

Winning Marriage: The Inside Story of How Same-Sex Couples Took on the Politicians and Pundits – And Won

Marc Solomon

ForeEdge (Imprint of University Press of New England)

2014

368 pp.

\$25.00 USD, hardcover,

ISBN 978-1-61168-401-8

Keywords Equality

Review DOI 10.1108/EDI-03-2016-0022

An insider's account of the fight for same-sex marriage in the USA

Nearly one year after the US Supreme Court's landmark ruling in *Obergefell v. Hodges* establishing a constitutional right to same-sex marriage in the USA, it is important to look back at how this important issue evolved from a fringe concern at the turn of the century to a broad national consensus just 15 years later. While the gay rights movement employed many strategies similar to the African-American and women's rights movements, and exhibited many characteristics that all social movements share, the speed with which gay rights advocates were able to achieve their goals is truly remarkable. No other social or civil rights issue has seen such a rapid change in both public opinion and public policy over such a short period of time. This makes the gay rights movement, and particularly the quest for same-sex marriage, a fascinating topic for academic study.

There are many approaches one could take in analyzing the fight for same-sex marriage. In his book, *Winning Marriage: The Inside Story of How Same-Sex Couples Took on the Politicians and Pundits – And Won*, Marc Solomon offers an insider's account of the efforts of activists, politicians, and ordinary citizens to secure and protect equal marriage rights. Solomon is a longtime gay rights activist who has been involved with several organizations including MassEquality, Equality California, and Freedom to Marry. The book largely details Solomon's own experiences and those of his fellow political activists.

Winning Marriage is divided into five parts. In the first section, Solomon focuses on Massachusetts, beginning with the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court's landmark ruling in *Goodridge v. Department of Public Health*. This case was decided in late 2003 and made Massachusetts the first state in the nation to have legal same-sex marriage. These chapters contain many moving accounts of same-sex couples overjoyed by the ability to finally marry, such as Ralph Hodgdon and Paul McMahon who married on the 49th anniversary of their first date. Notably, they also featured many same-sex couples with children whose families would finally be made legally whole. However, most of this section was not devoted to the SJC's ruling and its immediate aftermath. Rather, it focused on the multi-year political battle that followed, in an effort to undo what the SJC had done.

There are three important characteristics to understand about Massachusetts. While Democrats dominate the legislature, the state also has a tradition of electing (mostly moderate) Republican governors. The Democratic Party in the state runs the gamut

from liberal to conservative. Lastly, the Catholic Church wields a great deal of influence in state politics. Massachusetts has the second-highest percentage of Catholics in the nation after Rhode Island, and they are the only two states, where over 50 percent of the population is Catholic. In the aftermath of the SJC's ruling, there was a strong effort by the Catholic hierarchy in the state, along with other religious conservatives and opponents of same-sex marriage, to amend the Massachusetts Constitution to overturn the court's ruling. This was supported by Republican Governor (later presidential candidate) Mitt Romney.

In one of the most memorable exchanges of the book, Solomon describes a meeting between one of the plaintiffs in the gay marriage case, Julie Goodridge, and Governor Romney. After a frustrating meeting, "an exasperated Julie Goodridge turned toward Romney, looked him in the eye, and made one final appeal, parent to parent. 'Governor Romney, tell me, what would you suggest I say to my eight-year-old daughter about why her mommy and her ma can't get married because you, the governor of her state, are going to block our marriage?' 'I don't really care what you tell your adopted daughter,' he replied, once again ignorant of the fact that Julie was the birth mom [...]. 'Why don't you just tell her what you've been telling her for the last eight years?'" (p. 24).

Notwithstanding Governor Romney's position, the only path to undo the court's decision went through the legislature. In order to amend the Massachusetts Constitution, the legislature had to have a majority vote on a proposed constitutional amendment in two consecutive sessions. However, opponents were divided over whether to back an amendment banning same-sex marriage and replacing it with nothing, or one that would ban gay marriage but provide same-sex couples with "civil unions" instead. Because of this split, neither amendment ended up advancing. Opponents of same-sex marriage then tried to get a ballot measure placed before voters. In Massachusetts, once a certain amount of signatures have been collected, only one-quarter of the legislature must approve before a measure is placed on the ballot. Amazingly, groups like MassEquality were able to rally slightly over three-quarters of the legislature to their side to defeat the proposal, thus securing the freedom to marry in Massachusetts. This was far from an easy task. The chapters in this section of the book went into great detail about the intense and politically savvy lobbying efforts that marriage equality activists engaged in, as well as the heart-wrenching personal struggles that legislators dealt with who were torn between their conscience and their faith.

Every social justice movement that seeks to work its will through the political process should study what MassEquality did in Massachusetts between 2004 and 2008. Moreover, every political campaign consultant should read the chapter in this section detailing the state legislative race between Carl Sciortino (a 25-year-old openly gay man) and Vinny Ciampa (an entrenched anti-gay incumbent). Both efforts were masterful.

The second part of *Winning Marriage* moves slightly west to focus on New York. However, this section of the book has an entirely different flavor than the Massachusetts chapters. Whereas Massachusetts had more of a grassroots political feel, New York was more about power politics inside Albany and the power of big money.

The chapters in this section focused on the efforts of Democratic Governor Andrew Cuomo to pass a same-sex marriage bill through the Republican-controlled New York Senate in 2011 (the Assembly was overwhelmingly Democratic and supportive). What comes through most clearly here is the political power of Cuomo and his desire to employ every aspect of that power to pass a same-sex marriage bill. Solomon brings the

reader into every backroom in Albany to see how insider power politics, combined with smart and aggressive lobbying, can secure political victory. Also of note in the New York campaign was the role that (mostly Republican) big money donors from Wall Street played. Solomon vividly described meetings where CEOs, hedge fund managers, and other Wall Street titans lobbied Republican state senators, and used their vast wealth to provide cover for gay marriage supporters while pressuring those on-the-fence. In the end, all of these strategies were successful and same-sex marriage became legal in New York through legislative action.

After the victories in Massachusetts and New York, Solomon shifted his focus for one chapter to focus on the passage of Proposition 8 in California. This was a major defeat for the marriage movement. California voters amended their state's constitution to prohibit same-sex marriage, after such marriages had already been taking place for five months following a decision of the California Supreme Court. Solomon moved to California to help organize the effort for a ballot measure to overturn Prop 8. However, when activists decided to pursue a legal strategy instead, by filing a federal lawsuit, Solomon headed back east to work for the Freedom to Marry coalition in New York. Despite Solomon's minimal involvement in California compared to other states, the book would have been enriched here by a more in-depth discussion of Proposition 8 and its aftermath. Given that it happened in America's most populous state, and the attention it received in the subsequent five years of legal battles before it was struck down, it probably deserved more than one chapter of discussion.

The remaining chapters in that section dealt with the groundbreaking campaigns for ballot propositions in Maine, Maryland, Washington, and Minnesota in 2012. Minnesota was a defensive action. After Republicans gained control of the Minnesota legislature in 2010, they voted to place a constitutional amendment on the state's ballot defining marriage solely between a man and a woman. This had happened many times before and the gay rights side had always lost. This time, however, the amendment was defeated. In Maine, Maryland, and Washington, activists were trying to legalize same-sex marriage, something that had never been done before through the ballot box.

Through his role overseeing these campaigns at Freedom to Marry, Solomon provided an overview of each effort, but focused most of his attention on Maine. One particularly memorable passage was when Solomon was accompanying a young openly gay canvasser for Mainers United for Marriage, Michael Wood. Wood was canvassing a rural part of the state and knocked on the door of an 80-year-old woman. After initially expressing strong opposition to same-sex marriage, Michael asked her about her own family. She was recently widowed after having been married to her husband for over 40 years, and she began to cry. When she composed herself, she told Michael how happy they had been together and how she would never want to deny that same happiness to someone else. She changed her position and became a strong supporter. Ultimately, Question 1 passed in Maine and same-sex marriage was legalized by the voters, as it was in Maryland and Washington.

In the book's final two sections, Solomon pivoted to national politics by first discussing the "evolution" of President Barack Obama from an opponent of marriage equality (at least publicly) to a supporter, followed by an examination of the landmark US Supreme Court case *United States v. Windsor*, which struck down the federal Defense of Marriage Act and set the stage for the Court's ruling in *Obergefell* two years later. While both of these events were significant milestones for the gay rights movement, Solomon's personal involvement was less pronounced here (although as a senior official for Freedom to Marry he was very much in-the-loop). Moreover, the entire

arc of the book seems to move from Solomon being intensely involved in grassroots organizing and political lobbying in Massachusetts and New York, to more of a supervisory role for the ballot measure fights, to a figure of the national gay establishment when discussing President Obama and *Windsor*.

Nonetheless, Solomon still delivered gripping narrative about the pressure being placed on President Obama (either directly or through his senior adviser Valerie Jarrett) to publicly support marriage equality, and about sitting in the Supreme Court during the oral arguments in the *Windsor* case. Right before oral arguments began, Solomon wrote "I thought about what must have been going through her head [Edith Windsor] as she got ready to watch the nine justices debate whether her lifelong relationship with the love of her life deserved equal protection under law or whether it was acceptable for the federal government to treat her and Thea [Windsor's deceased wife] as strangers" (p. 327). For a much more in-depth discussion of *Windsor*, readers should seek out Roberta Kaplan's *Then Comes Marriage: United States v. Windsor and the Defeat of DOMA* (Kaplan and Dickey, 2015).

Overall, *Winning Marriage* has many strengths. The book is very well-suited for undergraduate and graduate courses on social movements and LGBT politics, but it would also work well in a variety of other courses. In academia, it is common for topics to be siloed. Universities offer courses on gender/sexuality studies, but they also offer separate courses on lobbying, campaigns and elections, public opinion, the mass media, political psychology, legislative politics, the judicial process, and constitutional law. However, in order to truly understand the gay rights movement, it is necessary to understand all of those other elements and how they came together. Similarly, in order to better understand those other topics, it is helpful to have an example of an actual movement that has engaged in them and been successful. So, I could envision all or parts of *Winning Marriage* being effectively used as a teaching tool in many other courses as well.

Brian DiSarro

California State University, Sacramento, California, USA

Reference

Kaplan, R. and Dickey, L. (2015), *Then Comes Marriage: United States v. Windsor and the Defeat of DOMA*, W.W. Norton, New York, NY.

Latino Access to Higher Education: Ethnic Realities and New Directions for the Twenty-First Century

Martin Guevara Urbina and Claudia Rodriguez Wright

Charles C. Thomas Publisher Ltd

Springfield, IL

2016

\$43.95, soft cover and ebook

Keywords Latinos, Higher education, Inclusion, Educational policy, Mexican-Americans, Institutional racism

Review DOI 10.1108/EDI-04-2016-0028

Latino Access to Higher Education presents a different way of thinking about diversity and inclusion. This book considers various aspects that are often not explored by management scholars, such as the history of exclusion, the legal framework that supports exclusion and segregation and other aspects of the context that Latinos and