

FAMILY VALUES



KEVIN M. CATHCART

LAMBDA LEGAL IS FIGHTING FOR OUR FAMILIES, AND PREVAILING OVER THOSE WHO WOULD BREAK US APART.

IN SEVERAL WEEKS, THE HOLIDAYS WILL BE UPON US, and with it, the prospect of reuniting with loved ones and family. At its best, the word “family” conjures feelings of acceptance and belonging. But for many in our community, “family” continues to be a loaded word.

For too long it’s been a fixed concept, consigning LGBT people to the status of outsiders, looking in. Despite this, many of us forged ahead, defining family on our own terms, loving and committing to a partner openly, raising children, and creating that sense of belonging from which LGBT people were so long excluded.

On so many fronts, Lambda Legal is fighting for our families, and prevailing over those who would break us apart.

In July, Lambda Legal filed a friend-of-the-court brief on behalf of a bi-national lesbian couple, in which we urged an end to the deportation of immigrants married to U.S. citizens. In August, the Department of Homeland Security announced that it will implement new procedures for reviewing deportation cases. This is expected to result in the administrative closure of deportation cases for immigrants with U.S. citizen spouses and children, a victory for thousands of binational couples and families.

That same month, we filed a friend-of-the-court brief in Illinois, where four dioceses of Catholic Charities, despite receiving state funding, refused to allow civil union couples to become foster parents. Two days later, the court ruled against Catholic Charities.

As we go to press, we are waiting to learn whether the U.S. Supreme Court has decided to hear our suit *Adar v. Smith*. In this case, which Lambda Legal has led since 2007, the Louisiana

state registrar has refused to provide an accurate birth certificate for a Louisiana-born boy, adopted in New York by a gay couple, listing both fathers as his parents. Despite two federal court rulings in favor of our clients, a closely divided appeals court overturned the earlier rulings and the state has continued its inhumane rejection of Oren Adar, Mickey Smith and their son as a loving family.

This season, too many LGBT youth will not be celebrating the holidays with their families. The high proportion of LGBT youth living in out-of-home settings like homeless shelters and group homes is a stark reminder of the extent to which we’re still rejected by our families. We were gratified, in August, to reach the resolution of a complaint we had filed on behalf of a teenaged transgender girl, “L.P.,” who had been physically attacked and verbally abused at a youth facility in Philadelphia. As a result of work by our Youth in Out-of-Home Care legal team, the Department of Human Services agreed to change its policies and conduct training for staff as well as provide facilities for transgender residents. It also agreed to pay L.P. an undisclosed sum.

We hope to see a day when we no longer have to litigate cases like these. Until then, we are digging our heels in, and fighting for families across the U.S., to whom we also wish the happiest of gatherings, this season and for many to come.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kevin M. Cathcart". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.