In the beginning of the letter, he makes a commitment ”to build an America that lives up to our founding promise of equality for all – a promise that extends to our gay brothers and sisters.” He further says that the realization of equality is not just a political goal but a “moral imperative” and that he will “never compromise on my commitment to equal rights for all LGBT Americans.” The letter identifies the struggle of the LGBT community for equality of rights as a civil rights movement. The rhetoric of the letter emphasizes the connection between the issues of the LGBT community and the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s. Examples are the reference to our “gay brothers and sisters,” “Americans living as second-class citizens,” the “founding promise of equality for all,” and the “Ebenezer Baptist Church . . . where Dr. Martin Luther King once preached.”

In the letter, he identifies the tools that he will use as president to achieve the goal of “equal rights for all LGBT Americans.” “As your President,” he says, “I will use the bully pulpit to urge states to treat same-sex couples with full equality in their family and adoption laws.” However, the bully pulpit does not mean, according to Obama, that the federal government should impose itself on the states as they “decide on how best to pursue equality for gay and lesbian couples . . .” Examples he gives in the letter of various ways the states may pursue equality are “a domestic partnership, a civil union, or a civil marriage.” Two other tools that Obama promises to use are the power of the office, “the weight of my administration,” and “leadership that can appeal to the best parts of the human spirit.”

The policy goals that Obama identifies in the letter and that are necessary to achieve the promise of equality for the LGBT community are the repeal of federal legislation that deprive the LGBT community of their rights, the Defense of Marriage Act and Don’t Ask Don’t Tell. He says, “I support the complete repeal of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) . . . and I have also called for us to repeal Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell (DADT). Another of his policy goals is the enactment of legislation that extends rights to the LGBT community. “I will place the weight of my administration behind the enactment of the Matthew Shepard Act to outlaw hate crimes and a fully inclusive Employment Non-Discrimination Act to outlaw workplace discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity.” Later, Obama refers to his work to “improve the Uniting American Families Act (UAFA).” This is a reference to the goal of amending UAFA so that it would extend to gay and lesbian bi-nation couples the same rights as are extended to heterosexual bi-national couples.,

In light of the letter and Obama’s progressive rhetoric in the presidential campaign, it is not difficult to understand the enthusiasm and optimism with which the LGBT community and human rights advocates greeted the Obama presidency