

## The Morning after Election Day 2012

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The message appeared in my phone not long after I went to bed and not long before I got up. It was from Sean, a psychologist with whom I had worked on a research project in 1992—reading over stories from LGBT people in Colorado who felt defeated, demoralized, and scared in the aftermath of that state's Amendment 2, a ballot measure that effectively legalized discrimination based on sexual orientation. Sean wrote, "I'm thinking of you tonight, Glenda. I never thought it would happen this much in my lifetime, but it has, and it will continue. And thankfully tomorrow, as I sit with my clients, in 20 years of post-election reactions, it won't be full of grief."

Before I turned off the TV for the night, the pundits were already calling it a "watershed moment" for LGBT rights in the United States. It is always worth celebrating our victories. They have been hard to come by on the issue of marriage equality. Historically, they have been hard to come by more generally. When voters have made decisions about the rights of *any* numerical minority group, those groups have most often come up the losers. But not this year, not this election.

While it is clear to me that no group's rights should ever be put up to a public vote, sometimes a movement has to go *through* when there is no option to go *around*. This year, we saw LGBT people who were hopeful enough to make decisions that would require them to go before the voters. We won in at least two of those states, and quite possibly in the third as well. Additionally, in Minnesota, LGBT people and our allies fought back against a Constitutional amendment banning marriage equality. This year, we also saw the election of the first open lesbian to the US Senate. We witnessed the reelection of a president who has been more actively supportive of LGBT rights than any of his predecessors. And, in Iowa, the voters refused to vote a Supreme Court justice off the bench solely for his support of marriage equality.

It has been an amazing election. It represents an opportunity for those of us in the LGBT movement to consider where we came from and where we have yet to go. We mourn for the pain caused to people touched by all the anti-LGBT campaigns; their lives were subject to debate, objectification, unfair scrutiny, and falsehoods. We celebrate with them their psychological strength as well as their political victories. And we pledge to begin the task of undoing two decades of hurtful legislative and Constitutional interference in our lives.

It is also appropriate that we acknowledge the debt we owe other movements for human and civil rights. We have been inspired by them, learned from them, stood on their shoulders—all too often without due recognition of where the lessons came from and at what cost. In a very real sense, we would not have our victories this morning were it not for the historical precedent of those movements, not to mention their recent direct support for our cause. Though long overdue, it is not too late to acknowledge that debt with gratitude. We can best do that by working more intentionally for the rights of everyone—whatever their gender identity or sexual orientation.

Sean was right. It will be a different day-after Election Day. Let's dance at this revolutionary moment (with a nod to Emma Goldman) and harness our progress to move toward the vision of liberty and justice for all.