

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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California Court to Hear Arguments in Marriage Equality Lawsuits for Same-Sex Couples

*Ruling on Marriage Equality Cases Led by API Plaintiffs
Would Impact Thousands of API Families in the State*

San Francisco, California (July 7, 2006) – The California Court of Appeal will hear oral arguments on July 10 at 9:00AM at the State Building (350 McAllister) in the historic marriage equality lawsuits entitled *Woo v Lockyer, et al.* A press conference featuring plaintiffs and lawyers will be held beforehand at 8:00AM in Room 305 at City Hall. Asian and Pacific Islanders for Equality (API Equality), a statewide organization committed to obtaining equal marriage rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) couples, is hopeful that the Court will decide in favor of marriage equality for these couples.

“California was one of the first states to recognize that barring interracial couples from marriage was not only discriminatory, but downright immoral, “ stated Karin Wang, Steering Committee Member of the Los Angeles Chapter of API Equality. “*Woo* is a momentous opportunity for California to once again stand out as a beacon of fairness, and be among the first states to guarantee equal marriage rights under the law for lesbian and gay people too.”

As in other states across the country, including Maryland and Washington, gay and lesbian couples in the API community are spearheading the struggle for marriage equality in California. Leading plaintiffs in the *Woo* suit include Cristy Chung and Lancy Woo, a Chinese American lesbian couple with a young daughter named Olivia, and Stuart Gaffney and John Lewis, an interracial couple with Chinese ancestry on Gaffney’s side.

A broad coalition of nearly 30 API organizations filed a brief in support of the plaintiffs earlier this year. Lancy Woo and Cristy Chung noted how important it was that so many API leaders and organizations support her family and thousands of families like hers. “We deeply appreciate our API community standing up for all families, including Lancy, our daughter Olivia, and me,” said Chung. “Olivia means the world to us, and we want her to grow up knowing that there’s nothing second class about her family.”

“My mother, who is Chinese American, and my father, who is white, were only able to marry over 50 years ago because the California Supreme Court overturned the state’s law prohibiting interracial couples from marrying. Today, my partner John and I turn to the California courts to protect our rights as a family. We hope to be able to celebrate our 20th anniversary next year with a fully legal marriage” said plaintiff Stuart Gaffney.

A ruling in the *Woo* suit would impact thousands of API families in California. According to UCLA’s Williams Institute, APIs form a highly visible portion of California’s population of same-sex couples and their children:

- Nearly 1 out of 10 of California’s same-sex couples include at least one API individual (13,000 APIs in total.)
- Over 50% of California’s API same-sex couples are raising children who would benefit from the protections afforded by civil marriage.
- Over 5,600 children under 18 (related and unrelated) are raised by same-sex couples with at least one API partner.

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API Equality is a statewide coalition based in Los Angeles and San Francisco comprising organizations and individuals who are committed to working in the Asian and Pacific Islander (API) communities for equal marriage rights and fair treatment of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) families through community education and advocacy.