

Views: An American Outraged

It is with great reluctance that I write this. I am not really an activist, I pay little heed to the political climate, and I generally go about my life in as quiet and unassuming way as I can. Even as a gay man, the subject of marriage rights for gays and lesbians did little to register my interest, especially since I never even wanted to get married. But since seeing our President make motions to change the constitution to ban gay marriage, I cannot remain silent.

People like me are exactly what is keeping gay marriage from happening — people who believe in it but are not willing to stand up and fight for it. In our apathy there is acquiescence; by allowing such injustice, we are condoning it. In our silence there is far greater danger than in any public disagreement or political grandstanding. When people are contemplating amending the constitution to deny the rights of one segment of the population, something is definitely wrong, and it is at this time that I must speak out.

My partner Andy and I have been together since the summer of 2000. He is a retired police officer, having served his country for over nine years before getting injured on duty. Andy sends me off to work everyday with a home-made lunch, does our laundry, cooks dinner and organizes our finances. Together we own a home, we share a life, we have everything but a marriage certificate. We pay our taxes and our mortgage, we mow our lawn, and we are bound by the same laws and regulations that govern any other citizen, yet we are forbidden to marry because we are of the same gender.

Our nation's constitution has stated that we are all created equal, that one person is as valid as

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another — so how can we deny one person the right to marry another, man or woman? I am not asking to marry more than one person, I am not asking to marry a child, I am not asking to marry an animal, and it's disgusting that I even have to defend such charges.

Marriage used to be a celebration of love — a bond honoring the life-long commitment of two people. Why should I be hated for my love? Why should Andy and I be banned from celebrating our love and our life together? In a country that honors freedom, how can we be denied the freedom to love and cherish another person, simply because we're of the same gender? I do not speak up now as a gay man wanting to get married. I speak up as an American outraged at the segregation and inequality that has been created by refusing a certain group of people the right to marry.

How would my marrying a man denigrate or even affect anyone else's marriage, or the institution itself? Would people be less faithful if I got married? Would other marriages be tainted or corroded by mine in any way? It seems that divorce and separation are more damaging to the institution of marriage than two gay people making a lifetime commitment to one another. Quickie Las Vegas

weddings and reality television shows bargaining off brides and grooms for money are doing more to destroy the institution of marriage than anything I could ever accomplish. If people truly care about preserving the sanctity of marriage, let us ensure that those who get married truly love one another, and care enough to fight for that right.

The opponents of marriage for gays and lesbians seem to be missing the point. This is not about preserving the sanctity of marriage. It is simple hatred — homophobic prejudice aimed at an innocent group who only wants to love and celebrate that love like every other person can. What they are really trying to stop is two women from loving each other or two men sharing a life together. But that has already happened, and it's going to continue to happen. Love cannot be contained or bound by a piece of paper or a legal proclamation.

Some Americans will likely disagree with my opinion. They may think I am asking for special rights or promoting a homosexual agenda. They might claim religious points and wield a strict adherence to a rigid reading of the Bible. If there are enough of them, then they will probably continue to deny me and other gay men and women the basic American rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. But they will never be able to take away the love that Andy and I share, and they will never silence me from proclaiming our love. All the constitutional amendments in the world cannot alter that. ▼

Alan Ilagan lives with his partner in Loudonville, NY.

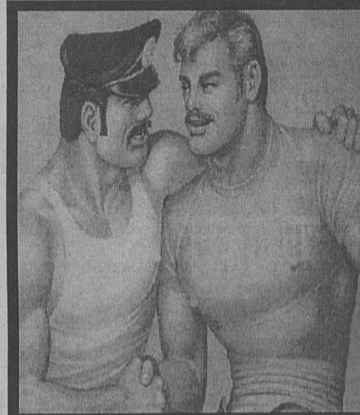
tences longer than God hates fags. Or perhaps, Civil unions — I can't believe it's not marriage!

Interestingly, there was a little-recalled amendment proposed to the U.S. Constitution back in 1912, an amendment to prohibit marriage between whites and persons of color. Not only did the amendment fail and the U.S. Supreme Court eventually overturn state laws against interracial marriage, but by 1997, 77 percent of

whites approved of marriages between blacks and whites.

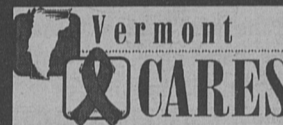
As divorced from reality as I'm feeling over the anti-gay marriage nonsense, I don't think we'll have to wait quite that long. ▼

Kevin Isom is the author of It Only Hurts When I Polka and Tongue in Cheek and Other Places, available at bookstores and online. He may be reached at isomonline@aol.com or www.KevinIsom.com.



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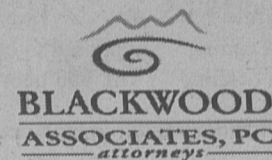
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Reality

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straights! Or maybe, taking a cue from Nancy Reagan's anti-drug campaign, Just say no to pre-marital sex — heck, just say no to marriage and have all the sex you want! (And make Bill Clinton really envious!) No, that's probably too long. Most of the anti-gay marriage folks have trouble with sen-