

HRC, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and UNID@S release new bilingual guide on sexual orientation, gender identity and the Bible for Latino/a families and churches

WASHINGTON, June 29 — In an effort to foster a dialogue with Latino/a families and churches on sexual orientation, gender identity and the Bible, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, the Human Rights Campaign Foundation and UNID@S, unveiled today a new bilingual guide, *A La Familia: A Conversation About Our Families, the Bible, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity* at a press conference during the League of United Latin American Citizens' 82nd National Convention in Cincinnati, Ohio..

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people often face unique challenges in Latino/a families and churches. To help in the process of acceptance and inclusion, *A La Familia* is born out of a profound desire to faithfully integrate an excluded group of people back into the life of their churches and families. This guide is written for two primary audiences: heterosexual people honestly struggling with LGBT issues and the Bible, and those whose sexual orientation and gender identity have marginalized them within their family or church or even both.

“While we know that God’s extravagant welcome and justice are powerfully known in many Latino faith communities, this is not universally true,” says the Rev. Rebecca Voelkel, faith work director at the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. “We’ve seen recently the tragedy in Puerto Rico as violence against gay and transgender persons is stoked by religious rhetoric. This is true in too many communities. We must do better. We must ensure that love and respect are the fruits of our faith communities. *A La Familia* is a powerful step toward this kind of a world.”

“Conversations about sexuality, gender identity, faith, and family are essential for building and sustaining robust and vibrant communities that value the spiritual life of all its people,” says Sharon Groves, Ph.D., director of the Religion and Faith Program at the Human Rights Campaign. “*A La Familia*, written by Latinos/as for Latinos/as will generate and support such conversations among Latino/a Protestant and Catholics about family, the Bible, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people, and what God calls us to be to one another.”

“As Latinos and Latinas, we know what it means to live under oppression,” says the Rev. Dr. Miguel A. De La Torre, co-author of *A La Familia* and HRC Religion Council member. “From current immigration policies, to discrimination in the work place, to anti-Hispanic biases in the media; we as a people are all too familiar with structural violence. To stand for justice can never be limited to Latinas and Latinos who are like us; it must also include the marginalized within our own *familia*. Hence, this booklet, *A La Familia*, is our attempt to make sure no one is excluded, no one is discriminated against, no one is abused due to prejudices and bias. It is an attempt, for those of us who call ourselves Christians, to live up the the good news of our faith.”

“As Christians, we struggle everyday with living the word of the Lord; as Latinas and Latinos we work to embed it in our lives and our families,” says Lisbeth Melendez Rivera, director of UNID@S, the National Latina/o LGBT Human Rights Organization. “*A La Familia* will guide us through a thoughtful dialogue about the integration of faith, religion, sexual orientation and gender identity. Catholics and Protestants, Latinas and

Latinos are a welcoming people. This guide will help expand, integrate and grow our communities and bridge the mythical schism so many believe separates us!”

Download a copy of *A La Familia: A Conversation About Our Families, the Bible, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity* here: www.hrc.org/familia

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The Human Rights Campaign is America’s largest civil rights organization working to achieve lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender equality. By inspiring and engaging all Americans, HRC strives to end discrimination against LGBT citizens and realize a nation that achieves fundamental fairness and equality for all.

The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Action Fund, founded in 1974 as the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, Inc., works to build the grassroots political power of the LGBT community to win complete equality. We do this through direct and grassroots lobbying to defeat anti-LGBT ballot initiatives and legislation and pass pro-LGBT legislation and other measures. We also analyze and report on the positions of candidates for public office on issues of importance to the LGBT community.

The mission of UNID@S, the national Latina/o LGBT human rights organization, is to create a multi-issue approach for advocacy, education and convening of and for communities. Guided by economic justice, feminist, environmental and pro-peace values, UNID@S joins a global effort to transform systems and policies to create the just equitable World we know possible.

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