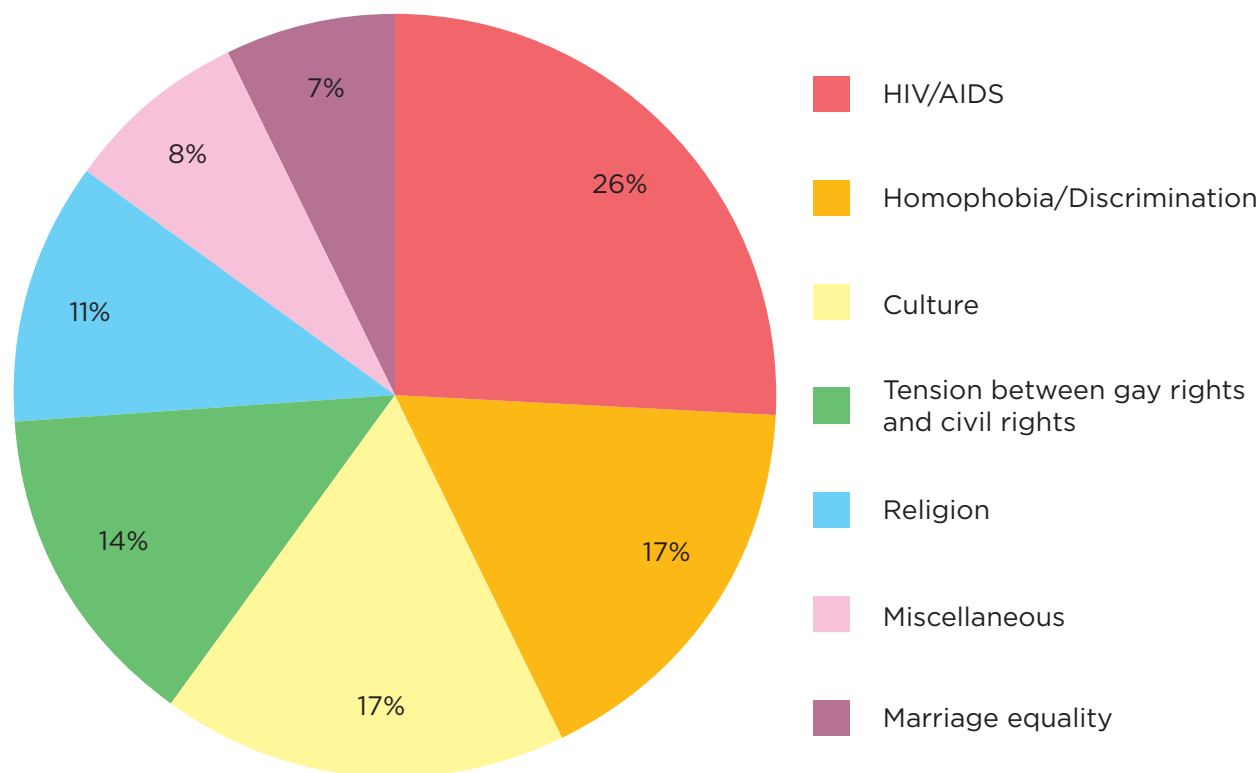
Overview

African-American newspapers are published on a weekly, biweekly, or monthly basis in urban areas throughout the U.S. Although their readership has diminished since their peak years in the 1940s, they still play an important role in informing and expressing African-American viewpoints on the pressing issues of the day. The National Newspaper Publishers Association, composed of 200 African-American newspapers, claims a combined readership of 15 million.³¹ These newspapers are important venues for commentary by African Americans in politics and public affairs, in the arts and popular culture, and from the faith community. They cover issues that the mainstream dailies ignore or fail to see. As one of our advocate interviewees explained, “There is still a way in which even those traditional African-American newspapers in different cities still reach a good number of folks who may turn to CNN or watch other outlets, but really rely on those indigenous papers to talk about issues that are important to the community.”

Storylines

Coverage of LGBT people, issues, and themes in African-American community newspapers generally falls into six broad categories, with stories about HIV/AIDS receiving the most attention. Also receiving significant attention, reflecting the intense concern of the African-American community with inequality in all its manifestations, are stories about homophobia and discrimination, both in general and regarding specific cases. Stories grouped under the heading of “Culture” are also relatively numerous and reflect the presence of LGBT characters and performers in African-American entertainment today. We also found a smaller group of articles that reveal the tension some African-American leaders see between the struggles for gay rights and civil rights and the struggle within the African-American church over whether homosexuality is “acceptable” or not. Relatively little attention is paid to marriage equality despite the issue’s prominence in mainstream news coverage over the past several years. Commentary in the form of columns and op-eds represents more than one-third of the articles. No editorials were picked up by our scan.

31 National Newspaper Publishers Association, Overview of the Past 182 Years of the Black Press; http://www.nnpa.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=15&Itemid=44

FIGURE 1. STORYLINES IN AFRICAN-AMERICAN COMMUNITY NEWSPAPERS

Source: *Media Content Analysis: Coverage of LGBT Issues in African American Print and Online Media*, The Opportunity Agenda, October 2011. A total of 87 articles were analyzed; 37 were commentary and 63 percent were news.

HIV/AIDS

Articles and commentary relating to HIV/AIDS fall into two broad categories: AIDS awareness and the perception of the role of “down low men” (men who have sex with other men as well as women but do not identify as gay or bisexual) in causing the high rates of infection among African-American women. World AIDS Day (December 1), Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day (February 7), and Sexually Transmitted Disease Awareness Month (April) were all occasions for opinion pieces. These include op-eds by AIDS activist and educator Tony Wafford, Tennessee State Senator Reginald Tate, and Dr. Kevin Fenton, the director of the National Center for HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, STD, and TB Prevention. All three address the fact that African Americans are bearing the brunt of the epidemic. After acknowledging that “African American gay and bisexual men and African American women are particularly hard hit,” Dr. Fenton attributed some of the problem to “stigma and homophobia in African American communities” and called upon readers “to confront the realities of this disease in African-American communities.”³² After delivering a series of statistics showing that “HIV/AIDS is a health crisis in Black America,” Tony Wafford argued that “we must face the facts, it’s HIV-infected brothers (knowingly and unknowingly) having unprotected sex with other men and women spreading HIV/AIDS. ... Now, I know this is going to be hard for many of you to deal with but we have to address it. Blacks who have sex with other men, (homosexuals) under 30 are hardest hit. ... We have a problem, Black people!” He concluded with a call for openness and unity:

32 Kevin Fenton, “Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day: Hope Amidst Crisis,” *Atlanta Daily World*, February 5-11, 2009

Some say that homo-disdain and stigma has caused many Black homosexuals to identify themselves as heterosexual or not to disclose their sexual orientation at all. Black homosexuals are more likely than their homosexual comrades of other races not to identify themselves as such. Think I'm wrong? Okay let's look at it. There are some 45 million plus Black people living in America, right? Can you name three major, self-disclosed Black homosexuals? The Black equivalent to David Geffen, Elton John, Barney Frank? Do you mean to tell me that out of 45 million people, we don't have one prominent Black male homosexual? ...There's no major movement by Black heterosexuals to condemn Black homosexuals, not even in the Black church. Oh sure, we all have an opinion on homosexuality, but no one wants to see our people suffer and die from HIV/AIDS. So let's all pull together to educate, treat and care for our brothers and sisters suffering from HIV/AIDS. Let us not do it as Black gays, homosexuals, SGL [Same Gender Loving], transgenders, lesbians and bisexuals, but let's all work together to save our people and save our community. We are all oppressed because of our Blackness, so let's fight to save ourselves in the name of our Blackness and we can only do that being Black First!³³

Our scan includes three articles about the relationship between “down low” men and the high rate of HIV infection among African-American women. One features the publication of an “explosive book,” *The Straight-Up Truth About the Down-Low: Women Share Their Stories of Betrayal, Pain and Survival*. One of the book's authors is quoted:

The black community needs to wake up and address this elephant in the room. Our community leaders would rather turn their heads than admit that the secretive homosexual practices of many black men are endangering the lives of innocent black women and their children. We have to take control of our lives. We must demand HIV tests in our presence. We must demand monogamy. We must demand respect and accountability from our men. In addition, we as black women should learn all we can about HIV/AIDS and how it's transmitted and the lifestyle factors that put us at risk for this disease, especially our involvement with secretive down-low men...³⁴

Syndicated columnist George Curry published two articles reporting on the Centers for Disease Control's opinion that “down low black men” are *not* the cause of the high rate of infection among African-American women. Pointing out that AIDS is the leading cause of death among African-American women between the ages of 25 and 34, Curry wrote: “Although men on the Down Low have been blamed for the high infection rate among African-American women, the CDC said men on the DL are not the major culprits.” He quoted Dr. Kevin Fenton of the CDC: “Black women are far more likely to become infected by straight African-American men with multiple sex partners than Black men on the DL...”³⁵

Homophobia, bullying, and discrimination

We found a number of news articles in our sample that covered instances of homophobia and bullying, as well as commentary urging an end to all forms of intolerance. An op-ed by Marc Morial, president of the National Urban League, celebrating the passage of the Shepard-Byrd Hate Crimes Prevention Act, opened with a quote from Bayard Rustin, who Morial described as “one of the few openly gay African-American leaders of the civil rights movement of the 1960s.”³⁶

33 Tony R. Wafford, “December 1st is Black HIV Awareness Day for Me!” *LA Sentinel*, December 3-9, 2009

34 “To Love, Honor and Infect with HIV...”, *The Jacksonville Free Press*, March 12-18, 2009

35 George E. Curry, “Troubling HIV/AIDS Stats for Black Women,” *Atlanta Daily World*, October 8-14, 2009; “Official says ‘Down Low’ men not responsible for high HIV rates among Black women,” *New Pittsburgh Courier*, October 7-13, 2009

36 The quote reads: “When an individual is protesting society's refusal to acknowledge his dignity as a human being, his very act of protest confers dignity on him.”

There were attempts, both by advocates and opponents of the movement to marginalize Rustin's influence because of his sexual orientation. And through the years, some in our community have objected to including gay rights as a civil right. Fortunately, that divide is closing as more of us embrace Dr. King's wisdom: "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."³⁷

Morial cited FBI statistics showing that racially motivated hate crimes are all too common, and that "crimes based on sexual orientation or gender identity have steadily increased, with more than 12,000 reported over the last 10 years." He concluded his piece with the hope that "this new legislation provides new tools to help us confront hate crimes whenever and wherever they occur."³⁸

Three prominent syndicated columnists, George Curry, Ron Walters, and Clarence Page, wrote strong op-eds condemning Tea Party protesters who verbally attacked Democratic congressmen as they left the Capitol building during the debate over the health care reform bill in early 2010. All three columnists stated that not only were racial epithets thrown at African-American lawmakers including John Lewis (D-GA) and Emanuel Cleaver II (D-MO) — who was spat upon — but "Barney Frank, an openly gay Massachusetts Democrat and the chairman of the House Financial Services Committee, was taunted with an infamous F-word slur against homosexuals."³⁹

Several news articles focused on individual cases of homophobia, bullying, and discrimination. Two suicides were reported. One concerned an 11-year-old African-American boy from Massachusetts, Carl Walker-Hoover, who hung himself after being repeatedly called "gay" at school. In the article, his mother charged the New Leadership Charter School where Carl was a sixth-grader with failing to take measures to stop the bullying: "During previous meetings Walker said school administrators chalked the behavior of the children who tormented her son up to 'immaturity.' 'They cannot sit here and say they didn't know, because they knew,' Walker said... 'The bullying, the teasing, the hurtful words — it has to stop.'"⁴⁰

The other suicide was a 19-year-old African-American college student named Raymond Chase. Reporter Glenn Townes wrote:

A recent spate of suicides by young teens and college students has raised questions and yielded an uncomfortable awareness about an issue that, historically, African-Americans are often too reluctant to discuss, according to various mental health experts and published reports. Last week, Raymond Chase, an openly gay African-American college student at Johnson and Wales University in Rhode Island, hung himself in his dorm room...While the details of his suicide are still being investigated, officials and others strongly suspect that Chase was driven to end his life by bullying because of his sexual preference.⁴¹

This article included a link to the website of the Trevor Project, which describes itself as "a national organization that provides crisis intervention and suicide prevention efforts among lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) youth."

37 Marc H. Morial, "Shepard-Byrd Hate Crimes Prevention Act Increases Protection," *Washington Informer*, November 26-December 2, 2009

38 Ibid.

39 Clarence Page, "'Racism is dead,' says pundit; slurs prove it," *Philadelphia Tribune*, March 28, 2010; Ron Walter, "The Hate Spasm in American Politics," *Atlanta Daily World*, April 1-7, 2010; George E. Curry, "March Madness on Capitol Hill," *Tri-State Defender*, March 25-31, 2010

40 Sean Yoes, "Boy, 11, commits suicide after anti-gay taunts," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, April 22-28, 2009

41 Glenn Townes, "Rash of gay student suicides draws national attention," *Amsterdam News*, October 7-13, 2010

Our scan picked up three *LA Sentinel* pieces by Jasmyne A. Cannick, a lesbian journalist described in her byline as “a critic and commentator based in Los Angeles who writes about the worlds of pop culture, race, class, sexuality, and politics as it relates to the African-American community.” All three pieces concerned Mitrice Richardson, a 24-year-old African-American lesbian, teacher, and aspiring psychiatrist who disappeared after being released from police custody for a minor infraction. (Tragically, her body was found almost a year later in Malibu Canyon.) Although most of Cannick’s fire is aimed at law enforcement, in an op-ed entitled “Black People, It’s Time to Nut Up or Shut Up” she wrote:

On any other occasion, had the Los Angeles Police Department arrested and booked a young Black female and then let her go in the middle of the night without her purse, car, or cell phone, in the middle of nowhere never to be seen again — Black people would be screaming “off with their heads”... So then can someone please tell me why the Los Angeles Sheriff’s Department continues to get a pass for the mishandling and mistreatment of 24-year-old missing Mitrice Richardson? ... There’s been no outcry from the NAACP, SCLC, Urban League, or other community advocate organizations that we typically see and hear from in the media when an injustice has been committed against African-Americans. And I find myself asking why? ... I would hate to think that our collective silence has to do with the fact that Mitrice is a young Black female or that because she is a lesbian, her disappearance is somehow not important or related to Black people.⁴²

Culture

Two articles covered theatrical productions by students that dealt with LGBT issues. One was performed at Affirmations, a “safe space and community center for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people and their allies” in Ferndale, Michigan (near Detroit). Titled “LGBT youth celebrate Black History Month,” the article describes a play inspired by the poems of Langston Hughes and by the music of the Harlem Renaissance. The play’s director was quoted as saying, “The point of the production was to instill a sense of pride in being Black and gay at a time in America where the issues of sexuality and gender expression are being challenged, a voice of an entire movement is being muted.”⁴³

The other article covered the production of an award-winning original play by a Philadelphia public high school student performed at Temple University’s Tomlinson Theater. Titled *God Makes No Mistakes*, the play was about homophobia in a Nigerian family. Playwright Gina Dukes explained, “The play had to center on change — on how you could make someone see the world in a new way.”⁴⁴

There were a number of other articles in which LGBT themes or cultural figures were mentioned in passing, sometimes in stereotypical terms (e.g., “flamboyantly gay”). A few examples:

Daniel Beaty has done it again! He has successfully written and performs in a piece that directly addresses issues in the African-American community. His latest piece, *Through the Night*, looks at the many serious issues facing Black males today. Beaty sheds a piercingly powerful light on matters like food addiction, homosexuality, wanting to be the perfect son, successful Black men mentoring young Black boys...⁴⁵

Korona spoke about her struggles as a rising artist trying to be true to herself and still appeal to the mainstream. As an openly gay rapper, she also deals with combating homophobic

42 Jasmyne A. Cannick, “Black People, It’s Time to Nut Up or Shut Up,” *Sentinel*, November 12-18, 2009

43 Victor L. Walker, “LGBT Youth celebrate Black History Month,” *Michigan Citizen*, March 29-April 4, 2009

44 Samaria Bailey, “Students find their voice in drama showcase,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, November 16, 2010

45 (Linda Armstrong, “Beaty is brilliant in ‘Through the Night,’” *New York Amsterdam News*, May 13-19, 2010)

attitudes in the industry as well. Those issues were discussed in the film and many artists were reluctant to comment on the topic at all.⁴⁶

The community is populated with an abundance of colorful characters, including BK (Desmond Dube), the caring and flamboyantly gay hairstylist and JLB Matekoni, the kind auto mechanic, who is obviously smitten with Precious.⁴⁷

The “element of love may be the purpose for us being put on the earth in the first place,” she [Ruby Dee] said. She also said “love is love.” Dee believes gay rights should be fought for and stressed that her mantra includes the desire for civil rights for members of the LGBT community.”⁴⁸

Tension between gay rights and civil rights

In this category we have grouped a number of articles, most of them opinion pieces, that reflect either implicitly or explicitly the tension felt by some African-American leaders and commentators between African-American and LGBT rights and interests. In his commentary Bishop Council Nedd II, a leader in Project 21 (The National Leadership Network of Black Conservatives), criticizes pro-LGBT opponents of Proposition 8⁴⁹ for violating “the will of the people.” Noting that seven in ten African Americans voted for Proposition 8,⁵⁰ Nedd writes, “Opponents were furious...In a state where residents pride themselves on inclusiveness, tolerance and enlightenment, proponents of gay marriage decided the will of the people must be overruled.”⁵¹ Writer and filmmaker Darryl James, a critic of “the effeminization of the Black man,” quoted poet and essayist Ishmael Reed:

The groups...women and gays have placed their oppression front and center and have even made villains of the former Black male machos who fantasized a revolution (while borrowing their strategies). These groups could even be accused of trivializing the oppression of the white and Black underclass, because once you propose that all women, including Queen Elizabeth, or all gays...are oppressed, then everybody is oppressed, even white males with Ph.D.s, whom the media would have us believe are being set upon by a politically correct multiculturalism.⁵²

Louis “Hop” Kendrick, a civil rights activist and weekly contributor to the *New Pittsburgh Courier’s* forum page, urged readers to:

Ask yourself if you remember at the outset of affirmative action that it was defined as Blacks, women, and the physically handicapped. The term affirmative action, for all intents and purposes, does not exist anymore. It has been replaced with “diversity” and diversity is now defined from the White House on down as women, girls, lesbians, gays, Hispanics and green — is more important than Black. Yes green — wild life — including whales, grey wolves, fish, polar bears and other wildlife species, have diverted attention from the plight of Black America and too many of us have allowed ourselves to be distracted as we focus on diversity.⁵³

46 Jazmine Steele, “Detroit talks misogyny in hip hop,” *Michigan Citizen*, December 6-12, 2009

47 Kimberly C. Roberts, “Scott lights up the screen in light-hearted HBO drama,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, March 27, 1009

48 Victor L. Walker, “Dee in Detroit,” *Michigan Citizen*, April 5-11, 2009

49 Also known as “Prop 8,” this state referendum passed by voters in 2008 banned marriage for same-sex couples

50 That statistic is based on a National Election Pool (NEP) survey that has been found to be an “outlier” since other polls taken before and after Election Day found much smaller differences in support for Proposition 8 between African Americans and voters as a whole than did the NEP exit poll. Researchers believe the NEP poll may have overstated African American support for Prop. 8 by as much as ten points (Patrick J. Egan & Kenneth Sherill, “California’s Proposition 8: What Happened, and What Does the Future Hold?” National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute, January 2009).

51 “‘Enlightened intolerance’ is an enemy of democracy,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, July 7, 2009

52 “Know Balance, Know Peace,” *LA Sentinel*, November 5-9, 2009

53 “Diversity can equal disastrous distractions,” *New Pittsburgh Courier*, April 1-7, 2009

Our scan produced three opinion pieces and one news article about the African-American community's disappointment with the president for not doing more for African Americans, especially with respect to the high unemployment rate, and in each instance, the lack of concern for African Americans was compared with the "rewards" given to other groups, including gay men and lesbians. Earl Ofari Hutchinson's op-ed, "Something special for everyone from Obama, but not for Blacks," opens with "President Obama's repeat lecture to Black critics that Blacks shouldn't expect anything special from him is disingenuous at best, and an insult at worst." He continued:

Labor, environmentalists and gay groups were rewarded with a guarantee to fight for Employee Free Choice Act, to do away with private ballot union elections in the workplace, reduction of greenhouse emissions, and ramped up green investment spending, the scrapping of don't ask don't tell, passage of the expansion of the hate crimes law and support of gay marriage.⁵⁴

Ron Walters alluded to the meeting President Obama held with Ben Jealous, Al Sharpton, and Marc Morial to discuss their ideas around the need for economic relief targeting African Americans and echoed Hutchinson's sentiments:

The consensus was that President Obama "got it" but that he was also focused on passing a jobs bill he thought would address some of the issues...[Sharpton] admitted that the President "was not going to engage in any race-based programs" but felt that some of the "structural inequalities" could be corrected. This reminded me of his comment to April Ryan, White House Reporter for the American Urban Network that, by law, he couldn't pass laws "that say I'm just helping black folks." I don't believe that is true, or he couldn't pass laws for Gays or Native Americans, or write Executive Orders for Asians and Pacific Islanders.⁵⁵

In her op-ed, Julianne Malveaux, the president of Bennett College for Women in Greensboro, North Carolina, urged African-American leaders to "not take Obama for granted" and to:

...develop a relationship with Obama that provides him with regular input about African-American issues, just as he is gaining information about labor issues, women's issues, gay and lesbian issues, Latino issues and other issues. All of these groups, I believe, have had meetings with our president. Why not African Americans?⁵⁶

In a report about the "We Count! The Black Agenda is the American Agenda" forum hosted by Tavis Smiley at Chicago State University, panelist Michael Eric Dyson was quoted:

My point is you [Obama] are the president of "everybody" which includes me. I ain't got to be white to be part of America. Latinos asking him for something and they got something. Gays and lesbians said "don't ask, don't tell," change it. Jewish brothers and sisters said deal with Israel, deal with it. All of those are specific entities, why is it when it comes to Negroes we are persona non grata?⁵⁷

Religion

The articles about homosexuality and the African-American church convey a sense of the struggle within the African-American faith community over LGBT rights. For example, the headline of a piece from the *Washington Informer* reads: "Clergy Outraged Over Council Vote" (the vote was a 12-1 vote to recognize marriages of same-sex couples performed in other jurisdictions). Because the article quotes

54 Earl Ofari Hutchinson, "Something special for everyone from Obama, but not for Blacks," *Chicago Defender*, December 30, 2009 -January 5, 2010

55 Ron Walters, "Black Leaders in the White House: What Happened, What Next?" *Washington Informer*, February 18-24, 2010

56 Julianne Malveaux, "Meaning of the White House jobs meeting," *Philadelphia Tribune*, February 19, 2010

57 Richard B. Muhammad, "Farrakhan defends Obama at meeting," *Philadelphia Tribune*, April 11, 2010

only the bill's detractors, it gives the impression that D.C.-area African-American clergy are completely united on the issue. The main spokesperson is Rev. Henry A. Gaston, President of the Missionary Baptist Ministers Conference of the District of Columbia, who said, "They [Council members] were talking human rights, we are talking church rights. They see it as a rights issue; we see it as a moral issue."⁵⁸ An opposing example is an article entitled "Church urged to tolerate homosexuality," which reported on the twenty-fifth anniversary celebration of the Calvary United Methodist Church in Philadelphia. Unlike the *Washington Informer* article, this one featured quotes from a pro-LGBT rights member of the clergy, Rev. Gilbert H. Caldwell, who, it is noted, participated with the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. in the Mississippi Freedom Summer in 1964. Rev. Caldwell discusses "racism and heterosexism in the Black community and church":

Often Blacks are angered because some homosexuals compare their struggle for equality to that of African Americans in the 1950s and 1960s. "Even though there are differences — and of course it's important for those of us who are African American to not back away from the uniqueness of our racial history with all of the its negatives as well as its plusses — but I think it's a concern for many Black people that other people are trying to ride our coattails," Caldwell said. "But after saying all of that, bigotry, hatred, bias and prejudice are the same and I think we need to focus on the similarities of prejudice rather than the differences in our respective struggles....The fact of the matter is that the same things, how we're using the Bible to down homosexuals, the Bible was used against Black folks."⁵⁹

Two news articles covered the struggle within the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) over Rev. Eric Lee's outspoken opposition to Proposition 8 in California banning marriage for same-sex couples. (Lee was the president of the Los Angeles SCLC who was threatened with removal by national headquarters):

Lee contends that he is upholding a Dr. King decree that states, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." "As African Americans we cannot just afford to speak out on issues that only pertain to Blacks...any time you deny one group of people the same right that other groups have, that is a clear violation of civil rights and I have to speak up on that."⁶⁰

Marriage equality

We found two opinion pieces about marriage for same-sex couples in our scan and both of them were generally positive, although neither of them presented a ringing endorsement of marriage equality. An op-ed by Clarence Page, a syndicated columnist for the *Chicago Tribune*, focused on the "strange bedfellows" of conservative attorney Ted Olson and liberal attorney David Boies, who had faced off against each other in the contested 2000 presidential election when Olsen represented George W. Bush and Boies represented Al Gore, but who later worked together to defeat California's Proposition 8 banning marriage for gay and lesbian couples. Page quotes Chad Griffin of the American Foundation for Equal Rights, who argues that this should not be a partisan issue: "Civil rights should never be decided by a popularity contest," Griffin says. Page then observed:

Indeed, one can easily imagine how quickly the right of Blacks and whites to marry one another would have been voted down back in 1967. That's when the Supreme Court's *Loving v. Virginia* case struck down state anti-miscegenation laws. Opinion polls at the time showed interracial marriage was supported by a pitifully small percentage of voters. But the Supreme Court's action helped pave the way for attitudes to change.⁶¹

58 Ed Laiscell, "Clergy Outraged Over Council Vote," *Washington Informer*, May 7-13, 2009

59 Stephanie Guerilus, "Church urged to tolerate homosexuality," *Philadelphia Tribune*, May 28, 2010

60 Kenneth Miller, "Rev. Eric Lee's Book Solidifies Stance Against Prop. 8," *LA Sentinel*, July 16, 2009

61 Clarence Page, "Marriage and politics in bed together again," *Philadelphia Tribune*, June 30, 2009

He concluded, “After decades of rising cohabitation, divorce and out-of-wedlock births devaluing marriage, we should be delighted that gays and lesbians are trying so hard to prop it up.”⁶²

The second commentary was authored by blogger and regular *L.A. Sentinel* columnist Eric L. Wattree. In it, he criticized certain “progressives” for condemning the California contestant in the Miss America pageant for expressing her opposition to marriage for same-sex couples: “While I am in total disagreement with her views on same-sex marriage, those are her views, and she has every right to them.”⁶³

Two of the news articles were about the District of Columbia’s marriage equality bill, one published shortly before the vote and one after the bill passed. Both articles quoted supporters and detractors:

Supporters:

June Crenshaw, 48, a Maryland resident who owns property in the District, said various opinions are to be expected but the one constant for Blacks is the need for equality. “Many people believe that this is a White gay issue but for people of color, equality is an issue. I think everyone has their own individual priorities, but equality is equality.”⁶⁴

DC Council member Harry Thomas (D-Ward 5) said that many of his constituents were against gay marriage but he came to a different conclusion than [Marion] Barry and [Yvette] Alexander. Thomas invoked his father, the late Council member Harry Thomas Sr., whose seat he holds, in stating why he is voting for the bill. “I grew up in a household where we believed that people have a right to equal treatment and access.”⁶⁵

Nick McCoy, field organizer for the Human Rights Campaign, the country’s largest advocacy organization for LGBT people, said that his group is working Capitol Hill also. “We are working with a coalition on this issue in which the messaging is strong.” McCoy, 34, who lives in the Northeast, said that his organization plans to send a message to Congress. “We are saying to members of Congress that this is something that District residents want and we have mounted an educational campaign for members of Congress on this.”⁶⁶



Nick McCoy (second from left) and other advocates applaud the Washington, D.C., City Council’s decision to approve marriage for same-sex couples on Tuesday, December 15, 2009.⁶⁷

62 Ibid.

63 Eric L. Wattree, “Are Progressives Becoming Just as Intolerant as Conservatives?” *LA Sentinel*, May 14-20, 2009

64 James Wright, “District Closer to Same-Sex Marriages,” *Washington Informer*, November 12-18, 2009

65 James Wright, “D.C. Council Passes Gay Marriage Bill,” *Washington Informer*, December 17-23, 2009

66 Ibid.

67 Photo by Khalid Naji-Allah for the *Washington Informer*

Detractors:

The Rev. Walter Fauntroy, the District's first delegate to the U.S. Congress and a former aide to Martin Luther King, Jr., said that the issue is more than just equality. "Marriage is an institution and you need both sexes for that. The only way you can perpetuate the species is to have both sexes with the other," he said. "Two people of the same sex cannot reproduce," Fauntroy said.⁶⁸

Bishop Harry Jackson of the Hope Christian Church said, "What the DC Council has done is illegal and unconstitutional. What this bill does is not redefine marriage but destroys it."⁶⁹

The *Bay State Banner* published an upbeat story on May 21, 2009 about "hundreds of gay and lesbian couples across Massachusetts...celebrating their fifth wedding anniversaries this week."⁷⁰ Cambridge Mayor E. Denise Simmons, described as the first openly lesbian African-American mayor, said that she was planning to marry her partner soon and made the following observation:

Over the last five years, the mayor said, she has noticed that some in the black community have come around to accepting gay marriage, possibly because they realize married gay couples are no different from married straight couples. "Marriage is a marriage is a marriage," Simmons said. "Once we start to think that way, some of those barriers that keep us from thinking inclusively will erode."



Cambridge Mayor E. Denise Simmons hosted a celebration at City Hall in May 2009 celebrating the fifth anniversary of Cambridge becoming the first city in the nation to issue marriage certificates to same-sex couples.⁷¹ Photo by Talia Whyte for the *Bay State Banner*.

Also quoted in that story was Regina Jones-Jenkins, who married her partner after "a 30-year courtship."

They share a home in Quincy, where they have a very active family life with three children and four grandchildren. They say that people who at first feel uncomfortable about their relationship quickly change their minds once they realize that they are just like any other family... "We live just like everyone else," Jones-Jenkins said. "We only ask that you respect us, just like you would want us to respect your relationship."⁷²

68 James Wright, "District Closer to Same-Sex Marriages," *Washington Informer*, November 12-18, 2009

69 James Wright, "D.C. Council Passes Gay Marriage Bill," *Washington Informer*, December 17-23, 2009

70 Talia Whyte, "Black gay couples in Mass. Mark marriage anniversary," *Bay State Banner*, May 21, 2009

71 Ibid.

72 Ibid.



Regina Jones-Jenkins (left) and Beverly Jenkins got married in 2008 after a 30-year courtship. They share a home in Quincy, where they have a very active family life with three children and four grandchildren. Like hundreds of other gay and lesbian couples across Massachusetts, in May 2009 they celebrated the fifth anniversary of the Commonwealth’s decision to legalize same-sex marriage.⁷³ Photo by Talia Whyte for the *Bay State Banner*.

Miscellaneous storylines

Two articles that defy categorization bear mentioning. One was an upbeat, 1,400-word feature story about a bakery opened by a gay, interracial couple in South Boston, once a bastion of segregation.

We didn’t think, “Oh my God, we can’t open a bakery with pink walls and we’re gay and interracial, in Southie — it can’t happen,” Quirion said. “We just opened our bakery and listened to the people...Consequently, we’re accepted wholeheartedly by ‘Old Southie’ and ‘New Southie’ — families that just moved here and families that have been here for generations and generations.”⁷⁴



David Venter (left) and Glenn Quirion are partners in every sense of the word. The co-owners of the unique bakery Sweet Tooth Boston are experiencing success in South Boston, which at one time may have been an unthinkable location for a business run by a gay, interracial couple. On the contrary, Quirion says, they’ve been “accepted wholeheartedly by ‘Old Southie’ and ‘New Southie.’” Photo by Victoria Leenders-Cheng for the *Boston Banner*.

73 Ibid.

74 Victoria Leenders-Cheng, “Bakery finds Sweet spot in ‘New Southie,’” *Boston Banner*, April 16, 2009

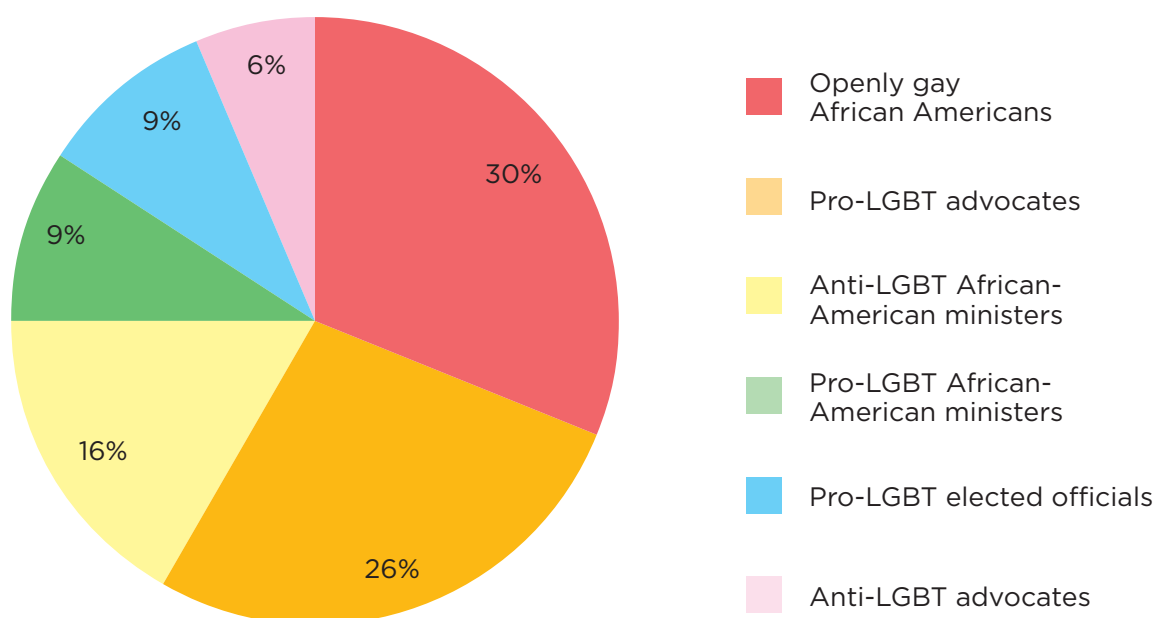
In October 2009 the *Philadelphia Tribune* ran a story entitled “Gay Black Activists Pleased with Actions of President.” The article covered a fundraising dinner for the Human Rights Campaign at which the president spoke and promised to end “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.”⁷⁵ The article includes a quote from Obama’s speech: “We should not be punishing patriotic Americans who have stepped forward to serve the country. We should be celebrating their willingness to step forward and show such courage — especially when we are fighting two wars.” Also quoted were Lee Carson, president of the local Black Gay Men’s Leadership Council, and Earl Fowlkes, president of the International Federation of Black Gay Prides, both of whom expressed their support for the pace of the administration’s actions to safeguard LGBT rights.⁷⁶

Spokespeople

The voices elevated in the news media as sources and commentators play a crucial role in framing and positioning the way a story is told. Who gets quoted in news reports as well as what they say strongly influence the reader’s perception of an issue. Choice of spokespersons provides insights into the angles journalists choose to champion. Additionally, the opinion pieces a newspaper chooses to publish help establish an individual commentator as an opinion leader and may reflect that paper’s editorial stance, inclination, and willingness to take on controversial issues. Our analysis of spokespersons looks at the types of speakers who were most frequently quoted in news stories and the dominant views reflected in the many opinion pieces in our sample. As far as the quotes are concerned, we measured the number of articles in which a spokesperson was quoted irrespective of how many times that individual was quoted in each article.

Overall, pro-LGBT voices outnumbered anti-LGBT voices in our sample of news articles. Openly gay African Americans, pro-LGBT advocates, pro-LGBT ministers, and pro-LGBT elected officials were quoted 77 percent of the time; anti-LGBT ministers and advocates were quoted 23 percent of the time.

FIGURE 2. SPOKESPEOPLE QUOTED MOST FREQUENTLY IN AFRICAN-AMERICAN NEWSPAPERS



Source: *Media Content Analysis: Coverage of LGBT Issues in African American Print and Online Media*, The Opportunity Agenda, October 2011.

⁷⁵ The recently repealed 17-year-old law that banned openly gay men, lesbians, and bisexuals from military service
⁷⁶ Eric Mayes, “Gay Black activists pleased with actions of president,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, October 13, 2009

The quotes below are a selected sample and are intended to give an impressionistic sense of how various voices are represented on the pages of African-American newspapers.

The voices of openly gay African Americans

“Marriage is a marriage is a marriage,” [Cambridge Mayor E. Denise] Simmons said. “Once we start to think that way some of those barriers that keep us from thinking inclusively will erode.”⁷⁷

“There are gay people in the black community, but the community pretends we don’t exist,” he [Kennedi E. Reeves, Cambridge city councilor] said. “We have to have a new conversation about this. You can’t have separate but equal rules for people.”⁷⁸

Curtis Lipscomb, who said he lost a job because he acknowledged being gay, declared: “All life is precious, including gay and lesbian life. Discrimination is discrimination, is discrimination. Against gays, it’s wrong. Against Blacks, it’s wrong. Against anyone, it’s wrong. The African-American gay community is part of the greater African-American community.”⁷⁹

“The boys began to reject me because I was the faggot,” [Ron] Simons recalled. “For a Black man, that was about the worst thing you could be called. They’re not going to call you the N-word because there are other Ns. Once they call you a faggot, you’re no longer a man.”⁸⁰ [Phill] Wilson said gay men have few places to turn when ostracized. “For Black gay men and lesbian people, we need our community to protect us against the bias of racism. Where do I go when I’m called a nigger? I go to my church. I go to my mama and my papa. But where do I go when I’m called a faggot? I don’t have anywhere else to go. And particularly if the people who are calling me a faggot are my mama, my papa and my church.”⁸¹

“If a boy wants to go to class ‘whipped’ [under the control of one’s partner to the point of distraction] and go to class with a dress on, so long as he is getting the grades, there should be no problem. At a collegiate level, exploration of identity, including sexuality, is a rite of passage,” [Nathaniel] Davis said. “Your representation should be your grades, how you are doing as you matriculate, but I think it is ingrained in Black culture for us to be homophobic. Listen to our music, our messages and it is very clear: stay in the closet.”⁸²

“The point of the production was to instill a sense of pride in being Black and gay at a time in America where the issues of sexuality and gender expression is being challenged, a voice of the entire movement is being muted,” said the director.⁸³

The voices of pro-LGBT advocates

“We are saying to members of Congress that this [passage of same-sex marriage bill] is something that District residents want and we have mounted an educational campaign for members of Congress on this,” said Nick McCoy, field organizer for the Human Rights Campaign, the country’s largest advocacy organization for LGBT people.⁸⁴

77 Talia Whyte, “Black gay couples in Mass. mark marriage,” *Bay State Banner*, May 21, 2009

78 Ibid.

79 George E. Curry, “Is Gay the New Black?” *Washington Informer*, May 13-19, 2010

80 George E. Curry, “HIV Infections Increasing Only Among Gay Men,” *Washington Informer*, October 15-21 2009

81 Ibid.

82 Shantella Y. Sherman, “Morehouse Model Creates Stir, Debate,” *Washington Informer*, November 12-18, 2009

83 Victor L. Walker, “LGBT youth celebrate Black History Month,” *Michigan Citizen*, March 29-April 4, 2009

84 James Wright, “D.C. Council Passes Gay Marriage Bill,” *Washington Informer*, December 17-23, 2009

“It is a human rights and civil rights issue,” Jeffrey Richardson (president of the Gertrude Stein Democratic Club) said.⁸⁵

“There are elements of both movements [ending “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” and the civil rights movement] that are similar,” said Lee Carson, president of the Black Gay Men’s Leadership Council, a gay advocacy group based in Philadelphia. “One such element being the discrimination and oppression imposed by the dominant culture. The major divergence for me is that for the most part if one wanted to — as is the case for many gays and lesbians can choose to hide their sexual orientation, whereas most people cannot hide their race. The violence and downright blatant discrimination perpetrated on Blacks was much more pervasive and institutionalized than what we see for gays and lesbians today.”⁸⁶

The voices of pro-LGBT African-American ministers

“As African Americans we cannot just afford to speak out on issues that only pertain to Blacks,” [Rev. Eric] Lee [President of the Los Angeles SCLC] explained. “Any time you deny one group of people the same right that other groups have, that is a clear violation of civil rights and I have to speak up on that.”⁸⁷

“Even though there are differences — and of course it’s important for those of us who are African American to not back away from the uniqueness of our racial history — but I think it’s a concern for many Black people that other people are trying to ride our coattails,” [Rev. Gilbert H.] Caldwell said. “But after saying all of that, bigotry, hatred, bias and prejudice are the same and I think we need to focus on the similarities of prejudice rather than the differences in our respective struggles.”⁸⁸

“There’s nothing in the scriptures about consensual same sexual relationships.” [Rev. Christopher D.] McNeil [senior pastor of the reconciling congregation in Miami Beach] agrees that homophobia is unhealthy. “I believe it’s harmful to the person to hold on to that type of negative energy.”⁸⁹

The voices of pro-LGBT elected officials

“The Council is prepared to stand up for the human rights of all DC residents no matter their sexual orientation,” said [then Council Chairman, now Mayor Vincent] Gray.⁹⁰

“This action will usher in an era of true equality for the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community,” said [David] Catania, who is one of two openly gay members on the DC Council. “We are not asking for special rights, just equal rights.”⁹¹

“DC Council member Harry Thomas (D-Ward 5) said that many of his constituents were against gay marriage but he came to a different conclusion. ‘I grew up in a household where we believed that people have a right to equal treatment and access,’ he said.”⁹²

The voices of anti-LGBT African-American ministers

“They were talking about human rights, we are talking church rights,” said Rev. [Henry A.] Gaston [President of the Missionary Baptist Ministers Conference of the District of Columbia]. “They see it as

85 James Wright, “District Closer to Same-Sex Marriages,” *Washington Informer*, November 12-18, 2009
 86 Eric Mayes, “Gay Black activists pleased with actions of president,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, October 13, 2009
 87 Kenneth Miller, “Rev. Eric Lee’s Book Solidifies Stance Against Prop. 8,” *LA Sentinel*, July 16, 2009
 88 Stephanie Guerilus, “Church urged to tolerate homosexuality,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, May 28, 2010
 89 Kaila Heard, “Openly accept gay and lesbian members,” *Miami Times*, November 17-23, 2010
 90 Ed Laiscell, “Clergy Outraged Over Council Vote,” *Washington Informer*, May 7-13, 2009
 91 James Wright, “D.C. Council Passes Gay Marriage Bill,” *Washington Informer*, November 17-December 23, 2009
 92 Ibid.

a rights issue; we see it as a moral issue.”⁹³ “Let the people decide if there should be same sex-marriage. In 30 states where referendums were held, the people voted against same-sex marriage. We think it is fair to allow the people to decide,” said Rev. [George] Gilbert [Chairman of the Civil/Social Action Committee for the Missionary Baptist Ministers Conference of the District of Columbia].⁹⁴

“What the DC Council has done is illegal and unconstitutional. What this bill does is not redefine marriage but destroys it,” said Bishop Harry Jackson of the Hope Christian Church in Beltsville, Md.⁹⁵

“Marriage is an institution and you need both sexes for that,” said Rev. Walter Fauntroy, a former aide to Martin Luther King, Jr. “The only way you can perpetuate the species is to have both sexes with each other.”⁹⁶

The voices of anti-LGBT advocates

“The gay agenda does not and cannot supersede the agenda for Black people as a whole, as far as human rights, and as for economic empowerment,” argued Malik Shabazz, Detroit leader of the New Black Panther Party for Self-Defense. “I believe we’re being socially engineered and manipulated into a lifestyle that’s in many ways hurting our community.”⁹⁷

“We are a society that’s structured as males and females,” said Anthony Samad, a Los Angeles-based scholar, social activist, and columnist. “If you want to advocate for a third gender, that should be the fight. Until that is, in fact, what you’re asking for, what you’re asking African-Americans to do is to go against their belief system, which is the church. Most of them believe a marriage should be between a man and a woman. You’re asking them to choose between your cause and their church.”⁹⁸

Commentators’ voices

More than one-third of the articles in our scan of African-American newspapers were commentaries, op-eds, and columns (no editorials were found). Some issues generated a great deal of commentary. For example, in the set of articles focusing on homophobia and discrimination, eight out of fourteen articles — more than half — were opinion pieces. One-third of the articles about HIV/AIDS (eight out of twenty-three) were commentary. Commentators represented a spectrum of African-American leaders and thinkers, including academics, public health officials, civil rights advocates, and bloggers. Among the most frequent contributors were:

Jasmyne Cannick ⁹⁹	6 op-eds (<i>The Sentinel</i>)
The late Ron Walters ¹⁰⁰	3 op-eds (<i>Atlanta Daily World</i> , <i>Washington Informer</i>)
Tony Wafford ¹⁰¹	3 op-eds (<i>The Sentinel</i>)

Other contributors included Kevin Fenton (Director, National Center for HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, STD and TB Prevention); Phill Wilson (CEO of Black AIDS Institute); George Curry (former president of the National Newspaper Publishers Assn.); Bishop Nedd Council (Project 21); Marc Morial (CEO

93 Ed Laiscell, “Clergy Outraged Over Council Vote,” *Washington Informer*, May 7-13, 2009

94 Ibid.

95 James Wright, “D.C. Council Passes Gay Marriage Bill,” *Washington Informer*, December 17-23, 2009

96 James Wright, “District Closer to Same-Sex Marriages,” *Washington Informer*, November 12-18, 2009

97 George E. Curry, “Is Gay the New Black?” *Washington Informer*, May 13-19, 2010

98 Ibid.

99 Self-described as “a critic and commentator based in Los Angeles who writes about the worlds of pop culture, race, class, sexuality, and politics as it relates to the African-American community

100 “Distinguished Leadership Scholar, Director of the African American Leadership Center and Professor of Government and Politics at the University of Maryland College Park”

101 AIDS activist, founder of “I Choose Life” — A Campaign Built to Move African Americans into Health Care

of the National Urban League); Clarence Page (syndicated columnist); and Earl Ofari Hutchinson (author, political analyst).

Very few of the commentaries in our scan were explicitly anti-LGBT. Some expressed personal ambivalence about homosexuality or complained that LGBT issues were receiving more attention from the Obama administration than African-American issues, but the majority of pieces were positive in the sense that they urged honest discussion about homosexuality, positioned LGBT rights as worthy of support, or criticized white conservative activists for being homophobic as well as racist.

Several commentators acknowledged and condemned the stigma experienced by African-American LGBT people in the African-American community. Dr. Kevin Fenton urged readers “to confront the realities of this disease [HIV/AIDS] in African-American communities...Stark realities of some African Americans’ lives — including poverty and limited access to health care — increase the likelihood of HIV infection. Stigma and homophobia also contribute to keeping HIV alive in Black communities.”¹⁰² Reggie Fullwood, who won a seat in the Florida state legislature several months after his commentary was published, expressed his own ambivalence about homosexuality:

...until we start to move past the stigmas and negative connotation associated with being gay then policies like Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell will continue to be needed. I am honestly torn over this issue, and here’s why. From a religious perspective, I think that homosexuality is wrong...If you are familiar with this column you know that I try my best to “keep it real.” The reality here is that there are hundreds if not thousands of homosexual males and females already in the military...The Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell policy allows all of us to continue being cowards and not dealing with reality.¹⁰³

Homophobia and hate crimes were the subject of a number of commentaries. As noted above, an unambiguously pro-LGBT rights piece was submitted by Marc Morial, President of the National Urban League, on the occasion of the signing of the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act.¹⁰⁴ Ron Walters, Clarence Page, and George Curry each condemned homophobic slurs flung at Rep. Barney Frank by Tea Party protesters during the health care debate on Capitol Hill.

102 Kevin Fenton, “Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day: Hope Amidst Crisis,” *Atlanta Daily World*, February 5-11, 2010

103 Reggie Fullwood, “Don’t Ask Don’t Tell Needs to be Addressed — But Not Now,” *The Jacksonville Free Press*, February 18-24, 2010

104 Marc H. Morial, “Shepard-Byrd Hate Crimes Prevention Act Increases Protection,” *Washington Informer*, November 26-December 2, 2009

African-American Magazines Analysis

Overview

Eighty-six percent of African Americans read magazines, consuming an average of eleven issues per month (compared to eight issues per month for the total U.S. population), and African-American magazines are among their top choices.¹⁰⁵ The five magazines included in our scan — *Black Enterprise*, *The Crisis*, *Ebony*, *Jet*, and *Essence*—are major sources of news and commentary for African Americans and have a combined paid circulation of five million readers. Every magazine except for *Jet* has an online presence.

Circulation numbers:¹⁰⁶

<i>Black Enterprise</i>	500,000
<i>Crisis</i>	215,000
<i>Ebony</i>	2,241,000
<i>Essence</i>	1,082,000
<i>Jet</i>	930,000

Overall, coverage of LGBT issues in the print versions of these magazines was limited. *Black Enterprise* published the only in-depth piece found, a 1,506-word article about discrimination against African-American LGBT professionals in corporate America. Most of the other print articles were less than 250 words (for example, a 176-word announcement in *Jet* that Janet Jackson had received GLAAD’s Vanguard Award, or a 73-word “talking point” in *Black Enterprise* about the FBI’s hate crime statistics).

The difference between the print and online versions was particularly noticeable in the case of *Essence*. Our Nexis search produced only one brief 143-word piece from *Essence Magazine*, but our search of *Essence.com* yielded 17 articles, some of them quite substantive and all of them LGBT-friendly. This suggests that the online version of *Essence* is targeting younger readers who are more supportive of LGBT equality, but the outlet is adopting a far more timid approach to older and less supportive readers who prefer to read the printed version.

Storylines

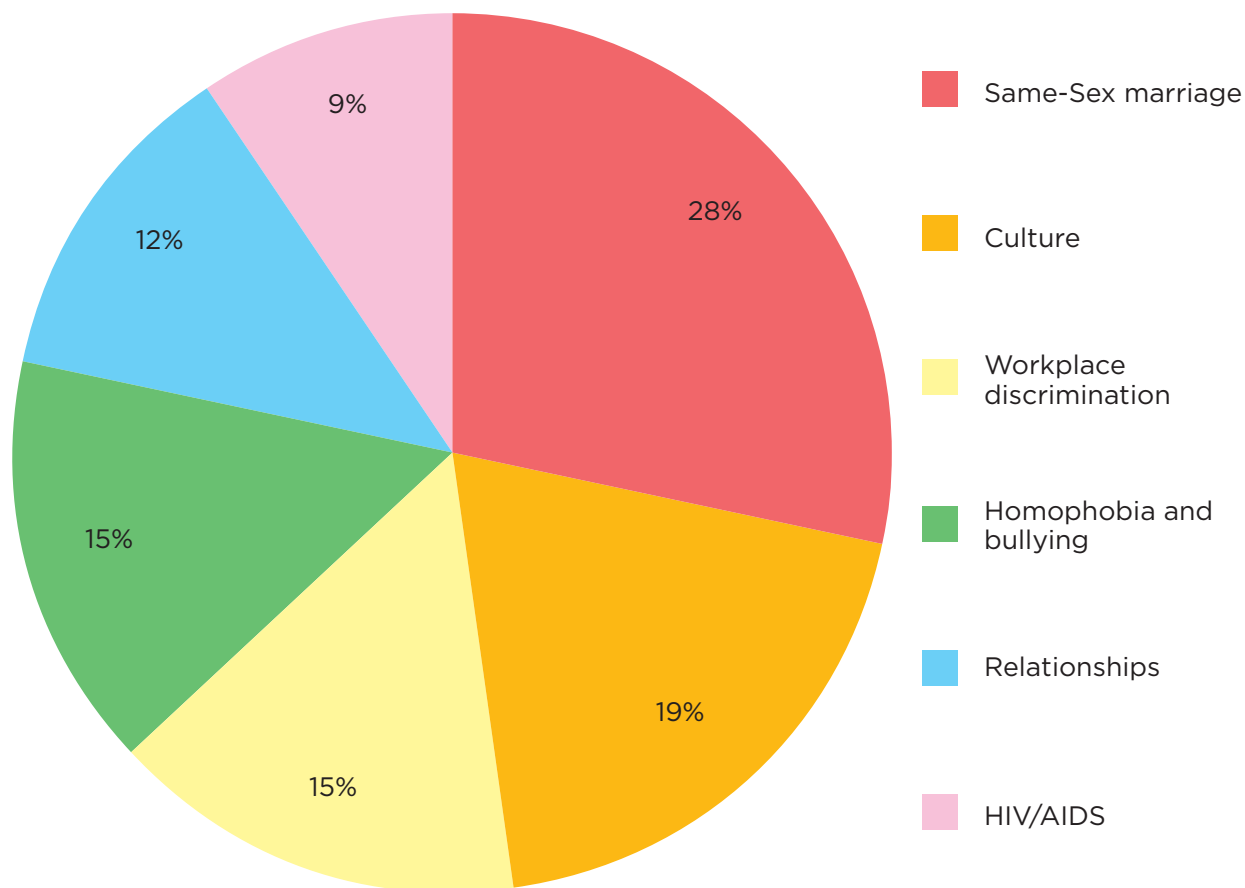
Coverage of LGBT people, issues, and themes in African-American magazines during this period fell into broad categories similar to those found in African-American community newspaper coverage but in inverse order of frequency. HIV/AIDS articles constituted 26 percent of the stories in newspapers but only 9 percent in magazines. Articles about marriage for same-sex couples were only 7 percent of stories in newspapers, but were 28 percent of the stories in magazines. Stories about culture,

105 “African-American/Black Market Profile,” Magazine Publishers of America (MPA), May 2008, http://www.magazine.org/advertising/categories/African_American_Black_Profile.aspx

106 Ibid.

discrimination, and homophobia occupied the middle ground in terms of numbers of articles in both media. The magazines during this time span did not deal with religion or the tension between gay rights and civil rights, but they did have articles about personal relationships.

FIGURE 3. STORYLINES IN AFRICAN-AMERICAN MAGAZINES



Source: *Media Content Analysis: Coverage of LGBT Issues in African American Print and Online Media*, The Opportunity Agenda, October 2011. Of the articles analyzed, 28 percent were commentary and 72 percent were news.

Marriage equality

Four of the nine articles covering marriage equality were Associated Press articles posted on *BlackEnterprise.com* and three of them covered the January 2010 trial challenging Proposition 8 in California. Under the headline “Prop 8 Trial Witness: Being Gay Not A Choice,” the testimony of a social psychologist was cited:

Lawyers for two same-sex couples suing to overturn the voter-enacted ban called University of California, Davis, researcher Gregory Herek as an expert witness to bolster their argument that sexual orientation cannot be easily changed. He says the leading mental health groups also take a dim view of therapies aimed at making people heterosexual. The point is central to their effort to show that gays deserve the same judicial protection as racial and ethnic minorities.¹⁰⁷

107 Posted January 22, 2010 on *Blackenterprise.com*

Another AP story described the “incendiary” testimony of a proponent of Prop. 8, who claimed that gay people are more likely to be pedophiles. The article focused on the cross-examination by one of the principal attorneys, David Boies, which revealed that the information upon which the witness based his opinion had no foundation in fact or science but was based on prejudice.¹⁰⁸

In March 2010, *Ebony* published a letter to the editor in which the writer commented on the inclusion of Apostle Frederick K.C. Price in the “EBONY Power 150” listing. Noting that Price was a leader of a coalition of African-American pastors in California who supported Prop. 8, the letter writer noted:

I’m a proud Black gay man who was born in 1965. In my lifetime, there was a time when marriages between Black people and White people were not recognized as legal unions. Interracial marriage was unlawful! There were countless proponents arguing why Blacks and Whites should not marry. Those same bigots and separatists are arguing against same-sex marriage. Interracial marriage has not had a negative impact on our society, nor will same-sex marriage.

In its Spring 2009 “Regional Update,” Sufiya Abdur-Rahman of *The Crisis* included a mention of the fact that the California State Conference of the NAACP “maintains its opposition to Prop. 8.” An early supporter of full marriage rights for gay couples, state conference president Alice Huffman said civil rights activists are no less righteous when they advocate gay rights. “When we find another group fighting for their rights, we should stand up for that group.”

Culture

Ebony published a feature about actress Loretta Devine who is described as “a gay rights activist ... To help tear down the walls of homophobia, she agreed to star in the independent movie *Dirty Laundry*... about a strong Georgia matriarch who discovers that her son is gay.” Devine was quoted as saying, “Yes, I think the story about homosexuality in the Black community is one that needed to be told today.”¹⁰⁹ In Its National Report section, *Jet* announced GLAAD’s decision to give its Vanguard Award to Janet Jackson for her work to increase the visibility and understanding of the LGBT community. Jackson is quoted: “Since its inception in 1985, GLAAD has taken the lead in making sure that people will no longer be judged by their gender identity or sexual orientation.”¹¹⁰ *Ebony Jet.com* carried a lengthy interview with the writer/director and the producer of the award-winning independent film, “Mississippi Damned,” which dealt with the theme of homophobia in the South. The interviewer observed, “The film deals with the difficulties of being gay in a Southern rural environment. It leads her to a mental breakdown in the film” to which one of the filmmakers responded:

I’ve been to Tupelo Mississippi and we’re afraid to hold hands. I’m very out and proud, but when you go to Mississippi and there’s Confederate flags hanging all over the mall, you just can’t reach out and hold your partner’s hand. ..I’ve had friends who are gay in Mississippi who have had nervous breakdowns, who didn’t or couldn’t tell their families or resorted to drugs or alcohol, or went to church thinking that it will cure me, though they never get “cured.”¹¹¹

Essence.com carried three culture articles with LGBT themes. Terrence Dean’s commentary, “Remembering E. Lynn Harris,” commemorated the writer who “made the world privy to the lives and relationships of down low and gay men of color, often times complex, through his two main characters Raymond and Basil...He encouraged me to share my story and voice with the world.”¹¹² The website

108 “Prop. 8 Backer Stands By Views On Pedophilia,” posted January 22, 2010 on *Blackenterprise.com*

109 Shirley Henderson, “Loretta Devine; Dreams come true for this ‘dreamgirl,’” *Ebony*, February 2008

110 Janet’s a GLAAD Honoree,” *Jet*, May 19, 2008

111 Sergio Mims, “Indie Movies: MISSISSIPPI DAMNED,” *Ebony Jet.com*, February 1, 2010

112 Terrance Dean, “Commentary: Remembering E. Lynn Harris,” *Essence.com*, July 24, 2010

published an interview between two African-American stars of the Sundance Channel's new reality show, "Girls Who Like Boys Who Like Boys." The conversation between Nathan Williams and Crystal McCrary Anthony (who also produced the film *Dirty Laundry*, see above), included this passage:

Nathan: In both of your novels and in your film there is at least one main character that is gay. How did that come to be?

Crystal: I could never create a fictional world that was not representative of the real people I interact with on a daily basis. I grew up in downtown Detroit and my early childhood was like living in the United Nations community with every religion, race, ethnicity and sexual orientation represented. So having a "gay" character in any of my work is not a novelty for me. Rather, it's a reality of the world I grew up in and live in now.

Nathan: Homophobia is still prevalent in the Black community. What's your position on this issue?

Crystal: Get over it, get on with living.¹¹³

Workplace discrimination

In November 2009 *Black Enterprise* published, both in its print and online versions, a 1,500-word article in its DIVERSITY WATCH section entitled "The 'Coming Out' Challenge." It led with the following paragraph:

Since the start of her career, Rosalyn Taylor O'Neale, 59, has always been clear about what it means to be an African American, a woman, and a lesbian in corporate America, but it has never stopped her from successfully pursuing her goals. As the vice president and chief diversity and inclusion officer for Campbell Soup Co. she is responsible for helping her organization create a diverse and inclusive culture... O'Neale believes who she is as an individual is a great asset to her company. "I've learned how to see the world through someone else's perspective," she explains. "I see the world through my lens of gender, race and sexual orientation, and I know that others do that too."¹¹⁴



Rosalyn Taylor O'Neale, Vice-President, Campbell Soup Co. Uncredited photo.

113 Nathan Hale Williams, "Meet the Stars of 'Girls Who Like Boys Who Like Boys,'" *Essence.com*, December 7, 2010

114 Brittany Hutson, "The 'Coming Out' Challenge," *Black Enterprise*, November 2009

The article reported that although the Human Rights Campaign's Corporate Equality Index shows significant improvement in the hiring practices of the country's top corporations, "African American LGBT employees have more difficult challenges that are compounded by race."

Essence.com had two brief articles about the impact of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" on African-American women. A piece adapted from *The Grio* reports that African-American lesbians serve in the Army at 11 times the rate of most women, and they are discharged at a disproportionately higher rate than other LGBT military personnel under "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

"Black lesbians in the military are often mothers, so a discharge means unemployment, loss of health care benefits for children" writes *The Grio* contributor Rod McCullom. "This is a real threat to the black family."¹¹⁵

The second article featured 28-year-old African-American Air Force Sergeant Jene Newsome, who was "outed" by South Dakota police and then discharged from the military. The report said she was being represented by the ACLU in a privacy case.¹¹⁶



Air Force Sergeant Jene Newsome. Photo from *Essence.com*.

Jet also ran a brief 165-word item on President Obama's speech at a Human Rights Campaign dinner at which he pledged to end "Don't Ask, Don't Tell": "My expectation is that when you look back on these years, you will see a time in which we put a stop to discrimination against gays and lesbians — whether in the office or on the battlefield."¹¹⁷

Homophobia and bullying

Essence.com had three brief articles, all of them posted in October 2010. One reported on rapper Nicki Minaj's interview with MTV News about the recent increase of suicide among gay teenagers around the country, in which she declared her love for her gay fans and encouraged them to "be fighters and to be brave...suicide is not the answer...The 25-year-old, whose own sexuality has been questioned, challenged gay teenagers to 'find a different way to fight people back.'"¹¹⁸ On October 20, 2010, *Essence.com* promoted GLAAD's Spirit Day, a day "to take a stand against the bullying of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people by wearing purple."¹¹⁹

115 "How 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' Policy Affects Black Women," *Essence.com*, February 14, 2010

116 "Lesbian Sergeant Discharged After Cops Tell Military," *Essence.com*, March 14, 2010

117 "I Will End Don't Ask, Don't Tell," *Jet*, November 2-9, 2009

118 "Nicki Minaj on Gay Teen Suicides: 'Be Brave,'" *Essence.com*, October 2, 2010

119 "Thousands Wear Purple to Support Gay Teens," *Essence.com*, October 20, 2010

The signing of the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act received a mention in *Jet*'s "From the Nation's Capital" section.¹²⁰ *Black Enterprise* included a 73-word item in the "Talking Points" section about new FBI hate crime statistics showing that "racially motivated incidents were slightly down by 1% while there has been a surge in hate crimes against gays and lesbians, up 6%."¹²¹

Relationships

Stories about relationships — new ones, broken ones, ones in trouble — are a staple of some of these magazines, and we identified several pieces in which gay relationships were either mentioned or featured. An article in *Jet* about domestic violence informs readers how to contact Stop Abuse for Everyone (SAFE), "a domestic violence organization that works with groups that are often overlooked, like abused men, gay, lesbian and transgendered victims, and the elderly (safe4all.org)."¹²² *Essence.com* carried an item about author Terry McMillan's relationship with her "down-low" ex-husband, Jonathan Plummer, and their joint appearance on Oprah Winfrey's television show.¹²³ Author Terrance Dean published a commentary on *Essence.com* that opened with: "Not long ago, after I made full disclosure of my sexuality, I heard some disturbing things in the Black community about Black gay men and Black women. One was that every gay man wanted to be women [sic]. The other was that all gay men did not like women, especially those in the Black community." He goes on to refute both "rumors" and urges black women to find a gay BFF ("best friend forever"): "If you don't have a gay best friend, know you can always count on me. I'm here for you. Like most gay best friends, we are your biggest cheerleaders. I've got your back and will be here through thick and thin."¹²⁴

On October 13, 2010, *Essence.com* posted its first lesbian "Bridal Bliss" feature story profiling Aisha Mills and Danielle Moodie, two women who married under the new marriage equality law in Washington, D.C. The story of how they met and fell in love was accompanied by photos from their wedding.¹²⁵ The feature generated an enthusiastic response from online readers, most of them congratulatory and positive, and a week later the couple published a commentary thanking their supporters and *Essence* for featuring their story:

As many of you noted, our love story is indeed unique. While we, like typical brides-to-be, raided bookstore after bookstore for inspiration for our wedding...we never saw any lesbian couples on those pages. It was as if our love did not exist. That experience was yet another reminder of how Black lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people remain virtually invisible within the media and our community.¹²⁶

120 "Hate Crimes Law Signed," *Jet*, November 16, 2009

121 Carolyn M. Brown, "Racial Hate Crimes Down, Anti-Gay Crimes Up," *Black Enterprise*, February 2009

122 Margena A. Christian, "Path To Healing: Walking Away from Troubled Relationships," *Jet*, May 4, 2009

123 Terry McMillan on Gay Ex-Husband, "Getting to Happy," *Essence.com*, September 20, 2010

124 Terrance Dean, "Sound Off: Why Every Woman Needs a Gay BFF," *Essence.com*, November 1, 2010

125 Bobbi Misick, "Bridal Bliss: Love at First Sight," *Essence.com*, October 13, 2010

126 Aisha and Danielle Moodie-Mills, "Standing on the Side of Love," *Essence.com*, October 20, 2010



Photo by Craig Paulson Photography from *Essence.com*.

HIV/AIDS

The handful of stories about HIV/AIDS all appeared on *Essence.com*. One was a commentary by Dr. Kevin Fenton of the Centers for Disease Control, marking National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day. He wrote:

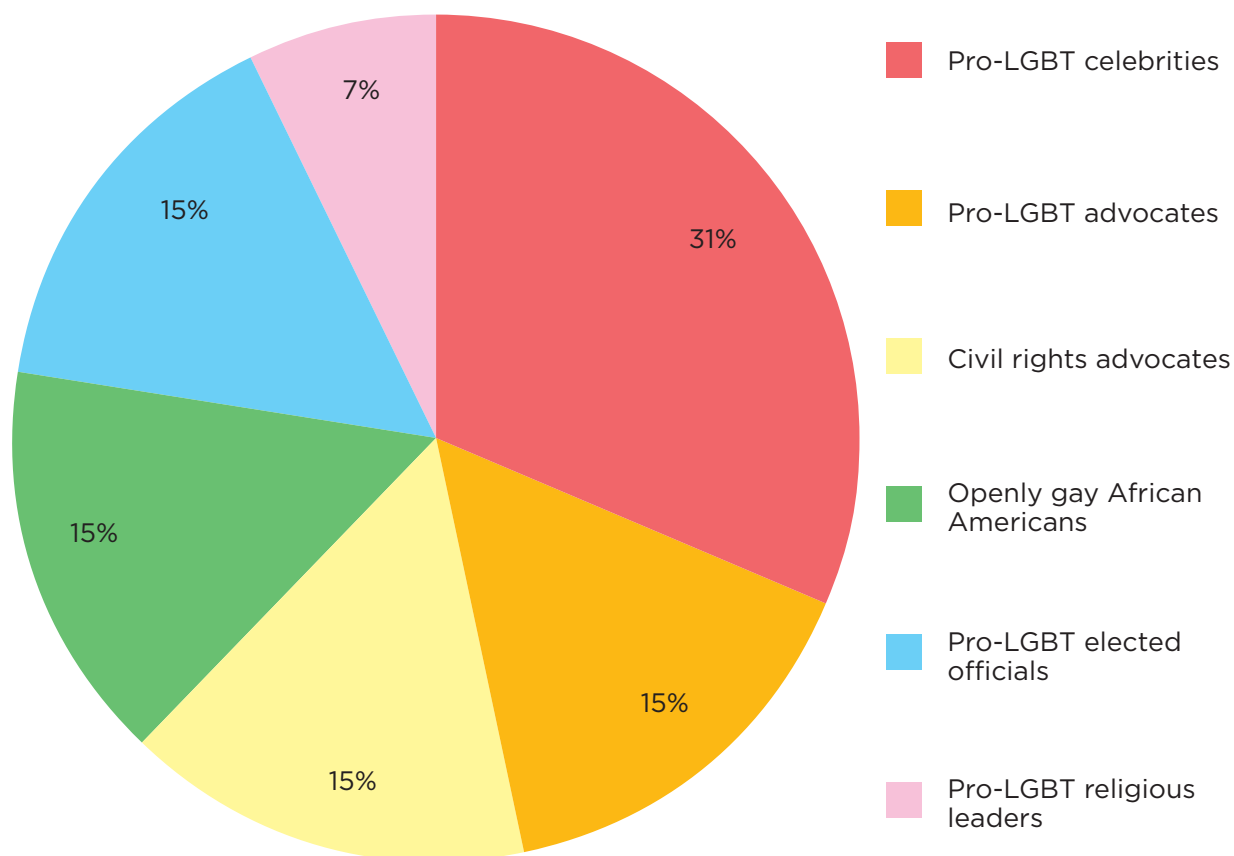
In order to break the cycle, we must break the silence. HIV can no longer be hidden or shrouded in secrecy. Our collective failure to talk openly and honestly about HIV to our friends, families and children and our refusal to confront homophobia and stigma is deadly. By simply talking about HIV we reduce the stigma attached to this disease, increase knowledge and motivate life-saving behaviors. Simply put, when it comes to HIV prevention, dialogue is power.¹²⁷

Another piece covered a meeting between approximately 80 AIDS workers and activists and the White House Office of National AIDS Policy to “thrash out challenges facing Black men, 1 in 16 of whom will be diagnosed with HIV in their lifetime, a rate higher than that of White men, and more than twice that of Black women.” The article reports on highlights from the meeting, including the fact that men “on the down low” do not engage in riskier behavior than heterosexual men.¹²⁸

Spokespeople

Overall, very few quotes (13 in all) were used in the magazine articles, but those that appeared were heavily weighted towards pro-LGBT voices. There were no anti-LGBT quotes at all in the news articles, and only one anti-LGBT opinion piece among the small number of commentaries. As far as the quotes are concerned, we measured the number of articles in which a spokesperson was quoted irrespective of how many times that individual was quoted in each article.

127 Dr. Kevin Fenton, “Breaking the Deadly Cycle of HIV Among Black Youth,” *Essence.com*, February 7, 2010
 128 Cynthia Gordy, “Black Men Talk About AIDS at the White House,” *Essence.com*, June 4, 2010

FIGURE 4. SPOKESPEOPLE IN AFRICAN-AMERICAN MAGAZINES

Source: *Media Content Analysis: Coverage of LGBT Issues in African American Print and Online Media*, The Opportunity Agenda, October 2011.

The voices of pro-LGBT celebrities

[Nicki] Minaj pledged her love for her gay fans, saying, “I love you very, very much,” and denounced their opponents. “For the people who don’t love you, they need help.”¹²⁹

Singer/actress Janet Jackson, on accepting the Vanguard Award: “I have received a number of awards throughout my career but I am so proud to be receiving the Vanguard Award from GLAAD. Since its inception in 1985, GLAAD has taken the lead in making sure that people will no longer be judged by their gender identity or sexual orientation.”¹³⁰

The voices of pro-LGBT advocates

“Chief diversity officers are looking to engage more African American LGBT employees, asking them to participate in LGBT groups within their corporation, because they feel they don’t have a wide range of diversity in the LGBT group,” explained Donna Payne, associate director of diversity for the Human Rights Campaign.¹³¹

129 “Nicki Minaj on Gay Teen Suicides: ‘Be Brave,’ *Essence.com*, October 2, 2010

130 “Janet’s a GLAAD Honoree,” *Jet*, May 19, 2008

131 Brittany Hutson, “The ‘Coming Out’ Challenge,” *Black Enterprise*, November 2009

“When employees are free to focus on their jobs, and not on changing pronouns or hiding a part of themselves, they are better able to advance professionally,” commented Selisse Berry, founder and executive director of Out & Equal Workplace Advocates.¹³²

The voices of civil rights advocates

“When we find another group fighting for their rights, we should stand up for that group,” said Alice Huffman, state conference president, NAACP.¹³³

“There needs to be an honest dialogue about how LGBTs are being treated in the workplace — in most states you can be fired just because you are perceived to be LGBT,” said Hilary Shelton, director of the NAACP’s Washington Bureau. “This bill [Employment Non-Discrimination Act] is an unfinished component of the civil rights movement to make sure all Americans, regardless of our differences, are able to work in an atmosphere without discrimination and intimidation.”¹³⁴

The voices of openly gay African Americans

“I played by don’t ask, don’t tell,” [Jene] Newsome told The Associated Press. “I just don’t agree with what the Rapid City police department did [in reporting the discovery of her same-sex marriage certificate to the military]...They violated a lot of internal policies on their end, and I feel like my privacy was violated.”¹³⁵

“The daily experience for the African-American LGBT has unique challenges and often deals with additional social pressures in the workplace. We are minorities in our community because of sexual orientation. We are minorities in the workplace because of sex, race, and gender. In the LGBT community, we are minorities because of race,” which [Rosalyn Taylor] O’Neale explained, results in “isolation and loneliness.”¹³⁶

The voices of pro-LGBT elected officials

“I believe I have assurances that the barn door is locked,” said Eleanor Holmes Norton, a Democrat who called the legislation [D.C.’s marriage equality law] “historic” and said she was “proud” of the council.¹³⁷

“I will end Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell. That’s my commitment to you,” Obama said. ... “My expectation is that when you look back on these years, you will see a time in which we put a stop to discrimination against gays and lesbians — whether in the office or on the battlefield. You will see a time in which we as a nation finally recognize relationships between two men or two women as just as real and admirable as relationships between a man and a woman.”¹³⁸

The voice of religious leader Desmond Tutu

“Today I pray for people in Africa and throughout the world who long for freedom because they are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. It grieves me to be retiring at this crucial moment in history, so I write to you in this open letter to invite you to pick up the work that remains to be done. More than 70 countries still imprison or execute gay and transgender people, and bullying and murders are all too common. This must change.”¹³⁹

132 Ibid.

133 Sufiya Abdur-Rahman, “Regional Update,” *The Crisis*, Spring 2009

134 Brittany Hutson, “The ‘Coming Out’ Challenge,” *Black Enterprise*, November 2009

135 Yolanda Sangweni, “Lesbian Sergeant Discharged After Cops Tell Military,” *Essence.com*, March 14, 2010

136 Brittany Hutson, “The ‘Coming Out’ Challenge,” *Black Enterprise*, November 2009

137 “Same-Sex Marriages Get OK From D.C. Mayor,” *Jet*, January 18, 2010

138 “Obama: ‘I Will End Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,’” *Jet*, November 2-9, 2009

139 “Desmond Tutu: ‘Hate Has No Place in God’s House,’” *Essence.com*, October 25, 2010

Commentators' voices

Of the six commentaries published in magazines, only one was anti-LGBT: a 750-word defense of “the requirements of natural law” by Alan Keyes, a former Republican candidate for president and U.S. Senate. In it he wrote, “Like others, in their [the “black elite’s”] support for same-sex marriage, they ignore the paradigm of justice established by the natural family.”¹⁴⁰ *Essence.com* published several pro-LGBT commentaries, including “Standing on the Side of Love” by Aisha and Danielle Moodie-Mills, the African-American lesbian couple whose wedding it featured in 2010, in which they thanked readers for “the outpouring of support generated by our recent Bridal Bliss profile.” Another *Essence.com* commentary argued that sexual orientation was not a choice and that the African-American church should welcome LGBT parishioners.¹⁴¹ Still another addressed the Rev. Eddie Long sex scandal and pointed out that “Long’s sexuality is not the scandal here. It’s the danger his homophobic rhetoric does to our communities.”¹⁴²

140 Alan L. Keyes, “Could Obama’s Election Mean the End of the Black Civil Rights Agenda? No, the Black elite has already abandoned it,” *Ebony*, November 2008

141 Hillary Crosley, “Being Gay in the Black Church,” *Essence.com*, June 28, 2010

142 Saida Grundy, “Why Rev. Long’s Sexuality Isn’t the Point,” *Essence.com*, September 23, 2010

African-American Online News Media

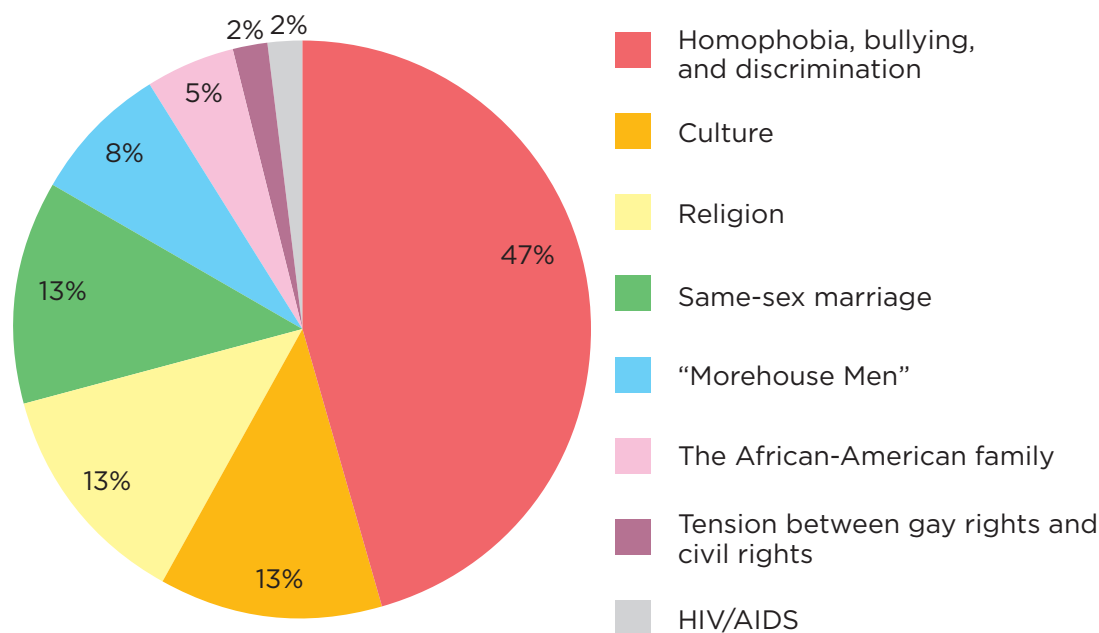
Overview

African-American news websites are growing in influence in terms of the number and loyalty of the unique visitors they attract. We chose to include three of the most prominent sites for our analysis: AOL's *Black Voices*; *The Root*, owned by *The Washington Post*; and *The Grio*, associated with NBC News. Between them they currently attract about seven million unique visitors per month.¹⁴³ These media outlets appeal to a younger African-American audience and are edgier than their newspaper and magazine counterparts. Their coverage of LGBT issues, people, and themes is generally LGBT-friendly, substantive, and fairly frequent.

Storylines

Homophobia and discrimination are the top storylines on the African-American news websites we analyzed, followed by culture, religion, and same-sex marriage in equal measure. The tension between gay rights and civil rights and stories about HIV/AIDS receive relatively little attention in this sample of articles.

FIGURE 5. STORYLINES IN AFRICAN-AMERICAN ONLINE NEWS MEDIA



Source: *Media Content Analysis: Coverage of LGBT Issues in African American Print and Online Media*, The Opportunity Agenda, October 2011. Of the articles analyzed, 47 percent were commentary and 53 percent were news.

143 *Black Voices* is the largest with 4.3 million visitors per month, followed by *The Root* with 1.6 million visitors and *The Grio* with 820,000 visitors. Sources: Omniture; comScore Media Metrix. In August 2011, *Black Voices* was acquired by the *Huffington Post*.

Homophobia, bullying, and discrimination

Six of the ten pieces focusing on homophobia were published by *Black Voices*. Two of the articles reported international stories, one about a couple in Malawi sentenced to 14 years in prison for being openly gay¹⁴⁴ and one about the appearance on “The Rachel Maddow Show” of Ugandan religious leader David Bahati, who has called for the execution of gay people.¹⁴⁵ The tone of both articles was sympathetic to LGBT equality. The U.S.-based articles about homophobia included coverage of a murderous hate crime — the killing of Durand Robinson, organizer of Atlanta’s Black Gay Pride. After briefly reviewing the history of Gay Pride and Black Gay Pride, the reporter noted: “Hate crimes statistics show that offenders particularly target male homosexuals.”¹⁴⁶



fo1 .

Durand Robinson (center). Photo from AOL/HuffPost *Black Voices*.

Boyce Watkins published an article entitled “Julian Bond Calls Bishop Eddie Long a ‘Raving Homophobe’” in which he quoted Bond: “You hope these charges [that Long sexually abused several young, male congregants] are not true because it’s bad news for his family, bad news for his church. However, if they are true, it’s typical of people who are raving homophobes who are secretly homosexual. They have this self-loathing, self-hate, and they have to let it come out some way.” Dr. Boyce went on to observe, “If it is the case that Long happens to be gay, this could turn out to be the most liberating experience of his life. It might also be liberating for the black church, which continues to grapple with how our spiritual beliefs mesh with the realities of the world.” He concluded: “Julian Bond, Rev. Al Sharpton, Rev. Jesse Jackson and others are open and honest enough to accept the gay community into the black experience and the black church. Perhaps we should all embrace the idea of a fair and open black community, where being different doesn’t automatically lead to condemnation. Those who are marginalized become a threat to us all, because nothing good happens in the dark.”¹⁴⁷

On the one-year anniversary of an 11-year-old bullying victim’s suicide, *The Grio* published an op-ed by Kenyon Farrow, executive director of Queers for Economic Justice. In “Anti-gay bullying is a deadly threat to children of color,” Farrow wrote about his own experience growing up, being taunted in school, and “suffering in silence”:

As we approach the one year anniversary of Carl’s death, we need to remind ourselves of the damage that homophobia has on the lives of black children. And let me be clear, the bullying of

144 Ruth Manuel-Logan, “Malawi Gay Couple Sentenced to 14 Years for Being Openly Gay,” *Black Voices*, May 20, 2010
 145 Paul Shepard, “Ugandan ‘Kill the Gays’ Leader speaks to U.S. Audience,” *Black Voices*, December 10, 2010
 146 Ericka Blount Danois, “Atlanta Black Gay Pride Organizers Shot, Killed,” *Black Voices*, August 26, 2010
 147 Boyce Watkins, “Julian Bond Calls Bishop Eddie Long a ‘Raving Homophobe,’” *Black Voices*, September 28, 2010

black lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender students (and those who are perceived to be LGBT) is not rare...I don't believe the black community is more homophobic than white America necessarily, but I think we do have a real obsession with masculinity — we're always correcting our boys for how they walk, talk, hold their hands — even if they cry or not. And when their behavior doesn't replicate 50 Cent, we verbally abuse them and strip away their self esteem.¹⁴⁸

The Grio also posted two AP stories about homophobic attacks in New York City.¹⁴⁹

The Root published an article by Habibou Bangre, a writer living in France, in which he criticized U.S.-based LGBT organizations for not endorsing the International Day Against Homophobia (IDAHO). The piece put homophobia in an international context and described the efforts of French activist Louis-Georges Tin, who launched IDAHO in 2005. On the subject of religious bias, Tin said: “We are asking religious leaders not to approve of homosexuality but to disapprove of homophobia. We don't want to discuss theology, which is not our concern, but we are asking theologians to discuss human rights, which is a concern for us all.”¹⁵⁰

We found four commentaries about “Don't Ask, Don't Tell,” all of them critical of the policy and calling for its repeal. *The Grio* published a piece by blogger and activist Rod McCullom soon after President Obama's first State of the Union Address, in which the President called for the end of DADT. McCullom observed that although “the public face of the dismissed gay soldier is often white and male they are statistically more likely to be a black lesbian or black gay man.” He points to Lt. Anthony Woods, “a black gay Harvard and West Point grad” who earned a Bronze Star before being thrown out of the military.¹⁵¹



Lt. Anthony Woods in Iraq. Photo courtesy of Anthony Woods for Congress.

McCullom ended his commentary as follows:

Cable news, talk radio and the not-very-black-friendly conservative evangelicals may try to pit “blacks” against “gays.” They always do this. Thankfully, our president and many of our smart, black leadership in Washington do not believe this and are showing the black community that we're all stakeholders. As the president says, “It's the right thing to do.”¹⁵²

148 Kenyon Farrow, “Anti-gay bullying is a deadly threat to children of color,” *The Grio*, April 6, 2010

149 “Gang members beat and sodomized gay recruit,” *The Grio*, October 9, 2010, and “Man charged with bias attack at noted NYC gay bar,” *The Grio*, October 19, 2010

150 Habibou Bangre, “On May 17 the world — largely without the United States — commemorates the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia,” *The Root*, May 14, 2010

151 Rod McCullom, “Ending ‘Don't Ask, Don't Tell’ will be a teachable moment for black America,” *The Grio*, January 29, 2010

152 Ibid.

Also in *The Grio* was an opinion piece by Edward Wyckoff Williams, a regular contributor and political commentator. It was based on interviews he conducted with three African-American lesbians:

Their stories are our stories, but hardly ever written and seldom told. The report published two days ago by the Pentagon compared the current policy against gays to the segregation of blacks and whites during the Jim Crow era, and concluded that despite ardent opposition to integration in the 1940s by white officers against black officers — it was still the right thing to do. Some readers may find the comparison of discrimination against African-Americans and gays analogous, while others will believe it to be an unfair similarity. On whichever side of the argument you find yourself, it is best to defer to those men and women who must live that truth and tolerate that lie.¹⁵³

The Root published David Kaufman’s 1,200-word critique of “gaystream” leaders who have vilified President Obama in spite of his “impressive record on LGBT issues.” The focus of his criticism was the idea expressed by some LGBT bloggers (including John Aravosis of AMERICABlog, David Mixner, and Pam Spaulding) that Obama’s race should make him more sensitive to LGBT issues than the white presidents before him:

“Well-educated minorities [like Obama] — one would hope they would be more sensitive to other minorities,” Aravosis explains. “That is the expectation: He should be trying harder because he is a minority.” Aravosis may merely be expressing a popular (yet unspoken) sentiment, but the notion that African Americans should be held to a higher standard than their white counterparts is *the very definition* of racism itself.¹⁵⁴

The Root also carried a news report covering “A Conversation With President Obama” sponsored by MTV, BET, and CMT, with a live audience of 225 18- to 29-year-olds:

With more young people supporting LGBT rights than ever before, gay equality was a major theme throughout the event. After saying that “Don’t ask, don’t tell” “will end on my watch,” the president responded to a question asking if he thought homosexuality was a choice. “I don’t profess to be an expert,” said Obama. “But I don’t think it’s a choice. I think that people are born with a certain makeup, and that we’re all children of God. We don’t make determinations about who we love. And that’s why I think that discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is wrong.”¹⁵⁵

Culture

Four of the five articles covering LGBT people and themes in the cultural realm were in *Black Voices*:

- ▶ “Joe Jackson Furious Over Claims That Michael Was Gay” reported on the Jackson family’s angry refutation of the claim by Michael Jackson’s doctor that he was gay (Ruth Manuel-Logan, *Black Voices*, May 4, 2010).
- ▶ “Laverne Cox: Diddy’s Transgendered Cast-Off Transforming Women on New VH1 Show” is about “TRANSform Me,” an eight-episode series on VH1 that “follows Cox and her two transgendered gal pals as they travel the country in their glam-ulance answering makeover 9-1-1 calls” (Bridget Bland, *Black Voices*, March 23, 2010).

153 Edward Wyckoff Williams, “‘Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell’ is segregation under another name,” *The Grio*, December 4, 2010
 154 David Kaufman, “Will DADT’s Repeal Mend Obama’s Rift With LGBT Leaders?” *The Root*, December 22, 2010
 155 Cord Jefferson, “Tough Questions for Obama During Youth Town Hall,” *The Root*, October 14, 2010



Photo from VH1 for AOL/HuffPost *Black Voices*.

- ▶ “Why Sherri Shepherd and D.L. Hughley Are in Trouble” is a commentary by Boyce Watkins about comments made by TV host Shepherd and guest Hughley on ABC’s *The View*. They linked the high rate of HIV among straight women in the African-American community to African-American men being on the “down low.” In the article, Watkins reports on the full-page ads in *Variety* taken out by GLAAD, the National Black Justice Coalition, and the Black AIDS Institute, charging that the information was inaccurate.¹⁵⁶
- ▶ “Jonathan Plummer Talks New ‘Down Low’ Show, Morehouse Men & Moving On With Terry McMillan” noted that “October 11 marked National Coming Out Day — an internationally observed day to encourage lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people to have discussions on living open and honest lives,” and the airing of a new web series, *NoMoreDownLow.TV*.¹⁵⁷

The Root carried a lengthy piece by David Kaufman about racial segregation in LGBT-oriented entertainment media. His lead example is *The A-List New York* on the Logo network: “Beyond the obvious clichés and caricatures, *The A-List*’s greatest offense is its unfathomable lack of diversity. Indeed, despite taking place in a city that’s 55 percent nonwhite, *The A-List* has few leading characters of color, and no African Americans.” Kaufman quotes Sharon Lettman-Hicks of the National Black Justice Coalition, who “attributes black media invisibility to the ‘gaystream’s’ traditional ‘one issue at a time’ mentality. We are all working with limited resources. But because it already feels marginalized, there’s this notion that the [larger] LGBT advocacy agenda can’t handle other issues of oppression.”¹⁵⁸

Religion

Many articles reflect the ongoing struggle and debate within the African-American faith community over homosexuality. Two focused on the mayoral campaign of Rev. James Meeks, a Chicago religious leader and state senator who is also an outspoken anti-LGBT activist. An article in *The Grio* reported on Rev. Meeks’ anti-gay stances: “He calls homosexuality an ‘evil sickness’ and he was the only black state legislator to vote against SB3186, an Illinois LGBT non-discrimination bill.” The article further observed that “Meeks’ stance on gay rights could jeopardize his [mayoral] prospects.”¹⁵⁹ Boyce Watkins published a brief commentary in *Black Voices* in which he also predicted that Meeks’ anti-gay stance would not help him at the polls. He characterized African Americans as liberals when it comes to economic and racial justice issues: “But when we go to church and spend time with our families, that’s when many black people turn into Glenn Beck; I know quite a few black folks in my own family who voted for George Bush in 2004 solely because of his position against gay marriage.”¹⁶⁰

156 Boyce Watkins, *Black Voices*, July 13, 2010

157 Bridget Bland, *Black Voices*, October 12, 2010

158 David Kaufman, “Logo’s ‘The A-List’: A Symbol of Gay Apartheid?” *The Root*, December 6, 2010

159 David A. Love, “Can an anti-gay black pastor become Chicago’s next mayor?” *The Grio*, September 30, 2010

160 Boyce Watkins, “Rev. James Meeks: Churches Condemned for Not Fighting Civil Unions,” *Black Voices*, December 6, 2010

The sexual misconduct charges against Bishop Eddie Long of Atlanta was the subject of two pieces. A news story in *The Grio* reported on a video of Pastor Dennis A. Meredith of Atlanta's Tabernacle Baptist Church, "home to many of the city's LGBT Christians," in which Meredith spoke against Long's denial of the charges against him: "I'm not saying he has to come out, but it's an opportunity to tell the truth, and to bring healing to the community."¹⁶¹ Boyce Watkins and psychologist Jeff Gardere posted commentary on *Black Voices* entitled, "A Conversation on Homosexuality, the Black Church, and the Black Community," which began with a paragraph introducing the back-and-forth dialogue:

Dr. Jeff Gardere and I both agree that the recent gay sex scandal of Pastor Eddie Long has opened a chasm in the black church and the black community that needs to be filled with discussion and most importantly, understanding. The relationship between the black church and the black community is one that begins for most of us as children and never ends. It is time to begin a conversation that can heal a lot of people.

In "My Take — The Black Church," Watkins discussed the importance of the church in the black community, then charged the church with "hypocrisy when it comes to homosexuality. ... If you are gay, you have the option of continuing to go to church and pretending you're not gay. How deeply you choose to live the lie depends on your preference." He ultimately argued that "The gay sex scandal of Bishop Eddie Long opens the door to the conversation on homosexuality that must occur in every black church across America." Dr. Gardere presented "My Take — The Black Community." He too argued that the scandal "may be the perfect time for us in the black community to get off our high horses and reexamine our belief systems regarding homosexuality." He continued: "The emotional pain that Bishop Long, his family, his accusers, his congregation and even Black America are now experiencing...should help us all break out of that prideful and hateful belief system of us, the heterosexuals vs. them, the homosexuals. The reality is that our sexuality may be different, but we are all brothers and sisters in the struggle and miracle called life."¹⁶²

Marriage equality

The Root published an opinion piece by regular contributor Nick Charles, entitled "Will Blacks Accept Gay Marriage? The overthrow of California's Prop 8 says it's time for African Americans to get on the bus." Charles observed that Prop. 8 "exposed the rift that has long existed between black civil rights leaders and gay-rights proponents." He concluded with a strong call to readers: "It's time for black folks to come to Jesus on this one and support gay marriage. If they don't, history will not be kind, and they will have forfeited their birthright to the homophobes."¹⁶³

Black Voices posed the question "Prop 8: Should Gays and Lesbians Be Allowed to Marry?" to its readers and highlighted two responses, one in favor of Prop. 8 and one against. The Proposition 8 supporter, a woman identified as a service technician, argued that "homosexuality is wrong, no more or less than lying is wrong." The opponent, a woman identified as a nurse and mother of two, wrote:

I'm pro-marriage equality. I believe that religious institutions where same-sex marriage/relationships go against their beliefs should be exempt from marrying such couples. However, not everyone agrees with it. Meaning, don't come into the place I worship (who is willing to marry same-sex couples) and tell us not to, because we're not telling you what you ought to do...My faith accepts same-sex marriages. I guess I wouldn't want anyone to tell me that I can't marry who I love based on their faith, belief, fear or bigotry because it is really my marriage — not yours.¹⁶⁴

161 "Atlanta LGBT pastor speaks out against Long," *The Grio*, October 1, 2010

162 *Black Voices*, October 4, 2010

163 *The Root*, August 5, 2010

164 Jeff Mays, "Prop 8: Should Gays and Lesbians Be Allowed to Marry?" *Black Voices*, August 16, 2010

The Grio's "Beautyshop Buzz" section posted a video of interviews with women attending the Bronner Bros. International Hair Show in Atlanta about their views on marriage equality, and pro-LGBT views outnumbered anti-views four-to-one. One of the supporters said, "People should be able to marry who they want. It's one of the universal human rights we have."¹⁶⁵

The Grio also carried an opinion piece by Sophia A. Nelson, a Virginia attorney and prominent African-American Republican, in which she described her own struggle to come to terms with marriage for same-sex couples: "Like most Americans I have wrestled greatly with my feelings about gay marriage...Much like the chasm over race in America the issue of gays upsets, confounds, and frankly frightens us because it forces us to move outside of our comfort zone of how we see the world or believe the world should be." Nelson rejected the idea that the "gay marriage struggle is akin to the Civil Rights struggle of blacks in this country" and stated that she "hold(s) fast to Christian Bible orthodoxy on this subject." Nevertheless, this is how she read the writing on the wall:

In the final analysis folks, the issue of gay marriage will be decided in my lifetime I am sure. And as an attorney my guess is that it will be decided under the equal protection clause of the Constitution and that gays will ultimately win the argument. If that does in fact happen, I would suggest we find ways to have a civil, decent and honest discussion about what that will mean in modern American culture. To do anything less is simply un-American.¹⁶⁶

In a brief item about a speech at a National Organization for Marriage rally in Atlanta by Dr. Alveda King, niece of Martin Luther King, Jr., the reporter wrote:

King failed to mention, however, that the late Coretta Scott King actually supported gay marriage publicly and was even a speaker at a 1996 Gay Pride festival in Atlanta. Back in 2004, she called gay marriage a "civil rights issue" and even denounced a proposed constitutional amendment that would ban it. She was once quoted as saying, "Gay and lesbian people have families, and their families should have legal protection, whether by marriage or civil union. A constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriages is a form of gay bashing, and it would do nothing at all to protect traditional marriages." Perhaps Alveda King should take a page from her aunt's teachings?¹⁶⁷

"Morehouse Men"

In October 2010, *Vibe Magazine* published an article titled "The Mean Girls of Morehouse," focusing on three students who were cross-dressing on campus in violation of the school's dress code that banned "clothing usually worn by women on the Morehouse campus or at college-sponsored events." College president Robert M. Franklin responded with a letter to the public in which he accused *Vibe* of sensationalizing reality "for the purpose of driving readership...Addressing our young men as 'girls' is deeply disturbing to me..." *The Root* carried two commentaries on these events, one supporting and one opposing the dress code. But even the dress code supporter, described as a "regular contributor" to *The Root*, argued that "We need to come to grips with the LGBT ranks within our community and stop fostering attitudes that lead to derision and assault."¹⁶⁸ The second commentary was authored by Shani O. Hilton, the associate editor of *CampusProgress.org*, a website for "young people working for progressive change" that was established by the Center for American Progress. She wrote:

It's not surprising that the Morehouse administration, with a dress code that bans women's clothing, is marching in lock step with the acceptable rigid gender identity to which black men are expected to conform. But doubling down on regressive policies will leave Morehouse men

165 <http://www.thegrio.com/specials/beautyshop-buzz/beautyshop-buzz-the-debate-over-prop-8.php#>

166 Sophia A. Nelson, "How to oppose gay marriage without being homophobic," *The Grio*, August 9, 2010

167 Ruth Manuel-Logan, "Martin Luther King Jr.'s Niece Calls Gay Marriage 'Genocide,'" *Black Voices*, August 10, 2010

168 Deron Snyder, "Morehouse's Dress Code: Anything Goes, But Not Everywhere," *The Root*, October 15, 2010

unprepared for a society that is slowly but surely becoming increasingly accepting of more fluid gender roles and gay rights.¹⁶⁹

Boyce Watkins weighed in on the controversy in his commentary on *Black Voices*. He criticized President Franklin for “failing to directly confront the realities of homosexuality on his campus, which exists whether he wants to acknowledge it or not. He also doesn’t address the degree of abuse that gay students likely receive from other students...I am hopeful that in his next letter to the public addressing homosexuality within his proud institution, President Franklin spends less time bashing away at the messenger (*Vibe Magazine*), and more time accepting the ideals of fairness and equality which opened doors for his people so long ago.”¹⁷⁰

The African-American family

Two pieces used the Thanksgiving holiday to describe the challenges confronting both gay African Americans and their families in the coming-out process. An article on *The Griot* looked at the experience through the eyes of gay students, researchers, and LGBT advocates, and steered readers to the Human Rights Campaign’s Resource Guide to Coming Out for African Americans, to PFLAG (Parents, Families, & Friends of Lesbians and Gays), and to a YouTube channel that chronicles people’s coming out stories. One of the featured students, Durryle Brooks, “worried that his coming out might lead to abandonment by the church. He says growing up he had a pastor who was very traditional and who often preached of the immorality of homosexuality.” His counsel to LGBT youth: “You don’t have to lose your relationship with a higher power, just because of your sexual orientation.”¹⁷¹



Durryle Brooks says his coming out experience was traumatizing. In spite of it all, he now works to train, educate, and empower LGBT youth and those who work with them. Photo courtesy of Jerome A. Lomax, from *The Griot*.

The Root published a moving piece by Linda Villarosa, a journalist, author, and college professor, called “My Gay Thanksgiving,” which began, “My mother, the matriarch of the family, will preside over a dinner table with my sister and me, my partner, our children and the gay baby daddy. Love is love and our family is the richer for it. But many black LGBT folks aren’t as fortunate as I am.” Villarosa admitted that although her mother came to terms with her sexuality years ago, she still wondered, “Does my mother *really* accept me for who I am?” She continued:

That is the central dilemma that plagues so many of us who are black and LGBT. The closet is a dark and lonely place...Whether we call it on the down low or undercover, large numbers of us are still sitting in the darkness wondering and worrying, will I still be invited to

169 Shani O. Hilton, “Can a ‘Mean Girl’ Be a Morehouse Man?” *The Root*, October 15, 2010

170 Boyce Watkins, “Morehouse President Irked by Vibe Article on School’s Gay Students,” *Black Voices*, October 12, 2010

171 Christopher Nelson, “Coming home and coming out during the holidays,” *The Griot*, November 24, 2010

Thanksgiving if my family, my black family, knows I'm gay? This is the crisis many of us face, and the huge disconnect that keeps the LGBT movement from reaching its full potential. Gay marriage or any LGBT-rights initiative or agenda cannot move forward without the support and alliance of other so-called "oppressed communities." This means other people of color. To be more precise, I'm talking about straight black folks. We need you to be on our side.¹⁷²

Tension between gay rights and civil rights

The Root published an in-depth, 1,500-word article about the NAACP's evolving relationship with the LGBT movement under the organization's new leadership: "On September 22, [2010] Benjamin T. Jealous, the charismatic head of the NAACP, made history...he spoke at Manhattan's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Community Center in Greenwich Village to promote the upcoming One Nation Working Together march in Washington, D.C. It was the first time in history that a current NAACP president has visited an LGBT center." The article attributed Jealous' enlightened views to both his youth and to the fact that he has a gay brother whom he called "the person closest to me in the world." "When my brother has been beaten up by the cops," he said, "it's been very clear that it's both because he's black and gay." The article cited and linked to the Applied Research Center's study "Better Together," which documents the relationship between racial justice organizations and LGBT constituencies and issues and finds, among other things, that "LGBT people of color are harmed by the perceived split between communities of color and LGBT communities." The article concluded with the observation that "the coalition building that's already taken place between the NAACP and the LGBT community seems built to last."¹⁷³

HIV/AIDS

We located only one article covering HIV/AIDS in the online publications included in our scan. A relatively upbeat story, it was published to coincide with World AIDS Day. It related the story of Roger Chapman, a gay man and former I.V. drug user who had been living with AIDS for more than 30 years. The piece led into a video of an eloquent Chapman, a client representative with the harm-reduction agency Harlem United, talking about his experiences and his hopes for the future.¹⁷⁴



Roger Chapman (right) has lived with AIDS for 31 years. Photo from AOL/HuffPost *Black Voices*.

172 Linda Villarosa, "My Gay Thanksgiving," *The Root*, November 25, 2010

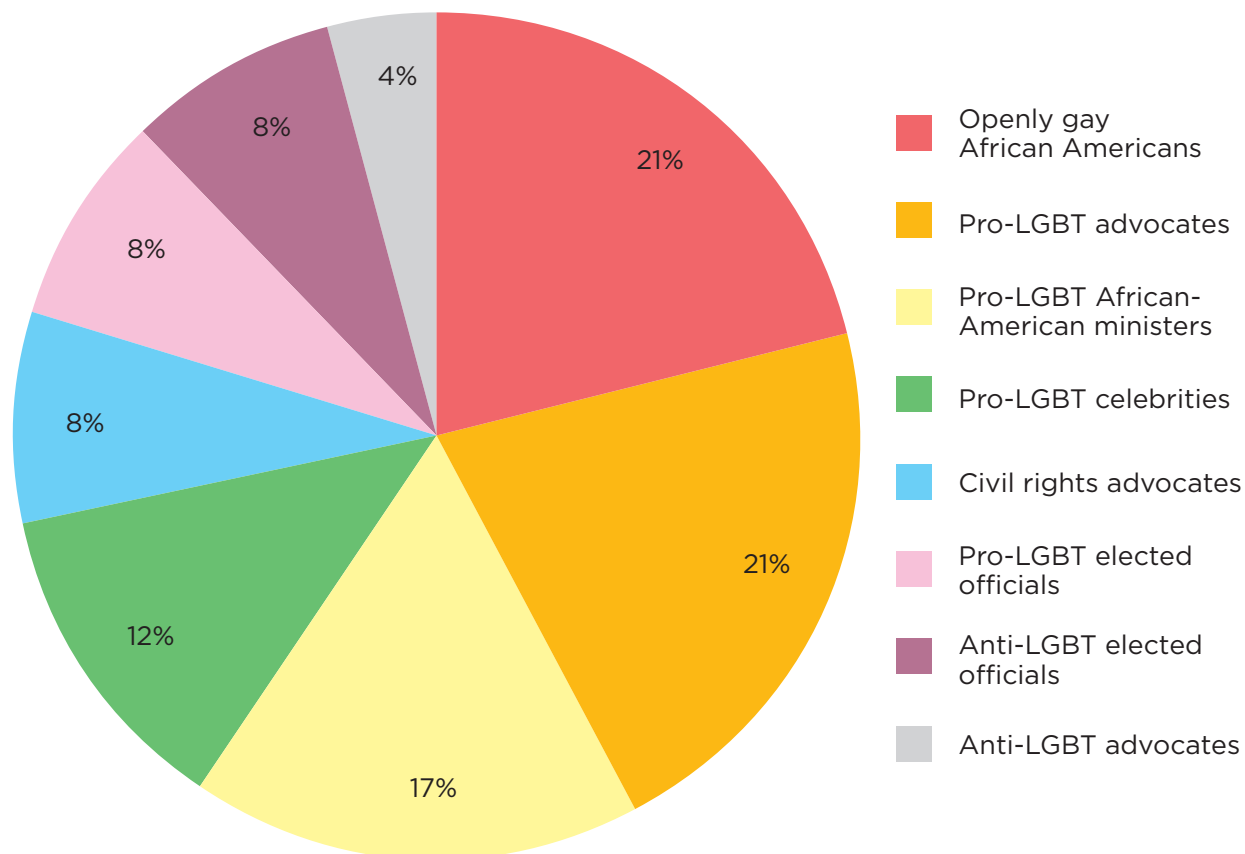
173 Cord Jefferson, "The NAACP Reaches Out to Gay-Rights Groups," *The Root*, September 28, 2010

174 Jeff Mays, "World AIDS Day 2010: Man Tells Story of Living With the Disease 31 Years Later," *Black Voices*, November 30, 2010

Spokespeople

Overall, pro-LGBT voices outnumbered anti-LGBT voices in our sample of online news stories. Eighty-four percent of the individuals quoted were pro-LGBT compared to 16 percent who were anti-LGBT. We measured the number of articles in which a spokesperson was quoted irrespective of how many times that individual was quoted in each article.

FIGURE 6. SPOKESPEOPLE IN AFRICAN-AMERICAN ONLINE NEWS MEDIA



Source: *Media Content Analysis: Coverage of LGBT Issues in African American Print and Online Media*, The Opportunity Agenda, October 2011.

The voices of openly gay African Americans

“Taylor stuck it out until the situation finally came to a head. ‘One Sunday, he [a new reverend] turned the riff on me — on gay people. I remember when he started up, I looked at mother. She turned to me and knowingly said, ‘Bye, baby.’ And I walked out of the church.’”¹⁷⁵

“Courtney Reid, 48, of Chicago said she and her partner of 12 years have decided they won’t pursue a civil union, preferring to wait until same-sex marriage is recognized by federal law and homosexual couples get all the tax benefits and other rights available to heterosexual couples. ‘It’s a stand on principle for us,’ Reid said.”¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁵ Gerry Christopher Johnson, “Black LGBT community builds their own houses of worship,” *The Grio*, November 4, 2010

¹⁷⁶ Carla K. Johnson, Associated Press, “Black Illinois state senator fights for gay civil unions,” *The Grio*, December 2, 2010

“For Alisha Laws, 22, college was the time when she finally grew comfortable enough to tell her family and friends that she is a lesbian. ‘I just recently told my mother and sister, as well as a few of my close friends about my preference. I always thought if my preference was out in the open, people wouldn’t be accepting of me,’ she said.”¹⁷⁷

“What is wrong with DADT [“Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell”] is that we feel like we are being stalked. I can’t even walk down the street and hold hands. There are times when I want to put a photo on Facebook, but I can’t because we’re not able to be open on social networking sites. Things other people take for granted could cause me to lose my job and livelihood.”¹⁷⁸

The voices of pro-LGBT advocates

“It is unacceptable that perpetrators of anti-LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer) violence feel emboldened to come into any neighborhood, including gay-friendly neighborhoods, and attack LGBTQ people because of who we are,’ said Sharon Stapel, executive director of the New York City Anti-Violence Project.”¹⁷⁹

“To be honest with you, our African-American community is in a schism,’ said Donna Payne, associate director of diversity for the HRC [Human Rights Campaign]. ‘Some African-American leaders smile at you and don’t want to say anything bad, but they won’t include you in anything. That’s the reality.’”¹⁸⁰

“He [Durryle Brooks] says things would have been ‘a lot easier for me psychologically, emotionally and spiritually if someone from the church could have those conversations with me,’ referring to conversations on sex and sexuality. ‘You don’t have to lose your relationship with a higher power just because of your sexual orientation,’ he now counsels young people.”¹⁸¹

The voices of pro-LGBT religious leaders

“Pastor Kenneth L. Samuel decided six years ago to turn his Victory for the World Church — traditional and primarily black — into an affirming institution. He cites his affection for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. as the driving force. ‘His model of ministry is a paradigm,’ he said. ‘Just as it became incumbent upon King to follow in the footsteps of Christ, it’s incumbent upon me to preach the gospel as it applies to inequality across the board.’ He says that one doesn’t have to be gay to champion gay rights any more than one has to be black to oppose racial discrimination.”¹⁸²

“Instead of him [Rev. Eddie Long] having the courage to stand up there and confess and to tell the truth about what he has done and who he is, he once again hides behind his pulpit and hides behind the crowds of people who protect him.’ [Pastor Dennis] Meredith says that something should be said to end the homophobia that comes from so many African American pulpits.”¹⁸³

The voices of pro-LGBT celebrities

“The show is really a universal message about anyone who felt like they don’t fit. It’s about helping them be inspired so everyone feels good about themselves.”¹⁸⁴

177 Christopher Nelson, “Coming home and coming out during the holidays,” *The Grio*, November 24, 2010

178 Gay service member quoted in Edward Wyckoff Williams, “Don’t Ask Don’t Tell is segregation under another name,” *The Grio*, December 4, 2010

179 AP, “Man charged with bias attack at noted NYC gay bar,” *The Grio*, October 19, 2010

180 Cord Jefferson, “The NAACP Reaches Out to Gay-Rights Groups,” *The Root*, September 28, 2010

181 Christopher Nelson, “Coming home and coming out during the holidays,” *The Grio*, November 24, 2010

182 Gerry Christopher Johnson, “Black LGBT community builds their own houses of worship,” *The Grio*, November 4, 2010

183 Clutch Magazine, “Atlanta LGBT pastor speaks out against Long,” *The Grio*, October 1, 2010

184 Bridget Bland, “Laverne Cox: Diddy’s Transgendered Cast-Off Transforming Women on New VH1 Show,” *Black Voices*, March 23, 2010

“I heard about the recent suicides, and I knew that I had to do something. God put this song on my heart, and I put it down on paper.”¹⁸⁵

The voices of civil rights advocates

“To that end, [Ben] Jealous is clear that One Nation Working Together will find him marching for the empowerment of all people, black, white or gay. ‘The person who stands in my position needs to be prepared to stand up for the civil rights of everybody,’ says Jealous.”¹⁸⁶

“Gay and lesbian people have families and their families should have legal protection, whether by marriage or civil union. A constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriages is a form of gay bashing, and it would do nothing at all to protect traditional marriages.”¹⁸⁷

The voices of pro-LGBT elected officials

“These attacks are appalling and are even more despicable because the victims were clearly targeted in acts of hate simply because they are gay,” [Christine] Quinn said. “The cowardly few who committed these crimes do not represent New Yorkers, and our community will not be cowed by such violence.”¹⁸⁸

“State Sen. Rickey Hendon accused some opponents of hypocrisy. ‘I hear adulterers and womanizers and folks cheating on their wives and down-low brothers saying they’re going to vote against this bill [Illinois civil union bill]. It turns my stomach,’ he said. ‘We know what you do at night, and you know too.’”¹⁸⁹

The voice of an anti-LGBT elected official

“Here we are, forced to debate an issue that may be political payback to a small but very politically powerful special interest group,” said State Sen. Chris Lauzen. He called gay sexual activities dangerous and questions whether the state has a role in regulating relationships that don’t produce children.”¹⁹⁰

The voice of an anti-LGBT advocate

“The niece of civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr. addressed a crowd at a National Organization for Marriage rally last weekend in Atlanta. Dr. Alveda King passionately addressed the issue of same-sex marriage, stating that it would lead to ‘extinction’ and ‘genocide.’”¹⁹¹

Commentators’ voices

Of the 17 commentaries posted, only one would be considered anti-LGBT: an opinion piece opposing marriage equality, published by *The Grio*.¹⁹² Boyce Watkins published five articles on *Black Voices*, three of which dealt with homophobia and the African-American church. Other pro-LGBT opinion pieces included Kenyon Farrow’s piece in *The Grio*, “Anti-gay bullying is a deadly threat to children of color,” (April 6, 2010) in which the author wrote about his own childhood experiences with bullying and observed:

185 Jawn Murray, “Todrick Hall: ‘American Idol’ Start Records Anti-Bullying Song ‘It Gets Better,’” *Black Voices*, October 13, 2010

186 Cord Jefferson, “The NAACP Reaches Out to Gay-Rights Groups,” *The Root*, September 28, 2010

187 Coretta Scott King quoted in Ruth Manuel-Logan, “Martin Luther King Jr.’s Niece Calls Gay Marriage ‘Genocide,’” *Black Voices*, August 10, 2010

188 “NYPD: Gang members beat and sodomized gay recruit,” *The Grio*, October 9, 2010

189 Carla K. Johnson, Associated Press, “Black Illinois state senator fights for gay civil unions,” *The Grio*, December 2, 2010

190 Ibid.

191 Ruth Manuel-Logan, “Martin Luther King Jr.’s Niece Calls Gay Marriage ‘Genocide,’” *Black Voices*, August 10, 2010

192 Sophia A. Nelson, “How to oppose gay marriage without being homophobic,” August 9, 2010

The study [by the Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network] found that African-American students were less likely than most other students of color to talk to their families about the harassment because of sexual orientation. Is it any wonder? I don't believe the black community is more homophobic than white America necessarily, but I think we do have a real obsession with masculinity — we're always correcting our boys for how they walk, talk, hold their hands — even if they cry or not.

There were three pieces expressing opposition to “Don't Ask, Don't Tell”¹⁹³ and two commenting on *Vibe's* “Mean Girls of Morehouse” spread and the college's dress code.¹⁹⁴

193 Mason Jamal, “‘Don't Ask, Don't Tell.’ Oh, What the Hell,” *Black Voices*, June 1, 2010; Edward Wyckoff Williams, “‘Don't Ask, Don't Tell’ is segregation under another name,” *The Grio*, December 4, 2010; David Kaufman, “Will DADT's Repeal Mend Obama's Rift With LGBT Leaders?” *The Root*, December 22, 2010

194 Shani O. Hilton, “Can a ‘Mean Girl’ Be a Morehouse Man?” *The Grio*, October 15, 2010; Deron Snyder, “Morehouse's Dress Code: Anything Goes, But Not Everywhere,” *The Root*, October 15, 2010 (in which the author opposes homophobia in the black community but supports the Morehouse dress code)

Dominant Narratives

What overarching story is the African-American print media telling about LGBT African Americans? What is the big takeaway for the readers of African-American community newspapers, magazines, and online news sites? Two narratives are dominant today and, in broad strokes, they give the reading audience a framework for reconsidering or reinforcing attitudes, opinions, and stereotypes and for making judgments about policy alternatives.

Clash of values: In general, the African-American community tends to be united in its condemnation of discrimination of any kind, so the fact that there is a significant split concerning LGBT rights is a story in and of itself. On the one hand, the idea that **it's all about equality** comes through loud and clear through the voices of openly gay African Americans, some influential civil rights and faith leaders, and the elected officials who have taken this issue on. One openly gay African-American man put it this way: “Discrimination is discrimination, is discrimination. Against gays, it's wrong. Against blacks, it's wrong. Against anyone, it's wrong.” Stories about violent attacks on gay people, bullying and suicides of gay youth, and employment discrimination reinforce the perception that inequality exists and evoke African Americans' strong condemnation of injustice of any kind.

Clashing with the value of equality is the idea that **being gay is wrong and immoral**. Anti-LGBT African-American ministers are the main promoters of this idea, and in their hierarchy of values, “morality” occupies the higher ground. Rev. Henry A. Gaston, a leader of the effort to oppose marriage equality in Washington, D.C., said, “They were talking about human rights, we are talking about church rights. They see it as a rights issue; we see it as a moral issue.” The prominence of stories about HIV/AIDS and dangerous “down-low black men,” particularly in community newspapers, tends to lend support to this message. Morality is also the subtext of the view expressed by some commentators who propound that being gay is a “choice” that can be hidden, while being black is an immutable characteristic: therefore, according to these particular commentators, the struggle for LGBT rights cannot and should not be compared with the struggle for civil rights.

The real world: Readers of African-American print media are also being confronted with reality: LGBT African Americans exist, they live and work among us, they are in our families and our communities, and they are not going away. Stories about popular openly gay cultural figures — writers, entertainers, musicians — reinforce this narrative. The predominance of pro-LGBT voices as spokespeople and commentators, and photographs of African-American LGBT individuals, couples, and families pose direct challenges to those who would prefer to ignore the struggle for LGBT rights. In connection with ending “Don't Ask, Don't Tell,” President Obama's declaration that, “You will see a time in which we as a nation finally recognize relationships between two men or two women as just as real and admirable as relationships between a man and a woman” cannot help but reinforce this narrative. As celebrity Crystal McCrary Anthony said in response to a question about the “prevalence of homophobia in the black community, “Get over it, get on with living.”

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Content Analysis: Latino Media

Executive Summary

This report analyzes Latino print and online media coverage of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) issues between May 2008 and February 2011. The timeline spans coverage including the legalization of marriage for same-sex couples in California and the repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.”¹

Latinos in the United States are consumers of a range of Spanish-language, bilingual, and English-language media. Forty percent read a Spanish-language newspaper and 60 percent read English newspapers. Thirty-three percent spend some time each day reading Spanish magazines. Overall, 66 percent of Latinos watch some Spanish-language TV, and 47 percent spend some time each day on Spanish-language websites.² This analysis is based on content from 38 Latino print and online media outlets, including both national and regional newspapers, four Spanish-language wire services, and a limited number of broadcast clips from Spanish-language TV networks. Twenty-five of the media outlets included were Spanish-language media, nine were bilingual, and four were English-language media. Overall, we found that LGBT issues are under-reported in Latino print and online media and that there is an absence of real debate between pro- and anti-LGBT voices. However California’s Proposition 8,³ outlawing marriage equality, did serve as a catalyst for more coverage of LGBT issues than in the past.

The media scan explores key elements of coverage of LGBT issues:

1. Overall trends of coverage of the issues
2. Framing of stories
3. Storylines
4. Spokespeople or types of people most frequently quoted
5. Dominant narratives

Appendix I details 50 examples of pro-LGBT arguments and 50 examples of anti-LGBT arguments used by a range of spokespeople, commentators, and online forum users. Appendix II lists all the media outlets included in the scan.

1 The recently repealed 17-year-old law that banned openly gay men, lesbians and bisexuals from military service

2 America’s Radio News Network, “Neilson details Hispanic Media Usage in the U.S.” <http://www.rbr.com/media-news/research/27520.html>

3 Also known as “Prop 8,” this state referendum passed by voters in 2008 banned marriage for same-sex couples

Major Findings

- ▶ Overall, LGBT issues were underreported in Latino print and online media, and there was an absence of real debate between pro- and anti-LGBT voices. However, California’s Proposition 8 outlawing marriage for same-sex couples in the state did serve as a catalyst for more coverage of LGBT issues than had appeared in the past.
- ▶ Generally, LGBT rights in Latino media are discussed through a positive lens. The dominant view is that LGBT rights are human or civil rights and LGBT people deserve the same rights afforded to all human beings. The less echoed argument against LGBT rights is based on a religious belief that homosexuality goes against God’s will.
- ▶ Stories about LGBT issues tend to be thematic in that they often draw a connection between the struggles of the LGBT community and those of other communities who have experienced discrimination.
- ▶ The most prevalent storylines were marriage equality, “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,” LGBT people in the larger community (as immigrants, in the media, in sports), anti-gay violence, and celebrity.
- ▶ Nearly all of the anti-LGBT rhetoric, slurs, and derogatory language found in this media scan came from users’ online comments, not from the media outlets themselves. The media shied away from confronting slurs and other expressions of homophobia or from addressing machismo or gender roles in a meaningful way.
- ▶ Pro-LGBT voices in the form of commentators and quoted sources outnumbered anti-LGBT voices by a wide margin. The majority of pro-LGBT rights spokespeople were Latino while the majority of “anti’s” were white.
- ▶ Two narratives are dominant in the Latino media’s coverage of LGBT issues and people. The first is that gay rights are, paradoxically, both controversial and mainstream. Half of all the articles in the scan focused on the issue of “same-sex marriage” (“matrimonio del mismo sexo”) and they generally covered the controversies surrounding the issue. At the same time, the pro-marriage equality editorials in major newspapers coupled with the dominance of pro-LGBT voices made the issue mainstream (in other words, not threatening). The second common narrative is that LGBT Latinos are part of the larger Latino population. In spite of the efforts of some religious leaders and other anti-LGBT advocates to portray LGBT Latinos as “outsiders,” the weight of the coverage conveys a different narrative.

For further direction on how to improve the African-American media discourse about LGBT, The Opportunity Agenda has developed a set of recommendations which can be found at http://opportunityagenda.org/lgbt_report_2012.

Introduction

This report analyzes Latino media coverage between May 2008 and February 2011. The purpose of this report was to analyze how Spanish-language media and media targeting Latinos dealt with LGBT issues and portrayed LGBT people. What were the most common storylines, and what was missing from Latino media coverage of LGBT issues? What were the arguments used by supporters and opponents of LGBT rights? What kinds of spokespeople were quoted most frequently? Was the overall tone of the coverage positive or negative? By answering these questions, we hope to provide advocates with a broader understanding of the way LGBT issues are treated in Latino media and where the challenges and opportunities lie for improving messaging to Latino audiences around LGBT issues.

The timeline of this report, from May 2008 through February 2011, covered a tumultuous time for LGBT rights. The major events that took place between 2008 and 2010 in LGBT legislation — from the banning of marriage for same-sex couples in California to the federal repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” — saw corresponding spikes in Latino media reporting. There were also several other big news stories during this time period that had a special resonance for Latinos and made headlines in Latino publications across the country. Several highly publicized hate crime cases captured the attention of Latino media. In 2008, an Ecuadorean immigrant in New York was fatally beaten by two young African-American men who thought he was gay in a case that made headlines in Latino media across the country. A year later, a gay teen in Puerto Rico was brutally murdered, his body found burned, decapitated, and dismembered.

Meanwhile, in Latin America, marriage equality was gaining traction. Mexico City became the first city in Latin America to legalize marriage for same-sex couples in 2009; Argentina became the first nation in Latin America to legalize it in 2010. Puerto Rican pop star Ricky Martin came out as a gay man in 2010, an announcement that made big waves in the Latino media. Finally, on the immigration front, the DREAM Act was defeated in the Senate in 2010 on the same day “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” was repealed. Latino media coverage of LGBT issues during this time period was informed by these events.

Methodology

The media analysis in this report is based on content from 186 articles in 38 Latino print and online media outlets, with additional content from four Spanish-language wire services and a limited number of broadcast clips from television networks Univision and Liberman Broadcasting. Twenty-five of the outlets included were Spanish-language media, nine were bilingual, and four were English-language media. The media outlets included 26 newspapers, four online-only news sites, four news wires, three magazines, and one blog site. The circulation for the print media outlets (not including wire services) is just under 3 million. The number of unique visitors per month to online media sites is 7.2 million (6 million for Univision.com and 1.2 million for the Impre.com network).

A complete list of outlets can be found in Appendix II.

The time frame under consideration spans May 2008 through February 2011, beginning one month before the first legal weddings for same-sex couples in California in June 2008 and ending two months after the repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” in December 2010.

The 186 articles analyzed in this report represent all articles found using the following search terms: “gay,” “homosexual,” “LGBT,” “matrimonio gay,” “Prop 8,” and “Don’t Ask Don’t Tell.” Other search terms that produced redundant, few, or no search results included the terms “lesbian,” “lesbiana,” “bisexual,” “transgender,” “transgénero,” “Proposition 8,” “Proposición 8,” “DADT,” “gay marriage,” “same-sex marriage,” “matrimonio del mismo sexo,” and “No pregunta no diga.” All terms were searched in English and Spanish. We searched the websites of Latino media outlets, with additional searches on New America Media, Google, and Buscador Univision.

Articles were categorized as pro- or anti-LGBT rights based on the explicit or implicit views expressed by the writer, the proportion of pro- to anti-LGBT rights spokespeople quoted, the language and arguments used, the positive or negative way in which LGBT people were portrayed, and the overall tone of the article. In commentaries, opinion columns, and editorials, the writer’s perspective was often explicit. Some news reports also had a discernible bias in favor of or against LGBT rights, often apparent via analyzing the proportion of spokespeople quoted on each side of the issue.

In addition to the 186 articles analyzed, this report includes content from a sample of 52 online user comments selected randomly from thousands of posted comments. Because online media outlets such as Univision.com encourage their audiences to engage in discussions in response to articles, videos, and polls, user comments represent a large and lively part of the online conversation taking place about LGBT issues. They should not be equated in value or status with the journalistic work analyzed in this report and they are not included in the storylines section. However, they are included in the arguments section in Appendix I.

Findings

Overview

LGBT issues made headlines in media across the country between 2008 and 2010, and Latino media were no exception. In many ways, California’s Proposition 8, a successful ballot initiative that outlawed marriage for same-sex couples in the state in 2008, was the catalyst for the Latino media to report on the subject, in some cases for the first time.

Even though Latino media covered marriage equality, “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,” and other LGBT issues during this time period, LGBT issues remained an underreported subject. This media scan covers a period of two years and nine months, yet there were only 139 original articles found in 34 Latino media outlets during that period of time. As a result, the media scan includes an additional 47 wire stories from four news agencies.

The original content represented in this media scan is limited in another way: in-depth exploration of LGBT issues is absent from this coverage. There was little or no real debate in the Latino media around the subject, from marriage equality to “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.” Although some writers argued in favor of LGBT rights and others argued against, there was no real dialogue or conversation between the two points of view.⁴

If Latino media were their only source of information, readers would be exposed to a generally positive attitude toward LGBT rights. They would view the main argument in support of LGBT rights as a human rights or civil rights argument making the case that LGBT people deserve the same rights afforded to all human beings. Readers would view the main argument in opposition to LGBT rights as one based on religious belief arguing that homosexuality goes against God’s will.

Readers would be familiar with the issue of marriage equality, which represents half of the articles found in this media scan. Readers would have less extensive knowledge of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” or examples of LGBT persons in the larger community. Understanding of LGBT issues would be further shaped by incidents of anti-gay violence, LGBT issues seen through the lens of celebrity culture, and LGBT-identified Latinos. Readers would gain little understanding about what homosexuality actually is and what makes people identify as LGBT.

Framing of Stories

The way the media frames news stories can influence people’s attitudes about the causes of and solutions to social problems. Episodic frames concentrate on the experiences of individuals, focusing audiences on personal or isolated causes or solutions. Thematic frames present the experiences of individuals in the context of the societal conditions that give rise to them and suggest systemic solutions.

⁴ The reason for the absence of a real debate might be due in part to the fact that there were surprisingly few commentaries found in this media scan that argued against LGBT rights. This was not necessarily because of a dearth of LGBT rights opponents. Rather, it may be because those who oppose LGBT rights were not discussing it in the public arena. Based on anecdotal experience from a campaign about marriage equality conducted by New America Media, editors who opposed marriage equality did not publish editorials voicing their opposition; instead, they published little or no original coverage of the issue. Similarly, those who supported LGBT rights may have been more comfortable voicing their views publicly. As a result, the media coverage analyzed in this scan may not be representative of the views of journalists who write for Latino media.

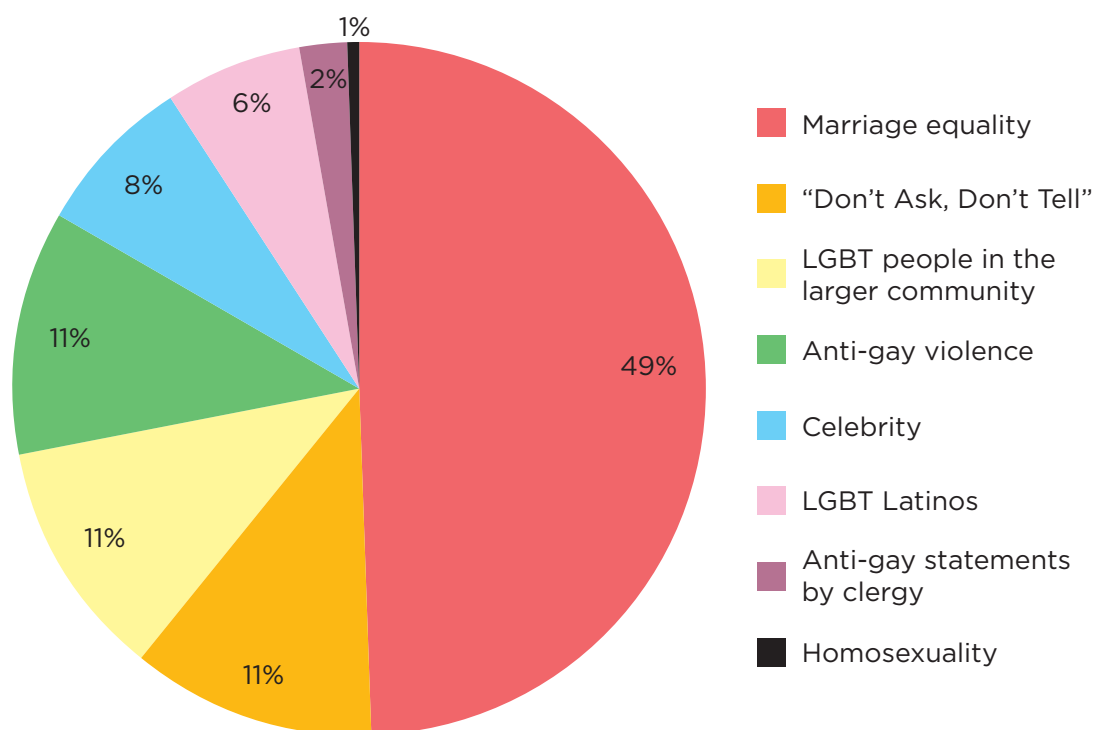
Latino media coverage tended to frame LGBT stories thematically. Pro-LGBT rights spokespeople and commentaries, including editorials and op-eds, drew a connection between the struggles of the LGBT community and those of other minority communities. Even when reporting on a specific incident, such as a violent attack on a member of the LGBT community, Latino media placed it within the context of the hatred and bigotry in society that give rise to such violence.

Anti-LGBT rights spokespeople and commentaries also used a thematic frame and most often asserted that giving certain rights to LGBT individuals would have an effect on everyone and could undermine everything from what we teach our children (in the case of marriage equality), to the effectiveness of our military (in the case of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell”).

Storylines

Coverage of LGBT people, issues, and themes in Latino media generally fell into eight topical categories, with stories about marriage equality receiving by far the most attention. Also receiving significant attention were stories about “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,” stories depicting LGBT people in the larger community, and anti-gay violence. Commentaries and editorials were plentiful.

FIGURE 1. STORYLINES IN LATINO PRINT AND ONLINE NEWS MEDIA



Source: *Coverage of LGBT Issues in Latino Print and Online News Media: An Analysis of Media Content*, The Opportunity Agenda, October 2011.

1. Marriage equality

The issue of marriage equality dominated Latino media coverage of LGBT issues. Half of the articles analyzed in this report addressed the topic. One out of five stories about marriage equality were editorials and commentaries, the vast majority supporting LGBT rights. The rest were news stories, along with a handful of news analyses and feature stories.

Of the original stories,⁵ pro-LGBT rights spokespeople outnumbered anti-LGBT rights spokespeople 2 to 1. In addition, the ethnicity of the spokespeople was interesting to note: among pro-LGBT rights spokespeople, the vast majority were Latino. Among anti-LGBT rights spokespeople, most were white.

What were the stories about?

Proposition 8 in California

Of the stories covering marriage equality, about half focused on Proposition 8, the 2008 California initiative to ban marriage for same-sex couples. All original content was Latino-focused. Much of the Proposition 8 coverage was straightforward news reporting tracking the first legal LGBT weddings in California in June 2008, the Proposition 8 campaign and election in November 2008, and the ensuing court battle. Nine news reports tracked LGBT rights organizing and protests against Proposition 8. Seven articles explored the human consequences of Proposition 8, showing the impact the ban would have on the lives of LGBT couples. A few examples:

- ▶ Less than a month before the November 2008 election, *La Prensa* (Riverside, California) published a feature about a gay married couple in Pomona who had been together for more than 27 years. Looking ahead to the election, they said they weren't afraid of Proposition 8: "If the bill passes, Alfonso says, it won't change the love he feels for his husband."⁶
- ▶ Two years later, after Proposition 8 had passed, a news report in the gay Latino magazine *Adelante* (the only LGBT media outlet analyzed in this report, other than the blog "Blabbeando") profiled another couple whose impending nuptials were at the mercy of a court decision. The San Francisco couple had planned to marry after U.S. District Court Judge Vaughn Walker overturned Proposition 8. But less than two weeks later, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals issued a stay on the decision. Here, again, the tone is pro-LGBT rights: "I was hurt. I was so excited about being able to finally marry José," said James. The couple didn't get married in 2008 because they didn't think 'Proposition 8' would pass."⁷
- ▶ Editorials and commentary were overwhelmingly supportive of marriage equality, sometimes in very forceful terms. For example, *La Opinión*, a Los Angeles-based daily with a circulation of close to 97,000, published an editorial following the passage of Prop. 8 titled "Shame on California" ("Vergüenza en California") in which it castigated the "majority of voters [who] turned their backs on the defense of civil rights of individuals."⁸

Legislation in Other Locations

Twenty-nine articles covered marriage equality in locations other than California. The vast majority reported on marriage equality legislation in Latin America, from Mexico to Argentina; only a few focused on marriage equality in other U.S. states. These articles tended to be straightforward reports with a neutral tone.

The Idea of Marriage Equality

The remaining 20 articles focused on the idea of marriage equality. About half of these engaged in a (mostly one-sided) debate about the issue, most advocating in favor of marriage rights. However, any real conversation between opposing views was noticeably absent. In fact, one of the articles, a news

5 In the analysis that follows, a comparison has been made between the number of wire stories and the number of original stories, as a meter of mainstream media coverage of the issue. One-third of the stories about marriage equality were wire stories; two-thirds were original content.

6 Gabriela González, "Pareja gay permanece más unida que nunca," *La Prensa*, Oct. 18, 2008

7 Nikholas Méndez, "U.S. Behind Mexico on Marriage Equality," *Adelante*, Sept. 1, 2010

8 *La Opinión*, Nov. 6, 2008

analysis in *Impacto USA* that was unique in presenting a mixed view of marriage equality, pointed out that there was virtually no debate taking place in the media on the issue of marriage equality:

Not just California, but Mexico has established a legal precedence for (same-sex) unions. Mexico has gone even further, by determining in the courts that gay couples can adopt children. The funny thing is that there hasn't been much debate in the media about the psychosocial and even biological legitimacy of that right that is, or could be, constitutional.⁹

Most of the editorial content opposing marriage equality came from the Washington-based Catholic newspaper, *El Pregonero*, which invoked “the will of God” and “natural law” to justify its position.

2. “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell”

Most of the articles on “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” focused on the political battle, from straightforward news reports to commentaries arguing to repeal the law. Two stories (from *Adelante* and *La Opinión*) profiled the experiences of retired gay military men, presenting a more in-depth picture of the effects the law has had on their lives.

About one-third of the pieces were commentaries, all of them pro-LGBT rights — that is, arguing to repeal “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.” For example, Jorge Ramos, the Mexican-born anchor for Univision’s news show, *Noticias Univision*, compared the discrimination faced by lesbians and gay men in the U.S. military to the discrimination faced by immigrants:

Let’s look at the two most obvious current examples of discrimination in the United States. The first occurs systematically throughout the most powerful military force the world has known, since the U.S. Army openly discriminates against homosexual men and women, who are prevented from serving openly in the armed forces. The second is the terrible treatment given to immigrants in the United States, where so many people who study and work and contribute to the country’s wellbeing are simply not seen as equals because of their immigration status ... Today, with two stated policies of open discrimination in effect against gays and the undocumented, the United States has entered a dark and inexplicable period.¹⁰

Half of the stories were news reports; the rest were polls, interviews and feature stories. One-third of the stories about “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” were wire stories; two-thirds were original content. Among original stories, the vast majority of spokespersons were in favor of LGBT rights. As with the topic of marriage equality, the majority of pro-LGBT rights spokespersons quoted were Latino. Both of the anti-LGBT rights spokespersons quoted were white.

3. LGBT persons in the larger community

Here we combine several subcategories that discuss LGBT people or issues in the context of the larger community.

LGBT Angle on a Bigger Story

Some of these stories present an LGBT angle on a bigger story. These stories were not explicitly about LGBT issues, but addressed other issues of interest (homelessness, domestic violence, the Census, immigration reform, and immigrant detention) from an LGBT perspective. All six were original news reports. Spokespeople are not included in this subcategory since they do not explicitly address LGBT rights issues.

9 José Fuentes-Salinas, “Matrimonios gay en California en suspenso,” *Impacto USA*, Aug. 17, 2010

10 Jorge Ramos, “Política oficial: mentir,” *Al Día*, Dec. 18, 2010

In some ways, this subcategory may be the most revealing about attitudes toward LGBT people in the Latino media, because it reflects the extent to which LGBT people have penetrated the broader discourse over issues that are not thought of as traditionally “LGBT issues,” such as marriage equality or “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.” The fact that only six articles out of 186 analyzed in this media scan fall into this category is significant.

The six articles present the struggles of LGBT people with a tone of empathy. A few examples:

- ▶ *La Opinión* published a news feature on LGBT immigrants who face abuse in detention: “While the Barack Obama administration promises to review the policy and conditions of immigrant detention centers, lawyers and human rights groups say that gay, transgender and HIV positive individuals are among the most vulnerable of those detained by immigration authorities.”¹¹
- ▶ Online student newspaper *El Nuevo Sol*, a project of California State University, Northridge, published a news report on domestic violence in the LGBT community, focusing on the experience of one man who was abused by his partner.¹²
- ▶ Bilingual community newspaper *El Tecolote* reported on the struggles faced by LGBT homeless immigrants who don’t speak English when trying to find a safe homeless shelter in San Francisco.¹³

LGBT-Related Actions in the Media

There were five stories about LGBT developments in the media: two news reports (one wire story and one original) and three blog postings. Both news reports cited LGBT-positive actions in the Latino media: a wire story in *La Voz* reported on the creation of a gay-themed Spanish-language *radionovela*, or radio drama, on Radio Bilingüe, to address LGBT issues in the rural communities of California’s Central Valley; and a news report in the San Jose Spanish-language newspaper *Alianza Metropolitan News* reported that their columnist Roberto Hernandez, who is openly gay, had received a 2009 Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) media award.

The three blog postings, meanwhile, all from the gay Latino blog site *Blabbeando*, pointed to actions in the Latino media that the blogger believed presented a negative view of the LGBT community. The blogs criticized two online polls by Univision and one Spanish-language daytime talk show, “José Luis Sin Censura” on Liberman Broadcasting in Burbank, California, for encouraging anti-gay rhetoric.

Life and Family

Four stories addressed LGBT issues in the family, presenting generally positive attitudes toward gay men and lesbians. These included a news report on a study that found that young gay people experienced health problems as a result of family rejection and three advice columns: how to come out of the closet, how to tell if your husband is gay, and a GLAAD award-winning column on Univision.com about how to handle having a gay son or daughter.¹⁴

Soccer

Two examples dealt with LGBT issues around soccer: one story that argued in favor of LGBT rights and one story that was later criticized by LGBT bloggers (and quickly removed) for being homophobic.

11 Pilar Marrero, “Inmigrantes gays vulnerables en prisión,” *La Opinión*, Aug. 23, 2009

12 Julissa Reyes, “Cruzando sexualidades,” *El Nuevo Sol*, May 8, 2010

13 Krystal Peak, “Most vulnerable homeless sector seeks shelter,” *El Tecolote*, April 21, 2010

14 Fernanda Martínez, “Saliendo del clóset: Cómo enfrentarlo en familia,” Univision.com, Oct. 13, 2009

A commentary on Univision.com argued that it is time for the sport of soccer to embrace a campaign against homophobia as it embraced a campaign against racism during the World Cup. The commentary was in response to comments by a representative of one of Germany's soccer players who blamed the German team's loss at the World Cup on a secret cadre of gay players.¹⁵

On the same page, Univision ran an online poll asking the question: "Is soccer compatible with homosexuality?" The poll was immediately taken down after being criticized by LGBT bloggers. For more about this, see "Homophobic Attitudes in Latino Media" in Appendix I.

Relations with Police

Two articles dealt with police relations with the LGBT community. Both involved police arrests of gay men for lewd acts in public. One was a straightforward news report from *Eastern Group Publications*. The other was an article in *La Opinión* that presented the story from the perspective of the LGBT community. An LGBT rights activist quoted in the latter story argued that there was a double standard at work:

The gay community doesn't support breaking the laws, but it's clear that there is no balance in the interpretation of the law. When a heterosexual couple is caught having consensual sex in the street, they aren't classified as predators, but if the case happens with someone who's gay, then they have to live with that charge for the rest of their life," said Richard Saldívar, a gay rights activist and a member of the LGBT community.

School

Two articles dealt with LGBT issues in schools, each of them presenting a negative image of the LGBT community. Both articles were verbatim presentations of press releases from the "Yes on 8" campaign, which advocated in favor of California's Proposition 8, the initiative to ban marriage for same-sex couples in the state. These were published in the bilingual community newspaper *El Bohemio* in San Francisco. The press releases argued that schools were enacting a "gay curriculum" that was a threat to children. For more on this, see "LGBT People as Outsiders: A Threat to Your Kids" under "Arguments Opposing LGBT Rights" in Appendix I.

No articles in this media scan focused on the issue of bullying in schools.

4. Anti-gay violence

Twenty-one articles in this media scan dealt with instances of anti-LGBT violence, which were covered in the Latino media as hate crimes. The vast majority of stories about anti-LGBT violence were news reports. Three were commentaries, all of them advocating in favor of LGBT rights. The vast majority were original stories.

Eight of 21 stories were centered on attacks on gay men in Puerto Rico; nine reported on anti-LGBT violence in New York. The remaining four stories reported on anti-LGBT attacks in Los Angeles, Washington, D.C., the Dominican Republic, and Honduras.

Among original stories, nearly all spokespeople advocated in favor of LGBT rights. The majority of pro-LGBT rights spokespeople were advocates, most of them Latino. There was only one anti-LGBT rights spokesperson represented in this category, New York gubernatorial candidate Carl Paladino, whose anti-gay remarks were reported in an article about a Latino gang that had attacked gay men in New York.

15 Robert Elzendi, "Is Spain's Soccer Team Gay?" Univision.com, Sept. 10, 2010

The murder of a gay teen in Puerto Rico made headlines not only for the violence of the act (the body of 19-year-old Jorge Steven Lopez Mercado was found burned, decapitated, and dismembered), but for the anti-gay bias among the police who investigated it. Pedro Julio Serrano, spokesperson for the Puerto Rico Para Tod@s Human Rights Foundation, called on the investigating officer of the case, Ángel Rodríguez Colón, to resign after making “unthinkable, immoral and unethical” comments concerning the murder. Colón had told Univision, “These types of people, when they enter this lifestyle and go out into the streets, know that this could happen.” Serrano charged:

It is unthinkable that the investigating officer is alleging that the victim was asking to be killed. ... It’s like the absurd and fallacious argument that a woman is asking to be raped because she’s wearing a short skirt.¹⁶

In another case in Puerto Rico, in which gay radio journalist José Raúl Arriaga was stabbed, the lawyer for the alleged perpetrator announced that his defense would be based on the idea of “homosexual panic.” In response, a gay commentator in *El Nuevo Día* argued that it was really the LGBT community in Puerto Rico that was panic-stricken:

But the panic in Puerto Rico isn’t against homosexuals; it’s we who suffer from it. We feel panic over the dozen hate crimes against homosexuals and transsexuals in just one year.¹⁷

Violence was also the topic of half of the few articles that reported on the transgender community. Coverage of this community was marginal. These stories depicted transgender people as victims of abuse or assault, including a news report about the attack on a Latina transgender woman in New York and a feature on the abuse of gay and transgender detainees in immigration detention.

5. Celebrity

Fourteen articles in this media scan focused on celebrities. Most of these were news reports; two were commentaries, both supporting LGBT rights; two were broadcast, both presenting a positive image of LGBT communities; and one was a blog.

Ricky Martin

Four examples centered on singer Ricky Martin, whose announcement that he was gay set off a lively discussion among online users and served as the impetus for several LGBT-themed talk shows and columns in Latino media.

After Ricky Martin came out, he was interviewed in an hour-long special by Univision anchor Maria Elena Salinas on the Univision TV program “Aquí y Ahora.” During part of the interview, Salinas and Martin walked along the beach barefoot and talked like old friends. Martin candidly discussed his decision to come out, his decision to have children through a surrogate, and his involvement in campaigns to fight human trafficking. The interview, which was posted online on Univision.com, generated some 584 comments by online users who voiced both approval and disapproval. Ricky Martin portrayed homosexuality in a positive light, saying there was nothing wrong with being gay and attributing the internal conflict he felt to homophobic attitudes in society. Although Martin presented a positive view of homosexuality, the headline of the video on Univision.com used the negative word “confessed” to describe his coming out: “Ricky Martin revealed secrets and confessed.” The gay blog site *Blabbeando* reported that about 200 members of a Latino evangelical church in Miami organized a protest against Univision for airing the interview.¹⁸

16 Bárbara J. Figueroa Rosa, “Solicitan relevo de agente investigador en asesinato de joven homosexual en Cayey,” *Primera Hora*, Nov. 15, 2009

17 Francisco Cartagena, “Alerta: panico homosexual,” *El Nuevo Día*, Nov. 7, 2010

18 “Ricky Martin dejó los secretos y se confesó,” *Aquí y Ahora*, Univision.com, Nov. 8, 2010

Ricky Martin's coming out was cited as the impetus for several Latino media outlets to take a more in-depth look at LGBT issues. The Univision TV talk show "Don Francisco Presenta," for example, aired a segment in which two gay men talked about how to deal with LGBT issues in families. The show *Tienes un Hijo Gay?* ("Do You Have a Gay Child?") generated 1,172 online comments on Univision.com. A Univision unscientific online poll posted alongside the video asked, "How would you react if your child was gay?" and was answered by 4,380 people: 66 percent said they would support him or her; 24 percent said they would seek help; 7 percent said they would go running from the house; and 3 percent said they would try to hide it.¹⁹ An editor for San Jose's *El Observador* also cited Ricky Martin as her inspiration for writing an advice column about how to come out of the closet.²⁰

Pro-LGBT Rights Statements by Celebrities

Four news reports covered pro-LGBT rights statements made by other celebrities including Rosie Perez, Christian Chávez, Perez Hilton, America Ferrera, Tony Plana, and Ana Ortiz.

Anti-LGBT Rights Statements by Celebrities

Three articles — two news reports and a commentary — covered anti-LGBT rights statements by celebrities: Mexican singer Paquita la del Barrio spoke out against adoption by LGBT couples; *telenovela* star Eduardo Verastegui and Miss California, Carrie Prejean, spoke out against marriage equality. *Adelante* responded to Paquita's statement criticizing adoption by same-sex parents in a column called, "Paquita Was Wrong, Our Families Deserve to Be Protected."²¹ For more on anti-LGBT rhetoric, see "Dehumanizing LGBT People: Slurs, Disgust" under "Arguments Opposing LGBT Rights" in Appendix I.

Movies and Celebrity Gossip

Two articles reported on celebrity gossip about which stars were rumored to be gay. One reported on celebrity Johnny Depp, whose portrayal of a pirate in the *Pirates of the Caribbean* was repeatedly criticized by Disney executives for being "too gay."

Note on Coverage of the Bisexual Community

There was no mention of bisexuals or bisexuality in the entire media scan, with the exception of one column in *Latina Magazine* about a singer who denied being "bisexual or homosexual" when asked about the subject on the Miami-based Spanish-language talk show "El Show de Cristina" on Univision.

6. LGBT Latinos

Twelve articles focused on LGBT Latinos. Most of these were news reports; two were commentaries; one was a news broadcast segment; and one was a photo slideshow. All of them presented a positive image of the LGBT community and a stance in support of LGBT rights.

About half of the articles covered Latinos at gay pride celebrations. These quoted various spokespeople in favor of LGBT rights, the majority of them Latino.

Several articles addressed the dilemma of LGBT Latinos, posing the question, "Where do they fit in?" These included voices of two columnists and three pro-LGBT rights spokespeople, all of them Latino, who criticized the LGBT rights movement for not addressing the needs of its Latino members. Columnist Rey Torres wrote, "The rights of gay Latinos are not being addressed within the white gay

19 *Tienes un hijo gay?* "Don Francisco Presenta," Univision.com, April 21, 2010

20 Rosario Vital, "¿Cómo salir del closet?" *El Observador*, April 2, 2010

21 *Adelante*, May 1, 2010

community in a manner that shows equality and fairness. Traditional gay rights organizations are not meeting the specific needs of the Latino community.”²²

Several articles covered prominent openly gay Latinos: the swearing in of John Perez, California’s first openly gay Assembly speaker, and the dismissal of gay news anchor Charles Perez from an ABC station in Miami. The former news anchor claimed that the station, WPLG, fired him because of his sexual orientation.²³

Two focused on transgender individuals: One Univision segment profiled a young transgender woman’s journey to self-acceptance; and one wire story reported on a program at the University of North Carolina for teaching transgender people to speak in the voice of the gender to which they are transitioning.

7. Anti-gay statements by clergy

Four examples (two news wire reports, one commentary, and an online poll) reported on anti-gay statements made by clergy or in religious settings, from the Peruvian Bishop Luis Bambarén’s remark that gay people should be called *maricones* (“faggots”), a comment for which he later apologized, to the Pope’s statement opposing marriage equality, and New York gubernatorial candidate Carl Paladino’s anti-gay comments in a Hasidic synagogue. A pro-LGBT rights editorial in *El Diario/La Prensa* took on this last example by reminding readers that homophobic attitudes are common among fundamentalist conservatives of many religions:

Throughout almost every community, the religious right has obsessively targeted gays — and politicians have pandered to them.²⁴

When the Peruvian Bishop told a TV reporter that gay people should be referred to as *maricones* (“faggots”), a comment for which he later apologized, Univision posted an online poll on the subject. It asked the question, “Is it appropriate for the bishop to call gay people ‘maricones’ (‘faggots’)?” The poll was criticized by gay bloggers and advocacy groups and was immediately removed from the site. For more on this, see the section in this report titled, “Homosexuality” under “Storylines.”

8. Being gay

Only one example in this media scan dealt with the nature of homosexuality itself: what it is, and whether people are born gay or become gay. This was also the only example in the entire media scan that presented a robust two-sided debate on LGBT issues, with spokespeople on both sides engaging in a dynamic conversation about it. The debate was broadcast on the Univision TV show “Don Francisco Presenta” and included four people arguing that people were born gay, and three arguing that people became gay and could work to change their orientation to become heterosexual.²⁵

Note: Homophobic Attitudes in Latino Media

While the majority of LGBT coverage in this Latino media scan leaned in favor of LGBT rights, there were four notable exceptions in which Latino media tolerated or encouraged homophobic speech and attitudes:

- ▶ *Univision Online Forums*: A sampling of users’ comments from Univision’s online forums shows that, while the media company itself did not engage in hate speech, its online forums were dominated by comments containing anti-gay slurs.

22 Rey Torres, “Gay Latinos: A Minority Within a Minority,” *Adelante*, Oct. 1, 2009

23 Rob Kuznia, “Fired Gay Anchor Charles Perez Speaks Out,” *Hispanic Business*, Aug. 10, 2009

24 Editorial, “El odio en el discurso nacional,” *El Diario/La Prensa*, Oct. 13, 2010

25 “El homosexual, nace o se hace?” “Don Francisco Presenta,” Univision, Feb. 10, 2010

- ▶ *Univision Polls*: Univision posted two controversial online polls on LGBT issues that were subsequently removed from the site after being criticized by LGBT bloggers and advocacy organizations.

The first poll, posted on September 10, 2010, asked: “Is soccer compatible with homosexuality?” The response options were:

1. “Yes, sexuality is private and independent.”
2. “Yes, but you don’t have to make it public.”
3. “No, soccer is a sport for macho men.”

Univision removed the poll after it was criticized by *Blabbeando* and other LGBT blogs.²⁶

- ▶ The second poll, posted January 25, 2011, asked the question: “Is it appropriate for the bishop to call gay people ‘maricones’ (‘faggots’)?” This time the response options were:

1. “Yes, there is freedom of expression.”
2. “No, it’s an insult.”
3. “Clergy should not give an opinion on social issues.”
4. “Yes, it is a defense of a religious perspective.”
5. “No, and it should be penalized.”

Univision removed the poll immediately after being contacted by the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD). Andrés Duque of the gay Latino blog *Blabbeando* observed, “The true issue here is why Univision.com deems it fit to keep posting these homophobic polls even after they’ve been caught red-handed in the past. ... Or does Univision feel there is any question whatsoever on whether it’s OK to call gays ‘faggots’? That’s one explanation I’d really like to get my hands on.”²⁷

- ▶ The last example of anti-gay attacks in Latino media is from the daytime Spanish-language TV talk show “José Luis Sin Censura,” (“José Luis Uncensored”) which debuted in June 2010. The show, produced by Liberman Broadcasting in Burbank, California, is a kind of Spanish-language version of “The Jerry Springer Show” but with more profanity, fighting, and nudity. In February 2011, GLAAD and the National Hispanic Media Coalition filed a Federal Communications Commission (FCC) complaint against Liberman Broadcasting. They claimed that the show often incited guests and audience members to “engage in verbal and even physical attacks, especially against people perceived to be LGBT.” Examples of anti-LGBT language and attacks on the show included the audience chanting Spanish terms for “faggot” at a guest they perceived to be gay, getting in physical fights, and threatening violence against guests they perceived to be gay. *Blabbeando* reported:

According to a statement by GLAAD: In over 20 episodes that aired between June 18 and December 7, 2010, the program contained images and language of the nature that is never displayed or is bleeped out of pre-taped English-language programs of the same nature, including the words “pinche” (“f*cking” in English) and “culero” (“assf*cker”), anti-gay language, including epithets such as “maricón,” “joto” and “puñal” (or “f*ggot”), and anti-Latino slurs, such as “mojado” (“wetback”). The program frequently featured blatant nudity and female guests have been shown in violent fights. Hypersexualized images of women’s bodies while stripping for male guests and audience members also make up routine offerings. Guests and audience members were often incited to engage in verbal and even physical attacks, especially against people perceived

26 “Univision poll: Is soccer compatible with homosexuality?” *Blabbeando*, Sept. 11, 2010

27 “Univision wants to know: Is it OK for a priest to call gays ‘faggots’?” *Blabbeando*, Jan. 31, 2011

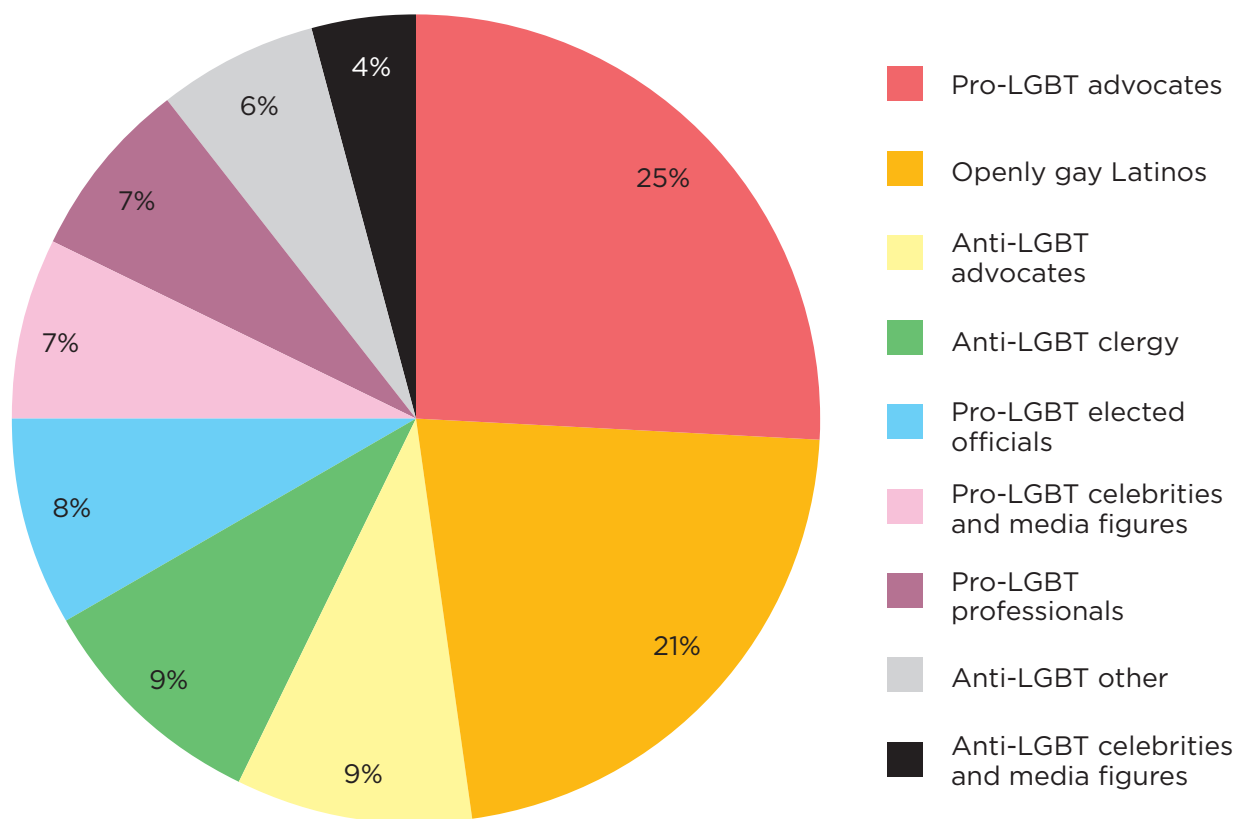
to be LGBT. Many episodes showed the audience standing and shouting anti-gay epithets and profanity at guests.²⁸

Since the complaint was filed, thousands have participated in an online action to e-mail the FCC in support of the complaint, according to GLAAD. On April 6, 2011, more than 30 organizations sent a letter to FCC Chairman Julius Genachowski, urging him to act on the complaint. The letter was filed by organizations including the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), the Southern Poverty Law Center, the Human Rights Campaign (HRC), and the United Church of Christ. As of May 2011, Liberman Broadcasting has not responded to the complaint and has refused to alter its programming.

Spokespeople

The spokesperson cited in Latino media’s coverage of LGBT issues — those quoted in news stories as well as the dominant views reflected in editorials and other opinion pieces — can be divided into two groups: those who advocated in favor of human rights and equality for LGBT people, and those who advocated against them. In a scan of the original content from Latino media, pro-LGBT rights spokesperson outnumbered anti-LGBT rights spokesperson by 2.5 to 1. The dominance of pro-LGBT voices in commentaries and editorials was even more pronounced: they outnumbered anti-LGBT voices by 9 to 1. As far as the quotes are concerned, we measured the number of articles in which a spokesperson was quoted irrespective of how many times that individual was quoted in each article.

FIGURE 2. SPOKESPEOPLE QUOTED MOST FREQUENTLY IN LATINO MEDIA



Source: *Coverage of LGBT Issues in Latino Print and Online News Media: An Analysis of Media Content*, The Opportunity Agenda, October 2011.

28 “Major FCC complaint launched against homophobic Spanish-language talk show,” *Blabbeando*, Feb. 28, 2011

The gender of LGBT spokespeople is noteworthy: Gay men outnumbered women by 5 to 3, with 50 gay men and 29 lesbians quoted in support of LGBT rights. Two transgender spokespeople were quoted making statements in support of LGBT rights. No openly bisexual spokespeople were quoted.

In addition, the ethnicity of the spokespeople was interesting to note. Among pro-LGBT rights voices, the vast majority of spokespeople (three out of four) were Latino. Among anti-LGBT rights spokespeople, a slim majority (just over half) were white.

The voices of pro-LGBT Latinos

The quotes below are a selected sample and are intended to give an impression of how various voices are represented in the Latino media:

You can't tell me to be a dyke today and an immigrant tomorrow. When I face the mirror every morning, I am both.²⁹

We are part of the community; we are your aunts and uncles and we are here to defend our rights and those of our families.³⁰

As Latinos, a community that has been marginalized by discriminatory propositions like 187 and 209, we have the responsibility to restore legal protections for all Californians, including protections for same-sex couples that are met only under civil matrimony.³¹

The approval of "Proposition 8" is a dark mark on the democracy of our state ... The majority of voters turned their backs on the defense of civil rights of individuals. Over the course of our nation's history, there have been many dark pages during which the majority approved racism, segregation and discrimination. Fear and intolerance were the winners with this initiative.³²

Across the nation, a gay rights agenda must be representative of LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) Latinos and the deeper inequities they confront. The gap between the struggle for LGBT rights and the struggles for economic and racial justice needs to be closed.³³

If we've learned as a nation that separate is not equal, then why must we try and apply this broken logic again in pointing to civil unions as the solution to denying one group of citizens the right other citizens have? This is not a gay issue. This is a human rights issue.³⁴

For 45 years, my husband [César Chávez] faced injustice and discrimination. Now I celebrate his memory and we continue his legacy to support the rights of gay and lesbian couples and their families.³⁵

The voices of anti-LGBT Latinos

Marriage is a human institution that is based on natural law. Natural law is not only the basis of the teachings of our faith, but is also the basis of civil law. Although some would like to change the natural law, that is not possible. ... Marriage has a very special meaning that has

29 Lizbeth Menéndez, executive director of Unidos, in Alex Galbraith, "Gay Immigrant Rights," *Hispanic Link*, June 21, 2010

30 Olga Talamante, executive director of the Chicana/Latina Foundation, in Erika Cebreros, "Líderes latinos piden derrotar la Proposición 8," *El Mensajero*, Oct. 19, 2008

31 Jorge Amaro, spokesperson for Equality California in "Este de Los Ángeles se Une para Revocar la Proposición 8," *Eastern Group Publications*, Aug. 6, 2009

32 "Vergüenza en California," editorial in *La Opinión*, Nov. 6, 2008

33 "A favor del matrimonio gay," editorial in *El Diario/La Prensa*, Nov. 17, 2008

34 Alexa Valavanis, *ChicoSol*, May 28, 2009

35 Helen Chávez, "Los derechos de las parejas gay," *Impacto USA*, Oct. 30, 2008

endured over time. It is the union of a man and a woman, open to procreating and raising children with their unique and complementary gifts. In fact, redefining marriage would mark the first time society intentionally deprived a child of the right to have a father and a mother.³⁶

Pope Benedict XVI stated that laws that approve forms of unions which distort the essence and purpose of the family end up penalizing those who, with much effort, commit themselves to living a life whose bonds are marked by stable intimacy, have juridical guarantees, and are recognized publicly.³⁷

The arguments used by supporters and opponents of LGBT rights are outlined in more detail in Appendix I.

36 Editorial, "Matrimonio es Patrimonio" *El Pregonero*, Sept. 24, 2009

37 "Arremete el Papa contra las bodas de homosexuales," *Notimex*, January 14, 2011

Dominant Narratives

What overarching story is the Latino media telling about LGBT Latinos and Latinas and their rights? Two narratives are dominant today and, in broad strokes, they give the reading audience a framework for reconsidering or reinforcing attitudes, opinions, and stereotypes and for making judgments about policy alternatives.

Gay rights are, paradoxically, both controversial and mainstream: Most of the articles in our scan were generated by controversy. Half focused on the debate over “same-sex marriage” (“matrimonio del mismo sexo”) and the next most common storyline covered the debate over “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.” At the same time, the strongly pro-LGBT editorial positions of such major daily newspapers as *El Diario*/*La Prensa* and *La Opinión*, both of which labeled marriage equality an issue of civil rights, plus the fact that pro-LGBT voices were so dominant and were mostly Latino, would lead to the perception that marriage equality and gay rights in general are struggles whose time has come. The “outliers” are not the advocates of marriage equality; they are those much less frequently quoted voices motivated by homophobia or religious doctrine. The coverage of attacks on LGBT Latinos (or those perceived to be LGBT) and the argument made by some commentators that LGBT people and immigrants face a common oppression reinforce the idea that gay rights are civil or human rights, values well within the mainstream of Latino thought and therefore not threatening.

LGBT Latinos are part of the larger Latino population: In spite of the efforts of some religious leaders and other anti-LGBT advocates to portray LGBT Latinos as “outsiders,” the weight of the coverage conveyed a different narrative. Ricky Martin’s message carried by heavily viewed talk shows on Univision that there is “nothing wrong with being gay,” along with news reports quoting pro-LGBT celebrities like Rosie Perez and the openly gay *telenovela* star Christian Chavez, and the fact that the great majority of the spokespeople in the scan were Latino LGBT rights advocates and LGBT individuals are all part of this narrative.

Appendix I

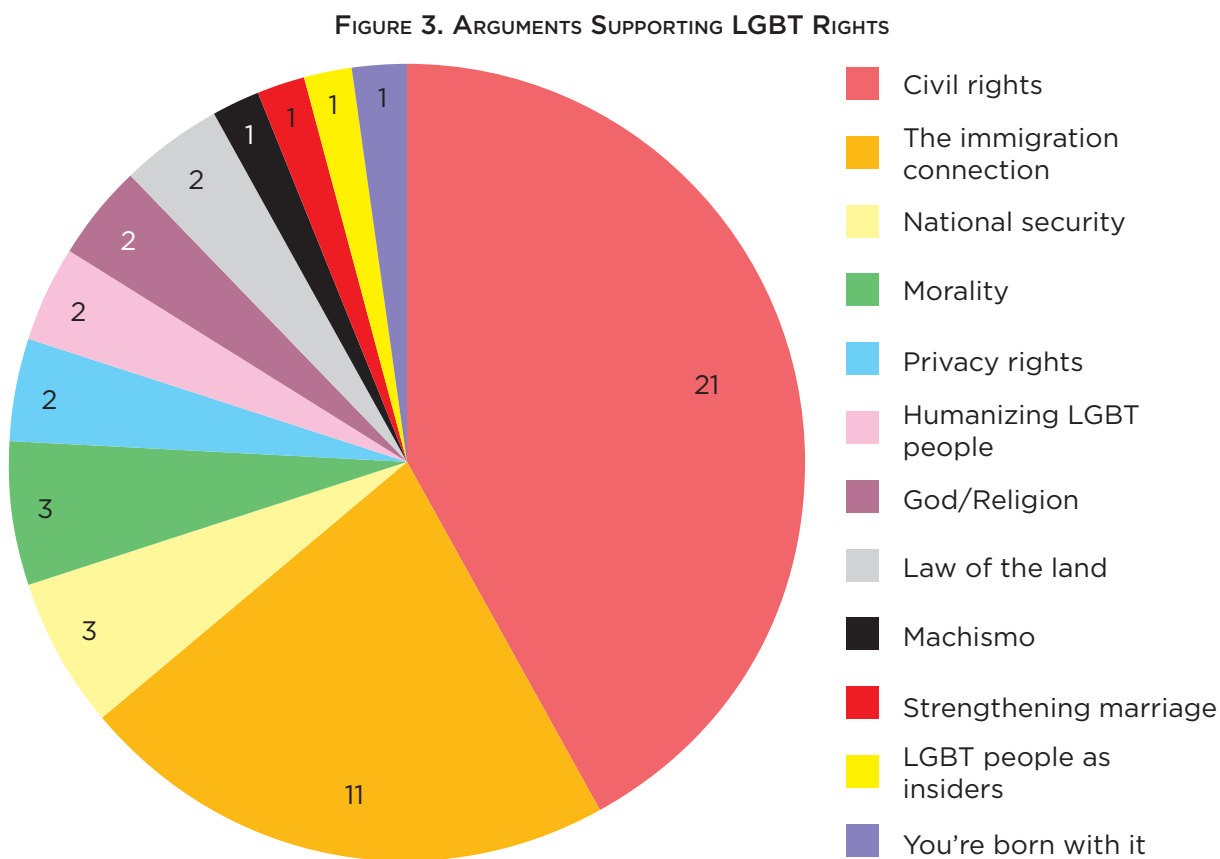
Analysis and Examples of Pro- and Anti-LGBT Rights Arguments

Unlike the storylines section, which provides an overall picture of the topics covered by all 186 articles found in this media scan, this Appendix looks at 50 examples of pro- and 50 examples of anti-LGBT arguments made by the writers of op-eds, editorials, and columns by spokespeople quoted in news stories and by online commenters. Arguments tended to be overarching across all storylines. For example, the same arguments that were used to make the case in favor of marriage equality were used to argue for the repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.”

Arguments supporting LGBT rights

The 50 examples of pro-LGBT rights arguments include arguments made by 20 spokespeople in reported stories, 27 writers in commentaries, and three users in online forums.

The arguments used by supporters of LGBT rights are as follows, in order of the most commonly to least commonly used.



Source: *Coverage of LGBT Issues in Latino Print and Online News Media: An Analysis of Media Content*, The Opportunity Agenda, October 2011.

1. Human or civil rights

Of the 50 examples of arguments, 21 made the case that LGBT rights were a human rights or civil rights issue. (There appeared to be no reluctance in using the term “civil rights.”) This argument emphasized the values of justice and equality and the importance of fighting against discrimination, ignorance, and homophobia.

An editorial in *La Opinión*, for example, argued that tolerance prevailed over fear when Mexico City approved marriage for same-sex couples: “The right of individuals to be treated as equals before the law was more powerful than the resentment of those who are different. This is an issue of justice and equity.”³⁸

Many of these arguments went one step further, comparing this civil rights movement to the African-American civil rights movement of the 1950s and ’60s, making a comparison between today’s fight against homophobia and the fight against racism.

The week that Californians approved Proposition 8, *La Opinión* published a bilingual editorial titled “Vergüenza en California” (“Shame in California”), which they translated as “A California Embarrassment.” Editors wrote that the election had two faces: pride in electing the first African-American president of the United States, and shame or embarrassment at changing the state’s Constitution to impose restrictions on the rights of a minority. The approval of Proposition 8, editors wrote, “is a dark mark on the democracy of our state. ... The majority of voters turned their backs on the defense of civil rights of individuals. Over the course of our nation’s history, there have been many dark pages during which the majority approved racism, segregation and discrimination. Fear and intolerance were the winners with this initiative.”³⁹

A commentary in *ChicoSol* argued: “If we’ve learned as a nation that separate is not equal, then why must we try and apply this broken logic again in pointing to civil unions as the solution to denying one group of citizens the right other citizens have? ... This is not a gay issue. This is a human rights issue.”⁴⁰

2. The immigration connection

While some arguments made the connection to the civil rights movement and racism against African Americans, others made a connection that spoke more directly to the Latino experience: a comparison between the rights of the LGBT community and the rights of immigrants. Eleven of the 50 examples made this immigration connection, and presented LGBT rights as being in harmony with immigrant rights:

The widow of César Chávez wrote an open letter drawing a comparison between immigrant rights and LGBT rights: “For 45 years, my husband faced injustice and discrimination. Now I celebrate his memory and we continue his legacy to support the rights of gay and lesbian couples and their families.”⁴¹

Univision anchor and commentator Jorge Ramos compared the discrimination gay men and women face in the military to the discrimination that immigrants face in the United States. Just as the military has created a policy of discrimination that forces people to lie, he wrote, undocumented immigrants are also forced to lie about their status:

38 “Tolerancia en el D.F.,” *La Opinión*, March 9, 2010

39 “Vergüenza en California,” *La Opinión*, Nov. 6, 2008

40 Alexa Valavanis, *ChicoSol*, May 28, 2009

41 Helen Chávez, “Los derechos de las parejas gay,” *Impacto USA*, Oct. 30, 2008

Let's look at the two most obvious current examples of discrimination in the United States. The first occurs systematically throughout the most powerful military force the world has known, since the U.S. Army openly discriminates against homosexual men and women, who are prevented from serving openly in the armed forces. The second is the terrible treatment given to immigrants in the United States, where so many people who study and work and contribute to the country's wellbeing are simply not seen as equals because of their immigration status. ... Today, with two stated policies of open discrimination in effect against gays and the undocumented, the United States has entered a dark and inexplicable period.⁴²

Jorge Amaro, a spokesperson for the LGBT rights group Equality California, compared Proposition 8 to two other ballot initiatives that California had approved: Proposition 187, the 1994 bill to prohibit undocumented immigrants from using social services, and Proposition 209, the 1996 bill that prohibited public institutions from considering race, sex, or ethnicity in the admissions process: "As Latinos, a community that has been marginalized by discriminatory propositions like 187 and 209, we have the responsibility to restore legal protections for all Californians, including protections for same-sex couples that are met only under civil matrimony."⁴³

An editorial in *El Diario/La Prensa* linked homophobia to hatred espoused by anti-immigrant groups. Editors wrote that New York Republican gubernatorial candidate Carl Paladino's anti-gay comments were representative of a larger movement to deny rights to LGBT people and immigrants: "Homophobic and anti-immigrant lobbies cloak themselves as the defense of family and America."

Nowhere, however, was the connection between hatred of Latinos and hatred of LGBT people more apparent than in the 2008 murder of Jose Sucuzhañay, an Ecuadorean immigrant who was beaten to death by two young men who shouted anti-gay and anti-Latino epithets at him. Sucuzhanay was not gay but was perceived to be gay because he was walking arm in arm with his brother on a cold night in Brooklyn.

City Council speaker Christine Quinn, who is openly gay, told *El Diario/La Prensa*, "They attacked him for no other reason than their hatred of the gay community and their hatred of the Latino and immigrant community."⁴⁴

An editorial about the murder in *El Diario/La Prensa* cited figures of anti-gay and anti-Latino attacks and condemned the hate that had incited them, noting, "Hate does not emerge in a vacuum. ... Sucuzhanay's attackers must be brought to justice. We commend the leaders who quickly denounced the hateful attack. We also urge them to remain relentless in drawing attention to the trend of hate and the attitudes and fear-mongering giving rise to it."⁴⁵

In a number of instances, LGBT Latinos argued that the two groups needed to do more to support each other and fight discrimination together.

Lizbeth Menéndez, executive director of Unidos, told *Hispanic Link*, "You can't tell me to be a dyke today and an immigrant tomorrow. When I face the mirror every morning, I am both."⁴⁶

Spokesperson Iván Torres told *Hispanic Link*, "Unfortunately, support has been a sort of one-way street. Sure, I'll go out and fight against these policies for Hispanic organizations. But when it comes time to fight for gay rights, who has our back? These organizations are nowhere in sight."⁴⁷

42 Jorge Ramos, "Política oficial: mentir," *Al Día*, Dec. 18, 2010

43 "Este de Los Ángeles se Une para Revocar la Proposición 8," *Eastern Group Publications*, Aug. 6, 2009

44 Catalina Jaramillo, "Indignación tras veredicto," *El Diario/La Prensa*, May 8, 2010

45 Editorial, "Otro víctima de odio," *El Diario/La Prensa*, Dec. 10, 2008

46 Alex Galbraith, "Gay Immigrant Rights," *Hispanic Link*, June 21, 2010

47 Ibid.

Latino media also argued that LGBT groups should do more to support Latinos and immigrants in their struggle for rights.

Editors of *El Diario/La Prensa* wrote, “Across the nation, a gay rights agenda must be representative of LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) Latinos and the deeper inequities they confront. The gap between the struggle for LGBT rights and the struggles for economic and racial justice needs to be closed.”⁴⁸

3. National security

Two examples argued in favor of repealing “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” for national security reasons, contending that gay soldiers were just as capable as their non-gay colleagues.

An editorial in *La Opinión* argued that the sexual orientation of a member of the military had nothing to do with his or her ability to accomplish a mission.⁴⁹

Commentator Humberto Caspa argued that the notion that openly gay soldiers would weaken a military regiment implied that gay soldiers were inherently weaker than heterosexual soldiers. “In this sense, they not only question the sexuality of the gay soldier, but also his patriotism, his loyalty to the country and his lack of professional capacity to carry out his military duties.”⁵⁰

4. Morality

Three examples argued in support of LGBT rights from a moral perspective, criticizing “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” for creating a culture of dishonesty:

Retired Marine Eric Alva told *La Opinión*, “‘Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell’ has forced people to be dishonest about who they are and to break the trust with their colleagues”;⁵¹ Jorge Ramos wrote, “The official policy of the U.S. Armed Forces is to lie, and also to discriminate”;⁵² Humberto Caspa wrote that Bill Clinton’s “great sin” was not Monica Lewinsky — it was “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.”⁵³

5. Privacy rights

Two examples argued that LGBT rights should be protected as individual and privacy rights:

In an op-ed advocating “no” on Proposition 8, writer Alejandro Maciel argued, “The government need not interfere in the private lives of citizens and decide whom they can fall in love with.”⁵⁴

La Opinión published an editorial opposing Proposition 8 as an unnecessary restriction on the rights of individuals: “We believe this is an unnecessary initiative that would impose a constitutional restriction on rights now held by a group of Californians whose mutual commitment before the law and society poses no danger whatsoever.”⁵⁵

48 Editorial, “A favor del matrimonio gay,” *El Diario/La Prensa*, Nov. 17, 2008

49 Editorial, “Fin a la discriminación,” *La Opinión*, Dec. 17, 2010

50 Humberto Caspa, “Derecho de los gays,” *Diario La Estrella*, Feb. 5, 2010

51 “Gay cuenta vivencia militar,” Antonieta Cádiz, *La Opinión*, May 30, 2010

52 Jorge Ramos, “Política oficial: mentir,” *Al Día*, Dec. 18, 2010

53 Humberto Caspa, “Don’t Ask Don’t Tell,” *Diario La Estrella*, Dec. 2, 2010

54 Alejandro Maciel, “Parejas del mismo sexo,” *Impacto USA*, Oct. 23, 2008

55 Editorial, “Una propuesta innecesaria,” *La Opinión*, Oct. 9, 2008

6. Humanizing LGBT people: a personal connection

Two examples argued in favor of LGBT rights because of a personal connection the writer felt to someone who was gay. In one case, this connection was to a celebrity, Ricky Martin; in the other case, the writer had a friend who was gay.

In response to an interview with Ricky Martin shortly after he came out, an online user wrote on Univision.com, “The people who love you, we are going to love you no matter what.”⁵⁶

Writer Alejandro Maciel said that having a close personal friend who was gay was a major factor in deciding to support marriage equality: “With such close gay friends and with that proof of love that they express to each other, it leaves me no other option than to wish them luck in the complicated life of marriage. Let them marry! Who are they hurting with this? Not me.”⁵⁷

7. God/Religion

God and religion were the most commonly used arguments in opposition to LGBT rights, while among those who supported LGBT rights, there was much more limited mention of religion. There was also a notable divide: Media outlets in support of LGBT rights responded to religious arguments by calling for the separation of church and state, while online commenters who supported LGBT rights used religion to make their arguments.

Two examples show this difference in the tactics of the media and their audiences:

The media acknowledged the religious argument against LGBT rights but argued that it should be set aside in observance of the separation of church and state: “This use of religious beliefs to block basic civil rights undermines the separation of church and state in this nation.”⁵⁸

Online users were more likely to engage in a conversation about religion and use the Bible to support their own position in favor of LGBT rights. In response to anti-gay commenters, one online user wrote, “The bible says ‘LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF AND DON’T JUDGE, and that’s the first thing you’re doing. You guys are the ones who are going to hell.”⁵⁹

8. Law of the land

Two examples argued that the Constitutional rights of LGBT people should be protected and that they should be granted equal rights since they were equal under the law.

In a column examining different views on marriage equality, José Fuentes-Salinas concluded, “The important thing is that the framework of socially acceptable behavior not attack the Constitutional rights with which we’ve lived, including freedom of choice and protection from discrimination because of this....”⁶⁰

In his column arguing against “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,” Jorge Ramos noted that the United States was “founded on the ideals of freedom and equality” and cited Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.”⁶¹

56 dilia08, New York, NY, in response to “Ricky Martin dejó los secretos y se confesó,” Univision.com, Nov. 8, 2010

57 Alejandro Maciel, “¡Pues que se casen!” *Impacto USA*, May 22, 2008

58 Editorial, “A favor del matrimonio gay,” *El Diario/La Prensa*, Nov. 17, 2008

59 Latino74, USA, in response to “Ricky Martin dejó los secretos y se confesó,” Univision.com, Nov. 8, 2010

60 José Fuentes-Salinas, “Matrimonios gay en California en suspenso,” *Impacto USA*, Aug. 17, 2010

61 Jorge Ramos, “Política oficial: mentir,” *Al Día*, Dec. 18, 2010

9. Machismo

While attitudes about gender roles were used frequently to argue against LGBT rights, especially by online commenters, only one article in support of LGBT rights addressed issues of machismo in the Latino community.

In the commentary “Macho Man,” writer Louis Bonilla gave examples of machismo in Latin America and the increasingly visible presence of gay Latinos in Philadelphia. Although this is the only example of a pro-LGBT rights commentary to address the issue of machismo, it does not delve into machismo among Latinos in the United States and does not analyze the subject in any depth.⁶²

10. Strengthening marriage

One editorial argued that allowing same-sex couples to marry strengthens all marriage.

On the first day of legal same-sex weddings in California, a celebratory editorial in *La Opinión* argued that the historic move served to strengthen the status of marriage: “The status of marriage is not in danger. To the contrary, today, it is stronger than ever.”⁶³

11. LGBT people as insiders: part of your family

One LGBT rights advocate argued that LGBT people are already part of the fabric of society and are simply fighting for the rights they deserve.

Olga Talamante, executive director of the Chicana/Latina Foundation, told *El Mensajero*, “We are part of the community; we are your aunts and uncles and we are here to defend our rights and those of our families.”⁶⁴

12. You’re born with it

Only one example in the entire media scan presented a real debate on LGBT issues. The debate, broadcast on the Spanish-language TV show “Don Francisco Presenta” on Univision, asked the question: “Are you born gay, or do you become gay?” With a total of seven guests, three on one side of the question and four on the other, those who supported LGBT rights argued that being gay was largely something people were born with, while those who did not support LGBT rights believed that being gay was something people became and could change.⁶⁵

Arguments opposing LGBT rights

The 50 examples of anti-LGBT rights arguments analyzed in this section include arguments made by 25 users in online forums, 21 spokespeople in reported stories, and four writers in commentaries.

The arguments made by opponents of LGBT rights are listed in order of the most commonly to the least commonly used. Each one mirrors an argument made by supporters of LGBT rights, addressing the same theme but from a different perspective.

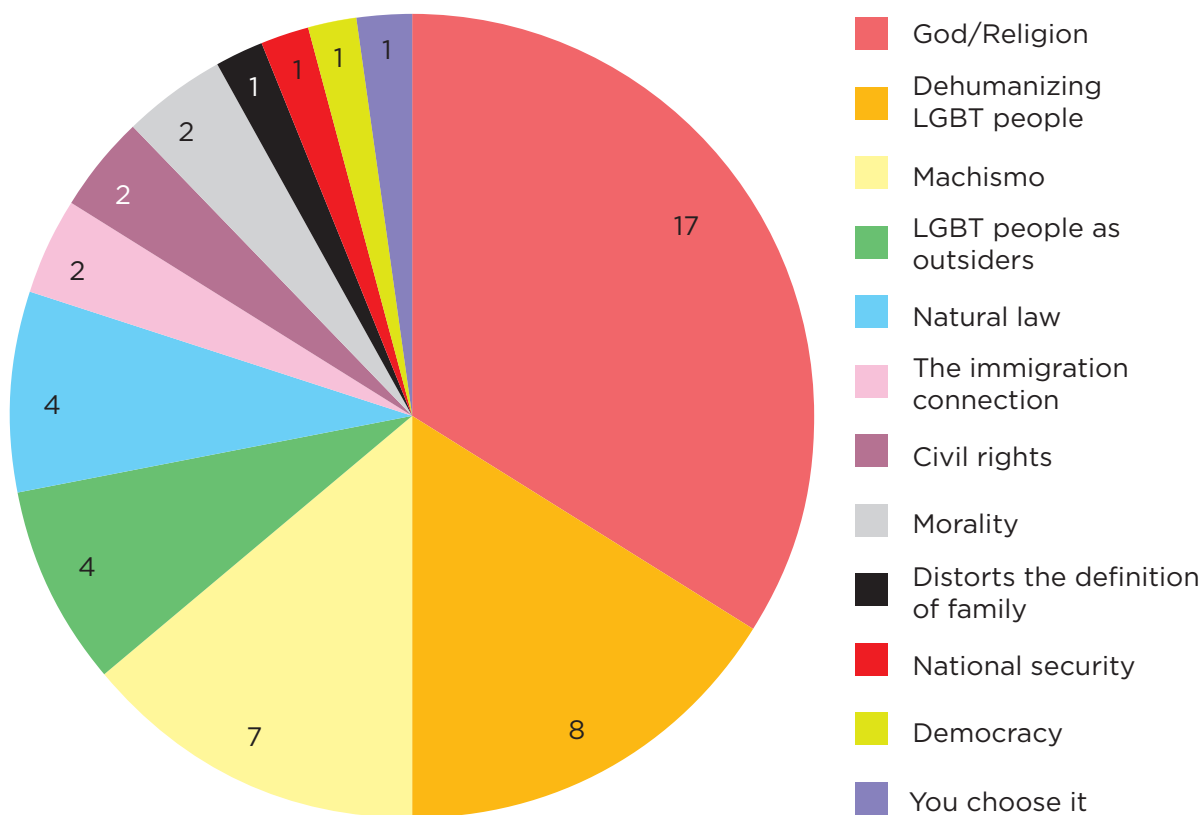
62 Louis Bonilla, “Macho Man,” *Ponte Al Día*, June 29, 2009

63 Editorial, “Una celebración justa,” *La Opinión*, June 17, 2008

64 Erika Cebrenros, “Líderes latinos piden derrotar la Proposición 8,” *El Mensajero*, Oct. 19, 2008

65 “El homosexual, nace o se hace?” “Don Francisco Presenta”, Univision, Feb. 10, 2010

FIGURE 4. ARGUMENTS OPPOSING LGBT RIGHTS



Source: *Coverage of LGBT Issues in Latino Print and Online News Media: An Analysis of Media Content*, The Opportunity Agenda, October 2011.

1. God/Religion

Of the 50 examples of arguments opposing LGBT rights, 17 made the case that homosexuality went against the will of God.

The only publication in this media scan to publish editorials opposing LGBT rights was the Catholic Spanish-language newspaper *El Pregonero*, an affiliate of the Washington Archdiocese, which argued against marriage for same-sex couples when it was proposed in Washington, D.C., in 2009. Editors argued that “marriage is a gift from God” and quoted the Gospel according to Mark as evidence that marriage between a man and a woman followed “God’s design.” The editorial further argued that the law would “undermine the religious freedom of groups and individuals with sincere religious objections to marriage between people of the same sex” and “force us to violate our teachings on marriage, or to abandon our good works.”⁶⁶

In a news report by *El Pregonero*, Washington Auxiliary Bishop Martin Holley argued that D.C. officials were making a mistake in trying to “redefine marriage” and were ignoring the will of God: “Marriage between a man and a woman brings to fruition the wishes of God. They have the sacred mission of bearing children and founding a family that serves as the basis for human civilization. The Catholic Church has an obligation to respect what God has reserved for men and women.”⁶⁷

66 Editorial, “El concejo de DC no debe redefinir el matrimonio,” *El Pregonero*, Oct. 22, 2009

67 Miguel Vivanco, “El matrimonio tiene una naturaleza de vida,” *El Pregonero*, Oct. 29, 2009

Many online commenters also used religion to make the case against LGBT rights. They pointed to passages or stories from the Bible, such as Sodom and Gomorrah, as evidence of God’s rejection of homosexuality. By moving to end “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,” they voiced the belief that the U.S. government was acting counter to God’s wishes.

In response to an unscientific Univision online poll that asked: “Do you think the ‘Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell’ law will change the history of the army?” (the poll results were close, with 49 percent agreeing and 51 percent disagreeing), one commenter wrote: “The Government has left behind and denied God, the God that they say ‘in God we trust,’ as if God would support Homosexuality, they don’t remember how he destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.”⁶⁸

2. Dehumanizing LGBT people: slurs, disgust

Eight of the 50 examples analyzed in this section (nearly all of them from online users’ comments) used dehumanizing language to express disgust with and disapproval of the LGBT community, making the implicit argument that LGBT people were less than human.

The dehumanization of LGBT people through slurs and insults was a frequently used strategy by online commenters who opposed LGBT rights. No media outlets engaged in that kind of anti-gay rhetoric. However, there were several notable exceptions in which Latino media tolerated or encouraged homophobic speech and attitudes. For more on this, see the section in this report titled, “Homosexuality” under “Storylines.”

Online commenters frequently expressed disgust at homosexuality: The terms they used to describe it included “disgusting,” “horrifying,” “dirty,” “weakness,” and “sick.”

They also frequently used slurs to refer to gay people, including *maricón* and other Spanish-language equivalents of the slur “faggot.”

While nearly all of this kind of language in this media scan came from online commenters, there were three notable exceptions of spokespeople (one member of the clergy and two celebrities) whose anti-gay language was reported in Latino media: Peruvian Bishop Luis Bambarén’s televised remark that gay people should be called *maricones* (“faggots”), a comment for which he later apologized; Mexican singer Paquita la del Barrio’s remark on Escándalo TV that she’d “rather see a kid die” than be adopted by same-sex parents; and singer Romeo’s use of the word “pájaro,” a Dominican pejorative slang term for “gay,” when responding to rumors about his sexuality on the Miami Spanish-language TV talk show “El Show de Cristina.”

This last remark was the only example in the entire media scan in which a Latino media outlet, *Latina Magazine*, took on the issue of slurs and anti-gay language:

“OK, Romeo, we get it. You’re not gay, but did you have to use the word ‘pájaro’? That’s a bit harsh!”⁶⁹

3. Machismo

Seven of the 50 anti-LGBT rights arguments contended that LGBT rights represented a threat to manhood. Nearly all of the arguments that used machismo and traditional ideas about masculinity as a rationale came from online commenters.

68 tomemi2, Port Charlotte, Florida, in response to poll “¿Cree usted que la Ley ‘don’t ask don’t tell’ cambiará la historia del ejército?” Univision.com, Dec. 22, 2010

69 Mariela Rosario, “Romeo from Aventura Addresses Sexuality Rumors,” *Latina Magazine*, Sept. 9, 2009

In online conversations about “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,” online commenters depicted openly gay soldiers as less “macho” than their peers and envisioned a future in which openly gay men and women could enlist in the armed forces as one that could compromise the honor and order of the military and turn the military into a laughingstock.

In an online discussion about “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,” a commenter linked machismo to honor and respect. “The army will lose its hierarchy of macho men, it will lose honor and respect.”⁷⁰ Another commenter wrote, “Imagine the army with Dora the Explorer backpacks and Barbie wings and Tinkerbell shoes, and instead of going to war, they go to Mexico to get married.”⁷¹

Meanwhile, a commenter who supported letting gay people serve openly in the military added one condition: that they leave their *mariposeria* (“gay behavior”) at home. “It’s good that they enter the army, we need more people there. But they should enter as ‘machos’ and not act like ‘mariposones’ (‘gays’). ... I say give them the opportunity to enter, but that they leave the ‘mariposeria’ (‘gay behavior’) at home.”⁷²

In response to Ricky Martin coming out, many online commenters questioned his masculinity. One commenter, for example, wrote, “I don’t understand. ... How can he call himself a man if he likes men?????”⁷³

4. LGBT people as outsiders: a threat to your kids

While pro-LGBT rights arguments largely saw LGBT people as “insiders” — those who were already part of their families and communities — opponents of LGBT rights presented them as “outsiders” — those who should be kept away and who posed a threat to children and society at large.

Four of the 50 examples analyzed in this section present LGBT people as a threat to children, families, and communities. Commenters in online forums and spokespeople in reported stories argued against LGBT rights as a way to “protect” themselves and their communities.

When asked in a Univision Chicago unscientific online poll, “Do you think gay couples should have the same rights as heterosexual couples?” in which 52 percent of respondents said “yes” and 48 percent said “no”, one online user explained her answer this way: “These people are a bad example for our kids.”⁷⁴

During the lead-up to the 2008 election, when California voters would decide on Proposition 8, several spokespeople in favor of the proposition made the case that it would “protect” children against the “threat” of marriage for same-sex couples.

Marco Antonio Vergara, spokesperson for the Protect Marriage Coalition, warned that marriage equality was already being taught in public schools, noting a first-grade class that attended a teacher’s wedding in San Francisco.⁷⁵

70 incatinwaj, Houston, Texas, in response to poll: ¿Cree usted que la Ley ‘don’t ask don’t tell’ cambiará la historia del ejército?, Univision.com, Dec. 22, 2010

71 miscostrotas, Williamsburg, Virginia in response to poll: ¿Cree usted que la Ley ‘don’t ask don’t tell’ cambiará la historia del ejército?, Univision.com, Dec. 22, 2010

72 mexiamericangirl, Fresno, California, in response to poll: ¿Cree usted que la Ley ‘don’t ask don’t tell’ cambiará la historia del ejército?, Univision.com, Dec. 22, 2010

73 issayana, Paramount, California, in response to “Ricky Martin dejó los secretos y se confesó,” Univision.com, Nov. 8, 2010

74 laruby1985, Chicago, Illinois, in response to poll: “Do You Think Gay Couples Should Have the Same Rights as Heterosexual Couples?” Univision.com Chicago, Jan. 31, 2011

75 Erika Cebreros, “Líderes latinos piden derrotar la Proposición 8,” *El Mensajero*, Oct. 19, 2008

Meanwhile, one small bilingual community newspaper in San Francisco, *El Bohemio*, published two verbatim press releases written by the “Yes on 8” campaign that portrayed some schools as teaching a “gay curriculum” that was a “threat” to children. They were not identified as press releases or as being affiliated with the campaign. One press release, titled “Elementary School Children to Be Indoctrinated With New Gay Curriculum,” began with the statement:

Providing yet another example of the threat that gay marriage and the gay agenda provides to school children and parental authority, the Alameda Unified School District last evening adopted a new curriculum, over the objections of hundreds of parents who testified at the board hearings. The newly adopted curriculum specifically elevates respect for gay, lesbian and bisexual students and their families over respect for diverse racial and religious backgrounds.⁷⁶

5. Natural law

While supporters of LGBT rights used the Constitution, or the “law of the land,” to argue in favor of equal rights for the LGBT community, opponents of LGBT rights used what they saw as a higher law to make their case, which they called “natural law.” According to natural law, they argued, marriage was supposed to be between a man and a woman, for the purpose of bearing and raising children. Children, meanwhile, had the “right” to both a mother and father. Four of the 50 examples in this analysis used this argument to make their case against LGBT rights.

An editorial against marriage equality in the Catholic newspaper *El Pregonero* argued that natural law could not be changed:

Marriage is a human institution that is based on natural law. Natural law is not only the basis of the teachings of our faith, but is also the basis of civil law. Although some would like to change the natural law, that is not possible. ... Marriage has a very special meaning that has endured over time. It is the union of a man and a woman, open to procreating and raising children with their unique and complementary gifts. In fact, redefining marriage would mark the first time society intentionally deprived a child of the right to have a father and a mother.⁷⁷

6. The immigration connection

Both supporters and opponents of LGBT rights made the “immigration connection,” drawing a comparison between LGBT rights and immigrant rights. However, they viewed it from two opposing perspectives. While supporters argued that LGBT rights were in harmony with immigrant rights, opponents argued that LGBT rights were in competition with immigrant rights. Two of 50 arguments made this connection.

The DREAM Act was defeated in the Senate on the same day “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” was repealed.

One online commenter wrote, “While the undocumented are waiting for amnesty and the DREAM Act, Obama is signing this law that goes against God.”⁷⁸

After the DREAM Act failed in the Senate, another commenter wrote, “What a shame they defeated the ‘DREAM ACT,’ but they don’t defeat ‘same sex marriage,’ I say, before they pass the Dream Act, they’re going to give more favors to Homosexuals.”⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Cherri Spriggs-Hernandez, “Elementary School Children to Be Indoctrinated With New Gay Curriculum,” *El Bohemio*, May 30, 2009

⁷⁷ Editorial, “Matrimonio es Patrimonio,” *El Pregonero*, Sept. 24, 2009

⁷⁸ aylines, New Jersey, in response to poll “¿Cree usted que la Ley ‘don’t ask don’t tell’ cambiará la historia del ejército?” Univision.com, Dec. 22, 2010

⁷⁹ tomemi2, Port Charlotte, Florida, in response to poll “¿Cree usted que la Ley ‘don’t ask don’t tell’ cambiará la historia del ejército?” Univision.com, Dec. 22, 2010

7. Civil rights

Civil rights was the most frequently used argument by supporters of LGBT rights. Opponents of LGBT rights acknowledged the argument in a limited number of articles. Two of 50 arguments against LGBT rights addressed the civil rights issue.

El Pregonero argued that marriage equality is not a civil rights issue; it is another requirement like age of consent and laws against incest: “The Church has a long history of supporting civil rights, equality, and respect for all people. Redefining marriage has nothing to do with civil rights. Civil marriage has all kinds of guidelines, such as age of consent or blood relationship. The gender of the participants is another one.”⁸⁰

8. Morality

Two examples argued against LGBT rights using the argument that homosexuality is morally wrong, and a society that does not accept homosexuality is in the right.

One commenter wrote, “Ricky Martin knows it’s wrong that’s why he doesn’t sing to men.”⁸¹

But another commenter acknowledged, pejoratively, that LGBT rights advocates, including Ricky Martin, were making the opposite argument: “According to homos, society is discriminatory for expressing its disagreement with homosexuality... or homophobic!! In other words, we are wrong... not them...”⁸²

9. Distorts the definition of family

While LGBT rights supporters argued that marriage equality strengthened all marriage, LGBT rights opponents argued that civil unions “distorted” the definition of family and have a negative impact on other families. One example used this argument:

Pope Benedict XVI stated that laws that approve “forms of unions which distort the essence and purpose of the family end up penalizing those who, with much effort, commit themselves to living a life whose bonds are marked by stable intimacy, have juridical guarantees and are recognized publicly.”⁸³

10. National security

While supporters of LGBT rights argued in favor of repealing “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” for national security reasons, opponents made the case that allowing openly gay soldiers in the military would compromise national security.

One online commenter wrote that the repercussions of repealing “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” could create havoc in the military and compromise the military’s ability to do its job: “Let’s respect them but let’s not give them this right. It will lead to deaths, abuses, lack of control, lawsuits.”⁸⁴

80 Editorial, “Matrimonio es Patrimonio,” *El Pregonero*, Sept. 24, 2009

81 fenixrjr, Orlando, Florida, in response to poll “¿Cree usted que la Ley ‘don’t ask don’t tell’ cambiará la historia del ejército?” Univision.com, Dec. 22, 2010

82 issayana, Paramount, California, in response to “Ricky Martin dejó los secretos y se confesó,” Univision.com, Nov. 8, 2010

83 “Arremete el Papa contra las bodas de homosexuales,” *Notimex*, Jan. 14, 2011

84 enixrjr, Orlando, Florida, in response to poll “¿Cree usted que la Ley ‘don’t ask don’t tell’ cambiará la historia del ejército?” Univision.com, Dec. 22, 2010

11. Democracy

While LGBT rights supporters argued in favor of LGBT rights as privacy and individual rights, opponents contended that granting marriage rights to same-sex couples went against the democratic process. After California voters approved Proposition 8, proponents of the initiative argued that the ensuing court battle did not respect the vote of the people:

Gilberto Arteaga, spokesperson for the “Yes on 8” campaign, told *La Opinión*, “The problem we have with the judges is that they aren’t listening to what the people are saying and this victory makes it clear that democracy must be respected.”⁸⁵

12. You choose it

In a debate on LGBT issues broadcast on the Univision TV show “Don Francisco Presenta,” opponents of LGBT rights argued that homosexuality was not something a person was born with, but was something a person became, and that it could be changed.⁸⁶

85 Rubén Moreno, “La Proposición 8 camino a la Victoria,” *La Opinión*, Nov. 5, 2008

86 “El homosexual, nace o se hace?” “Don Francisco Presenta,” Univision, Feb. 10, 2010

Appendix II

Publications and Online Media

- Adelante Magazine* (Los Angeles) – Gay bilingual monthly magazine (Circulation: 25,000)
- AFP in Spanish (nationally syndicated) – International news agency
- Al Día* (Dallas) – Spanish-language semiweekly sister paper of *The Dallas Morning News* (Circ.: 120,000)
- Al Día* (Philadelphia) – Bilingual weekly newspaper (Circ.: 54,539)
- Alianza Metropolitan News* (San Jose) – Bilingual monthly community newspaper (Circ.: 40,000)
- A.P. in Spanish (nationally syndicated) – International news agency
- Blabbeando* (New York) – Gay English-language blog
- ChicoSol* (Chico, Calif.) – Bilingual biweekly online news magazine
- Diario La Estrella* (Fort Worth) – Spanish-language weekly sister paper of *Star-Telegram* (Circ.: 100,000)
- Diario San Diego* (Chula Vista, Calif.) – Spanish-language independent weekly newspaper (Circ.: 32,000)
- Eastern Group Publications (Los Angeles) – Bilingual weekly independent newspaper chain (Circ.: 106,500)
- EFE (nationally syndicated) – Spanish-language international news agency based in Madrid
- El Bohemio* (San Francisco) – Spanish-language weekly community newspaper (Circ.: 20,000)
- El Diario/La Prensa* (New York) – Spanish-language daily newspaper (ImpreMedia) (Circ.: 52,261)
- El Latino San Diego* (Chula Vista, Calif.) – Spanish-language weekly newspaper (Circ.: 77,000)
- El Mensajero* (San Francisco) – Spanish-language weekly newspaper (ImpreMedia) (Circ.: 102,614)
- El Nuevo Día* (San Juan, Puerto Rico) – Spanish-language daily newspaper (Circ.: 150,000)
- El Nuevo Herald* (Miami) – Spanish-language daily sister paper of *The Miami Herald* (Circ.: 57,748)
- El Nuevo Sol* (Northridge) – Bilingual student newspaper of CSU Northridge (Circ.: 8,000)
- El Observador* (San Jose) – Bilingual weekly community newspaper (Circ.: 40,000)
- El Pregonero* (Washington, D.C.) – Catholic Spanish-language weekly newspaper (Circ.: 38,000)
- El Tecolote* (San Francisco) – Bilingual biweekly community newspaper (Circ.: 10,000)
- El Tiempo Latino* (Arlington, Va.) – Spanish-language weekly of *The Washington Post* (Circ.: 50,000)

Hispanic Business (Santa Barbara) – English-language national monthly magazine (Circ.: 260,000)

Hispanic Link (Washington, D.C.) – English-language national weekly news service (Circ.: 3,000; Syndication: 60 Spanish newspapers)

Hoy (Chicago and Los Angeles) – Spanish-language daily (Chicago) and weekly (Los Angeles) newspaper (Tribune) (Circ.: 75,000 Chicago; 142,000 L.A.)

Hoy (New York) – Spanish-language daily online newspaper (ImpreMedia) (Impre’s monthly unique visitors in U.S.: 1.2 million)

Impacto USA (Long Beach) – Spanish-language weekly newspaper (Circ.: 252,000)

La Opinión (Los Angeles) – Spanish-language daily newspaper (ImpreMedia) (Circ.: 96,522)

La Prensa (Riverside, Calif.) – Spanish-language weekly newspaper (Press-Enterprise) (Circ.: 65,000)

La Prensa-San Diego (San Diego) – Bilingual weekly community newspaper (Circ.: 25,000)

La Raza (Chicago) – Spanish-language weekly newspaper (ImpreMedia) (Circ.: 152,154)

Latina Magazine (New York) – English-language monthly lifestyle magazine (Circ.: 500,000)

La Voz Arizona (Phoenix) – Spanish-language weekly sister paper of *The Arizona Republic* (Circ.: 60,000)

Notimex (nationally syndicated) – Spanish-language news agency based in Mexico City

Primera Hora (Guaynabo, Puerto Rico) – Spanish-language daily newspaper (Circ.: 168,000)

Univision.com (Miami) – Spanish-language daily online news site (Monthly unique visitors in U.S.: 6 million)

Queens Latino (New York) – Spanish-language online news site and monthly newspaper (Circ.: 10,000)

Broadcast Media

“Aqui y Ahora,” Univision, Spanish-language weekly news magazine show (Miami, Fla.)

“Don Francisco Presenta,” Univision, Spanish-language weekly talk show (Miami, Fla.)

“El Show de Cristina,” Univision, Spanish-language weekly talk show (Miami, Fla.)

“José Luis Sin Censura,” Liberman Broadcasting, Spanish-language daytime talk show (Burbank, Calif.)

Online Discourse Scan

Executive Summary

This report analyzes discourse about the intersection of LGBT issues and people of color on the most widely used platforms on the social web: blogs, YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter. Our goal was to identify the themes, issues, values, and images LGBT African Americans and Latinos are encountering on social media platforms for which they are an important audience. Using several available search tools, we scanned all four platforms for a series of uniform key words.

Major findings

- ▶ Three of the platforms — blogs, YouTube, and Twitter — carry some content about policy issues that affect LGBT people of color. There is more content about and for LGBT African Americans than there is about or for LGBT Latinos. The content on Facebook is more limited.
- ▶ **Blogs:** During the time frame we studied, pro-LGBT bloggers dominated those blogs that regularly cover the intersection of racial justice, sexual orientation, and gender identity. The discourse took place not only on blogs that prioritize those audiences but in the mainstream blogosphere as well.
 - ✓ The most common themes on blogs covering LGBT issues and African Americans were racism within the mainstream LGBT community; homophobia within the African-American community; sexuality, culture, and the African-American experience; African-American opposition to marriage equality; tension between LGBT rights and African-American civil rights; and men on the “down low.”
 - ✓ The most common themes on blogs covering LGBT issues and Latinos were entertainment and the media, the family, and the potential impact of the increasing Latino voting power on LGBT rights.
- ▶ **Facebook:** Much of the content in our sampling of Facebook Groups and Pages was only tangentially related to LGBT policy issues. Overall it did not appear that Facebook was being widely used to inform and activate LGBT people of color around the issues that affect them.
- ▶ **Twitter:** The conversation on Twitter touching on the intersection of African Americans, gender identity, and sexual orientation was relatively lively and dominated by LGBT-rights advocates and advocacy organizations, with celebrities and bloggers also wielding significant influence. The most common themes were marriage equality, tension between LGBT rights and African-American civil rights, and HIV/AIDS and “Down Low Black Men.” The conversation connecting LGBT issues with Latinos was much more limited and tended to focus on celebrities and other notable individuals.
- ▶ **YouTube:** The videos on YouTube connecting LGBT issues to the African-American and Latino communities were dominated by pro-LGBT videos of celebrities and LGBT individuals relating personal stories. We also found videos posted by advocacy organizations and public affairs and news broadcasts presenting both pro- and anti-LGBT views.

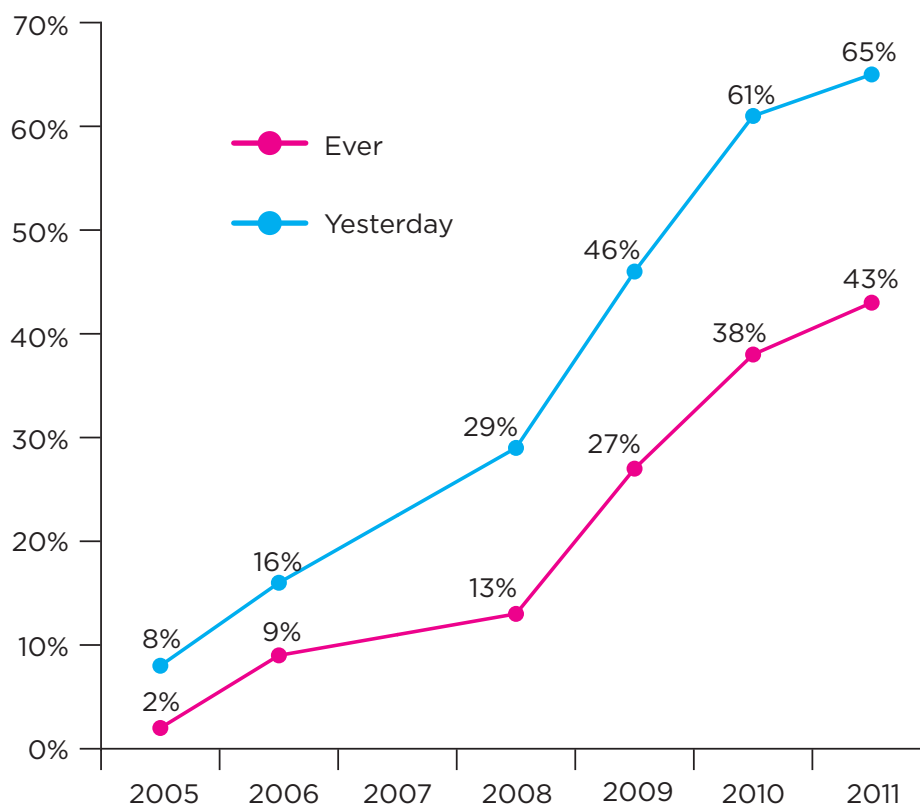
- ✓ The most common themes connecting African Americans with LGBT issues were “being black and gay,” the role of the black church, tension between LGBT rights and African-American civil rights, marriage equality, “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,” and HIV/AIDS and “down low men.”
- ✓ The most common themes connecting Latinos with LGBT issues were “being Latino and gay,” LGBT immigrants, and marriage equality.

This report provides important insight into the online discourse about LGBT people of color and their rights, and reveals challenges and opportunities for improving the media content. Based on this insight, The Opportunity Agenda has developed a set of recommendations which can be found at http://opportunityagenda.org/lgbt_report_2012.

Introduction

In just a few short years, we have witnessed a transformative change in the most popular technologies and uses of the internet. That change, in turn, is reshaping the media landscape and the public discourse. The readerships of some mainstream blogs rival those of major newspapers. Facebook recently hit 800 million users — one in every nine people on the planet.¹ YouTube remains the go-to site for any sort of online video, and the number of Twitter-users has grown exponentially since the first tweet was sent in March 2006: today, an average of 140 million tweets are sent every day worldwide.² As Pew researchers have put it, “The pace with which new users have flocked to social networking sites has been staggering.”³

FIGURE 1. SOCIAL NETWORKING SITE USE BY ONLINE ADULTS, 2005-2011
THE PERCENTAGE OF ALL ADULT INTERNET USERS WHO USE SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES SINCE 2005



Source: Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project surveys; February 2005, August 2006, May 2008, May 2010, and May 2011.

A new survey by Georgetown University and Ogilvy Public Relations⁴ shows that African Americans and Latinos are significantly more likely than whites to believe that they can help get the word out

1 Maddy Rowe, “No Signs Of Slowing Up: Face book’s New 800 Million,” October 5, 2011, at: <http://www.onlinesocialmedia.net/20111005/no-signs-of-slowing-up-facebooks-new-800-million>

2 <http://blog.twitter.com/2011/03/numbers.html>

3 Mary Madden, Kathryn Zickuhr, “65% of online adults use social networking sites,” Pew Research Center, August 26, 2011

4 Georgetown University Center for Social Impact Communication and Ogilvy Public Relations, “Social Media Plays Greater Role in Cause Engagement for African Americans and Hispanics,” May 31, 2011

about a social issue or cause through online social networks (58 percent and 51 percent, respectively, compared to 34 percent of whites). Nearly one in three African-American adults (30 percent) and four in ten Hispanics (39 percent) say that they are more likely to support a cause or social issue online than offline today — both significantly higher percentages than whites (24 percent). Both African Americans and Hispanics are also more likely than whites to look to social media as an additional source of information, and they are also more likely to say that supporting causes makes them feel like a part of a community.

Given these trends, it is vital that advocates take full advantage of the communications opportunities offered by social media. This analysis of online discourse is based on scans of the most widely used platforms on the social web: blogs, YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter. Our goal was to identify the themes, issues, values, and images LGBT African Americans and Latinos are encountering by looking at social media platforms for which they are an important audience.

Overall Methodology

Search terms were chosen based on both generic terms and an understanding of the top LGBT topics of conversation in the African-American and Latino communities. The terms “Latino” and “Hispanic” and “black” and “African American” were used in order to capture all relevant conversations and any differences in the use of the terms within those online communities:

- ▶ gay black OR lesbian black OR LGBT black OR transgender black
- ▶ gay African American OR lesbian African American OR LGBT African American OR transgender African American
- ▶ gay Latino OR lesbian Latino OR Latino LGBT OR transgender Latino
- ▶ gay Hispanic OR lesbian Hispanic OR LGBT Hispanic OR transgender Hispanic
- ▶ gay Latina OR lesbian Latina OR LGBT Latina OR transgender Latina
- ▶ homosexual black
- ▶ homosexual Latino
- ▶ black gay marriage OR black same-sex marriage
- ▶ Hispanic gay marriage OR Hispanic same-sex marriage
- ▶ black Don’t Ask Don’t Tell
- ▶ Latino Don’t Ask Don’t Tell
- ▶ black Defense of Marriage Act
- ▶ Latino Defense of Marriage Act
- ▶ black “Prop 8”
- ▶ Latino “Prop 8”
- ▶ “down low” black

For each platform, search tools that provided the greatest date range and reliability of search results were used. (See “Methodology” in each section for more details.) For the blogosphere and YouTube, findings analyze all content available for search at the time of the scan (April 2011) and report on the outlets, authors, and key players with the greatest visitor traffic and views.

Blogs

Blogs have become a ubiquitous source of news and commentary on the internet. Blogs range in subject matter from general news to niche topics on anything one can possibly imagine. BlogPulse,⁵ a website that tracks trends and mentions in approximately 152 million blogs,⁶ gives a good picture of the size of the blogosphere.

5 *BlogPulse*, accessed March 14, 2011, <http://www.blogpulse.com>

6 “Internet 2010 in Numbers,” *Pingdom*, last modified January 12, 2011, <http://royal.pingdom.com/2011/01/12/internet-2010-in-numbers>

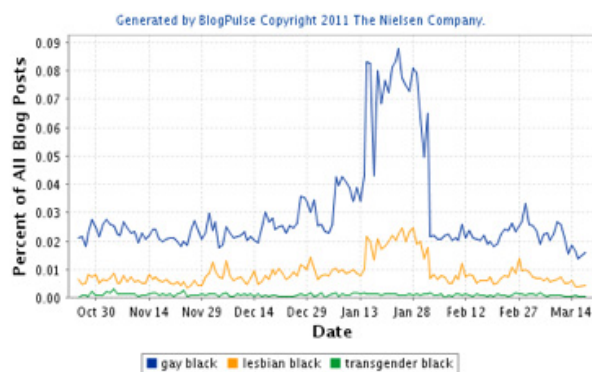
Methodology

To better grasp the nature of the conversation on blogs surrounding people of color and LGBT issues, we:

- ▶ Entered the selected keywords on BlogPulse to obtain a sample of relevant blog posts in the last six months (October 2010 – March 2011); and
- ▶ Used Technorati,⁷ a website that provides real-time searches of blogs by keywords, including a popularity ranking, to see which highly trafficked blogs were discussing issues relevant to the keywords.

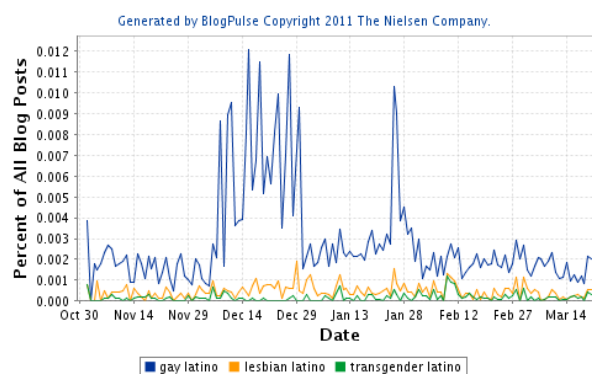
Once a list of blog posts with relevant content was compiled, we analyzed the posts for common themes. This analysis includes a Technorati Authority ranking,⁸ which is a ranking for blogs based on their influence within the blogosphere.

Using BlogPulse,⁹ we found that the word “black” yielded the highest volume of blog results overall and that the term “black” in LGBT-related conversations is used more frequently in the blogosphere than “African American.”



Use of the phrases “gay black,” “lesbian black,” and “transgender black” in blogs according to BlogPulse, March 14, 2011.

“Latino” brought up more posts than “Hispanic” or “Latina.”



Use of the phrases “gay latino,” “lesbian latino,” and “transgender latino” in blogs according to BlogPulse, March 14, 2011.

7 *Technorati*, accessed March 14, 2011, <http://technorati.com>

8 “Technorati Authority FAG,” Technorati, accessed March 14, 2011, <http://technorati.com/what-is-technorati-authority>

9 *BlogPulse*, accessed March 14, 2011, <http://www.blogpulse.com>

The term “gay” is the most common LGBT term, compared to “lesbian,” “bisexual,” and “transgender,” which are far less common.

The current playing field

During the time frame we studied, pro-LGBT bloggers dominated the discourse on those sites that covered LGBT issues and people of color. Anti-LGBT perspectives existed in blog circles but were less visible. The conversation around the intersection of LGBT issues and communities of color took place not only on blogs that prioritize those audiences but in the mainstream blogosphere as well.

Blogs covering LGBT issues and the African-American community

The most highly trafficked blogs, according to site traffic numbers from Quantcast¹⁰ and Authority ranking from Technorati (where available),¹¹ were largely pro-LGBT and included the following:

- ▶ Wonk Room — Authority 710 (21,800 monthly U.S. visits)
- ▶ Towleroad News — Authority 689 (375,000 monthly U.S. visits)
- ▶ Joe. My. God. — Authority 664 (141,600 monthly U.S. visits)
- ▶ PinkNews.co.uk — Authority 660 (99,000 monthly global visits visits)
- ▶ Queerty — Authority 647 (307,727 monthly U.S. visits)
- ▶ Pam’s House Blend (41,900 monthly U.S. visits)

One blog with a high “Authority” ranking from Technorati and high traffic numbers was anti-LGBT:

- ▶ iOwntheWorld — Authority 664

The most common themes

Racism Within the Mainstream LGBT Community

A recurring theme on pro-LGBT blogs was criticism of racism within the larger LGBT community. We found several posts critical of Logo TV, MTV’s gay and lesbian network,¹² for not including any African-American characters in its show “The A-List.” Nevin Jefferson, a gay African-American blogger, wrote, “I’ve been told by people of every race and creed that the so-called Gay community is ‘the most racist community’ there is” and asserted that people who are African American and gay are rejected by both communities.¹³ Other bloggers suggested that the white LGBT community needs to acknowledge the existence of white privilege.

Homophobia Within the African-American Community

Posts by African-American bloggers criticized homophobia in the African-American community. These included claims that the African-American community was “stabbing their own people in the back” by opposing LGBT equality:

10 Quantcast, accessed March 14, 2011, <http://www.quantcast.com>

11 “Technorati Authority measures a site’s standing and influence in the blogosphere. Authority is calculated based on a site’s linking behavior, categorization and other associated data over a short, finite period of time. A site’s authority may rapidly rise and fall depending on what the blogosphere is discussing at the moment, and how often a site produces content being referenced by other sites.” More information is available at <http://technorati.com/what-is-technorati-authority/#ixzz1VImUkKQV>.

12 LOGO TV, accessed March 14, 2011, <http://www.logotv.com>

13 Nevin Jefferson, “The Summer of Pride Divide Part III,” *The Saga Continues*, last modified November 24, 2010, <http://wnevinj721.typepad.com/blog/2010/11/the-summer-of-pride-divide-part-iii.html>

African-American leaders who speak against lgbt equality are stabbing their own people in the back — the young black lesbian kicked out of her home for “acting like a man,” the effeminate black gay boy constantly picked on by bullies, the older African-Americans lgbs left adrift and rendered invisible by their own black community, and all of the other assorted black lgbt brothers, sisters, cousins, nephews, nieces, and close friends not given the courtesy of simple public acknowledgement.¹⁴

Also criticized was the failure to recognize the contributions of African-American LGBT individuals during Black History month.¹⁵

Sexuality, Culture, and the African-American Experience

The perception that being gay threatens African-American masculinity was also a common theme. The blogger nohomo375 wrote that being identified as gay was to be doubly marginalized: “black persons, after centuries of oppression, do not want to lose ground because of the implications that he or she may be identified as a ‘homo’.”¹⁶ Another post on homophobia in the hip-hop community noted the role of hyper-masculinity in hip-hop, and observed that “homosexuality” is used lyrically to signify a lack of masculinity. Posts about Gay Hip Hop, an organization trying to promote LGBT themes in hip-hop culture, suggested that it is trying to fit into the mold of masculinity: “Homo Hop is hip-hop boiled down to its essence: blunt expression, individual and collective identity and sexuality.”¹⁷

There are blogs that reflect a desire to counter negative images of LGBT African Americans by referencing significant LGBT African-American figures. For instance, one blogger wrote that Bayard Rustin, organizer of the 1963 March on Washington, “could’ve been as famous if not more famous than Martin Luther King, but because he was homosexual, he mostly stayed in the background.”¹⁸ Another discussed SGL, or same-gender loving, a term used to counter the negative connotation of “down-low,” that “affirms black homosexual and bisexual men and women through its African-American conceptual origins, African inspired iconography, philosophy, symbology, principles, and values.”¹⁹

African-American Opposition to Marriage Equality

The active opposition of some African-American religious leaders to marriage equality was a subject of discussion in the blogosphere. One post referred to Preacher Voddie Baucham and his claim that “homosexuals have co-opted blackness”²⁰ by making marriage a civil rights issue:

Pastor and cultural apologist Voddie Baucham challenged Christian broadcasters at their annual convention on Saturday to not buy into the “gay is the new black” propaganda, but instead to remain committed to defending biblical marriage on the airwaves. “The reason is the homosexuals have effectively co-opted blackness...to where now, we actually believe gay is the

14 Ibid.

15 Alvin McEwan, “From one black man to the black community - stop the homophobic madness!” *Pam’s House Blend*, last modified March 14, 2011, <http://www.pamshouseblend.com/diary/18837/from-one-black-man-to-the-black-community-stop-the-homophobic-madness>

16 The History of “No Homo,” NOHOMO375, last modified March 7, 2011, <http://nohomo375.wordpress.com/2011/03/07/the-history-of-no-homo>

17 “The Scoop on Gay Hip Hop,” *Dance Colleges*, last modified February 4, 2011, <http://hiphopdance.dancecolleges.org/2011/02/04/the-scoop-on-gay-hip-hop>

18 Michael Christopher, “Rewriting Civil Right,” *Michael Christopher*, last modified March 6, 2011, <http://michaelchristopherj.wordpress.com/2011/03/06/rewriting-civil-right>

19 “Same gender loving,” *Online Channels*, last modified March 6, 2011, <http://hey-facebook.blogspot.com/2011/03/same-gender-loving.html>

20 “Preacher Says Gay is Not the New Black,” *The Gospel News Wire*, last modified March 2, 2011, <http://www.thegospelnewswire.com/preacher-says-gay-is-not-the-new-black>

new black and we actually believe homosexual marriage is a civil rights issue,” he explained. He stressed, however, that being gay is not the same as being black.²¹

Another post pointed to the Colonial Baptist Church’s opposition to a Maryland bill that would legalize marriage for gay and lesbian couples. Robert Anderson, Jr., pastor of the church, echoed Baucham’s sentiments that marriage equality cannot be compared to African-American civil rights because homosexuality is a sin, and he credited his church with “stopping gay marriage in its tracks.”²²

Conservative bloggers were critical of President Obama for instructing the Department of Justice not to defend the constitutionality of the Defense of Marriage Act. Former governor and Fox News commentator Mike Huckabee speculated this move could alienate African-American voters who “overwhelmingly” support traditional marriage.²³

But other bloggers pointed out that African-American voters, who are generally more concerned with economic issues, do not consider marriage equality to be a priority and tend to vote for Democratic candidates no matter what.^{24, 25}

Tension Between LGBT Rights and African-American Civil Rights

Comparing the African-American struggle for civil rights with the LGBT struggle for equality was a common blog theme. In some posts, African-American churches denounced the comparison, arguing that “gay is not the new black.”²⁶ In discussing the Civil Marriage Protection Act, the Maryland marriage equality measure, one post noted that African-American lawmakers opposed marriage equality and the very concept of LGBT rights.²⁷ A pro-LGBT blogger, specifically addressing white LGBT people on the *transmeditations’s* blog, rejected the conflation of LGBT and African-American civil rights as a cultural appropriation by white people:

White Gays: Stop advancing your narrow agenda off of the backs of People of Color and off of the Civil Rights Movement. This is racist, disrespectful, ahistorical, arrogant, and offensive. It reeks of cultural appropriation, social movement rape, and white privilege that is off the charts. ... Many many people died in the Civil Rights Movement. ... So many people lost their lives and faced horrific physical, psychological and spiritual violence. And you are going to compare that to the rights of a bunch of mostly white, privileged cis gays and lesbians to enter into a patriarchal, oppressive institution?²⁸

At the same time, many pro-marriage equality bloggers did compare the struggle for LGBT rights to the civil rights movement. For example, one noted that the 1960s civil rights movement created

21 Ibid.

22 Michael Foust, “Md. ‘gay marriage’ bill faces critical week,” *Baptist Press*, last modified March 7, 2011, <http://www.sbcbaptistpress.org/BPnews.asp?ID=34785>

23 Amanda Marcotte, *The Anti-Choice Full Court Press*, podcast audio, MP3, 25:45, accessed March 14, 2011, <http://www.rhrealitycheck.org/blog/2011/03/06/antichoice-full-court-press>

24 David Kaufman, “Black Voters Are Pragmatic About Gay Marriage,” *The Root*, last modified March 4, 2011, <http://www.theeroot.com/views/marriage-equality-black-community>

25 David Kaufman, “The root: the misjudged Black vote on gay marriage,” *Outspoken*, last modified March 4, 2011, <http://gmadnyc.wordpress.com/2011/03/04/the-root-the-misjudged-black-vote-on-gay-marriage>

26 “Preacher Says Gay is Not the New Black,” *The Gospel News Wire*, last modified March 2, 2011, <http://www.thegospelnewswire.com/preacher-says-gay-is-not-the-new-black>

27 Alvin McEwen, “From one black man to the black community — stop the homophobic madness!” *Pam’s House Blend*, last updated March 14, 2011, <http://www.pamshouseblend.com/diary/18837/from-one-black-man-to-the-black-community-stop-the-homophobic-madness>

28 Blog # 47: “Calling Out GetEQUAL for their Racist Appropriation, Transphobia and Oppressive Agenda,” *transmeditations’s* blog, accessed March 14, 2011

a template for other minority groups to achieve their rights,²⁹ while another compared the ban on marriage for same-sex couples to the ban on interracial marriage.³⁰

It [LGBT rights] is about Civil Rights. Civil Rights means the rights accorded to each and every citizen of the United States being equal and across the board to all citizens. That means African Americans and gays and women and anyone else who's being denied equality under our Constitution. Thankfully, the black Civil Rights movement has greased these wheels considerably, and provided a template so that other minority groups experiencing discrimination can achieve more equal treatment in decades rather than the centuries it took for African Americans to get as close as they have (though there's still a ways to go, there, too).³¹

“Men on the Down Low”

The term “down low” was widely used in blogs and has a strong negative connotation, evoking duplicitous African-American men who threaten the African-American community, particularly African-American women, with AIDS. Many blogs referenced *On the Down Low: A Journey Into the Lives of Straight Black Men Who Sleep With Men*, by J. L. King.³² King suggests that homophobia fuels the negative perception of “down low” men, saying, “The black community could accept that this brother got the virus from a woman — even a prostitute.” Some bloggers promoted the acceptance of being gay as a way to end the “down low” culture, noting that it is the African-American community’s lack of acceptance that leads men to hide their sexuality.

There was also significant discussion of Tyler Perry’s movie “For Colored Girls,” which features a character on the “down low.” Bloggers generally had a negative take on the film. A typical criticism was made by one blogger at Yorkcitysoul’s Blog who argued that the character was “fanning the flames of homophobia” by promoting the “down low” stereotype.³³

And it was so pathetically predictable that Janet’s husband in the film would turn out to be “a brother on the down-low.” We’ve got to stop fanning the flames of fear and homophobia to Black people like that, once and for all. The issue with HIV/AIDS in Black America is sexual dishonesty and sexual irresponsibility across the board, not whether someone is straight or gay.

Blogs covering LGBT issues and the Latino community

The most highly trafficked blogs that discussed LGBT issues and the Latino community (with site traffic numbers from Quantcast.com and Authority ranking from Technorati, where available) were:

- ▶ Towleroad News — Authority 689 (375,000 monthly U.S. visits)
- ▶ Company Town — Authority 683
- ▶ Joe. My. God. — Authority 664 (141,600 monthly U.S. visits)
- ▶ Queerty — Authority 647

29 “How to Defend Your Support of Gay Marriage Rights,” *EHF- Weddings-Civil Partnerships*, last updated November 22, 2010, <http://ehf-weddings-civilpartnerships.blogspot.com/2010/11/how-to-defend-your-support-of-gay.html>

30 “Marriage Discrimination — Can an LLC Help,” *Love & Marriage*, last updated January 27, 2011, <http://makingloveisworking.blogspot.com/2011/01/marriage-discrimination-can-llc-help.html>

31 “How to Defend Your Support of Gay Marriage Rights,” *EHF- Weddings-Civil Partnerships*, last updated November 22, 2010, <http://ehf-weddings-civilpartnerships.blogspot.com/2010/11/how-to-defend-your-support-of-gay.html>

32 *On the Down Low: A Journey into the Lives of ‘Straight’ Black Men Who Sleep with Men*, Amazon.com, accessed March 14, 2011, <http://www.amazon.com/Down-Low-Journey-Lives-Straight/dp/0767913981>

33 “Tyler Perry’s ‘For Colored Girls,’” Yorkcitysoul’s Blog, last modified November 16, 2010, <http://yorkcitysoul.wordpress.com/2010/11/16/tyler-perrys-for-colored-girls>

- ▶ Pam’s House Blend (41,900 monthly U.S. visits)
- ▶ News Taco — The Latino Daily
- ▶ Out For Justice (1,200 monthly U.S. visits)

The most common themes

Entertainment and the Media

Blog posts referencing the Latino LGBT community often focused on entertainment and the media. They included coverage of a San Diego Latino Film Festival that included an LGBT segment called “Cine Gay,” Latino singer Ricky Martin’s winning of The Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) award, Michelle Bonilla, “the first openly gay Latina actress in tinseltown,” and “Bienvenidos a Casa,” a series of LGBT stories on Spanish-language radio.

The Family

A study finding that family acceptance is key to protecting white and Latino LGBT youth from depression, substance abuse, and suicidal behavior was noted and discussed by several bloggers.³⁴ The positive influence of LGBT entertainment figures on Latino families was a topic of discussion. The “magnitude” of Ricky Martin’s coming out was repeatedly referred to as a step towards increasing the acceptance by Latinos of LGBT family members.³⁵

Some pro-LGBT blogs argued that marriage equality was good for families, noting that LGBT African Americans and Latinos were twice as likely to be raising children from a previous marriage as whites.³⁶

Latino Voting Power

The Latino community’s increasing voting power and its potential significance for LGBT policy issues were discussed by bloggers with respect to two areas: labor rights and marriage equality. The Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Center was strongly criticized by the hotel workers union UNITE HERE for holding its 39th Anniversary Gala at the Hyatt Regency Century Plaza in violation of a boycott called by the union.³⁷ The Center was also criticized by LGBT supporters, California State Assembly Speaker John A. Perez, and some Latino community organizations for not standing in solidarity with the workers against a hotel that had donated money in support of Proposition 8. Bloggers quoted a Latino Equality Alliance press release:

The political empowerment of the Latino community itself is rooted in the success of the Labor movement...UNITE HERE has been a strong ally of the LGBT community and made a sacrificial donation of \$100,000 to the No on Proposition 8 campaign when we [the LGBT community] needed their help. The LGBT community must stand in solidarity with our union brothers and sisters in support of workers’ rights and fair wages at every opportunity. We wouldn’t expect less from them in our struggle for social justice.³⁸

34 “Study: Family acceptance key to LGBT youth’s mental health,” *LikeME*, last modified December 6, 2010, <http://likeme.org/?p=808>

35 <http://www.economicrefugee.net/progressive-marriage-gay-immigrants-rights>

36 Kerry Eleveld, “Guest column by Kerry Eleveld - The False Choice: ENDA v. Marriage Equality,” Pam’s House Blend, last modified February 12, 2011, <http://www.pamshouseblend.com/diary/18643/guest-column-by-kerry-eleveld-the-false-choice-enda-v-marriage-equality>

37 Press released issued by UNITE HERE on September 2, 2010, <http://www.unitehere.org/presscenter/release.php?ID=4124>

38 “UNITE HERE Local 11 to Picket LA Gay and Lesbian Center Gala,” Karen Ocamb, LGBT | POV, November 10, 2010; <http://www.lgbtpov.com/2010/11/unite-here-local-11-to-picket-la-gay-and-lesbian-center-gala>

Whether or not Latino voters were moving toward more conservative positions on LGBT issues was a topic of discussion. The blog *News Taco* suggested that “New Latino Christians,” a group composed largely of new immigrants, could swing the Latino vote in favor of the Republican Party and lead Democratic office-holders and candidates to be less supportive of marriage equality. Rev. Samuel Rodriguez, President of America’s largest Latino Christian organization, was quoted:

Traditional marriage is the #1 antidote against the social ills — drugs, teen pregnancy and high school dropout rate — that plague races of color. We applaud Speaker John Boehner’s action to build a legal case defending “DOMA.”³⁹

Another blogger speculated that Latinos were likely split on the issue of marriage equality:

There’s no doubt that devout Hispanic Catholics and evangelicals are socially conservative. But despite the Republican focus on abortion and same-sex marriage, Hispanics voted Democratic — even the approximately 35 percent of those who self-identify as “conservative.” That’s because both Catholics and evangelicals tend to place liberal issues like universal health care, immigration reform and higher taxes for more social services at the top of their priorities.⁴⁰

That blogger went on to quote Jessie Miranda, director of the Center for Urban Studies and Hispanic Leadership at Vanguard University in Costa Mesa, California:

Hispanics are conservative on moral matters, but liberal on economic issues. We still have an inferiority complex from being oppressed after the conquest of Latin America. Within the evangelical church, on issues like poverty and immigration, we are totally different from Anglo evangelicals.⁴¹

Facebook

Facebook’s potential to connect people and bring about dramatic social change was made abundantly clear during the “Arab Spring” of 2011. It was the Facebook page “We Are All Khaled Said,”⁴² started by Cairo-based Google executive Wael Ghonim, that has been credited with catalyzing the recent Egyptian revolution. As noted above, Facebook currently has 800,000 members and grows every day.

Methodology

To understand the conversation occurring on Facebook around LGBT issues in the African-American and Latino communities, we analyzed the Facebook Pages and Groups that were accessible to the general public at the time of the search.⁴³ For each keyword set, we looked at Groups and Pages with over 100 members. We then selected a sampling of the Groups and Pages in order to capture the general sentiments and the conversations with the greatest presence.

39 “National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference and Freedom Federation Respond to President Obama’s Recently Announced Policy,” *Hispanic Tips*, accessed on March 14, 2011, <http://www.hispanictips.com/2011/03/14/national-hispanic-christian-leadership-conference-and-freedom-federation-respond-to-president-obamas-recently-announced-policy>

40 Michael May, “New Latino Christians Could Swing Latino Vote For GOP,” *News Taco*, last modified December 20, 2010, <http://newstaco.com/2011/02/04/latino-christians-swing-latino-vote-gop>

41 Ibid. As discussed in the public opinion meta-analysis section of this report research shows Latinos’ religious affiliation is not incompatible with acceptance of homosexuality. Catholics are less likely than the general population to believe homosexuality is a sin—and 68 percent of Latinos in the United States are Catholic. When it comes to adoption by same-sex couples, Latinos are more likely than whites or African Americans to support it: 62 percent compared to 53 percent of whites and 48 percent of blacks.

42 Khaled Said was a young computer programmer who was beaten to death by the Egyptian police in Alexandria

43 Facebook offers several ways in which users are able to communicate to the wider public, most prominently Facebook Groups and Facebook Pages. Each of these formats allows for privacy controls that can make the conversations entirely public, entirely private, or somewhere between the two. Facebook Groups facilitate many-to-many communications for a group of individuals unified by a specific interest. Facebook Pages facilitate one-to-many communications around a specific issue.

The current playing field

Much of the content of our sampling of Facebook Groups and Pages was only tangentially related to LGBT policy issues. In general, our search terms returned content focused largely on celebrities like Jack Black and other pop culture references, such as the video game Black Ops and references to house music, which was frequently described as having been “popularized in mid-1980s discothèques catering to the African American, Latino and gay communities.”⁴⁴ Overall, we found a lack of references or discussion about the issues at the intersection of racial justice, sexual orientation, and gender identity on Facebook.

Facebook Groups and Pages covering LGBT issues and the African-American community

Facebook Groups and Pages that use LGBT keywords and “black” or “African American” focused on dating, LGBT advocacy, and general affinity groups such as “Gay Black and Proud!”⁴⁵ The LGBT advocacy groups that are represented range from local groups such as the “Saint Louis Black Gay & Lesbian Pride Committee”⁴⁶ to national marriage equality groups and foreign-based LGBT advocacy groups. Our search identified far more Facebook Groups than Facebook Pages — we found more than 800 Groups but only 64 Pages — but overall, the content was not policy- or advocacy-oriented. The search term “black” returned many more entries than “African American,” but the Groups and Pages that used “African American” were more likely to be pro-LGBT.

The most common themes

The majority of Groups focusing on marriage for same-sex couples and African Americans who were supportive of marriage equality, and many identified African Americans who voted “no” on Proposition 8. Only a handful of Groups were supportive of Proposition 8, and a few were supportive of the prominent role played by the Church of Latter Day Saints in the Proposition 8 campaign.⁴⁷ There was almost no conversation around “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.” We found only three Groups referencing DADT and only one of them advocated policy change.⁴⁸ Similarly, there was little relevant content around “down low” on Facebook; no Pages referenced the term and only 164 Groups did so but did not really address the issue.

Facebook Groups and Pages covering LGBT issues and the Latino community

We found few Facebook Pages that focused specifically on the Latino LGBT community, but those we found tended to be cultural in nature, such as the “Festival Gay Latino” Page.⁴⁹ Facebook Groups were more numerous but had little content about policy issues. Groups that connected “Latino” and LGBT issues were largely dating groups such as “Latino Gay and Bisexual Men”⁵⁰ and general affinity groups such as “Gay Latino Network.”⁵¹ We did find several Groups that focused on advocacy, such

44 “House Music,” Facebook Group. Retrieved April 26, 2011 from <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=115031962027>

45 “Gay Black and Proud!,” Facebook, accessed April 5, 2011, http://www.facebook.com/home.php?sk=group_2214748564

46 “Saint Louis Black Gay & Lesbian Pride Committee, Inc.,” Facebook, accessed April 5, 2011, <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=84663052893>

47 “Stop persecution of the LDS church for prop 8!,” Facebook Group, accessed April 5, 2011, <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=47881126632>

48 “Overturn Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,” Facebook Group, accessed April 5, 2011, <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=121504174562633>

49 “Fesival Gay Latino,” Facebook Group, accessed April 5, 2011, <https://www.facebook.com/FestivalGayLatino?sk=wall>

50 “Latino Gay and Bisexual Men,” Facebook Group, accessed April 5, 2011, <https://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=176176263386&v=wall>

51 “Gay Latino Network,” Facebook Group, accessed April 5, 2011, <https://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=105001099443&v=wall>

as “UNITY COALITION\COALICION UNIDA”⁵² and “HBGC Boston,”⁵³ but some of the pro-LGBT advocates combining LGBT keywords and “Hispanic” were non-Latino allies such as “Gay Unitarian Universalists.”⁵⁴

The most common themes

It is fair to say that at the time of our search, discourse about policy issues affecting the Latino LGBT community was not well-represented on Facebook Pages or Groups. There were no mentions of the Defense of Marriage Act or “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.” We did find 12 Groups that mentioned both “Latino” or “Hispanic” and “Prop 8” or “same-sex marriage,” but they were only tangentially related to LGBT Latinos or the Latino community. These included Groups like “Gay Unitarian Universalists,”⁵⁵ “1,000,000 Strong for NO H8,” and “I Still Think Marriage is the Wrong Goal.”⁵⁶

Twitter

Twitter has made its presence felt in the American media, and “twitter surges” are now news. This platform’s terseness, simplicity, and speed make for a wide and growing readership.

Methodology

In order to understand the conversation on Twitter relating to LGBT issues and the African-American and Latino communities, we looked at the top posts using the search engine Topsy,⁵⁷ which ranks posts based on retweets and user following. Retweets refer to Twitter messages that are echoed by other Twitter users, which can lead to viral spread. We looked at posts over time, the overall quantity of posts using the keywords, the top “hashtags” used with each keyword set,⁵⁸ the most influential Twitter users discussing the issue, and a synopsis of the topics being discussed. For the analysis of the quantity of posts over time, this report looks at Twitter posts all-time as well as over the preceding month in order to make comparisons between subject areas. The sampling of Twitter posts was taken in early April 2011 and includes all posts inventoried by Topsy.

The current playing field

The conversation on Twitter touching on the intersection of racial justice, gender identity, and sexual orientation is relatively lively and is dominated by LGBT-rights advocates and advocacy organizations, with celebrities and bloggers also wielding significant influence.

LGBT issues and the African-American community on Twitter

A snapshot of the online conversation about LGBT issues and the African-American community taken at the beginning of April 2011 shows more than 54,000 posts in the previous 30 days. The great majority of these tweets used the terms “black” rather than “African American.” However, tweets that used “African American” were more likely to be posted by pro-LGBT advocates. Anti-LGBT tweets were fewer in number and tended to use the terms “homosexual” and “black.”

52 “UNITY COALITION\COALICION UNIDA,” Facebook Group, accessed April 5, 2011, <https://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=35375537701&v=wall>

53 “HBGC BOSTON,” Facebook Group, accessed April 5, 2011, <https://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=146069957026&v=wall>

54 “Gay Unitarian Universalists,” accessed April 4, 2011, <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=69846893752>

55 “Gay Unitarian Universalists,” Facebook Group, accessed April 5, 2011, <https://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=69846893752>

56 “I Still Think Marriage is the Wrong Goal,” Facebook Group, accessed, April 5, 2011, <https://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=39392496765>

57 “Topsy — Real-time search for the social web,” *Topsy*, accessed March 17, 2011, <http://topsy.com>

58 “Hashtags” is a method of tagging content based on keywords so that it can be searched. For a list of the most common hashtags used by pro-LGBT advocates see Appendix.

The most prominent bloggers and independent advocates that regularly tweet about LGBT issues and the African-American community are:

- ▶ Blabbeando⁵⁹
- ▶ Pam_Spaulding⁶⁰
- ▶ jbrotherlove⁶¹
- ▶ Russell Simmons⁶²
- ▶ BlackInformant⁶³

The most prominent advocacy organizations include:

- ▶ Human Rights Campaign⁶⁴
- ▶ The Bilerico Project⁶⁵
- ▶ NLGJA⁶⁶
- ▶ LAPRIDE⁶⁷
- ▶ Equality California⁶⁸
- ▶ Victory Fund⁶⁹
- ▶ GLAAD⁷⁰

The most prominent independent and traditional news outlets that regularly feature Twitter content include:

- ▶ Feministing⁷¹
- ▶ Blackpolitics⁷²
- ▶ SistersTalk⁷³
- ▶ Black Voices⁷⁴
- ▶ Colorlines⁷⁵
- ▶ 365gay⁷⁶
- ▶ Towleroad⁷⁷

59 “Blabbeando (blabbeando),” Twitter, accessed April 5, 2011, <http://twitter.com/#!/blabbeando>
 60 “Pam Spaulding (pam_spaulding),” Twitter, accessed April 5, 2011, http://twitter.com/#!/pam_spaulding
 61 “JBrotherLove (jbrotherlove),” Twitter, accessed April 5, 2011, <http://twitter.com/jbrotherlove>
 62 “Russell Simmons (UncleRUSH),” Twitter, accessed April 5, 2011, <http://twitter.com/#!/UncleRUSH>
 63 “BlackInformant (blackinformant),” Twitter, accessed April 5, 2011, <http://twitter.com/BlackInformant>
 64 “Human Rights Council (HRC),” Twitter, accessed April 5, 2011, <http://twitter.com/HRC>
 65 “The Bilerico Project (bilericoproject),” Twitter, accessed April 5, 2011, <http://twitter.com/bilericoproject>
 66 “NLGJA (NLGJA),” Twitter, accessed April 5, 2011, <http://twitter.com/bilericoproject>
 67 “LAPRIDE (LAPRIDE),” Twitter, accessed April 5, 2011, <http://twitter.com/LAPRIDE>
 68 “Equality California (eqca),” Twitter, accessed April 5, 2011, <http://twitter.com/eqca>
 69 “Victory Fund (VictoryFund),” Twitter, accessed April 5, 2011, <http://twitter.com/DREAMActivist>
 70 “GLAAD (glaad),” Twitter, accessed April 5, 2011, <http://twitter.com/glaad>
 71 “Feministing (feministing),” Twitter, accessed April 5, 2011, <http://twitter.com/#!/feministing>
 72 “Black Politics (blackpolitics),” Twitter, accessed April 5, 2011, <http://twitter.com/blackpolitics>
 73 “Sisters Talk (SistersTalk),” Twitter, accessed April 5, 2011, <http://twitter.com/SistersTalk>
 74 “Black Voices (blackvoices),” Twitter, accessed April 5, 2011, <http://twitter.com/blackvoices>
 75 “Colorlines (colorlines),” Twitter, accessed April 5, 2011, <http://twitter.com/Colorlines>
 76 “365gay (365gay),” Twitter, accessed April 5, 2011, <http://twitter.com/365gay>
 77 “Towleroad (Towleroad),” Twitter, accessed April 5, 2011, <http://twitter.com/Towleroad>

- ▶ The Advocate Magazine⁷⁸
- ▶ Pam_Spaulding⁷⁹
- ▶ jbrotherlove⁸⁰

Most common themes

Marriage Equality

The buzz around African Americans and marriage for same-sex couples on Twitter was dominated by celebrities and advocacy organizations, both pro- and anti-LGBT. Much of the conversation focused on the role of black churches and African Americans in general as supporters or opponents of marriage equality, particularly in the context of the Proposition 8 vote in California.

Pro-LGBT tweets

SistersTalk Genia
New Report Says Exit Polls Exaggerated Black Support for Prop 8 - <http://is.gd/eLcs>
7 Jan 09 via web

renwl Renwl.org
Open Letter to Pastor Joshua Beckley: On His Petition To Force CA To Defend Prop 8, Gay Black Folks, And The Black F... <http://nblo.gs/7w79C>

Anti-LGBT tweets

renwl Renwl.org
NOM Honors LA Black Mega Church Leader For Yes On 8 Support And Defense Of Marriage <http://bit.ly/9WYD1j> #NOM, #Equality #LGBT #Prop8
4 Jun via Seismic

Bcnn1 Bcnn1
Most Black, Christian Obama Supporters Say They Are Dismayed and Offended at Obama's Shift on Defense of Marriage Act <http://bit.ly/hLsWPX>
2 Mar via twitterfeed

Tension Between LGBT Rights and African-American Civil Rights

There was a solid amount of traffic that commented on the similarities and differences between the LGBT struggle for equality and the African-American civil rights movement, with some individuals and organizations arguing against drawing a comparison between the two, and others taking the opposite position. Some examples:

78 "The Advocate Magazine (TheAdvocateMag)," Twitter, accessed April 5, 2011, <http://twitter.com/TheAdvocateMag>
79 "Pam Spaulding (pam_spaulding)," Twitter, accessed April 5, 2011, http://twitter.com/#!/pam_spaulding
80 "JBrotherLove (jbrotherlove)," Twitter, accessed April 5, 2011, <http://twitter.com/jbrotherlove>

moniquealicia ProfessorSoandSoBecause you know they're the same, don't you? "Civil" rights isn't synonymous with "Black" rights... [#DOMA](#) [#facts](#)

25 Feb via TweetDeck

JasonLeopold Jason LeopoldThis just in... Beyond Black vs. Gay: A Wake-Up Call to Gay Marriage Activists in.. <http://tinyurl.com/69n768>

22 Nov 08 via twitterfeed

gaymarriagewatc Gay Marriage WatchGay Marriage Watch: Being Black and Gay: Panel Discusses the Gay Rights Struggle and the African Ameri... <http://bit.ly/auge9Q> [#gaymarriage](#)

14 May via twitterfeed

ldfarah Leyla FarahRT [@americablog](#): NAACP refuses to take a position on gay marriage; discounts connection btwn black/gay civil rts <http://tinyurl.com/nky8ys>

12 Jul 09 via Seismic

stop8dotorg MattBlack clergy opposing gay marriage resent civil rights comparison: (Source: Buffalo News) <http://stop8.org/> [#2182](#)

19 May 09 via twitterfeed

mojustice MojusticeCommentary: Gay is not the new Black. - <http://bit.ly/PPxdM> [#cnn](#) [#Prop 8](#) [#Gay](#)

16 Jul 09 via web

HIV/AIDS and "Down Low Black Men"

The dialogue on Twitter about "being on the down low" was fairly active, with a range of perspectives being expressed. Some of the most active discussions focused on advocacy around prevention and the role black men on the "down low" were playing in spreading HIV/AIDS. There were also numerous homophobic comments posted by unaffiliated individuals accusing others of being gay or on the "down low," often targeting celebrities. Prominent Twitter users discussing "down low" included Rae Lewis-Thornton,⁸¹ Calvin Fleming,⁸² Health Literacy,⁸³ and The Body.⁸⁴

81 "Rae Lewis-Thornton (raelt)," Twitter, accessed on April 7, 2011, <http://twitter.com/#!/raelt>

82 "Calvin Fleming (calvinfleming)," Twitter, accessed on April 8, 2011, <http://twitter.com/#!/calvinfleming>

83 "Health Literacy (hlth_literacy)," Twitter, accessed on April 7, 2011, http://twitter.com/#!/hlth_literacy

84 "The Body (thebodydotcom)," Twitter, accessed on April 8, 2011, <http://twitter.com/#!/thebodydotcom>

raelt Rae Lewis-Thornton

Why are Black Women becoming infected with HIV.. Is it drugs.. Down Low--Low Down or A Woman's Worth Lets talk about it <http://bit.ly/eFXbjO>

3:05 PM Mar 7th via web

Retweeted by 3 people

LGBT issues and the Latino community on Twitter

The conversation on Twitter that connects “Latinos/as” or “Hispanics” with LGBT keywords was dominated by a focus on individuals: Latino LGBT entertainers and cultural and political figures such as actress Michelle Bonilla and Daniel Hernandez, the Latino gay man credited with saving Rep. Gabrielle Giffords’ life after she was shot in Tucson, AZ. There were only a few influential Twitter users who focused on broader topics, and they tended to be LGBT or immigration reform advocacy groups, publications or cultural hubs, or celebrities.

Influential Twitter users included bloggers, LGBT news outlets, religious organizations, and LGBT advocates and advocacy organizations:

- ▶ LatinoLdrSHIFT⁸⁵
- ▶ CarlosQC⁸⁶
- ▶ Latina Magazine⁸⁷
- ▶ Queerty⁸⁸
- ▶ The Wonk Room⁸⁹
- ▶ Noticias LGBT⁹⁰
- ▶ Colorlines⁹¹
- ▶ Gay Marriage Watch⁹²
- ▶ Towleroad⁹³
- ▶ Blabbeando⁹⁴

The most common themes

The conversation on Twitter connecting Latinos and LGBT-related policies was minimal. There were fewer than 300 posts connecting “Latino” or “Hispanics” and “same-sex marriage” and even less traffic around the Defense of Marriage Act. Most of the tweets about marriage equality revolved around whether or not Latino voters supported Proposition 8 and the negative role of the church. There was even less conversation about “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” and “Latino” or “Hispanic.”

85 “LatinoLdrSHIFT (LatinoLdrSHIFT),” Twitter, accessed April 5, 2011, <http://twitter.com/LatinoLdrSHIFT>

86 “CarlosQC (CarlosQC),” Twitter, accessed April 5, 2011, <http://twitter.com/CarlosQC>

87 “Latina Magazine (latinamagazine),” Twitter, accessed April 5, 2011, <http://twitter.com/#!/latinamagazine>

88 “Queerty (queerty),” Twitter, accessed April 5, 2011, <http://twitter.com/Queerty>

89 “The Wonk Room (wonkroom),” Twitter, accessed April 5, 2011, <http://twitter.com/wonkroom>

90 “Noticias LGBT(NoticiasLGBT),” Twitter, accessed April 5, 2011, <http://twitter.com/#!/NoticiasLGBT>

91 “Colorlines (colorlines),” Twitter, accessed April 5, 2011, <http://twitter.com/Colorlines>

92 “Gay Marriage Watch (gaymarriagewatc),” Twitter, accessed April 5, 2011, <http://twitter.com/#!/gaymarriagewatc>

93 “Towleroad (Towleroad),” Twitter, accessed April 5, 2011, <http://twitter.com/Towleroad>

94 “Blabbeando (blabbeando),” Twitter, accessed April 5, 2011, <http://twitter.com/blabbeando>

ihatethemedia | Hate The MediaMedia plays down 20,000 Hispanics protesting against gay marriage <http://is.gd/BJtU> (VIDEO)

20 May 09 via TweetDeck

RevMeiam Rev MeiamProp. 8 Divides Religious Latino Community – Christian Post: USA Today Prop. 8 Divides Religiou... <http://bit.ly/dhq9Nz>
www.atcworldwide.org

22 Jul via twitterfeed

YouTube

YouTube, the world’s largest video site, had more than 600 million unique visitors worldwide in September 2011, according to comScore Inc.⁹⁵

Methodology

On YouTube, a search was performed of each keyword set, and an analysis was made of the videos that were most relevant to the keywords and had at least 500 page views. The videos were then viewed, categorized, and analyzed in order to capture the common themes.

The current playing field

The videos on YouTube connecting LGBT issues to the African-American and Latino communities were dominated by pro-LGBT videos of celebrities and LGBT individuals relating personal stories. We also found videos posted by advocacy organizations and public affairs and news broadcasts, presenting both pro- and anti-LGBT views.

LGBT issues and the African-American community: the most common themes

“Being Black and Gay”

We found numerous videos about the challenges of “being black and gay.” Examples included a comedy routine by Wanda Sykes, “I’m a Be Me - Gay vs. Black,” Actor Jensen Atwood talking about the difficulty for artists to get their experiences out there,⁹⁶ and hip-hop artist Wale promoting the need for LGBT rights, noting that gays “have the same heart and the same soul, as straight people.”⁹⁷ Others featured ordinary people talking about their experiences, like the “It Gets Better Project”⁹⁸ video of an African-American gay seminarian explaining that his suicide attempt was in response to “pent up frustration in his personal and spiritual life.”⁹⁹ Many tell about dealing with the homophobia of their parents or church.

95 Amir Efrati, “YouTube Goes Professional,” *Wall Street Journal*, October 4, 2011

96 *Actor Jensen Atwood speaks at Outwrite during Black Gay Pride*, YouTube, 4:35, Uploaded on September 8, 2010, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tr9wrwC5qYA>

97 *Hip Hop & Gays - WALE at DC Black Pride*, YouTube, 6:36, Uploaded on May 30, 2010, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ina281gpFkM>

98 The “It Gets Better Project” was created in response to a number of young LGBT people taking their own lives because of bullying and harassment. To date more than 25,000 user-created videos have been created showing how love and happiness can be a reality in their future and YouTube carries them all.

99 *Leading the Black Church Forward: Black, gay and a Seminarian*, YouTube, 4:58, Uploaded on September 28, 2009, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3xXfbI5oZYY>



Wanda Sykes: I'ma Be Me - Gay vs. Black (HBO), YouTube, 2:15, Uploaded on February 1, 2010.



Leading the Black Church Forward: Black, gay and a Seminarian, YouTube, 4:58, uploaded on September 28, 2009.

The Role of the Black Church

The role of the black church in either rejecting or accepting LGBT congregants was a common theme. An Atlanta interfaith show featured a round table discussion with an African-American lesbian and an African-American pastor about whether homosexuality and religion can coexist. In another video, a gay man speculated that the AIDS rate in the African-American community might be the result of a lack of support from the faith community.

In a CNN segment, Bishop Carlton Pearson, founder of the “doctrine of inclusion,” spoke of his decision to accept the LGBT community. He discussed the allegations of sexual impropriety against Eddie Long, senior pastor of the New Birth Missionary Baptist Church, and noted that the people who are “most vociferously against something are dealing with it in their own life.” He also observed that it is the church in general, and not the black church, that condemns homosexuality.¹⁰⁰



Bishop Carlton Pearson on CNN addressing Gays in the Black Church, YouTube, 9:18, uploaded on September 27, 2010.

100 *Bishop Carlton Pearson on CNN addressing Gays in the Black Church*, YouTube, 9:18, Uploaded on September 27, 2010, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JphY46ljQEs>

Tension Between LGBT Rights and African-American Civil Rights

Segments from *The View* and the *Tyra Banks Show* confronted the question “Is gay the new black?” in the context of the struggle for marriage equality and whether it could be compared to the civil rights movement.^{101, 102} Appearing on the *Tyra Banks Show*, NAACP Chairman Julian Bond argued that the comparison could be made because being black and being gay are “immutable” characteristics.¹⁰³ Another video showed an African-American man arguing that civil rights and LGBT rights are different because you can see if someone is black. He went on to criticize the mainstream LGBT movement, saying it lacked an understanding of why African Americans disliked the cultural appropriation of the civil rights movement.¹⁰⁴



Proposition 8 and Civil Rights. Tyra Banks Show with Sam Harris, YouTube, 12:36, uploaded on May 8, 2009.

Marriage Equality

The fight over Proposition 8 generated a spate of YouTube videos. The YouTube channel *YesProp8*¹⁰⁵ featured videos made by African-American church goers arguing against marriage equality. They argued that “homosexuals discriminate against people who disagree with them,” including one video in which a minister attributed the vandalism of a Latter Day Saints church to an LGBT group.¹⁰⁶



YesProp8, YouTube Channel, accessed on March 14, 2011.

101 *Proposition 8 and Civil Rights. Tyra Banks Show with Sam Harris.*, YouTube, 12:36, Uploaded on May 8, 2009, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=roviP_SaAwA

102 *“The View”--Argues over Gay Marriage*, YouTube, 7:50, Uploaded on November 18, 2008, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J5T8DbQmGHg>

103 *Gay Rights are Civil Rights, says Black leader*, YouTube, 9:34, Uploaded on October 28, 2008, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q-hgov6ukeo>

104 *The Prop 8 Issue - Being Black and Gay Are Not The Same*, YouTube, 4:38, Uploaded on November 8, 2008, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mprxYFav0Y8>

105 *YesProp8*, YouTube Channel, accessed on March 14, 2011, <http://www.youtube.com/user/YesProp8>

106 *African American Minister Says: Gays Must Lose Their Hate*, YouTube, 5:57, Uploaded on November 13, 2008, <http://www.youtube.com/user/YesProp8#p/search/0/Gwxtoaa33mk>

The issue of whether African-American voters were responsible for the passage of Proposition 8 was the subject of debate in several videos posted on YouTube after the November 2010 election. Conservative commentators like Bill O'Reilly and Michael Savage asserted that African Americans were overwhelmingly against marriage equality. Others, like African-American civil rights attorney Eva Patterson, discouraged the blaming of the black community and pointed to the negative influence of some African-American religious leaders.¹⁰⁷ The NPR show *News & Notes with Farai Chideya* featured LGBT activists saying that blame needed to be avoided and that the LGBT movement had to do a better job of reaching out to the African-American community.¹⁰⁸

“Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell”

Videos opposing DADT were common on YouTube. One showed soldier Evelyn Thomas telling the story of her discharge from the military after her fellow marines turned a love letter from her girlfriend over to her commanding officer. She explained that she was inspired to be an activist after a Provost was murdered for being gay, and she noted that black women were hit hardest by DADT.¹⁰⁹

HIV/AIDS and “Down Low Men”

We found videos expressing varying viewpoints on the role of “down low” behavior in the African-American community. Comedian D.L. Hughley questioned the existence of a “down low” culture and suggested that it was either a myth or something blown way out of proportion in an effort to blame African-American males for the AIDS epidemic among African-American women.¹¹⁰



J.L. King, advertising his DVD for identifying the 10 signs of “down low” behavior.

At the other end of the spectrum, J.L. King created a video advertising his DVD about the top 10 signs of “down low” behavior (e.g., “Manipulation” and “Secrecy”)¹¹¹ in order to promote his book *On the Down Low: A Journey into the Lives of ‘Straight’ Black Men Who Sleep with Men*.

107 *Why Did Black People Vote for Prop 8? (Part I)*, YouTube, 3:59, Uploaded on January 25, 2009, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KAy4dgz3lv4>

108 *Black, Gay Communities Collide Over Gay Marriage*, YouTube, 9:15, Uploaded on November 13, 2008, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C1FEZRV8d1s>

109 *Don’t Ask Don’t Tell: Black Lesbians in the Military*, YouTube, 4:59, Uploaded on January 19, 2011, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XfUgtIr8gpo>

110 *D.L. Hughley and the Black Men on the Down Low myth*, YouTube, 10:55, Uploaded on July 6, 2010, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RUN0145kv_c

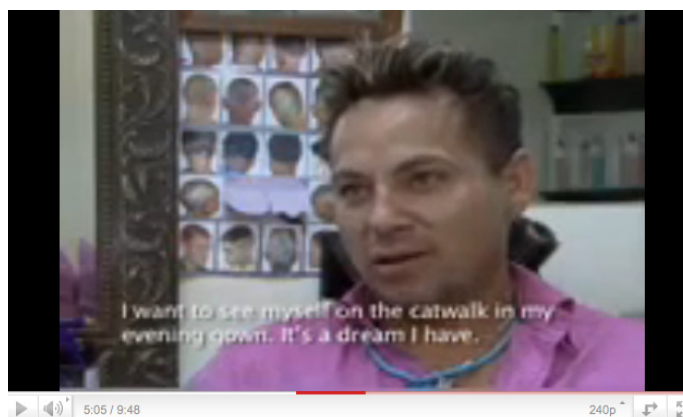
111 *Top 10 Signs of Down Low Behavior and more...*, YouTube, 1:30, Uploaded on June 18, 2008, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h2PNBsLgL8A>

LBGT issues and the Latino community: the most common themes

LGBT Immigrants

We found a number of videos that centered on Latino immigrants at LGBT venues and events.

One video called “Fuera del Closet” showed Latino immigrants going to LGBT clubs in Dallas.¹¹² Two others featured interviews with immigrant contestants in the Miss Latino Pageant. Another two focused on Pride, including one of gay immigrants at Capital Pride, and National Gay and Lesbian Task Force communications coordinator Pedro Julio Serrano talking about the creation of Latino Gay Pride.¹¹³



Miss Gay Latino 2008, YouTube, 9:48, uploaded on Jan 11, 2009.

Being Latino and Gay

We found two “It Gets Better” videos¹¹⁴ featuring LGBT Latinos. One featured a gay man talking about how being rejected by one’s family increases the chances of making risky life choices. The second video featured a gay man who formed a gay-straight alliance in his high school with the support of his friends and family.¹¹⁵ Spanish-language news coverage of the murder of a young gay man in Puerto Rico was posted on YouTube along with footage of religious leaders denouncing violence toward the LGBT community.¹¹⁶

Marriage Equality

Videos about Proposition 8 were almost universally pro-LGBT, including English- and Spanish-language ads, a music video, interviews, and video blogs encouraging Latino voters to “vote no.” In an interview at a Pride parade, actress and Bienestar Queen Kate del Castillo said that she stood “with

112 *Fuera del Closet: Gay Latino Immigrants in Dallas*, YouTube, 5:22, Uploaded on August 31, 2007, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pv5qDlzRmE>

113 *Task Force comments on Latino LGBT Pride (ABC News)*, YouTube, 1:54, uploaded on December 20, 2006, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JPiRLR6qb1U>

114 It Get’s Better Project, <http://www.itgetsbetter.org>

115 *It Gets Better, By Julio (Gay, Latino and Proud)*, YouTube, 6:10, Uploaded on October 4, 2010, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cu4EasrDD8k>

116 *Hispanic religious leaders condemn brutal murder of Puerto Rican gay youth*, YouTube, 7:38, Uploaded on November 22, 2009, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f0viQwa73cg>

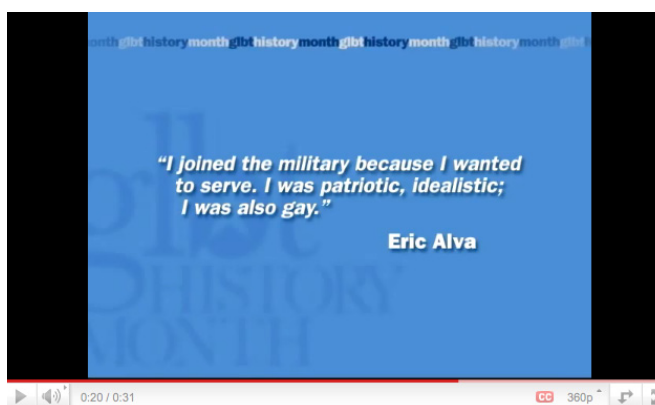
the Latino Community against homophobia and Prop 8.”¹¹⁷ The message in these videos was that Proposition 8 discriminated against families.¹¹⁸



No on Prop 8 - Spanish, YouTube, 0:45, uploaded November 1, 2008.

Don't Ask, Don't Tell

There weren't many videos relating to Latinos and “Don't Ask, Don't Tell,” but one celebrated LGBT History Month featured Eric Alva, a gay soldier who was the first soldier injured in the Iraq War, as an icon for the repeal of DADT.¹¹⁹ Another video showed Hispanic comedian Laz Vicedo performing a stand-up routine in which he criticized “Don't Ask, Don't Tell.”¹²⁰



GLBT [sic] History Month 2010 - Eric Alva, YouTube, 0:31, uploaded on September 20, 2010.

117 *LA PRIDE PARADE 2009 (BIENESTAR Y KATE DEL CASTILLO)*, YouTube, 2:26, Uploaded on June 19, 2009, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Te4LDryx7cs>

118 *Ferrera, Plana & Ortiz Speak Out Against Prop 8*, YouTube, 0:31, Uploaded on October 25, 2008, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I9HfNwMKZ0E>

119 *GLBT [sic] History Month 2010 - Eric Alva*, YouTube, 0:31, Uploaded on September 20, 2010, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-SRcIPBTJXw>

120 *Do Ask, Do Tell - Comedy Time Latino*, YouTube, 1:47, Uploaded on April 26, 2010, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vc3vTuyBd_A&feature=fvsr

Appendix

Twitter Hashtags

This analysis found that hashtags are mostly used by the politically active Twitter users such as LGBT advocates or advocacy organizations. The most relevant ones include:

- ▶ #p2 (Liberals on Twitter; resource for Progressives)
- ▶ #dreamact
- ▶ #lgbt
- ▶ #tcot (Top Conservatives on Twitter @tcot)
- ▶ #tlot (Top Libertarians on Twitter)
- ▶ #racism
- ▶ #teaparty
- ▶ #latism
- ▶ #gay
- ▶ #trans
- ▶ #Latina
- ▶ #woc (Women of Color)
- ▶ #fem2 (Fem 2.0; www.fem2pt0.com)
- ▶ #lesbian
- ▶ #LGBT
- ▶ #AIDS
- ▶ #HIV
- ▶ #downlow
- ▶ #black
- ▶ #gay
- ▶ #prop8
- ▶ #noh8 (No H8 Campaign; www.noh8campaign.com)
- ▶ #doma
- ▶ #glbt
- ▶ #DADT (“Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell”)
- ▶ #military
- ▶ #gaymarriage
- ▶ #marriage
- ▶ #Latino
- ▶ #blck



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