

OUT FOR JUSTICE

NCLR Reflections on Kate's Leadership and Legacy

On March 15, NCLR Executive Director Kate Kendell announced that she will step down after 22 years of leading NCLR. For more than two decades, she has positioned NCLR at the forefront of the national fight for LGBTQ equality.

Kate has inspired countless LGBTQ community members, including many of her own staff:

Shannon Minter, Legal Director:

Working with a leader of such fierce intellect and unfailing compassion has been the greatest privilege of my professional life. I speak for all of NCLR's staff in saying that we are more dedicated than ever to fulfilling Kate's vision of a world in which no one is left behind.

Amy Whelan, Senior Staff Attorney:

Here is a secret about Kate—people might think that such a dynamic speaker and leader must have flaws hidden from public view. Nothing could be further from the truth. In the office, she is just as hilarious and down-to-earth as she is

during public appearances. Leaders like Kate come around once in a lifetime and her incredible impact will shape NCLR's work for years to come.

Noemi Calonje, Immigration Project Director:

When my father passed away 3 years ago, I notified the office about his funeral. The day we were to bury him, things just felt extremely overwhelming to me. I went outside the funeral home for a moment, and then I saw Kate walking across the parking lot. I walked toward her, and she just held me and let me cry. No words were needed. I will never forget that moment. And that is what makes Kate special.

Alexander Chen, Equal Justice Works Fellow:

Kate began her work at NCLR when I was five years old. Growing up, I never imagined I could live the open, free, and authentic life I do now. Through all those tumultuous and eventful years, Kate has been at the center of driving the unimaginable progress that LGBTQ people have experienced in this country. My generation lives in the world that she created.

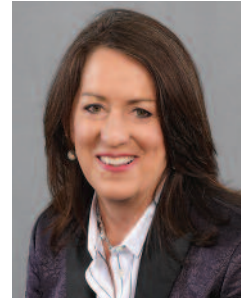
We are more dedicated than ever to fulfilling Kate's vision of a world in which no one is left behind.



Noemi Calonje with Kate; staff meeting; Shannon Minter with Kate.

Letter from the Executive Director

When I first came to NCLR in 1994, two years before “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” barred openly gay, lesbian, and bisexual people from serving in the military, I was shocked by the harm and discrimination directed toward many in the LGBTQ community. Whether listening to stories of family rejection and self-hate, or stories of queer people losing their jobs and their kids, it felt like there was a tidal wave of homophobia and stigma. Coming from Utah, where I grew up Mormon, I believed I had seen the worst. Not even close.



Kate Kendell, Esq.

Now, 24 years later—within the lifetime of a college graduate—we have witnessed a monumental shift in LGBTQ progress. From out celebrities and openly LGBTQ elected officials, to fierce and unbowed allies and incredible legal and policy wins, we know LGBTQ individuals and families are an integral part of the American fabric.

But even as we mark how far we’ve come, we still witness the relentless pursuit of anti-LGBTQ bigotry.

Last July, when Trump announced his transgender military ban, we knew we could not allow this discrimination against transgender servicemembers to stand. Not just because it would ultimately result in the loss of highly qualified and trained troops, but also because this precedent would be used against transgender people in every context you can imagine—from immigration law to family law to employment law. Our legal director Shannon Minter sprang into action to file the lawsuit to stop Trump’s ban—and so far, we are winning at every level of this important fight. But it’s not over yet, and we will need to keep fighting until Trump’s ban is gone for good.

Together, we will keep pushing forward until the day when every LGBTQ person can wake up knowing that who they are and whom they love does not limit either their opportunities or their dreams. That day, while still distant, is within sight.

At the end of this year, when I walk past that threshold for the last time as Executive Director, I will do so with a heart bursting with gratitude that I had the privilege of doing this work and being part of bending that legendary arc of the moral universe. I can only hope that years from now, when my own grandchild becomes an adult, that the injustices of today will be relegated to the dustbins of history. And I know that, like today, NCLR will be a key part of that fight for many years to come.

Onward,


Kate Kendell, Esq.
NCLR Executive Director

Fighting to Protect LGBTQ Immigrants and Sanctuary Cities

Twenty-four years ago, NCLR launched its Asylum & Immigration Project. With longtime staffers like Noemi Calonje, who has been there since the very beginning, NCLR has helped countless LGBTQ people—for many of whom, being forced to return to their home countries could be a death sentence. And in that time, we've never lost an asylum case. Not one.

In January 2017, President Trump ramped up his attacks on immigrant communities by signing a series of executive orders imposing punitive restrictions on immigrants, including refugees and asylum-seekers—and attacking sanctuary cities by threatening to withhold all federal funding.

Cities like San Francisco, New York City, and others have enacted sanctuary policies to ensure that all community members, especially those most prone to exploitation and abuse, can report crimes and discrimination, and access essential services regardless of immigration status. Without these policies, for example, an

undocumented individual could be raped or exploited without anywhere to turn for help. These policies keep everyone safer.

In February, NCLR, together with partners, filed an important amicus brief with the 9th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals in *City and County of San Francisco v. Trump* urging the judges to uphold a lower court ruling declaring these executive orders to be unconstitutional. It also underscores the urgency of the irreparable harms communities would suffer if forced to abandon sanctuary policies, including harms to public safety, public health, and the ability to combat discrimination and other forms of abuse, all of which are compelling government interests.

NCLR is committed to ensuring the United States continues to be a beacon of hope and opportunity for all of our community members, as we fight for the rights of LGBTQ DREAMers, asylum seekers, and immigrants.



In the 24 years NCLR has worked on immigration and asylum issues, we've never lost an asylum case. Not one. And we will keep fighting.

LGBTQ Parental Rights: The Next Frontier in Our Fight for Dignity and Respect

In 1977, NCLR founders faced a family law landscape in which lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender parents were losing custody of their children simply because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. And NCLR was born, not just to win these battles but also to take down the pervasive stigma and stereotypes our community faced.

Forty-one years later, NCLR is still taking on landmark cases on behalf of our families. Over the past two years, NCLR has had three U.S. Supreme Court victories for our community.

This year, NCLR fought like hell in Arizona to protect the rights of nonbiological parents. In the Arizona Supreme Court case, *McLaughlin v. McLaughlin*, Arizona recognized a nonbiological parent as the legal parent of the child she and her same-sex spouse conceived through assisted reproduction. NCLR argued this Arizona case on behalf of nonbiological mother Suzan McLaughlin.

The U.S. Supreme Court has already explained in both *Obergefell v. Hodges* and *Pavan v. Smith*—that the U.S. Constitution requires states to provide the exact same rights to same-sex spouses and different-sex spouses. And NCLR was an integral part of *Obergefell* and led *Pavan*, critical milestones



Across the country, there are still states seeking to chip away at marriage equality or strip our families of their rights and dignity.

our families and community.

Across the country, there are still states seeking to chip away at marriage equality or strip our families of their rights and dignity. But we've won. The U.S. Supreme Court has already spoken on these issues. And we will continue to ensure that we don't lose any ground in this important fight.

NCLR is a national legal organization committed to advancing the human and civil rights of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community through litigation, public policy advocacy, and public education.

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