

KAMENY UNCENSORED : NEW CHRISTIAN COALITION THREAT

*Father of Gay Activist Militancy Isn't Discouraged by Recent Losses
Says: "The Tide's Against Them, They're Losing the War They Started!"*

By Jack Nichols



Franklin E. Kameny

Washington, D.C., Feb. 19 Franklin E. Kameny, Ph.D., the father of gay activist militancy, told *GayToday* Thursday that "we should not be overly discouraged by recent losses in Maine and Washington State, but should be prepared to continue to do battle, both reactively and proactively."

In 1961, the earnest 72-year old Harvard astronomer single-handedly made himself the nation's foremost authority on how to thwart the U.S. Government's anti-gay policies. Kameny was also the first American to attempt the elimination of anti-gay government discrimination, taking his case to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Under the unflappable scientist's leadership, the Mattachine Society of Washington, America's first militant/activist group, introduced bold activist strategies into the gay movement. After four decades of persistent, dedicated gay movement work, Kameny remains as involved as ever in the historic struggle that reflects, as it grows, much of what began in his always-controversial, carefully-reasoned statements, clearly marked roadmaps to equality for same-sex affection under the law.

In the wake of the February 10 defeat for gay rights at the polls in Maine, Kameny says that the lesbian and gay movement's tactical responses to declarations of war by the Christian right must be waged "more competently than we have in the past." The pioneering gay leader predicts, however, that "full success" is ahead for gays who request nothing less than full equality with fellow U.S. citizens.

Nevertheless, he says, "we have not done nearly as well as we should both strategically and rhetorically. They (the Christian Coalition) have come up with effective soundbites, of which their *special rights* has been the most devastating. We have not come up with adequate counters."

Kameny believes that such "soundbites and rhetoric are crucial!" He points at how "the opposition raises arguments which have no relationship to relevant reality, and has no compunctions about inventing 'facts' to suit them."

The veteran gay strategist insists it is "necessary to LISTEN to what is said, and to refute, rebut and otherwise counter it point by point." He thinks that thus far such countering of arguments has been less than effective.

"There has been too much of a tendency as (apparently) in Maine, to be complacent. We should always approach these fights as if it were absolutely certain that we will lose unless we make an all-out effort, and then make that all-out effort. These fights are no place for timidity or closetry."

"Further," says Kameny, "our people tend to be 'nice guys'; theirs are not. They have respect neither for truth nor for civility. They fight 'hardball'; our people must learn to do likewise, as alien as that type of fighting is for many of us."

In casual conversation, Kameny's views of the religious right's leadership reach a kind of crescendo, reflecting his scorn for the nationwide war (See *GayToday* archives, Events, [February 19](#).) against gay men and lesbians declared by Randy Tate's Coalition Wednesday.

"Like cockroaches, rats and other kinds of vermin," Kameny uncensored told *GayToday*, "the human vermin who constitute the Christian Coalition, the American Family Association, the Family Research Council, Focus on the Family, and the rest of the nutty fundamentalist, homophobic, bigoted hatemongers, who infest the rightwing ideological and political woodwork, crawl out to feast whenever they detect likely prey."

"If," he continues, "as usually occurs in recent times, they lose the battle of the moment, they scurry silently back to their holes, not to be heard of again until another confrontation arises. If they win, as occasionally happens they proceed to play up their victory far beyond its significance."

The 'nutty' fundamentalists do this, Kameny believes, "in order to direct attention away from the fact that while they may win an occasional battle, the tide is against them, and they are unquestionably losing the war which they started."

Kameny's optimism stems, in part, from the results of effective leadership he has exercised during the last half of the 20th century. It remains strong in spite of the overturning of Washington's and Maine's Gay Rights laws.

The Christian Coalition's declaration of war on gay America, he says, is marked by a "marshalling of troops" and their "coming out in full force in shameless celebration of prejudice, bigotry, discrimination, and undiluted hatred, in the evident hope of

extending their success."

"But," he says confidently, "if the history of the past quarter century, and, especially the past decade, painted with a broad brush, is any indication, Maine and Washington State will be 'flashes in the pan.' "

"Ultimately," according to Kameny, "of course most, if not all of these battles will be trumped by the enactment of ENDA (the Employment Non-discrimination Act pending in Congress) and so it is there that we must continue to direct our efforts in full force and relentlessly. While ENDA deals only with employment discrimination, once it has become law, additional protections in housing and public accommodations will probably be relatively easy to enact."

Kameny says that gay men and lesbians will win most of the battles ahead because "we are right, moral and American and they are wrong, immoral and unAmerican."

© 1998 BEI; All Rights Reserved.

For reprint permission e-mail gaytoday@badpuppy.com

