



**Empowering Spirits**  
— FOUNDATION —  
Working Together for Equality

July 20, 2009

Thomas S. Monson, President  
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints  
50 East North Temple  
Salt Lake City, UT 84150

RE: Love Unites Rally – Wednesday, July 22, 2009

President Monson:

Rarely do I spend my time writing letters to individuals with disparate viewpoints. However, the recent arrest of Derek Jones and Matthew Aune by LDS security guards compelled me to speak out. And though I know there is some debate as to the true motivation behind their detainment, I think it is safe to assume both men would not have been detained if it had been a man and a woman showing affection.

I must confess that I am a Methodist and not a Mormon, and though I have studied some of the teachings of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, I do not fully comprehend all of its teachings.

I, however, do admire the steadfast faith of the Mormons, which brings me to the superior issue. There is great conflict within our society by various classes as they struggle with their uniqueness and goals. What these groups do not realize is that by attempting to marginalize each other, we degrade the very beliefs this country was founded upon, and in fact the LDS Church itself was founded upon.

This struggle is not about a single class in society, but society altogether – the unity of America. Diversity and individuality are qualities that enrich this country. Surely we can both agree any individual, group, or community that alienates individuals because of a differing perspective, does not reflect tolerant values as defined by God or by this country's founding fathers. The history of the LDS Church and its followers is filled with fervent intolerance. Almost since Joseph Smith had the First Vision, it seems Mormons have been the victims of wanton violence, rape, murder, arson, discrimination...the list of cruelties goes on and on. In the spirit of unity and understanding, I submit to you, President Monson, that gay and lesbian Americans have endured the same attacks, with equal fervor, and though our causes may be different, our struggles are shared, and our blood runs as red as the blood of all oppressed, misunderstood peoples.

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Surely by now, the Church understands the value of teaching tolerance. Additionally, our children should be taught the principles of equal protection and freedom of expression as defined by our faith, and as is laid out in our U.S. Constitution. For those less tolerant, children today will give rise to generations of greater intolerance.

Differing sides may not always agree, but we must not focus on pious trivialities as this corrupts our society. Only through social dialogue and shared sacrifices will humanity progress, and only then can we overcome any obstacle.

Our organization will hold a rally in our home town of San Diego, CA, and outside of your San Diego, CA temple Wednesday, July 22<sup>nd</sup>. In the spirit of unity I hope that officials of your San Diego temple will be able to meet with me in our attempt to engage in respectful dialogue as we continue to learn more about our similarities, rather than differences.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "A. Latham Staples".

A. Latham Staples  
President & C.E.O.  
Empowering Spirits Foundation, Inc.

ALS/jeb

cc: San Diego, CA Mormon Temple