

Civil Rights vs. Sacred Rights

We must look beyond clichés to understand what same-sex marriages will cost the black community.

Francis Scott Key penned the words of The Star-Spangled Banner from Fort McHenry, not far from my home in Maryland. Key was a lawyer who appeared many times before the U.S. Supreme Court in legal defense of the nation.

One evening, pen in hand, he saw 1,000 brave Marylanders crush the English in the attack known as the Battle of Baltimore. This devout Christian was so moved he wrote the poem that became the lyrics for our national anthem.

Like Key, we as Christians find ourselves observing a battle of epic proportions in America. But the bombs are not aimed at military outposts; they are aimed at our families. The United States stands in the middle of a moral war that jeopardizes the very definition of who America is and what she stands for. Let me take a moment to go a little deeper.

It is no secret that black families have been under assault. African-American households have been suffering from fragmentation since slavery, when husbands were often sold away from their wives and mothers from their children. Today divorce, teenage pregnancy, fatherless homes and the alarming spread of HIV/AIDS are threatening the black family landscape.

Unbridled same-sex marriage will have a striking impact on African-Americans, who have historically been morally conservative and politically liberal. This issue changes that

truism. A May 17 Gallup poll showed that 72 percent of the African-American community supported protecting marriage as a union between only one man and one woman versus 59 percent of the mainstream community.

A handful of elite black leaders have taken it upon themselves to use their influence to undermine God's first institution, marriage, and the foundation of every community, the family. Their views simply do not reflect the true feelings of African-Americans.

They purport a belief that blacks consider the struggle for marriage similar to our struggle during the civil rights movement. Nothing could be further from the truth. Civil rights are not the same as sacred rights. We must look beyond clichés and superficial arguments to understand what same-sex marriages will cost the black community.

Currently, only one-third of all black babies are born into a two-parent, married family. Same-sex marriage would aggravate this crisis.

The experience of other nations demonstrates that the imposition of same-sex marriage and civil unions leads to a weakening of the institution of marriage. In Scandinavia, the system of marriage-like, same-sex partnerships established in the late 1980s has contributed significantly to the ongoing decline of marriage in that region.

In the Netherlands, same-sex marriage has increased the cultural separation of marriage from parenthood, resulting in a soaring out-of-wedlock birthrate. Scholars warn that same-sex marriage could widen the separation between marriage and

parenthood here in the United States.

Further, renowned British anthropologist J.D. Unwin, whose studies chronicled 86 different cultures throughout history, discovered that every nation that rejected monogamy in marriage disintegrated morally in less than one generation.

History has proved that it is necessary to eliminate loopholes in legislation. For example, when the Emancipation Proclamation was written, a constitutional amendment to outlaw slavery in every state also was needed. The same process is necessary to protect marriage today.

Federal judges have consistently challenged the Defense of Marriage Act. Because of the Full Faith and Credit Article of the Constitution, it is imperative that one man-one woman marriage be uniformly protected in every state.

What is at risk is not our sovereignty but our dignity. What is at risk is our nation's moral authority to be a bastion of freedom and strength—a model for the whole world. We, however, cannot look from a distance. We must get involved. The eyes of the nation are upon us.

Harry R. Jackson Jr. is senior pastor of 3,000-member Hope Christian Church in the nation's capital. A best-selling author, Jackson recently helped launch the High Impact African-American Leadership Coalition ([http://www.hiaaalc.org](#)), which is seeking 1 million signatures in support of its Black Contract With America on Moral Values.