

## Open letter: Leaders embrace President Obama's position on equality for gay and lesbian individuals

Written by  
Wednesday, 16 May 2012 17:37

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*Reverend Al Sharpton, President of National Action Network, along with Julian Bond, Chairman Emeritus of NAACP, Melanie Campbell, President and CEO of the National Coalition for Black Civic Engagement, and Reverend Dr. Joseph Lowery, Civil Rights Icon and President Emeritus of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, released an open letter recently embracing President Obama's position on equality for gay and lesbian individuals in this country.*

May 11, 2012:

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." As leaders in today's Civil Rights Movement, we stand behind the President Obama's belief that same sex couples should be allowed to join in civil marriages. We also affirm that individuals may hold different views on this issue but still work together towards our common goals: fair housing and equitable education, affordable health care and eradicating poverty, all issues of deep and abiding concern for our communities.

President Obama stated his view that same-sex couples should be allowed to marry. This is a view that we concur with, because as civil rights leaders we cannot fight to gain rights for some and not for all. At the same time, we acknowledge that the President stated his personal opinion, which everyone is entitled to – both those who agree with him, like us, and those who disagree. The President made clear that his support is for civil marriage for same-sex couples, and he is fully committed to protecting the ability of religious institutions to make their own decisions about their own sacraments.

There will be those who seek to use this issue to divide our community. As a people, we cannot afford such division. It is our hope that conversations on strengthening African American families continue in a civil and respectful way, on all sides, both with those who support the ability of same-sex couples to marry, and those who do not.

We are glad that President Obama has joined Dr. Joseph Lowery, Dr. Julian Bond and so many others in full embrace of equality for gay and lesbian individuals in our country. We also

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welcome the civil debate on this issue that will surely spring. And we encourage all individuals to keep all issues of import to our communities in mind in the days ahead, and we seek to secure equal justice, opportunity and dignity for all God's children.