



**For Immediate Release**

Ashley White, Equal Rights Center, 202.370.3204  
awhite@equalrightscenter.org

## The Equal Rights Center Shocked by Louisiana Justice Refusal to Marry Interracial Couple

WASHINGTON, D.C., October 16, 2009 – Keith Bardwell, a Louisiana justice of the peace, refused to issue a marriage license to an interracial couple based on his concern that any children they have may suffer in the future. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) is currently investigating Bardwell, and advocates in eastern Louisiana are calling for his resignation.

In response to Keith Bardwell’s actions, **Equal Rights Center (ERC) Executive Director Donald L. Kahl made the following statement:**

**“It is both shocking and very saddening that forty-two years after a unanimous United States Supreme Court outlawed state laws interfering with interracial marriages in *Loving v. Virginia*, that some—including those who are appointed “to keep the peace”—still hold these destructive views on race.**

**“In delivering the majority opinion in *Loving v. Virginia*, Supreme Court Chief Justice Earl Warren said, ‘Marriage is one of the “basic civil rights of man,” fundamental to our very existence and survival.... To deny this fundamental freedom on so unsupportable a basis as the racial classifications... is surely to deprive all the State's citizens of liberty without due process of law.’ Regardless of Keith Bardwell’s baseless view on interracial couples, as an elected public official, it is his duty to uphold the highest law of the land and protect all citizens’ rights.**

**“The Equal Rights Center has worked to advance our country towards equality for nearly 30 years, but this incident is a stark reminder of just how much still remains to be done to protect civil rights across this country.”**

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**About the Equal Rights Center ([www.equalrightscenter.org](http://www.equalrightscenter.org))**

Since 1983, the Equal Rights Center (ERC), a national non-profit civil rights organization, has identified, challenged, and eliminated discrimination. The ERC fights discrimination in housing, employment, public accommodations, and government services through education and outreach, research, testing, counseling, enforcement, and advocacy.