

Broadway Premiere of "8" Lifts Veil on Prop. 8 Trial

NEW YORK, July 18, 2011 /PRNewswire/ -- Today the American Foundation for Equal Rights (AFER) and Broadway Impact announced the Broadway premiere of "8", a play chronicling the historic trial in the federal legal challenge to California's Proposition 8, written by AFER Founding Board Member and Academy-Award winning writer Dustin Lance Black and directed by Tony Award-winning actor and director Joe Mantello.

The production is an unprecedented account of the Federal District Court trial of *Perry v. Schwarzenegger*, the case filed by AFER to overturn Prop. 8, which eliminated the right to marry for gay and lesbian couples in California.

Black, who penned the Academy-Award winning feature film "*Milk*," based "8" on the actual words of the trial transcripts, first-hand observations of the courtroom drama and interviews with the plaintiffs and their families. It is set to premiere at the Eugene O'Neill Theatre in New York City on Monday, September 19, 2011 for an exclusive, one night only fundraiser to benefit AFER. High profile and award-winning actors will play the roles of the legal team, plaintiffs and witnesses for both sides of the historic Prop. 8 case. Casting for the all-star benefit will be announced soon.

Following the New York debut on September 19, AFER and Broadway Impact will license "8" to schools and community organizations nationwide in order to spur action, dialogue and understanding. AFER and Broadway Impact will help produce these staged readings across the country, so that "8" will live on beyond its September premiere.

"People need to witness what happened in the Prop. 8 trial, if for no other reason than to see inequality and discrimination unequivocally rejected in a court of law where truth and facts matter," said Black. "I've built my career around exposing and uncovering 'the real story'. The goal of '8' is to show the world that marriage equality is a basic constitutional right and that those who would deny this basic freedom from loving, committed couples have only vitriol and baseless hyperbole to fall back on. The facts are on our side and truth always finds the light. We at AFER are doing all we can to help speed that process along."

The story for "8" is framed by the trial's historic closing arguments in June 2010, but features the best arguments and testimony from both sides of the issue. Scenes include flashbacks to some of the more jaw-dropping moments of trial, such as the admission by Prop. 8 supporters' star witness David Blankenhorn that "we would be more American on the day we permitted same-sex marriage than we were on the day before."

AFER prevailed at the federal district court and Prop. 8 was found unconstitutional on August 4, 2010. It is currently being appealed by the anti-marriage Proponents.

The American public was not given a chance to witness the historic trial because the Proponents of Prop. 8 launched a desperate attempt to forever hide the trial videotapes. Although the trial proceedings were open to the public, and all courtroom testimony and events were well-documented, the trial video most vividly compares the weakness of the Proponents' arguments to the well-reasoned, valid and constitutionally-based arguments and evidence put forth by AFER's team.

The video of the trial has been kept under seal due to a federal protective order. AFER's attorneys have filed a motion asking the court to make the full and unedited recordings available for all to see.

"Because this case involves the constitutional rights of millions of people, it is especially important for the public to see what happened during the trial," said AFER Senior Project Director Adam Umhoefer. "Both sides had an equal opportunity and ample resources to assemble their strongest teams and put forth their absolute best arguments in a fair setting. Viewed side-by-side there is simply no question that there was only one decision the court could have reached. The moment we knew the trial would not be publicly broadcast we immediately began planning to find a way to show the world what happened in this historic case. This play and our partnership with Broadway Impact allow us to do exactly that."

"I was lucky enough to watch the initial closing arguments of *Perry v. Schwarzenegger* in San Francisco," says Broadway Impact co-founder Rory O'Malley (Tony nominee for *The Book of Mormon*). "We knew then and there that audiences needed to see and hear this story live, as we had done. '8' builds on a successful tradition of documentary theatre—plays like *The Laramie Project* and *The Vagina Monologues*, which inspire us with their combination of art and activism. We are thrilled to partner with AFER to bring this story to a national audience."

Tickets for the play will be in high demand and are expected to sell out. The proceeds will go directly to the fight for full federal marriage equality and to support educational efforts on the freedom to marry nationwide.

Read Pat Healy's New York Times EXCLUSIVE: <http://nyti.ms/oGZBwf>

For info on ticket sales, visit: www.afer.org/broadway8

For info on how your local theater can produce "8", visit: www.BROADWAYIMPACT.com

About the American Foundation for Equal Rights

The American Foundation for Equal Rights is the sole sponsor of the federal court challenge to Proposition 8, *Perry v. Schwarzenegger*. After bringing together Theodore B. Olson and David Boies to lead its legal team, AFER successfully advanced its case through federal district court and is now leading it through the appeals process. The Foundation is committed to achieving full federal marriage equality. AFER Board of Directors includes Chad Griffin (President), Bruce Cohen, Dustin Lance Black, Jonathan Lewis, Ken Mehlman, Michele Reiner and Rob Reiner.

www.AFER.org

About Broadway Impact

BROADWAY IMPACT is a non-profit organization of theatre artists and fans mobilized in support of marriage equality. Founded in 2008 by Tony-nominated performers Rory O'Malley (*Book of Mormon*), Gavin Creel (*HAIR*) and Production Coordinator Jenny Kanelos, BROADWAY IMPACT works to educate and inspire the theatre community into action. Recent initiatives include helping to staff the phone banking efforts in New York State, creating a 3,000 piece letter writing campaign, gaining the funding for 1,400 supporters to attend the National Equality March and producing a rally for over 5,000 attendees in Midtown Manhattan where speakers included, Cynthia Nixon, Audra McDonald, David Hyde Pierce, Mayor Michael Bloomberg, and Governor David Paterson. BROADWAY IMPACT was awarded the 2009 Human Rights Campaign Community Award.

www.BROADWAYIMPACT.com

SOURCE American Foundation for Equal Rights