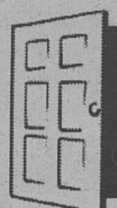




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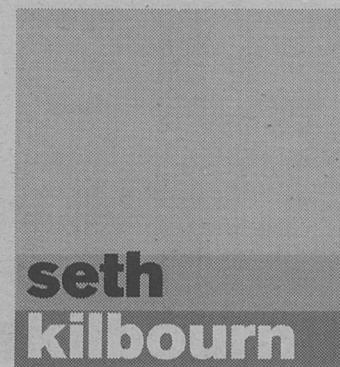
As the second anniversary of marriage equality in Massachusetts has recently passed, it seems an appropriate moment to salute Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders (GLAD), the seven plaintiff couples who sacrificed their privacy in the name of equality, as well as MassEquality, the coalition that has preserved marriage after continuous attacks from the far right.

Since Nov. 18, 2003 when the Supreme Judicial Court ruled that loving gay and lesbian couples could not be excluded from the protections of marriage, so much has changed. In Massachusetts, nearly 6,500 couples have married since it became legal on May 17, 2004, and the national debate about equality for our families shifted on its axis.

Certainly, those Massachusetts families are safer and more secure today because of marriage. Those couples now know that they won't be shown the door when their spouse faces a medical crisis, and mothers and fathers sleep easier knowing their parenthood status is recognized and honored. But these marriages go beyond the state border. These families have taught not only their neighbors but all Americans an important lesson about fairness.

The discussion around marriage is more than one of benefits. It's a discussion about the type of society we want to live in. It's the question of whether the "certain inalienable rights" of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" are American ideals or simply nice ideas. It's about what we want to teach our children.

Annie Goodridge is a good case in point. Years ago, when she asked her moms why they couldn't get married, they didn't have an answer. Yet, Annie's simple but profound question helped ignite a lawsuit that under Mary Bonauto's leadership led to the historic



**seth
kilbourn**

Goodridge decision. Annie and other children, no matter what their parentage, know that Massachusetts values equality and fairness. She and her schoolmates know that her parents are valued and recognized

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members of the community. And these children have learned that democracy works best when it applies to everyone.

The *Goodridge* decision has taught us all. Much to our opponents' dismay, no marriage has been negatively affected by Annie's parents having full rights under law. The dire predictions of anti-gay activists have not come to pass — much like they withered away in Vermont after civil unions were enacted.

In fact, a majority of Massachusetts citizens now support marriage equality, and interestingly, Massachusetts

boasts the lowest divorce rate in the country. Elected officials have grown along with voters as demonstrated by the overwhelming rejection this year of a constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage.

But as we celebrated the second anniversary of the *Goodridge* decision, we remember that we have a lot of work ahead. In Massachusetts, opponents have crafted a second marriage ban for the 2008 ballot. And nationwide, the far right wing is twisting marriage equality to scare voters and legislators from enacting even the most basic protections for the LGBT community. It didn't work in Maine this November, but it did in Texas. We must be

ever vigilant and continue to tell our stories to our families, friends and colleagues.

As Martin Luther King Jr. said, "Let us realize the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice." We have seen legalized discrimination defeated through groundbreaking court decisions, and *Goodridge* now stands among them. The arc is bending toward justice, and Massachusetts is ahead of the curve. ▼

Seth Kilbourn is Vice President of the Human Rights Campaign's Marriage Project.