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Civil Rights leader Cheryl Jacques speaks at the Penn Law School about combatting prejudice.

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## First gay Mass. senator speaks out on LGBT equality

### Cheryl Jacques gives lecture to graduate students at Penn Law last night

**By: Hoa Hoang**

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"Full equality for gay Americans will be achieved, 100-percent guaranteed ... It's not a question of if, it's only a question of when."

These were the words of Cheryl Jacques at a lecture she gave on the gay rights movement last night at the Law School. Jacques is Massachusetts's first openly gay State Senator. She has served as president of the Human Rights Campaign and successfully spearheaded the defeat of the Federal Marriage Amendment.

The diverse audience of gay and straight students alike sat quietly while they listened to Jacques talk about issues concerning the lack of equality for Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender individuals in the United States, how far gay rights have come and what society must do to counteract the remaining prejudice.

Jacques first acknowledged that the current generation is "literally writing the next chapter in the book of civil rights." Just as the prior generation lived through the Civil Rights Movement, she said, this one is witnessing the gay rights movement.

After delving into examples of past prejudices against minorities, Jacques established the similarity between the current gay rights movement and all other past battles for equality in America.

Jacques urged individuals who are still in the closet to come out to their friends and family. Family advocacy is pivotal for combatting prejudice, she said.

Prejudice today against LGBT individuals is a pressing issue we must discuss, Jacques emphasized. Discussion raises awareness.

The diversity of the crowd last night indicated the variety of the fields the issue of LGBT equality spans.

Corina Tennant, a fourth-year student in the School of Medicine, spoke of the relevance gay rights has to medicine.

For example, she said, spousal rights are important in cases where a patient is not capable of making a medical decision alone.

According to the organizer of the event, David Soo, a Graduate School of Education Ph.D. candidate, Jacques was an appealing choice for the event as someone with a lot of experience in both government and academia.

He added that she "has really affected policies across the nation."

The event was sponsored by Lambda Grads, Penn's LGBT graduate student affinity group, and cosponsored by Lambda Law, Out for Business and the Graduate and Professional Student Assembly.

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