

**Tod Roulette (left) and Chuck Allen outside the church where they hope to make history.**

gay scouts and leaders. Allen had been a lifelong scout, scoutmaster, lodge chief, camp counselor, board member. Now he felt he had to restrict himself to scouting activities that involved contact only with adults, like fundraising.

Unlike back-slapping pols, Allen always kept a tight public persona. Intense, serious, guarded, he watched his words. He didn't discuss his private life.

"Black gays don't relate to coming out as the same kind of liberating thing that is for white people," he says. "It's not the most important part of who I am. You guys [whites] get oppressed in a different way: Women get oppressed; gays get oppressed. For us, the main way we get oppressed is for being black. Everything else pales in comparison."

His sexual orientation never seemed important enough to reveal. Then came Tod.

## IRRESISTIBLE OPPOSITES

It was the summer of 1999. Allen was hanging out in a Harlem social club. He caught the eye of Tod Roulette.

"It was one of those classic You Look Across the Room and See Somebody kind of scenes."

They couldn't be more different. Roulette wears his passions on the

outside. Fourteen years Allen's younger, he runs a leading Harlem contemporary art spot called Gallery M. It took Allen a while to understand much of the art; an accountant, he more quickly understood the financial appreciation of the artwork Roulette discovered. "We were so different," Allen says, "we couldn't help being attracted to each other."

Soon they were living together part-time near 125th Street, as Allen commuted to his job in New Haven City Hall and the family home on Thompson Street in Newhallville. Roulette introduced Allen to Gregorian chants. Allen introduced Roulette to the splendors of the Temptations, Diana Ross & the Supremes and Allen's mother's collection of older discs by groups like the Ink Spots. (Allen's father sang for the group.)

They spent a Christmas in London, part of a summer in Provincetown. They took Allen's goddaughter to Salem for Halloween.

Allen balanced the checkbook and cooked. "My role," Roulette says, "is Martha Stewart/Tammy Faye. I lay out what he's going to wear. I plan these elaborate outings. I make the schedules. I host. I make the list of what needs to be served. We give elaborate brunches."

Many of the brunches followed Sunday worship services at Harlem's St. Philip's Church. St. Philip's is one of the country's oldest and most prominent African-American congregations; its members over the years have included Thurgood Marshall, W.E.B. DuBois, Langston Hughes, Duke Ellington. Allen and Roulette threw themselves into St. Phillip's.

# "CIVIL MARRIAGE, CIVIL RIGHT"

**By Carole Bass**

Opponents of same-sex marriage pulled thousands of people to a rally at the state Capitol early this year. Now it's time for the other side to speak up.

A "Rally for Marriage Equality" will take place Sunday, May 16, at the Capitol. Organizers are billing it as "the largest gathering in Connecticut history" in support of gay & lesbian rights.

The next day—May 17—is when Massachusetts is supposed to begin issuing same-sex marriage licenses, as ordered by that state's supreme court. Connecticut gay and lesbian activists have not introduced same-sex marriage legislation this year. But they want a rousing show of support now in hopes of passing a law next year. The rally's theme: "Civil Marriage, Civil Right!" In other words, religious debates about homosexuality and the "sanctity" of marriage belong in church, synagogue and mosque—not in halls of government.

The rally runs from 2 to 3:30 p.m., rain or shine. There'll be speeches, music by Mikata and Sista Funk, and a children's crafts area. For more information, contact the sponsoring organization, Love Makes a Family, at (860) 674-8942 or <[www.lmfct.org](http://www.lmfct.org)>.

For \$5, you can hitch a ride on a bus from one of several New Haven locations. Reserve your seat by May 9: Call 481-5471 or e-mail <[CBLiberty@aol.com](mailto:CBLiberty@aol.com)>.

Meanwhile in New Haven, gay rights activists are talking up same-sex marriage one-on-one. They're circulating a petition, headed "An Open Letter in Support of Marriage Equality from the New Haven Community," among religious and political leaders.

"The main goal," says Aldermen Ben Healey, "is not to get thousands of people, but to demonstrate that there's a diverse group of leadership" in New Haven that supports gay marriage as a civil right. The plan is to publish the open letter in newspapers and use it to prove to politicians that New Haven cares about equality for same-sex couples. ■

[cbass@newhavenadvocate.com](mailto:cbass@newhavenadvocate.com)

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Tod introduced Chuck to the beauty of Gregorian chants.

Chuck turned Tod on to the Temptations and Diana Ross.