

Anti-Gay vs. Pro-Marriage

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The American dream, one of freedom and equality, is cherished in the heart of every citizen of the United States. With this dream in mind, most of society will say they support equal rights for homosexuals. Ask these members of society if they support gay marriage, however, and the support of gay equality comes to a screeching halt. As seen in the most recently debated public votes, the majority of Americans voted *for* the Constitutional Amendment, which puts a ban on gay marriage. All of these Americans, ironically, do believe in providing equal rights to the gay community, rights including: no toleration of discrimination in jobs by creating equal opportunity employers, rights protecting gays from hate crimes, rights allowing same access to housing, rights allowing advancement in government, and so on. However, the concept of gay marriage is still not considered a right the American people should extend to homosexuals.

A huge misunderstanding underlying this debate is the assumption that gays have a "choice" to whom they can feel attracted. Just as heterosexuals cannot "choose" who they are attracted to, neither can homosexuals. Opposition movements, such as the Focus on the Family led by Dr. James Dobson, claim to "promote the truth that homosexuality is preventable and treatable" (Dobson 74). Dobson goes further in claiming, "living as a homosexual is not as happy-go-lucky as frequently portrayed in the entertainment media" (Dobson 72). How can a member of the straight community say with an "expert opinion" that homosexuality can be "changed," or even whether a homosexual can be happy or not? What about the research done to prove that

homosexuality is purely genetic? No one would ever "choose" to live a life faced with prejudice and discrimination.

The same assumption of choice leads to the idea that homosexuality is purely about sex, often called a "sexual perversion" (Personal Interview). Again, the reality is that homosexuality is multi-faceted. Homosexuality is much more about love and affection than it is about sex. Sex, in any committed relationship, is a means of expressing that love. This is true whether in a heterosexual *or* homosexual relationship. Being gay represents who that person is and forms his/her identity; being gay is that significant to the person who is. Very few heterosexuals can understand this. Instead, heterosexuals use their lives as a basis for what "normal" should mean.

Perhaps the most significant and repeated case opposing gay marriage is the idea that it is "immoral," yet the "immoral" label is based solely on religious beliefs (personal interview). The First Amendment states, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof ... " (" Amendments"). While the amendment clearly protects the right of religious freedom, it also confirms that the Bible has no relevance in American law. Religion is not supposed to be the basis for our country's laws. Nevertheless, the majority of citizens against gay marriage are trying to impose their religious beliefs onto others and formulate those beliefs into laws. One can completely agree with the argument against gay marriage because of one's religious beliefs. One should also agree that under the First Amendment no one has the right to impose rules, beliefs, or opinions, on anyone else simply because they identify a moral dilemma with the Bible. Not everyone is religiously inclined to the same morals. The argument for supporters of gay marriage is neither a demand of a change in the opponent's religious beliefs nor a demand for the acceptance into that religion. The gay community is simply fighting to be free *from* religion in determining the laws of the country.

The majority of opponents believe marriage is between one woman and one man. The opponent's viewpoint is that a marriage should be between members of the opposite sex; otherwise, the marriage would be untraditional. The opponent also believes that same-sex marriage would threaten the institution of marriage. I believe this argument has no factual evidence to support the claim. *How* does allowing a person to marry threaten marriage? *Why* is the straight society only given the right to marry? *Who* defines marriage? Recently, many courts say there is no evidence for why gays should not be allowed to marry. These courts realize the American principle of human rights. One such case, *Lawrence vs. Texas*, determined "all sodomy laws in the United States are unconstitutional and unenforceable when applied to non-commercial consenting adults in private." In other words, sodomy laws, laws prohibiting consenting members of the same-sex to privately engage in oral or anal sex, were deemed unjust and were no longer able to be enforced. The reasoning behind such laws and beliefs seems more like direct prejudice rather than an overwhelming reason worthy of denying people their civil rights.

Many countries throughout the world have extended equal rights of marriage to same-sex couples. The first country to do so was Denmark in 1989. Later in 2000, Denmark also allowed legal adoptions for these married gay couples. Other countries were able to observe how legalizing gay marriage only made the institution of marriage stronger, both for heterosexuals and homosexuals. Soon, in 1993 Norway formed *Registered Domestic Partnerships*, and in 1996, Iceland formed *Registered Cohabitations*. Both of these legislations extended gay marriage and adoption rights to gay couples. In recent years, Germany in 2000, the Netherlands in 2001, and Belgium and Canada in 2002, have all agreed that "discrimination of marriage laws based on sexual orientation" is not only unjust but also "unconstitutional" ("Gay Marriage"). It

has been proven in these countries that the opposing fears of legalizing gay marriages based on the idea of causing an increase in divorce rates and STDs, along with the loss of monogamous relationships, have no merit. In all of the countries with legalized gay marriage, studies have shown no increase in STDs and a dramatic decrease in divorce rates. Despite evidence to the contrary, these fears exist and thrive in the United States, and are the reason why, as of June 2003, the only rights extended to gays are federal death benefits to same-sex couples. Vermont is the only state where gay marriage is legal; however, these marriages are not recognized in any other part of the United States. The U. S. is usually the country others look to as an example of how to govern a democracy, yet the US is still fearful of passing any legislation in support of gay marriage.

Other opposing arguments state that same-sex couples cannot provide the proper environment to raise a child. Well, take a look at who many of these critics allow to marry and raise children: murderers, child molesters, convicted felons of all sorts, and so on. Is this preferred to a gay couple free of criminal history that in fact does embrace morals? If a same-sex couple can provide a home filled with love, stability and commitment, then where is harm done? The child, as well as the love for the child, must be a priority in every family, no matter the gender of the parents.

Interwoven in the argument of providing an appropriate upbringing for the child is that marriage is for reproduction. What about couples who cannot have children? Is it safe to say by the rule of the critics that if a couple cannot produce offspring than they should not be married? This is hardly the case since the option of adoption is available for straight couples. Why is adoption not a right often extended to gay couples? Better yet, why is the right to adopt not even a possibility offered to gays? Wouldn't this help to decline the number of children left in state

homes without families to call their own?

In summary, much of what the straight community knows and believes to be true about gays is based on stereotypes. There are those who assume gays are promiscuous, unable to form lasting relationships. As a member of the gay community, I can attest to the extreme inaccuracy of this stereotype. Equally important, even though these unstable and sex-based relationships do exist in both the gay and the straight communities, they are usually among the very young and represent a small percentage.

Gay marriage is defined as a legal union between members of the same sex. Ten percent of Americans, the estimated size of the gay community, are denied the right to marry. The citizens representing this minority want what every heterosexual has, the right to legally wed their life partner, as a means of solidifying their loving and committed relationship. Most critics use one or all of these arguments to rightfully deny gays the right to marry. However, maybe one can see the weakness in all arguments against gay marriage. As a country we need to move away from illogical reasoning, whether based on ignorance or prejudice. We need to allow every individual the civil right to wed his or her life partner. Our society must live up to the American dream. The Pledge of Allegiance demands "liberty and justice for all" and so should every citizen in our country.

Works Cited

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Personal interview. 13 Nov. 2004.

Ms. Zeller's Comments: *The logic and evidence used to support the argument are very effective in building a strong case for the writer's claim. The writer also skillfully and thoroughly discredits the opposing arguments presented. I was also impressed with the obvious organizational skills the writer possesses. This level of writing in a 101 course is a rarity and a pleasure to behold.*