

POSITIVE I.D.



KEVIN M. CATHCART

THIS PRIDE SEASON PROMISES TO FEEL ESPECIALLY CELEBRATORY, AS OUR COMMUNITY HAS ENJOYED SOME STUNNING ADVANCES.

EVERY YEAR AT THIS TIME, communities across the United States celebrate Pride. It's a happy time—a time to relax and be ourselves, reconnect with friends and marvel at the astonishing diversity within our communities—sometimes mixed with bittersweet thoughts as we remember the loved ones we lost. There are contingents devoted to every conceivable community within our community: people of faith, people of color, people living with HIV, teens, straight allies, seniors, student groups, company employee networks. The list is endless.

This year promises to feel especially celebratory, as the LGBT and HIV communities have enjoyed some stunning advances. These were hard-won, the result of decades of getting back up and fighting after having door after door slammed in our faces. “Don’t Ask Don’t Tell” may soon be ended, and the so-called “Defense of Marriage Act” is on the ropes (see “What’s Next for DOMA?” p. 10). We’ve seen big steps forward in respect for our families in hospitals and health care settings, and polls show more and more support for LGBT equality.

Perhaps it’s no surprise that our community has come to be seen as a model for effecting dramatic shifts in social attitudes, most notably by our colleagues in the movement for immigration reform (see “Sharing Strength,” p. 14). But it is telling of how far as a nation we still have to go that recently, President Obama endured the repugnant exercise of releasing his birth certificate to the public in order to prove, once again, his American citizenship. It is difficult to imagine this demand being made of a president of European ancestry on both sides of his family. And it underscores the symbolic power of documentation.

Documentation represents recognition and belonging. It’s a dream for millions—including thousands of LGBT and HIV-positive people—who have come to the U.S., contribute billions

to our economy (despite popular misconceptions) and yet live in fear of deportation.

Documentation also continues to be a crucial battleground for the LGBT movement. It’s only last year that the U.S. Department of State issued new passport guidelines which made it easier for transgender people to carry identification which properly reflected their gender identity.

However, in so many other ways, recognition and respect continue to be denied to us. In April, the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals reversed two prior court rulings won by Lambda Legal and denied an accurate birth certificate to a Louisiana-born five-year-old boy adopted at birth by a gay couple in New York. For 200 years, states have been required to respect the court decrees of other states. The decision, and Louisiana’s recalcitrance, are simply outrageous. It’s even more upsetting to consider the ways in which such a decision upends the day-to-day lives of our plaintiffs Oren Adar, Mickey Smith and their son. Not having a birth certificate complicates enrolling their son in school, putting him on their insurance and even getting him through airport security—all things most American parents get to take for granted.

This Pride season, we have a great deal to celebrate. Look for our fuchsia T-shirts with the Lambda Legal logo and pick up one of our great new drawstring sportpacks at more than 40 pride events across the U.S. When Pride winds down, let’s take that positive energy and continue fighting for the things we believe in, and that still very much need to be fought for: equality, respect and dignity.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kevin M. Cathcart". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.