

LDS Leaders Are Wrong to Support Proposition 8

By Aaron Ashcraft

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I personally admire the work of the LDS Church. The vast majority of children raised in LDS families reflect the values of strong character, dedication and an amazingly strong belief system characteristics which are often missing in many other societies. I congratulate the church for its principles of strong family units. LDS people make a very strong contribution that is felt around the world.

I also completely understand LDS aversion to gay marriage. On the surface, gay marriage is an anathema to strongly held beliefs based on maintaining strong families. However, I strongly believe LDS Church leaders are wrong to support California Proposition 8, which would permanently deny 5 percent of the population equal civil rights. Gay marriage is essential for a free society where everyone can enjoy equal rights. Under existing state and federal laws, married couples receive the benefit of more than 1,100 rights that are denied to gay couples. For example, only married couples can:

File joint tax returns.

Receive Social Security survivor benefits.

At the death of a spouse, the surviving spouse can inherit the assets of the deceased without the payment of income tax; a surviving spouse is not forced to sell in order to pay tax on the increased value of a home.

In a medical emergency, married couples can visit their spouse in a hospital intensive care unit; a surviving spouse can arrange a funeral for a deceased husband or wife.

If married, an American can sponsor his/her foreign spouse for legal immigration to the United States.

These are extraordinarily important civil rights that are specifically denied to gay couples because federal and state laws do not recognize gay marriage. These laws impacted me very personally:

My partner, Tomas, and I have been in a 100 percent monogamous, committed relationship for more than seven years. When his student visa expired, he was forced to return to Spain because I could not sponsor him for a green card. Devastated at being alone, I made the incredibly difficult decision to move to Barcelona. It has not been easy. I had to learn two new languages and adapt to a new culture. I abandoned my two children and a grandchild, sold my home, gave up a wide circle of friends along with the charity work and church choir I loved. But our being together again has made these sacrifices worthwhile.

I hope readers can understand that the only reason for gay marriage is so everyone can have equal civil rights.

For this reason, I ask LDS members to thoughtfully consider that the passage of California Proposition 8 will only make thousands of gay couples permanent underdogs in society the land of the free will continue to be unequal.

Gay marriage will not have a negative impact on LDS families. It will not suddenly make heterosexuals become gay. Gay marriage is not an attempt to undermine families. It's only purpose is to grant equal civil rights to all.

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