

I KID YOU NOT

In case of legal marriage, first treat for shock

by Beren deMotier

It's finally happened. I've been launched out of my armchair of complacency, wracked by reality and otherwise thrown for a loop over the lightening-fast reaction of this country to the potential "threat" of same-sex marriage. It is with considerable dismay and bewilderment that I've read about the scramble among the states to outlaw same-sex marriage should it try to invade their borders.

That this one issue should mobilize people like nothing this side of nuclear war or an outbreak of *Ebola* (or the news that Madonna is pregnant) is not only surprising. It tells it like it is.

Because this is it, isn't it? The question has been raised. The last bastion is being scaled. Are we people or not? Are we members of society and therefore guaranteed the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness and therefore marriage to the one we love? Which includes the possibility that we can make the same mistakes as everyone else and marry for furniture, or the weekend, or parking spaces, like in New York City.

Or are we indeed perverts and beyond the pale?

Once you've heard the Adam and Steve jokes pulled out for the eighteen millionth time by the far right, it gets hard to take them seriously. I forget that to some people we're still these frightening Things that are after their children (and not for adoption, mind you!). This incredible sicko stew the right wing has cooked up tosses us nice ol' gay folk (quietly mowing our lawns or heading for the bowling league) in with the child molesters, the rapists, the pornographers, and, say, Jeffrey Dahmer. And it's being served up again to fuel the argument against same-sex marriage.

And while there are those delightful, enlightened, heterosexual souls out there in the voting public that either really do think we're human beings same as them, or are willing to vote as if they do, there are still a large majority of folks out there that draw the line at us getting hitched. Some cite tradition; some can't get over the "who's gonna wear the dress" dilemma; some just can't handle it—we can keep our jobs, keep our homes, maybe even keep our kids if they were from a previous opposite-sex marriage, but same-sex marriage is going too far.

We've got to leave something for the real people, after all.

As a lesbian housewife mother of two, I find this especially ironic. Here we are in my household ready and willing to enthusiastically take part in traditional family values (which God knows every politician is calling for) and the country won't even let us get married for the sake of the kids!

Even among gay men and lesbians there is a split on the issue. Since I'm just hoping for a hope chest and clambering to carry the bridal bouquet, it shocks me how many in the community either don't want us to push for the right to marry or are actually opposed to same-sex marriage. I have struggled to see the other point of view, really I have. Perhaps it's my adolescence-onward ob-

session with marrying in the satin dress worn by Rita Hayworth in *Gilda* during the "Put the Blame on Mame" scene, but still, I have yet to see a down side to having the option to marry. I've heard the "out-dated institution, property-rights preserving, medieval male ownership sustaining, blah-de-blah" argument—which of course has had a long history among straight people as well, generally among pretty young men with goatees that knew a good excuse not to settle down when they heard one. And I hear you out there; I get it. You don't want to get married, don't get married! Just don't try to keep me from doing so, or you might find out why mother lionesses are feared throughout the savanna.

And though the opposition to same-sex marriage among us sounds like cutting-edge queer politics, savvy semiotics and coffeehouse radicalism, I think it's because we've been eating a little too much of that right-wing stew that's being passed around. It's hard to accept yourself as a worthy, natural member of Society on a steady diet of "sicko" and "faggot" and "I wish you were dead." It takes a toll. We've been missing some of our best people while they've sat in the bottle waiting for courage to come, hoping that in the next drink they'd find the self-worth they were missing inside.

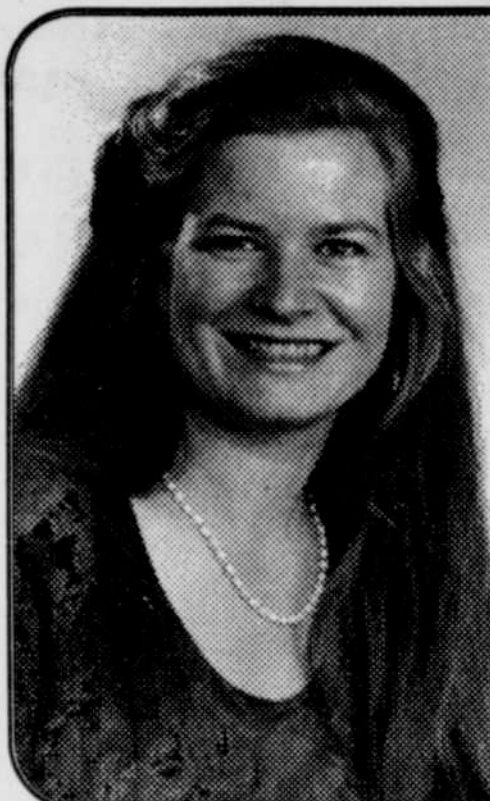
And sure, maybe we're above all that plebeian concern with marriage and monogamy, and we've developed a more modern and intellectual pattern of living and celebrating love. And sure, we may be counterculture neopagans in touch with our primal selves, and that's why we're tattooed to the nines and refuse to buy into the establishment. Or then again, we may think that normalcy is not an option we ever had.

Because marriage represents that for us, I think: normalcy. That's why it is being opposed so hard, and that is why it is so important. We, the people of the

United States of America, we are gay and straight and lesbian and bisexual, and those categories are about the love between consenting adults. We fall in love, we feel the same as straight people. We get jilted, we feel the same. We may dress better while we're doing it, and know where to buy mascara that really is smudge-proof, but that's another subject altogether. And every one of us has an impact on whether we will have the right to marry someday. Studies show that those lawmakers with gay men and lesbians in their lives are much more likely to support same-sex marriage. It's hard to face neighbor Martha over the fence when you've vetoed her and the spouse that day—even after you were invited to the wedding. It has got to be the same way with the average voter. And so it's "reach out and touch a straight person" year (now don't take that literally, boys and girls) for all of us who want to make this come about.

And when we come to a place where the love between adults is honored as healthy and desirable, and our society decides it wants committed love to be celebrated for everyone, that's the day you'll find me in the chapel.

Gonna get married.



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