

= Chad Griffin =

Chad Hunter Griffin (born July 16 , 1973) is an American political strategist best known for his work advocating for LGBT rights in the United States .

Griffin got his start in politics volunteering for the Bill Clinton presidential campaign , which led to a position in the White House Press Office at the age of 19 . Following his stint in the White House and his graduation from Georgetown University , he led a number of political campaigns advocating for or against various California ballot initiatives , as well as a number of fundraising efforts for political candidates , such as Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama .

Following the 2008 passage of California 's highly publicized Proposition 8 , which barred the recognition of same @-@ sex marriage , Griffin founded the American Foundation for Equal Rights (AFER) to overturn the law . AFER 's challenge , Perry v. Brown was ultimately successful following a decision by the United States Supreme Court in June 2013 . In 2012 , Griffin was appointed president of the Human Rights Campaign , the largest LGBT rights organization in the United States .

= = Early years = =

Griffin was born in Hope , Arkansas , and grew up 45 miles to the northeast in Arkadelphia . While attending Ouachita Baptist University , he volunteered for the 1992 presidential campaign of Bill Clinton , and , following the election , received a job offer from Dee Dee Myers to join the transition team and administration . Griffin dropped out of college and became , at the age of 19 , the youngest @-@ ever member of a presidential staff . He worked as a White House Press Office manager for two years . There , he also acted as White House liaison to the 1995 film The American President , where he met producer Rob Reiner . Griffin went on to lead Reiner 's charitable foundation and to work with Reiner on numerous political efforts , including the founding of the American Foundation for Equal Rights (AFER) . AFER is a nonprofit organization formed to challenge the federal constitutionality of California 's Proposition 8 , which limited legal recognition of marriage in California to opposite @-@ sex couples . After leaving the White House , Griffin entered the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University , from which he graduated in 1997 . Griffin was also a part of Griffin Schein , a consulting firm that he founded with Kristina Schake , former communications director for Michelle Obama .

= = LGBT rights activism = =

Griffin , who is himself gay , is best known for his work advocating for LGBT rights , often citing the elevated rate of suicide among gay teens as motivation . In 2008 , Griffin was selected as one of The Advocate 's People of the Year , and in 2013 , Griffin was placed 16th on Out magazine 's " Power 50 " list of the 50 @-@ most powerful LGBT individuals in the United States , moving up from 20th , 28th and 29th positions in 2012 , 2011 and 2010 , respectively .

= = American Foundation for Equal Rights = = =

Griffin and Reiner founded AFER in 2008 to challenge the federal constitutionality of California 's Proposition 8 . Prior to AFER 's founding , Griffin had raised funds and produced television ads for the " No on 8 " campaign . This was Griffin 's first professional work on LGBT rights . Following Proposition 8 's passage in 2008 , Griffin and Reiner reflected on the No campaign 's failure , and the possibility of mounting a federal legal challenge . An acquaintance of Reiner 's suggested speaking to conservative lawyer Theodore Olson , who supported the challenge and soon began research on the case . Griffin saw the case and Olson 's support as an opportunity to frame the same @-@ sex marriage debate in nonpartisan terms . It was Olson who later suggested recruiting the contrastingly liberal David Boies as co @-@ counsel , the two had previously litigated opposite sides of Bush v. Gore . Griffin approached Boies , who quickly accepted .

Meanwhile , Griffin began discussing the potential case with other LGBT rights organizations . Many of those organizations , including the American Civil Liberties Union , Lambda Legal , and the National Center for Lesbian Rights opposed a federal lawsuit , seeing it as " reckless " and expressing fear that a loss at the Supreme Court could be " devastating " . These same groups would later ask to intervene in the lawsuit , an attempt which Griffin fought and which was ultimately unsuccessful . In a letter to the leaders of those organizations , Griffin wrote " You have unrelentingly and unequivocally acted to undermine this case even before it was filed . In light of this , it is inconceivable that you would zealously and effectively litigate this case if you were successful in intervening . " Griffin also expressed concern that intervention would complicate the trial , making it less efficient and would , as a result , ultimately weaken their case .

In May 2009 AFER announced its creation after filing their lawsuit , now styled Hollingsworth v. Perry , which argued that Proposition 8 was unconstitutional on equal protection and due process grounds . The lawsuit 's plaintiffs are two same @-@ sex couples , Kristin Perry and Sandra Stier , Paul Katami and Jeffrey Zarrillo . Governor of California Jerry Brown and other state officials are listed as defendants in their official capacities . Perry was successful at district court and at the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals . In December 2012 , the Supreme Court agreed to review the 9th Circuit ruling , and held in June 2013 that the proponents of Proposition 13 had lacked standing for their appeals to the 9th Circuit and Supreme Court , which left the district court ruling intact . On June 28 , California resumed marrying same @-@ sex couples .

= = = Other LGBT @-@ related activism = = =

In 2012 , Griffin was selected to succeed Joe Solmonese as president of the Human Rights Campaign , the largest LGBT advocacy and political lobbying organization in the United States . His appointment was well received by many in the LGBT community , including Cleve Jones , R. Clarke Cooper , and Transgender Law Center executive director Masen Davis . Griffin assumed his new role on June 11 , 2012 .

In May 2012 , Griffin asked a question which , in part , led Vice President Joe Biden to publicly share his support for same @-@ sex marriage . In a May 2012 Meet the Press appearance , Biden recounted that , at a private dinner with LGBT campaign donors , he had been asked " How do you feel about us ? " The dinner was being held at the home of a gay couple and their two children , and Biden told the parents : " I wish every American could see the look of love that those kids had in their eyes for you guys . And they wouldn 't have any doubt about what this is about . " Barack Obama announced his own support a few days later , becoming the first sitting United States president to do so .

Griffin was one of several executive producers of the 2009 documentary Outrage , which investigated allegations of homosexuality among a series of political figures who had worked against LGBT rights . Griffin was selected to help raise funds for its production .

= = Other work = =

Prior to his work opposing Proposition 8 , Griffin has been involved in supporting or opposing a variety of other California ballot initiatives . In 1998 , Reiner hired Griffin to lead an effort to pass California Proposition 10 . Proposition 10 created a tax on cigarettes and other tobacco products sold in California , and directed that income toward early childhood education efforts under the First 5 California Commission . That commission 's executive director , Kristin Perry , later became the named plaintiff in Perry v. Brown . In 2004 , Griffin was campaign director for California Proposition 71 , which authorized the sale of three billion dollars in general obligation bonds to fund stem cell research . Two years later , Griffin led the unsuccessful campaign for passage of California Proposition 87 , which would have established a tax on oil extraction in the state . Funds were to have been used to for alternative energy and energy efficiency efforts . Prior to these initiatives , in 2003 , Griffin ran the Rally to Save Ahmanson Ranch , which successfully advocated for wilderness protection of what became the Upper Las Virgenes Canyon Open Space Preserve . Jason

Schwartzman shadowed Griffin during this campaign in preparation for Schwartzman 's role as the head of an environmental group in the 2004 film I Heart Huckabees .

Griffin 's recent work also includes political fundraising for candidates , his clients have included Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama . He was a member of the national finance committee for Obama 's 2012 reelection campaign , and raised over \$ 300 @, @ 000 in that effort . Griffin also sits on the board of Brad Pitt 's Make It Right Foundation New Orleans , which works to build houses for those who lost homes in New Orleans to Hurricane Katrina .

= = Personal life = =

Griffin attended a White House dinner in 2012 . He began dating longtime friend Charlie Joughin in early 2015 .