

Marriage: A Basic Human Right

by Rebecca Shorten

A girl lives in a pretty neighbourhood, with row upon row of neatly painted and trimmed houses, and the gardens are manicured by tender motherly hands. A boy moves in next door, and they meet and play together after school while waiting for their fathers to come home from the office and their mothers make dinner. As they grow older, the playing turns into innocent hand-holding, and after finishing school, they declare their love for each other and get married. After awhile they have children, and the cycle is repeated. That is the way its supposed to be, right?

As a single woman, I know this is not true. My "boy next door" and I moved on and went in separate directions a long time ago. Our interests changed, and this is the case with many other people I know. It is difficult, with

all those people out there, to find the perfect person to love. Yet, somehow we still have this "Leave it to Beaver" attitude stamped on our culture and we're having a hard time moving past it. Granted many things have changed, but the basic idea behind it has not. We're supposed to grow up, get married, have children, and go on retirement cruises. But the thing here is that it's men and women who are supposed to get married, not men and men, or women and women.

It is a basic human right to marry whomever one wants. The main criteria is that the marriage is supposed to be between two people who love each other, for example a man and a woman. It is a contract between two people saying that they will be true to each other, and love each other, and take care of each other "til death do they part." All sorts of people get married: inter-racial

couples, couples who are in abusive relationships, couples who are infertile, couples from broken families, etc. No two couples are alike. But it is still their basic human right to get married; no one tells them they can't.

Society has had its shames that were kept hidden away from the public so as not to taint the moral values of the rest of the community. It wasn't so long ago that it was shameful to have a child out of wedlock. Now people have children out of wedlock all the time, and there is no shame in it. We have realised, as a society, that those children do indeed turn out to be healthy, intelligent adults. African American people have more opportunities now than ever before; they can go to school and become doctors, lawyers, and business men and women. They are now a respected and valuable part of our society. You may well ask what race has to do with marriage. But it's not about race or marriage. It's about discrimination.

People are homosexual or heterosexual because they are born that way. It is not the fault of the parents that their children may be gay, and it is not a decision the child makes. It is predeter-

mined. So why do we discriminate and say that a minority group in our society can't get married? It can't be because of religious belief. Atheists get married all the time. It can't be because it hurts other people. The only people who are affected are the ones wanting to get married. It's because people don't understand, and what they don't understand they are afraid of, and what they are afraid of they say is wrong.

I don't understand why people smoke; I can't understand the addiction part of it. I have a fear of relinquishing control to an external influence. But that doesn't mean I go around pulling cigarettes out of people's mouths just because I think it's wrong. I don't understand what it's like to be gay, but I can imagine that it's not much different than being straight. Love goes beyond gender; many people don't understand that, so they are afraid of it. And then they discriminate and say that homosexuals can't get married, taking away a basic human right. The contract is between two people, not between two people and their community.



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