

Community Comment  
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## Marriage Equality

The Supreme Court of the United States took up the topic of marriage equality over the last two days. On Tuesday they heard arguments regarding Proposition 8 in California and on Wednesday they heard arguments about the Defense of Marriage Act. I have no way of knowing how they will rule on either of these issues but I am convinced it doesn't matter. Marriage equality will become the law of the land; if not now, then soon.

This question is the civil rights question of our day. Can you think back to the fifties and sixties and remember the struggle for black equality? We have news reel footage of the conflicts that occurred. The vitriol and pure hatred on the faces of those that opposed these basic rights for blacks is startling. But don't we see this issue today as basic to our American ideal? I think most do. We saw activist in the news and they aren't always the best for public relations. It was the same for the gay community and that does color our perception of who these people are. As we've gotten to know real people who happen to be gay or lesbian, we have come to see them as friends and neighbors, teachers and coworkers, and daughters and sons.

My journey in this issue began when I was eighteen. I was working for the forest service in the summer and wanted to get to know San Francisco on my days off. My mother's cousin lived and worked in the city so I asked for his phone number. She gave it to me and then offered that he had a roommate for the last twenty years. I had met him once or twice when I was young and thought he was a nice guy. I called and was welcome at their home on my days off. I got to know them as just two people with real lives and problems and dreams. Oh, and fears. They were not out to the larger community. They could lose jobs if they came out. They had been together for over twenty years yet they couldn't get married or have basic rights if one went to the hospital. They were not family in the eyes of society even in San Francisco.

I looked at gay people differently after that. And here we are, nearly fifty years later, and maybe we are finally catching up with reality. This issue is generational. My thirty something daughters have close friends that are gay or lesbian. They are open about who they are and enjoy much more tolerance and acceptance than ever before. To them this is a non issue. More than that, it is a sore point with my generation that we didn't do something about marriage equality sooner. It is a question of what's right and what's fair.

We will have to get over our prejudices and intolerance and biblical references and treat these folks with the same common courtesy and respect and right, the rest of us enjoy in our private lives. The reality is, it will happen with or without the support of my generation.

Also on the federal level, Sequestration has begin to affect us in ways that are disturbing. These budget cuts are affecting the educational opportunities promised to our veterans. If this is true, we are indeed in for a wild and very uncomfortable ride. Congress needs to get there act together. The only thing stopping them is the desire.

This has been Sam pennisi for community comment.