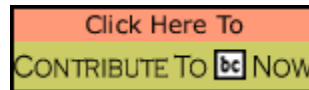
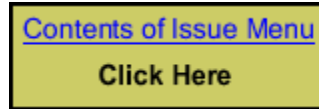




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**Marriage Equality Movement Mother Dies  
In Struggle Spotlight  
By The Reverend Irene Monroe  
BlackCommentator.com Editorial Board**

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As the nation celebrates Mother's Day this Sunday, let us as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer Americans not forgot our mother of the marriage equality movement who died this week - Mildred Jeter Loving.

There is no greater challenge before us than the issue of marriage equality. In the U. S. Supreme Court decision that struck down this country's anti-miscegenation laws as unconstitutional, Chief Justice Earl Warren wrote for the court stating the following: "Marriage is one of the 'basic civil rights of man,' fundamental to our very existence and survival. ... Under our Constitution, the freedom to marry, or not marry, a person of another race resides with the individual and cannot be infringed by the state."

While none of our presidential hopefuls in their campaign promises to Americans will heed to the June 1967 ruling for us, they should, at least, learn from the history lesson of Mildred Loving's tenacity that brought about a decision in her favor, that soon, too, will the courts rule in ours.

"I think marrying who you want is a right no man should have anything to do with. It's a God-given right," Loving stated on ABC news 41 years ago.

But that God-given right has been violated throughout American History. And while we know African Americans have always had a tenuous relationship with the institution of marriage, beginning with slavery, so too have had many other Americans.

We were told here that if the state of Massachusetts legalized such an ungodly act as

same-sex marriage, not only would it bring out the death the institution of marriage, it would also bring about the demise of civilization.

Many also said the righteous hand of God would be in that defining moment to stop same-sex marriage with ugly protests, with town clerks engaging in civil disobedience by refusing to issue licenses, and with just those last minute unavoidable and inexplicable legal snafus.

But none of that happened.

And get this: The sky didn't fall either!

The ugly rhetoric against same-sex marriage is all too familiar to this country's legal battle against miscegenation.

And here are the four arguments used:

- First, like the judges against interracial marriage judges against same-sex marriage claimed that marriage belonged under the control of the states than the federal government.
- Second, just as anti-miscegenationist judges defined and labeled interracial relationships as illicit sex so too do anti-marriage equality judges.
- Third, anti-miscegenationist judges insisted that interracial marriage was contrary to God's will.

The trial judge's ruling against Loving stated:

"Almighty God created the races white, black, yellow, malay and red, and He placed them on separate continents. And but for the interference with His arrangement, there would be no cause for such marriages. The fact that He separated the races shows that he did not intend for the races to mix."

This same argue shows up for us.

And lastly , these judges declared, over and over again, that interracial marriages, like same-sex marriages are "unnatural."

But the campaign for same-sex marriage will succeed for us because the campaign to strike down anti-miscegenation laws did for Mildred Loving.

On June 12, 2007 Freedom to Marry joined with several of the nation's leading civil rights organizations to hold a press conference at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. to commemorate the 40th anniversary of Loving v. Virginia decision for affirming the freedom to marry as a "basic civil right" of every American.

Lending her support to the commemoration, Mrs. Mildred Loving wrote,

"When my late husband, Richard, and I got married in Washington, DC in 1958, it wasn't to make a political statement or start a fight. We were in love, and we wanted to be married. Not a day goes by that I don't think of

Richard and our love, and how much it meant to me to have that freedom to marry the person precious to me, even if others thought he was the "wrong kind of person" for me to marry. I believe all Americans, no matter their race, no matter their sex, no matter their sexual orientation, should have that same freedom to marry. I am proud that Richard's and my name are on a court case that can help reinforce the love, the commitment, the fairness, and the family that so many people, black or white, young or old, gay or straight, seek in life. I support the freedom to marry for all. That's what Loving, and loving, are all about."

In quelling the tension between black civil right activists of the 1960 who stated that marriage equality for LGBTQ Americans is not a civil right, one of the organizations that spearheaded the Loving case, the NAACP Legal Defense & Educational Fund, Inc., marked the 40th anniversary of Loving by stating the following: "It is undeniable that the experience of African Americans differs in many important ways from that of gay men and lesbians; among other things, the legacy of slavery and segregation is profound. But differences in historical experiences should not preclude the application of constitutional provisions to gay men and lesbians who are denied the right to marry the person of their choice." And on April of 2006, NAACP LDF filed a friend-of-the-court brief in the case brought by New York same-sex couples challenging their exclusion from marriage.

A resolution authored by Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin passed the House of Representatives on June 11, 2007, by unanimous consent, commemorating the fortieth anniversary of the Loving v. Virginia decision that ended the ban on interracial marriage in the United States and recognizing that marriage is one of the "basic civil rights of man" at the heart of the Fourteenth Amendment protections.

My ancestors give us the Yoruba proverb that states, "If we stand tall it is because we stand on the backs of those who came before us." It is my ancestors who taught us how to make it on the broken pieces, and they have taught us how to make "a way out of no way." They have taught us we must lift as we climb, and they have taught us that we must always see our work in relationship to one another. And it is my ancestors who taught us it matters not who stands against us because all that we ever need to be, to do, and to know is available to us in their teachings. The teachings of Mildred Loving, we must not forget!

I have also learned that the wonderment of life is oftentimes for brief moments when you hear a song or a sermon, see a picture or meet a person who helps you to see yourself, the world or the journey you have been on or will be on a little clearer. For us LGBTQ Americans, who would have thought that the audacious actions of a demure African American young woman from Caroline County, Virginia is the reason our paths crossed?

But when the work of justice is bent toward freedom, it allows us to see, along this troubling human timeline, those faces and to hear those voices in history of the damned, the disinherited, the disrespected, and the dispossessed.

Let us hold in memory this Mother's Day our "Loving-spirit" of Mildred.


**BlackCommentator.com** Editorial Board member, the Rev. Irene Monroe is a religion columnist, theologian, and public speaker. A native of Brooklyn, Rev. Monroe is a graduate from Wellesley College and Union Theological Seminary at Columbia University, and served as a pastor at an African-American church before coming to Harvard Divinity School for her doctorate as a Ford Fellow. Reverend Monroe's *Let Your Light Shine Like a Rainbow 365 Days a Year - Meditations on Bible Prayers* will be out in June, 2008. As an African American feminist theologian, she speaks for a sector of society that is frequently invisible. Her website is [irenemonroe.com](http://irenemonroe.com). [Click here](#) to contact the Rev. Monroe.

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