

TRAILBLAZERS

EQUALITY



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PIONEER SPIRIT Jeff Trachtman served as chair of Kramer Levin's pro bono committee for 17 years. "The firm has been involved in LGBTQ equality issues going back to the formation of GMHC, in 1981, as recounted in 'The Normal Heart,' a play about the early days of AIDS by Larry Kramer, whose brother was a firm founder. In the 1990s, I was asked to do an amicus brief in *Boy Scouts v. Dale*—what we used to call the 'Homo 101' brief, educating the courts about gay people. Later, we co-counseled with Lambda Legal on New York's marriage equality challenge, *Hernandez v. Robles*."

TRAILS BLAZED Trachtman and the firm helped win one of the nation's first rulings for marriage equality in that case. Although it was reversed on appeal in 2006, "there was such a backlash that the state assembly passed a marriage bill a year later, and the state senate followed in 2011. So our case did have an impact." Trachtman has also filed Supreme Court amicus briefs in cases like *Windsor*, *Obergefell*, and *Masterpiece Cakeshop* representing "a wide range of mainstream religious groups favoring equality" and recently filed a similar brief in *Bostock v. Clayton County*, "which will determine whether Title VII covers gay and trans people." Earlier, Trachtman also represented the lesbian partner of a 9/11 victim "seeking recognition as a surviving spouse under the Victims' Fund."

FUTURE EXPLORATIONS Trachtman sees a mixed picture for the future. "Before the election, I thought I would be able to retire down the road leaving things better than I found them. But under this administration, civil rights are under attack. I'm concerned about what is coming. And there remains a lot of work to do eliminating racism and transphobia even in our own community."