

Why Gay Rights Are Not the Same As Civil Rights

Many politicians are equating legal rights for homosexuals with the black struggle against racism. This is not a valid argument.

There is a specter haunting America. It is the movement to promote and legalize homosexual marriage. The movement has adopted a cunning political strategy to appeal to everyone from the suburban soccer mom to the urban white-male liberal: It has packaged its demand for the radical redefining of marriage in the rhetoric and imagery of the U.S. civil rights movement.

This strategy, though utterly cynical and possibly racist, has enormous strategic utility. For what reasonable and fair-minded American would object to a movement that conjures up images of Martin Luther King Jr. along with pacifist marchers facing down unleashed attack dogs and men with fire hoses? In the aftermath of that struggle for racial justice, who today is prepared to risk being branded a bigot for opposing the homosexual's activist agenda?

This strategy is the most brilliant playing of the race card in recent memory. We have not witnessed so brazen a misuse of African-American history for partisan purposes since the "poverty pimps" of more than 35 years ago—who leveraged the American public's sense of guilt and fair play in order to hustle affirmative action set-asides.

But the partisans of homosexual marriage have a problem. There is no evidence in the historiographical literature of the civil rights movement or in the movement's genesis in the struggle against slavery to support their political and moral argument of equivalence. For it was in the crucible of the

unique experience of slavery that the civil rights movement was born.

As the eminent historian Eugene D. Genovese observed more than 30 years ago, the black American experience as a function of slavery is unique and without analogue in the history of the United States. Though other ethnic and social groups have experienced discrimination and hardship, none of their experiences historically and politically can compare with the physical brutality of slavery.

The Hijacking of a Legacy

The civil rights movement was born with the establishing of the United States as a slaveholding republic. This extraordinary history included the kidnapping and brutal transport of blacks from African shores and the stripping from them of their language, identity and culture in order to subjugate and exploit them.

It included the constitutional enshrining of these evils in the form of a U.S. Supreme Court decision—Dred Scott v. Sandford—which denied to blacks any rights that whites had to respect. It included the establishment of Jim Crow culture and *de jure* racial discrimination after the Dred Scott case was overturned by a civil war and three historic constitutional amendments.

It is these basic, historical facts that weaken the efforts of homosexual-marriage apologists to exploit civil rights rhetoric as a way to advance the interest of a generally privileged group.

In fact, the campaign for homosexual marriage is ironically an assertion of *white* privilege. Frequently, same-sex couples wanting to marry are white lesbians seeking the accoutrements of family life, including kids and the proverbial white picket fence, while excluding the benefit of a father for the children.

From their positions of socioeconomic privilege, they insist that their desires must be viewed as *rights* instead of preferences.

The dominant demographic behind this political initiative is neither homosexual males nor people of color—notwithstanding the occasional interracial lesbian couple that is portrayed for propaganda purposes.

It is precisely the indiscriminate promotion of various social groups' *desires and preferences* as rights that has eviscerated the moral authority of the paleoliberal civil rights industry.

Let us consider the question of rights. What makes a homosexual's aspiration to overturn thousands of years of universally recognized morality and practice a "right"?

Why should an institution designed for the reproduction of civil society and for the rearing of children in a moral environment be refashioned to accommodate relationships integrated around intrinsically nonmarital conduct?

One must, in the current discussion, address directly the assertion of "discrimination." The claim that the definition of marriage as the union of one man and one woman constitutes discrimination is based on a false analogy with statutory prohibitions on interracial marriages in many states during much of the 20th century.

This alleged analogy collapses when one considers that skin pigmentation is utterly irrelevant to the procreative and unitive functions of marriage.

Racial differences do not affect or interfere with the ability of sexually complementary spouses to become "one flesh" through sexual intercourse that fulfills the behavioral conditions of procreation.

The law of marital consummation makes it clear that this

bodily union serves as the foundation of the profound sharing of life at every level—biological, emotional, dispositional, rational and spiritual.

This complementary form of life-sharing explains not only why marriage can only be between a man and a woman, but also why marriages cannot be between more than two people.

Moreover, the alleged analogy also disregards the fact that the whole point of those prohibitions was to maintain and advance a system of racial subordination and exploitation. It was to maintain a caste system in which one race was relegated to conditions of social and economic inferiority.

The definition of marriage as the union of a man and a woman does not establish a sexual caste system or regulate one sex to conditions of social and economic inferiority. It does, to be sure, exclude the lawful recognition of “marriages” formed from some types of sexual combining—including polygyny, polyandry, polyamory and same-sex relationships.

However, there is nothing invidious or discriminatory about laws that decline to treat all sexual wants or proclivities as morally equal. *People* are equal in worth and dignity, but *sexual choices and lifestyles* are not.

That is why the law’s refusal to license polygamous, polyamorous and homosexual unions is entirely right and proper. In recognizing, favoring and promoting true marriage, the law does not violate the “rights” of people whose “lifestyle preferences” are denied the stamp of legal approval.

Rather, it furthers and fosters the common good of civil society, and makes proper provision for the physical and moral protection and nurturing of children.

The word “discrimination” has now been emptied of its normative and historical content—thereby serving to

disadvantage blacks in American society. Malcontented members of any group, however privileged, now can simply invoke the term and launch their own personalized civil rights industry. It is the revival of a culture of narcissism.

Defending the civil rights legacy likely will be a cold comfort to its historical advocates because the loss of its distinctive nature is our own fault. It is our failure, philosophically and politically, to develop a compelling historiography of the movement that has contributed to its decline and decay.

From the teaching in school to the use of the term "civil rights" in the public square, the notion of *civil* rights has been diluted, ahistoricized and nearly emptied of content in relation to the historical experience of blacks in this country.

That the authorized institutional inheritors of the civil rights movement failed to recognize and prevent this loss brings in question their ability to continue as effective leaders of black people.

It is especially sad and disturbing that the established leadership of the civil rights industry has utterly failed to resist the corrupting and co-opting by a mostly white special-interest group of the history of the civil rights phase of the black freedom struggle.

This failure highlights the need for a regime change in favor of new leadership, as well as a post-civil rights conceptual framework for addressing a more complex racial reality.

Moreover, in light of the phenomenon of judicially mandated homosexual marriage, we believe that black leaders need to speak forcefully in favor of a federal marriage amendment to the Constitution.

If their support for true marriage alienates them from their

white liberal friends, so be it.

No community has suffered more than has ours from the weakening of marriage at the hands of purveyors of the doctrines of the sexual revolution.

It is our sons and our daughters who have paid the bulk of the cost imposed by a cultural elite that seeks to overthrow societal and biblical principles of sexual restraint and responsibility.

Leaders of our community should therefore be in the vanguard of the movement to prevent further moral erosion and begin reversing historical declines.

We respectfully suggest that Martin Luther King Jr. did not give his life, nor Fannie Lou Hamer her struggle, so that libertines could be free to pursue their polymorphous forms of sexuality under the banner of the black civil rights movement.

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