

For as long as the  
institution of marriage  
has been

[Family](#), [Marriage](#)



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n around, so too has the belief that it represents the union of one man and one woman. Now gay men and lesbians are challenging that institution. They believe that their relationships mean the same in their sphere as heterosexual marriages do in our sphere. Homosexuals would like to see their marriages legalized.

In 1991 three gay couples filed a lawsuit, in Hawaii, for denying them marriage licenses.

They claim that the refusal amounts to gender discrimination, which violates the Equal Rights

Amendment. Judge Kevin Chang ruled, in 1996, that same-sex couples have the right to legally

marry. This ruling makes Hawaii the first state to recognize that gay and lesbian couples are

entitled, by law, to the same privileges as heterosexual married couples (CNN). Under the Full

Faith and Credit clause of the Constitution, this also forces all states to recognize these marriages

as far as federal benefits are concerned. Congress has approved a bill, the Defense of Marriage

Act, that will allow states to decide whether to recognize homosexual marriages. The second part

of the bill would define " for federal purposes" as the union of a man and a woman. Under such a

definition gay and lesbians, even if they win the right to marry in Hawaii or

elsewhere, would not be able to file joint federal tax returns, claim federal pension, or survivor's benefits, or be allowed to file for green card status (Gallagher 21).

I don't feel that marriages between gays or lesbians should be given the same status as heterosexual marriages. Since when do gay people think they can broaden the institution of marriage to include themselves? They shouldn't be able to. The institution of marriage is recognized by the church, homosexuality isn't. I don't feel that gay people have given a reason that carries enough weight for the government to legalize same-sex marriage.

Should gay people fight for the right to marry? Gay rights activists say absolutely. Gay couples should be afforded the same benefits as heterosexual couples. The legal status of marriage rewards the two individuals with substantial economic and practical advantages.

Married couples can file joint tax returns. Social security provides benefits for surviving spouses and their dependents. They can inherit money and property from one another without a will.

They are immune from testifying against a spouse, and marriage to an

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American citizen gives a  
foreigner the right to residency in the United States. Another advantage  
would be health  
insurance provided by employers. These benefits usually include the  
employee and their spouse.

Employers generally will not include a partner who is not married to an  
employee, whether of the  
same sex or not. Very few insurance companies will extend benefits to  
domestic partners' who  
are not married (OUT/LOOK 234-235).

Gay marriages are highly emotional topics in the 90s. Many people feel that  
gay marriages  
would show heterosexual people how much two people can love each other  
even if they are of the  
same sex. Homosexual relationships are more than just sex with someone of  
the same gender.

Homosexual relationships include feelings and being able to share those  
feelings with the person  
you love. " People have become used to the idea of defining gay people  
solely in terms of sexual  
acts," says Gregory Herek, a research psychologist at the University of  
California, Davis.

I think many heterosexuals get very nervous when they have to think of gay  
people in terms of relationships, because it challenges the way they have  
always

thought about gay people. I find it interesting that the same people who condemn

homosexuality as being a promiscuous lifestyle also say they're against gay marriage because they wouldn't want to recognize stable gay relationships, says

Herek (Gallagher 24).

Rep. Barney Frank asks, " How can you argue that a man and woman in love are somehow

threatened because two women down the street are also in love?" Later, he put the question in

more personal terms. Frank said he respects the marriages of fellow committee members but

added, " I don't understand for a minute how I demean them by living with a man" (U. S. House).

Most people, when asked the question " What is your opinion of gay relationships?", their first

response encompasses sex, promiscuity and AIDS. When asked about heterosexual relationships

they generally answer with love, companionship, and families. If same-sex marriage is made legal,

the next generation won't think of it as taboo. It will just be another way of life. All of the

controversy has opened the door to discuss families, parenting, and equality for lesbians and gays.

They believe that they will be able to raise children in a stable, loving

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household as most children have with heterosexual marriages. The law generally favors marital relationships as they will do everything to enhance the rights of individuals who enter into it. And marriage will end a negative: their sexual lives no longer will be considered felonious, which negatively affects fights ranging from child custody to civil rights (Graff 12). Lesbian and gay men do not seek a special place in America but merely to be a full and equal part of America, to give back to society without being forced to lie or hide or live as second-class citizens. Andrew Sullivan, senior editor of The New Republic says, " At some point in our lives, some of us are lucky enough to meet the person we truly love. And we want to commit to that person in front of our family and country for the rest of our lives. Gay marriage seeks to change no one else's rights or marriages in any way. It seeks merely to promote monogamy, fidelity and the disciplines of family life among people who have long been cast to the margins of society" (Sullivan 26).

Some religious leaders are the most forceful advocates of same-sex marriage. In Hawaii alone, many faiths such as the Reform and Reconstructionist branches of

Judaism, Quaker,

Buddhist, Episcopal and many individual Protestant congregations are involved in the

pro-marriage campaign (Rotello 16). On the opposite side of the coin there are many faiths that condemn gay marriage. They feel that these people defy the Bible.

Ultimately the battle may not be so much about winning the right to marriage as about

winning new levels of respect for gay relationships. Evan Wolfson, senior staff attorney for the

gay group: Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund says, " Winning or losing any particular

battle over marriage is not all that's at stake here. What's at stake is a historical moment to

change the position of gay people in society. If we do the work right, all kinds of gains will come

from it, apart from the outcome of any particular battle," he says (Gallagher 36).

Opponents of same-sex marriage feel that giving recognition to this new way of life will

break down the value system set up by heterosexuals. " We need to strengthen, not weaken, the

institution of marriage," said Governor Pete Wilson (Capps G9). Ministers say marriage is one of

the most impenetrable institutions in modern society. It provides the ultimate form of acceptance for personal intimate relationships in our society. People in today's society can talk about homosexuality with a group of friends without feeling like the issue has been dropped in their lap.

When faced with the situation, many people don't know how to act in the presence of gay or lesbian couples. They tend to walk on eggshells for fear that they will say something to offend that person or their lifestyle.

For example, my Uncle Steve is a gay man that lives in San Francisco. My immediate family knew of his lifestyle many years prior to this incident. He came to California for the holidays in 1990. The entire family was invited to my mom and dad's house for Christmas dinner.

My Uncle showed up with his boyfriend Troy. Some of my extended family and friends weren't aware of his lifestyle; therefore, were extremely offended when they saw them hug each other. I even had to remind myself not to stare at them because I'm not exposed to this behavior. It made most of us very uncomfortable. Both of them felt the tension at the dinner table so they tried to



lighten up the mood by explaining how they met and their subsequent relationship, however the conversation quickly turned into an argument about morals; nevertheless, they went back to their hotel early.

Children are influenced by their parents and peers on issues such as divorce and

inter-racial marriage. They hear negative responses to inter-racial marriage from parents from the

"old school". Children of divorced parents have formed opinions of how marriage should be. If

we allow same-sex marriage, children will be more confused by social relations than they already

are. "Children do best in a family with a mom and a dad," said House Majority Whip Tom Delay,

(R-Texas). "Accepting same-sex marriage," he said, "will only take us further down the road to

social deterioration" (Weitzstein G14). "Government recognition of same-sex marriage," wrote

Martin Mawyer, President of Christian Action Network, "will forever change the American family

as we know it. Forced homosexuality will be thrust upon America in public schools, homosexual

marriage will be taught as a normal, healthy relationship" (Rotello 16+).

Gay activists have been fighting for many years against discrimination based on sex and/or

sexual preference. Many of us didn't look twice at their protests and literature about what they

believe. Now that they want the same recognition religiously and financially, as heterosexual

couples, the silent community speaks out. " There is no other issue on the American landscape

where there is such a strong political consensus - Americans oppose homosexual marriages," said

the Rev. Lou Sheldon, chairman of the Traditional Values Coalition (Gray E2).

A survey

conducted in June 1995 found that only 33 percent agreed with the persuasively phrased

statement, " If two people love each other, they should be able to get married even if they are of

the same sex" (Gallagher 36).

Randy Thomasson of the Christian group called Capitol Resource Institute says that

sanctioning gay marriage in California could cost " Hundreds of millions of dollars for businesses,

and potentially above one billion dollars a year," through health care coverage alone (Capps G10).

This would be from claims filed by partners that were previously not covered.