

The debate of proposition 8

Politics



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Should sexual preference determine marriages? This is the ongoing debate our generation will have to address. California has been in the epicenters of this debate; as we witnessed voters oppose gay marriage in the elections of 2008. The success of Proposition 8 discriminated against those of homosexual orientation. Proposition 8 adjusted California's marriage laws to prevent a change in language, favoring the majority of heterosexual America. As California's constitution in article 1, section 7. reads, " Only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in California" (California Marriage Protection Act). This perception of marriage adopted to be law is built upon gender identity ideals that men and women have to fulfill. Women are to marry that of the opposite gender and sex. Accordingly, the language used to describe marriage was contorted by gender ideals in the fight for Proposition 8. Those for Proposition 8 argued it would restore the definition of marriage. From this perspective, marriage is seen as a tradition that is natural and immutable.

To the contrary, the argument against Proposition 8 states, " OUR CALIFORNIA CONSTITUTION—the law of our land—SHOULD GUARANTEE THE SAME FREEDOMS AND RIGHTS TO EVERYONE—NO ONE group SHOULD be singled out to BE TREATED DIFFERENTLY" (Official California Legislative Information). Marriage is a right that cannot be exercised by all due to sexual preference. Gay and lesbians are discriminated based on societies resistance to amend the definition of marriage past sexual preference. Additionally, the language used to describe marriage and the roles of individuals, is a major outlining factor behind the issue itself.

Analyzing the language used in both arguments allows us to delve further into this question and expose why Proposition 8 should have been abolished. Proposition 8 is simply a resistance to change in language in how we come to define marriage. “ Typically, language changes as a result of social political and economic processes such as lifestyle changes, new experiences, counters with technologies and communication media, colonization, or migration” (Litosseliti 19). Although political action may try to slow down this historical ongoing change in language, just as the world changes, so will the language.

Marriage will eventually cease to be defined by the standards of sexual preference. In such, the argument against Proposition 8 holds more validity than those in favor of it. Those opposed to Proposition 8 rely on California’s constitution promise for equal rights and freedom to every person, gays included. This allowed those opposed to use powerful words associated with civil rights such as, equality, dignity, freedom, and respect. These are portrayed to the audience from a gay language lending more of feminine like characteristics of care, nurture, and support.

This gay language serves a purpose in relaying the message to oppose Proposition 8. As scholar Don Kulick believes, “...homosexual slang serves communicative functions, the most important of which is to ‘ reinforce group cohesiveness and reflect common interests, problems, and needs of the population’ (Sonenschein 1969: 289)” (Kulick 250). They used the gay slang as to draw attention from all gay and lesbians to feel connected. They refer

to themselves as the “ gay community”. This self maintained identity allows them to reach out to all gays and lesbians.

For instance, there is a great example in YouTube, where the protest against Proposition 8 continues. In their advertisement they are promoting the Eve of Justice March for gay rights. In the video words displayed are “ if you believe...” followed by the alternating words such as life, happiness, kindness, beauty, compassion, and love. These words of sentiment and support are a prime example of the gay language inducing activism throughout the gay community. “ In constructing particular subject positions for the readers or viewers, advertisements play a role in constituting identities” (Litosseliti 108).

The gay language so to speak allows them to create a desired identity for the gay community, which allows them to mobilize themselves within their civil rights movement. Additionally, the gay community has maintained a similar identity to heterosexual relationships on what role individuals play in a marriage. They believe in the similar manner as to what is expected out of a relationship. For instance in the official voters guide an example of daily interaction between spouses is described as if to show they are not much different than a heterosexual marriage.

The guide postulates, “ When you’re married and your spouse is sick or hurt, there is no confusion: you get into the ambulance or hospital room with no questions asked. IN EVERYDAY LIFE, AND ESPECIALLY IN EMERGENCY SITUATIONS, DOMESTIC PARTNERSHIPS ARE SIMPLY NOT ENOUGH” (Official California Legislative Information). The gay community displays the similarity

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of marriage interaction in daily life is the same as any other marriage would be. Marriage roles are portrayed to be similar, and the situation presented above uses words such as, hurt and sick.

This invokes the audience to relate to the situation presented of care and nurture for one's spouse. Although, there are some differences in the expected roles in a marriage, for only a single gender identity is shared between the spouses. For instance, in the role of a wedding usually both partners wear the traditional clothing used for their sex. Lesbians dress in wedding dress attire as the gay men wear the traditional suit. This infers that in a gay marriage their roles are different than that of traditional couples.

It objectifies the image of two masculine or feminine figures in a relationship, demonstrating marriage is about love, and not fulfilling prescribed gender roles. The symbolic meaning of commitment is also displayed through the exchange of wedding bands. The gay community's ideals on marriage are centered more around love than sexuality. Gays use this traditional wedding practice as a way to explicate the language of love, and equality in marriage. To the contrary, those in favor of Proposition 8 argue the need to restore the definition of marriage for the sake of protecting the children.

They argue that marriage itself is traditional and the meaning needs to be reallocated for sexual preference. The argument is made that domestic partnerships give all the same rights as a marriage just the title is different. Further, the language used to describe gay marriage is severely negative. Gay marriages are described as " same-sex marriages" for the sole purpose

of pointing out the sexuality of the marriage. We can distinguish this in the arguments presented that our children are to be protected from.

The voter's guide reads " It protects our children from being taught in public schools that ' same-sex marriage' is the same as traditional marriage" (Official California Legislative Information). The argument uses strong words such as protect and traditional as if gay marriage were a threat to our society. Those in favor of Proposition 8 question why they should have to deal with gay marriages when raising children. As I recall there was an advertisement on television during election warning people about societal issues our children will have to deal with. The commercial demonstrated a child's confusion as to why she had 2 daddies, yet mommies were the ones who made the babies. The child's confusion of marriage sexual identities promotes gay marriage as a social issue in raising kids. Those in favor of Proposition 8 claim that gays are putting their adult desires first before the children. Derogatory terms are used in protests against those who oppose Proposition 8. In rallies across California supporting Proposition 8, such as the one on the left, implement the feeling of hate. The term fag implies a negative connotation upon the being homosexual.

Additionally, the word depraved implies that the gay lifestyle is a social burden to America. Those who support the banning of gay marriage perceive this as a social problem of a minority group trying to change social culture. Gays should live private lives and not bring their lifestyle to the public arena and force society to change. Moreover, the argument against Proposition 8 holds a much stronger stand against those who support it. First, we must

understand that language in society will always change and adapt to the needs of society.

Marriage just as many other words will be redefined as society expands out of the two traditional gender roles. The gay community needs to be included as the law has to prescribe to everyone equally. As we see in the protest rallies, the movements' association with civil rights of the blacks helps their argument gain solidarity. A popular slogan across protests was " Gay is the new Black". I experienced protestors in Fresno, CA yelling this to supporters of Proposition 8. The correlation of the blacks civil rights display their desires and emphasizediscrimination.

In addition, supporters claim children will be confused as to sexuality preferences, yet sexuality preferences don't usually profess themselves until puberty. In this adolescence the children will be able to cognate their own sexual preference. Those in support are simply trying to prevent gays from their prescribed rights. When have we ever heard of a vocabulary word that needed its definition restored? Marriage is defined differently by many societies and who are we to say that a minority group should be exempt from it.

As the gay language further manifests itself with civil rights language, it will draw increasing support from the gay community as well as civil rights activists. Works Cited California Marriage Protection Act, § 7. 5. Kulick, Don. " Gay and Lesbian Language. " Annual Review of Anthropology 29 (2000): 243-85. Litosseliti, Lia. Gender and Language Theory and Practice. New York: A

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