

Creating Change that Matters

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The 24th National Conference on LGBT Equality: Creating Change took place in Baltimore "Charm City", Maryland, January 25-29, 2012. There were nearly 3,000 people from all over the globe who attended this five-day program—the largest Creating Change ever! The conference featured over 250 workshops and training sessions which covered a lot more than just lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender issues—they covered issues that affect us all—no matter your sexual or gender orientation.

Alongside expert-led sessions on transgender healthcare issues, marriage politics and interpersonal communication, Creating Change had plenary sessions covering the LGBT movement in America and around the world.

Benjamin Jealous, president and executive officer of the nation's oldest and largest civil rights organization, the NAACP, delivered the opening plenary keynote speech. Jealous gave a stirring speech in which he voiced how the "LGBT struggle is a cause dear to [his] heart" and how we must fight to end racial, economic, sexual and gender discrimination because "oppression is oppression is oppression!" He also explained how it is important to continue to fight united until all people "can live in a country free of discrimination, hatred or violence." Jealous pushed further by declaring that any "child who is being bullied in school doesn't have access to a fair education"—one of the most applauded lines at the conference.

Task Force Executive Director Rea Carey gave her "State of the Movement Address," where she spoke on the movement's ongoing goals: ending abuse of transgender immigrants, winning equal benefits for same-sex spouses of military service members, allowing transgender people to enlist in the military and reducing the high AIDS infection rates for gays, bisexuals, and men of color.

The fight for equality was rekindled when Carey declared that "progress for some is not progress for all and we will not stop until we are fully free!"

Creating Change also got a surprise visit from a very special guest: Maryland's Governor Martin O'Malley—another first for the Conference!



Earlier this year, Governor O'Malley introduced a state marriage equality bill and encouraged legislators to help pass it. He said that his bill would ensure that all children "live in a loving, caring, committed, and stable home, protected equally under the law." On March 1, 2012, Governor O'Malley signed legislation legalizing same-sex marriage in Maryland, making the state seventh in the nation to offer marriage equality to gay and lesbian couples.



Finally, the conference featured a plenary session on International LGBT Issues and Organizing where Mira Patel, Special Advisor on LGBT and Women's Issues at the U.S. Department of State, participated in a panel discussion with human rights defenders from Guyana, Malaysia and Uganda. She reiterated the Obama administration's support of international LGBT human rights and declared that "gay rights are human rights, and human rights are gay rights...My job is to ensure that our work is for human rights and dignity for all."

Southwest Airlines is a Company that works hard every day to do right by our Customers and our Employees - regardless of race, religion, sexuality, etc. The diversity of our Employees and our Customers is our strength and has enabled us to be a Leader in the airline industry and a strong community partner in the cities that we serve. Our Corporate Culture was built on the tenet that we would always treat each other with dignity and respect. We are proud to be the Official Airline Creating Change as this support will not only positively impact Southwest, it has and will create change in the lives of millions across the world.

