

# THE CASE AGAINST GAY MARRIAGE

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As a kid who grew up in New York in the 1950s, I had no idea what a homosexual was. There were a few effeminate boys, of course, but they were simply regarded as sissies; the most exaggerated of this group were known as fairies. What this conveyed was an inability to be one of the guys. For example, these boys didn't know how to put on a baseball glove, and things like that. The idea that they were sexually attracted to other boys was something so foreign as to be unbelievable.

It wasn't until I was in the U.S. Air Force (during the Vietnam war) that I first encountered homosexuals. To my knowledge, only one of the young men with whom I worked was homosexual. We got along fine. After work, he went his way and I went mine. To be more accurate, he socialized with other homosexuals on the base—often in their rooms with the door closed—and I headed to the Airmen's club for a beer.

Though homosexuals could technically be thrown out of the Air Force (and given a bad conduct discharge), the only ones who were ever expelled were those who made an explicit issue of their sexuality and sought to be discharged. And when they were, they were uniformly given a general discharge: this meant they were entitled to all the benefits of an honorable discharge (on appeal they could also be granted an honorable discharge). That's the way it was handled. In short, "Don't ask, don't tell" was always the rule—it's just that it wasn't formalized in writing.

But those were the days when homosexuals simply wanted to be left alone. At most, they wanted tolerance. Today, tolerance is a dirty word among homosexuals—they want society to affirm their lifestyle. But as gay activist Larry Kramer has astutely observed, it would be more accurate to call it a deathstyle:

the diseases they carry, and the high mortality rate they sport, is testimony to Kramer's characterization.

Nothing shows how much our culture has changed in my lifetime than the contemporary push for same-sex marriage. Gays can, of course, sign a legal contract binding themselves to each other, but this is not what they seek. What they want—it's more like a demand—is that society permit them to marry. It is not a request that should be honored.

To be pro-same-sex marriage is to be against marriage. How so? Explain to someone who served in the armed services that the veterans' benefits he justly earned are now going to be extended to those who never served. Explain to senior citizens who get discounts in many different venues that their benefits are going to be made available to everyone, regardless of age. And then tell veterans and seniors that the new policy has no effect on them.

If something is special, it cannot be universally distributed. This is what our society must decide: if marriage is special, then it must be treated as such in custom and law. If it doesn't matter, then let the politics of inclusion prevail. But history warns against such nonsense.

The mores, and later the laws, in every society in the history of the world—in both eastern and western civilizations—have reserved marriage for heterosexuals. Moreover, not one world religion has ever endorsed the idea that two men should be allowed to marry. Now given the extraordinary diversity that has existed over the centuries, and in so many different cultures, it is astounding that not one place on earth has ever sanctioned the idea of two men getting married. This alone ought to give the proponents of gay marriage pause.

Those who advocate same-sex marriage like to emphasize that all that matters is that two people love each other. But if a loving and committed relationship is the *sine qua non* of

marriage, then a brother and sister who “fall in love” would qualify for marriage. Polygamy would have to be legalized as well. And what if Tom and Dick are courting and they both fall in love with Harry. Why can't Tom, Dick and Harry get married? To deny them would be to discriminate.

If marriage is to be treated as if it were nothing more than an alternative lifestyle, cohabiting men and women will have less reason to marry. Unfortunately, this does not bode well for children. The social science evidence overwhelmingly demonstrates that children do best when raised by a mother and father in the institution of marriage. Indeed, the data show that the physical, psychological, emotional and social well-being of children is so better served in this context that it is preposterous to argue otherwise; substitutes are theoretically available, but in reality there are none.

In short, if marriage is special it cannot be treated as if it were but one selection on a sociological smorgasbord. On the contrary, it must be granted a privileged position in society.