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December, 2009

Point/Counterpoint: Civil Rights for Homosexuals

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Available at: https://works.bepress.com/mike_cobb/4/

Published in the News & Advanced, December 2008

Civil Rights for Homosexuals

By Mike Cobb

Regarding civil rights for homosexuals, I have three main points. First, people need to be free from harm based on their thoughts or characteristics. Additionally, anyone who can make the military a top notch fighting force should be welcomed. Lastly, while committed relationships are a societal good, child-bearing heterosexual ones are a societal necessity.

First and foremost, in the public square, people need to be free to express an opinion or their personality. No one should be threatened for their sexual identity. Dialogue and interaction are more conducive to discussion than the intimidation and harassment evidenced both by some who opposed the recently passed heterosexual marriage bill in California as well as the “Fred Phelps-like” characters. Certainly, though, any call for hate crime or hate speech legislation for merely pronouncing an opinion that homosexuality is an immoral choice is a call for something that clearly violates one constitutional amendment and, if prohibited in a church as well, would violate two. Why should disapproval of homosexuality be considered a crime but disapproval of those who think homosexuality an immoral behavior be considered legal? Without encouraging violence, both must be free to hold and express their opinion. A free and open debate on issues will generate hurt feelings, but the dialogue is an important part of a democratic society. Freedom to express your identity in the public square doesn't, though, equate to freedom of acceptance by private institutions. The idea that a church, for example, must accept a homosexual as a member, isn't a civil rights issue since people aren't forced to be a part of a church. The church is a private non-profit organization that should be free to state a set of beliefs and values and dictate appropriate behavior for membership.

Second, the military has a “Don't Ask Don't Tell” policy regarding homosexuals. The military is an organization designed to develop soldiers to kill the enemy, and it seems like that could possibly be done just as effectively by a homosexual as a heterosexual. So long as the units can remain a top-notch, cohesive, premier fighting force without the awkwardness and tension seen in romantic attractions, I see no reason for sexuality to be kept in private. Reports of sexual abuse of military women show that our military isn't necessarily great at resolving sexually charged situations. While a social mosaic representative of our country in every military unit is nice, more comforting to me as a civilian and more valuable to the nation as a whole is to see an effective, well-trained, well disciplined, unified fighting force ready to battle the enemy wherever he may be found.

Finally, heterosexual marriage amendments recently passed in many states – including California. Some argue that because “marriage” has “always” been between a man and a woman, it should always continue to be that way. Slavery also lasted for a long time but it rightly needed to be ended. For some, the Bible makes a clear proscription against homosexual behavior as a whole, arguing that the state shouldn't condone that behavior in marriage. Can one group's Biblical interpretations be the sole case for why the government should approve or reject something? Some make the case that the history of

marriage as a heterosexual union crosses societies, cultures, and religions. I think that's an intriguing concept that is worthy of further research.

We do have laws regulating both behavior between consenting adults and our personal choices – assisted suicide and seatbelt laws, for example. How about marriage? When someone starts thinking more about the welfare of another, their lifestyle does change for the better. But if society benefits when people are in committed marital relationships, is there a reason to elevate one over another? Is there a reason to deny one? We don't allow polygamy or consanguineous (I looked it up) marriages. Why not? Aren't they consenting adults?

Without denying the opportunity for civic approved relationships, I would argue that a heterosexual marriage encourages better understanding between the opposite sex and is the greatest means by which children can be born into an environment that offers identity, discipline, love, and instruction. Certainly children can be born outside of a marriage and there are numerous cases of homosexuals, single parents and relatives offering great love and warmth to children throughout our society. While two moms may be nice, though, a mom and a dad is better. While two dads may be nice, a child needs a mom. Children find identity and connection through generational bonds found in a biological family. Child-bearing heterosexual marriages must be given preeminence by societies or those societies risk imploding.

In the public square, both homosexuals and heterosexuals need the safety and freedom to express their thoughts and identity. The military needs to have the freedom to create the most effective fighting force possible to protect and defend our nation, allowing and denying whomever they think best serves or harms that purpose. And while being legally bound to seek the welfare of another is a good thing, society must remember the critical societal interest in promoting the child-bearing heterosexual family above all others.