

What Happens in Maryland Stays in Maryland

☒ Lately I've been discussing the battle over the marriage definition with friends and parishioners.

I have been amazed by a new collaboration between former political rivals in all of our urban, minority communities.

The largely white religious right is literally becoming a melting pot of diversity as far as this marriage issue is concerned. Huge numbers of blacks and Hispanics of faith are starting to feel that there is a "not so subtle" media attack on the nation's most fundamental institutions. They realize that many movies and TV sitcoms have gone out of their way to express support of so-called "gay rights."

They marveled at the number of celebrities that have jumped on the bandwagon for same-sex marriage. Two weeks ago 8, a play about Prop 8 produced by Rob Reiner, trotted out Hollywood's finest—including Brad Pitt, George Clooney, among several openly gay actors and actresses. The entertainers read selected testimonies of traditional marriage which have never been released to the public. The point of the play was simply to ridicule traditional marriage supporters and "expose the bigotry" of the traditional point of

view.

All of this media attention has been coordinated and timed with legislative battles in New York, Maryland and Washington state. The 800-pound gorilla in the room is that the Supreme Court will likely rule on the constitutionality of referendums or votes on maintaining the definition of marriage. Even though the Supreme Court should be above politics, the court will likely attempt to gauge the aggregate public opinion about same-sex marriage.

In Maryland, the home of several of my lead churches, black clergy voices were instrumental in blocking the same-sex marriage initiative last year—so much so that Lesbian, Gay, Transgendered and Bisexual (LGBT) activists lobbying in Maryland specifically targeted blacks with a celebrity-studded marketing blitz. The opposition campaign featured videos of black actors such as Michael Kenneth Williams (of television's *The Wire*, set in Maryland) and Baltimore native Mo'nique winking at the camera and extolling the virtues of the gay community. These PR efforts were synchronized with the strong-armed tactics of Gov. Martin O'Malley (D).

There is a huge amendment campaign going on in Maryland right now—to develop their version of proposition 8. As I have already stated, the national media campaign is now coming to roost in

Maryland. Liberal talking heads project that blacks like me should identify with gay people because they are fighting the same battle for civil rights that we did. The overwhelming majority of black Americans find this argument both offensive and ridiculous.

In fact, not long ago, Jonathon Capehart (openly gay writer for *The Washington Post* and frequent commentator on MSNBC) received a tweet that challenged his interpretation of current events and history. The tweet read: "Still can't believe u think the choice of being gay is congruent to the struggle of blacks. Ain't never seen no gay plantations!"

Although the tweet succinctly captures how the vast majority of blacks feel about this comparison, Capehart's answers to the tweet refused to address the two main concerns expressed by the writer.

First, the simple fact is that gay Americans have never been rounded up and shackled into centuries of forced labor. They have never been branded, owned or sold with the full permission of the government. Further, in every state in the nation, gay Americans can live as they choose; what traditional marriage advocates object to is their crusade to redefine age-old institution for the rest of us.

The attempt of homosexual activists—of any race—to hijack the

moral authority that black Americans won through their blood, sweat, tears and prayers is both dishonest and outrageous.

Secondly, Capehart went on to dismiss the tweet's assertion that the black experience and the gay experience in America are not comparable because the individual refers to homosexuality as a choice.

Let me explain.

First of all, I must point out that someone could theoretically believe that homosexuality is an inborn trait and still not believe that the historic suffering of gays compares to that of blacks. Human suffering is nearly impossible to quantify, but I have a feeling that the homosexual lobby would have difficulty coming up with numbers to match the estimated 8 million blacks who suffered through the Middle Passage (more than 1 million of whom are believed to have perished at sea) or the millions born into bondage in the centuries that followed.

Next, whether one defines homosexuality by the presence of same-sex attraction or the choice of same-sex partners is really a matter of semantics. Laws cannot regulate feelings; they can only regulate behavior. What Capehart really wants when he asks the rest of us to redefine marriage in the name of "equality" and "dignity" is our approval of homosexuality.

Simply put, redefining marriage to include homosexual couples forces the rest of us to say that in the eyes of the law, homosexual behavior is morally equal to heterosexual behavior. They believe this is self-evident, but not all of us agree.

The five states that will pursue constitutional amendments defining marriage as a union between one man and one woman will likely influence the fate of the institution of marriage nationally.

I am praying for the family and friends of folks from these states.

May you speak your worldview with passion and clarity. I also pray that you will support the cause with your dollars and volunteer service.

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