

Engaging the Left: A Futile Waste of Time?

L. Ara Norwood

“Prop 8 was doomed to failure as an attack on equal rights until an unholy alliance of churches, fueled by Mormon money terrified voters into believing that their children would be taught to be gay in school. This is an example of a successful political campaign by churches to force their religious beliefs upon all citizens of California. Time for a change in tax-exempt status?”

“I know this is very elementary, but I’m going to say it anyway....EQUAL RIGHTS FOR ALL. Why can't just that simple statement be understood? It seems so simple to me...Why is something so SIMPLE so difficult for some? People, stop overthinking...embrace each other, embrace each others beliefs, embrace love, embrace differences, embrace others, and embrace each others desire to be happy in their own right.”

The above two quotes were posted on a Facebook page of a friend of mine in May 2010, the second of those two posts written by that friend. Although written by two like-minded people, they started a debate that ended rather quickly. I was a part of that debate. I am a man who embraces both moderate conservative politics and strong religious values in the Judeo-Christian tradition. I believe in God. I believe in liberty. I believe in capitalism (to a point). I believe in less government but strong defense. I believe the world is both a dangerous place with some very bad people in it, as well as some very good people, and, at the risk of sounding arrogant (a trait I do not feel), I believe I live in the greatest and most exceptional country in the world, the United States of America, whose constitution I hold sacred.

I also believe there is good and evil in the world, and there is right and wrong. Further, I believe there is wisdom and foolishness, and I sometimes fear there is much more of the latter and far too little of the former. This became clear to me again as I pondered the debate I had engaged in.

The basics of the debate pitted me against about four other people, all of them Gay-Rights Activists to one degree or another. Three of the four were (presumably) straight women, and the fourth opponent was a gay male. The debate never really got any momentum as Judith (all names of my opponents have been changed), one of the straight women whose Facebook page served as the forum for this encounter, pulled the plug and invited me to “graciously withdraw.” I’m not entirely sure why she did that, but, as she is a friend of mine of some ten years, and it is her turf, I ceased

further participation. Since the debate never really got off the ground, many arrows I had in my quiver never got fired.

This essay, however, is not the place for such points. Instead, I wish to discuss what I have come to believe may well be the futility for anyone whose politics are Right-of-center of having any sort of a dialogue, discussion, or debate, or even a civil conversation, with people who's political world view is Left-of-center. As I will be placing a transcript of the entire Facebook exchange in the Appendix of this paper, the dispassionate reader (i.e., the proverbial "reasonable man") can see very quickly that the effort on my part to reason with my opponents (one of them a friend) appeared to be utterly doomed to failure from the outset. And it is this pervasive inability of the Left* to engage in constructive dialogue that fascinates me.

And fascination is the correct word here. I find it odd, uncanny, and bizarre, but fascinating nonetheless. It's as if a large population of brilliant linguists were adept at picking up and learning the basics of conversational Spanish, Portuguese, German, Italian, and Russian, but when it came to French, a certain percentage of that population, say 25%, were stymied when it came to comprehension. The rest of us are left scratching our heads and wondering what it is about those 25% and/or the French language that makes comprehension so troublesome. But so it seems with the Liberal Left when discussing matters that challenge some of their cherished beliefs. I want to stress – my point is *not* that the Left cannot be persuaded to *change their minds and adopt a different position on a matter*, it is that the Left often seems unable to *even engage in a constructive, meaningful dialogue on any level* with someone who opposes their views.

Admittedly, it is difficult to ascertain what is happening here; perhaps the Left is uncomfortable looking in the mirror when having someone challenge them. Perhaps somewhere in their subconscious, the Left senses there is something amiss with their belief structure and they don't wish to subject it to possible ruination, like someone choosing to believe in the Easter Bunny while knowing deep down inside it's all make-believe, yet not wanting to face up to the charade. Or perhaps the holders of Leftist beliefs are so plagued by hubris, that they truly believe they have no need to reexamine their assumptions. Or it could be something entirely different. I don't pretend to understand, nor do I wish to commit to my speculations.

I hasten to point out that I am keenly aware I am generalizing here. I do not presume that every Leftist is prone to avoid debate, examination, and reflection. Perhaps Bill Mahr, a very committed Leftist, were he sitting with me in the privacy of his living room with no audience to pander to, might be capable of a serious discussion. I'm sure it's possible. But as my experience with people of the Left seems to follow a pattern of closed-mindedness and mean-spiritedness and insecurity and shouting down their opponents, I am well within bounds to make such generalizations.

But I digress.

Over the years, I have noted a number of tendencies manifesting themselves in such encounters with the Liberal Left. And this most recent Facebook exchange provided

several telling examples, as if they came right out of the Leftist Playbook. Here is a “Bakers Dozen” illustrative of some of the tendencies I noticed; they seem to follow a well-trod pattern:

1. *Start by making a bold, controversial statement and then loudly proclaim that anyone who disagrees with you is an idiot (or whatever other epithet suits you.)* Jake, the gay man who opened the debate by demanding his rights, stated plainly that anyone who disagreed with him is either an idiot or dangerous. The implication is that the dangerous should perhaps be incarcerated, thus effectively removing from them their rights, the very rights Jake believes he is owed. Jake is an interesting case study; he claims, in other places on his own Facebook page, that he was victimized many times for being gay – picked on and harassed while in high school, ousted from a job by an allegedly homophobic manager, etc. He now appears to be loaded for bear as it’s pay-back time. I don’t really get the impression that Jake’s primary goal is about “rights” but more about “revenge”.

I think this is a very unhealthy perspective from which to engage in debate. Jake is certainly vulnerable to making all sorts of ill-founded and irrational claims while possessing such a victim-mentality that seeks revenge. Plus, when he begins from the premise that disagreement with him equates to idiocy, it makes dialogue impossible, as Jake has placed himself in a position where he cannot *learn*, let alone *listen*.

2. *Whatever you do, drone on and on about your point of view while turning a deaf ear towards your opponent’s point of view. Go with Advocacy, not Inquiry.* I want to stress here that I am not opposed to advocating a point of view. It is fine to do so. The problem is when such advocating is not accompanied by a spirit of inquiry, an inquisitiveness as to what your counterpart’s views consist of, or why they believe what they believe, or how they perceive your own arguments, etc. When you read the transcript of the debate in the Appendix, you may notice that in the 9 posts I contributed, I asked approximately 22 questions of my opponents, all of them serious and thought-provoking, none of them rhetorical. By contrast, my opponents contributed 20 posts (more than double mine) and asked 16 questions, all but two of them rhetorical.
3. *Find the weakest examples from your opponents, present them as if they were the strongest examples from your opponents, and exploit them.* In the debate, when you look at Post #17, you will see that I offered three examples of why the Leftist Mantra that everyone deserves equal rights and that we should all just embrace each others’ beliefs simply cannot hold up to scrutiny. In the third of those examples I describe a scenario of an organization of men who believe their rights to have sex with minors are being violated, and I did so to try to get my opponents to explore with me why they draw the line there, but not draw the

line when it comes to the alleged rights of gays to marry. In my describing the scenario, I had my protagonist, Chad Southwick, ponder aloud what was wrong with his having sex with a 16 year old girl, a 13 year old girl, a 9 year old girl, a 6 year old girl, a 3 year old girl, or a 7-month old girl. Rather than addressing the point being presented, my opponent (Jake, in this case) ceased to follow the contours of the argument and instead expressed outrage at the false allegation that I was morally equating gay marriage with raping an innocent 7-month old baby by a pedophile (see Post #19). His harping on the example of the 7-month old girl, while ignoring, say, the scenario involving the 16 year old girl, is a manifestation of trying to draw attention away from the point being made and feigning outrage over the most extreme example given at the expense of everything else. It's obfuscation at its best.

4. *Loudly proclaim your victimhood. Whenever anything bad happens to you (i.e., a job loss) presume, nay, insist it is due to the bigotry of people with different beliefs than you, rather than just the luck of the draw, or your own poor choices. Never look in the mirror.* Jake, the only gay rights activist in the group who, as far as I can ascertain, is also gay himself, complains that he is the victim of all sorts of abuse for being gay (name-called, ousted from a job, etc.) I wonder if Jake is aware that virtually everyone growing up is named-called, regardless of their sexual orientation. Kids can be cruel; it shouldn't take deep thought to come to that conclusion. Even seemingly good kids can, on occasion, be terribly cruel. And many people have been pushed out of jobs for reasons other than their sexual orientation. And gays are not immune to doing the pushing. In fact, I, myself, was pushed out of graduate school on one occasion because a militant lesbian simply could not tolerate the idea that a person like me who embraces Judeo-Christian values (which values see homosexuality as a moral sin) should have the right to be in graduate school. Life is sometimes unfair. Get used to it. But also consider the possibility that sometimes it is our own choices that bring about unfortunate consequences. Jake desires to present himself as the innocent victim. Yet no one is innocent all of the time.
5. *Accuse your opponents of acting in bad faith, even of cheating or playing dirty, to mask the fact that it is actually your side that has played dirty.*

In Post #5 in the Appendix, Kate, a gay-rights advocate, suggests that Proposition 8, which passed in the November 2008 California State Election, and which defined marriage as an institution between a man and a woman, only passed because of dirty political tactics on the part of the Mormon Church in concert with other churches.

Although featured in the head note of this article, I reprint Kate's post here:

Prop 8 was doomed to failure as an attack on equal rights until an

unholy alliance of churches, fueled by Mormon money terrified voters into believing that their children would be taught to be gay in school. This is an example of a successful political campaign by churches to force their religious beliefs upon all citizens of California. Time for a change in tax-exempt status?

She mentions “Mormon money,” as if it was money alone that won the passage of Prop 8, and that this is somehow unfair. But while supporters of Prop 8 generated \$39.9 million, opponents of Prop 8 outspent supporters by \$3.4 million, and still lost that electoral battle. If it is, to use Kate’s vapid rhetoric, an example of a successful political campaign by churches to force their religious beliefs upon all citizens of California, is it not also an example of a failed political campaign by secularists to force their secular beliefs upon all citizens of California?

But wait: there’s more. When it comes to dirty tactics, what would Kate say about Jerry Brown, California’s Attorney General, who simply changed the description of the proposed amendment to make it appear more inflammatory to the average citizen and hopefully ensure its defeat? The description of the Proposition, as drafted by its authors, originally read as follows:

“Amends the California Constitution to provide that only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in California.”

Brown, betraying his pro-gay proclivities, unilaterally altered the wording to read:

“Eliminates right of same-sex couples to marry. Initiative Constitutional Amendment.”

If this does not constitute unfair tactics, nothing does.

6. *Present complex issues as if they are actually very simple, black-and-white issues, thus sparing yourself the need for deep thought and analysis.*

My friend, Judith, offered the opinion that the issues involving gay marriage are simple, not complex, and that it really takes little or no thought to grasp the issues involved. To Leftists like Judith, the issues involved here are so simple, so fundamental, they are akin to saying “human beings need air to breath.” Human sexuality, changing the time-tested definition of marriage, how such a change could affect young children in particular or society in general, how laws would be affected and applied, how Churches and their religious teachings as well as their understanding of venerated texts such as the Holy Bible would be affected, are, to the typical Leftist, nothing to think about, nothing to worry about, nothing to ponder. It’s all just so simple. So simple, in fact, that there is nothing really to discuss. Humans simply need air to breath. And, gays simply need to be allowed to marry. Period. End of issue. Those of us on the Right

who wish to point out what we see are problematic complexities are said to be clouding the waters unnecessarily and we should just shut the hell up – or perhaps forced to be silent.

Take the subject of human sexuality. Contrary to the simplistic models that occupy the cranial cavities of the average Leftist, human sexuality is actually rather complex. There are men, for example, who's orientation is exclusively heterosexual, and the thought of two men spooning each other would lead this particular man to retch. Then there are men who are mostly heterosexual, but who occasionally could find themselves able to tolerate a homosexual encounter. There are men who, like Peter Townsend (legendary guitarist and songwriter from The Who) can appear to be utterly heterosexual, marry and have children, then go through a phase lasting many years where they embrace homosexuality, and then, inexplicably, return to heterosexuality later in life. Down the scale would be men who are bi-sexual, followed by men who are mostly homosexual, but who on rare occasions can embrace heterosexuality, and finally, there are men who appear to be exclusively homosexual, where the thought of finding themselves with, say, Jennifer Lopez or Julia Roberts, sickens them (for some unfathomable reason.) It shouldn't take much depth of thought to consider the content of this paragraph and realize that we are dealing with a subject of immense complexity. Simply asking the nature versus nurture question (or, the issue of disposition versus choice) begins to suggest complexity. Add to that the question of how much influence society's gradual changing standards of "right and wrong" have influenced certain individuals to embrace a fluid sexual orientation that would never have been the case had society maintained a stronger bias in favor of heterosexual relationships, and, what do you have? Simplicity if you ask the Leftist. Complexity if you ask everyone else.

7. *Venerate feelings, impulses, and emotions, while castigating thought, logic, and reason.*

My opponents all talked incessantly about how they *felt* about the issue. When it came to the subject of *thought* (i.e., the intellect) my opponents expressed disdain. In Post #6, Judith decries the "over-thinking" of the issue. In fact, one need only read Post #10 to see all sorts of emoting, void of the careful thought that should go into such exchanges.

8. *By all means, grab any opportunity to misstate your opponents' point of view, turn it into a caricature, and then stomp on it mercilessly.*

In this exchange, I was incorrectly accused of morally equating gay marriage with pedophilia (See Posts #19, #23 and #26). This was based on a misreading of my Post #17, wherein I asked my opponents, who insist that laws be changed to accommodate the noisy demands of homosexuals who want to redefine marriage since they feel their rights are being violated, how they would respond

to an organization of men who make the same type of noisy demands that laws be changed to accommodate their “rights” (as they see it) to have consensual sex with under-age girls. My point, which should not have been difficult to follow, was that if one group (i.e., gays) cry foul and that causes activists to jump on the bandwagon, why would these same activists *not* jump on the bandwagon when it comes to the perverts who insist they should be allowed to have sex with consenting “partners” who just happen to be under the arbitrary age of 18? What I had hoped to do with this line of questioning was start a conversation around morality, and how it is that we judge something to be immoral, as well as how notions of morality can sometimes change over time. Instead, I found myself up against a clamoring mob who seemed incapable of following a rather basic line of questioning.

9. *When your opponent points out that you have misstated his position, and right after he clarifies his actual position so that there is no misunderstanding, simply pretend he said nothing and continue to cry foul at the caricature you yourself created moments ago.*

In Post #27, I made 3 points to correct the record for Jake. The third of those three points explicitly denied that I was equating gay marriage with pedophilia. I plainly stated that I have never believed that, I do not believe that now, and I did not state any such thing in my posts. I urged Jake to retract his irresponsible misstatements of my position. He refused to do so. That does not surprise me at all. But what I found telling was my own friend, Judith, in Post #28, demanded that I retract my moral equating of gay marriage and pedophilia – and this coming *right after I denied ever making any such equation*. The inability of the Left to process what you are saying is uncanny.

10. *Call your opponent names, swear at him, or otherwise attack him (not his ideas) personally.*

One of the interesting things about engaging the Left is their propensity to belittle, attack, name-call, or otherwise hurl invective (usually in the form of profanity, the “F-word” being a favorite choice.) While no “F-Bombs” were thrown my way in this exchange, my 21-year old daughter was recently in a very similar exchange with some individuals on the exact same subject, and in the exact same forum – Facebook. My daughter, while not an active, practicing Latter-day Saint herself, was urging caution to those who were busily engaged in an on-line attack of the Mormon Church for its stance on Proposition 8. My daughter, like myself in this debate, never proffered a specific argument or stated a particular position, but instead, prodded her adversaries to re-examine their own approach. One of the first rejoinders from her opponents was this incisive bit of intellectual depth: “F___ you, Nicole!”

Such is the all-too-frequent illustration of what passes as sound argumentation on the Left. This is not an isolated case or an aberration. In my experience, this is the M.O. of the Left.

In my own exchange, I was called a “Douche-Bag” (see Post #24). Someone who read that charge asked me if I was hurt, offended, or upset by the barb. I replied that in all honesty, I didn’t feel any tinge of anger or hurt at the insult, for the post suggested to me that the person who has to resort to name-calling is probably aware at some deeper level that she is losing the debate. Those who maintain sound positions never have to resort to name-calling. The strength of their position is enough.

By the way, some might ask if I accept the apology of the person who called me a “Douche-Bag” inasmuch as she is said to have apologized (see Post #25.) Well, a careful look at the nature of the apology suggests she was not apologizing to me. Rather, she was apologizing to her colleagues for having tipped her hand in such an open and careless manner. Her recklessness, which made her side look bad, is what she was apologizing about. And the fact that she didn’t exercise her option to delete her insult demonstrates that she wanted the insult to stand.

11. *Engage in projection. Take your own hatred and attribute it to your opponent, accusing him of the very hatred you yourself feel.*

The hatred by the Left towards the religious Right is astonishing. What is even more astonishing is that the Left, while in the act of drowning in their own seething hatred, routinely accuse their opponents of hatred. We on the Right, in general, don’t feel hatred towards our opponents. There are always exceptions – every group has its extremist kooks. But in studying a movement, one must look at the overall contours of the group, not the fringe elements of that group. People on the Right as a general rule look at the Left and see a group of people we on the Right deem to be wrong. Misled. Foolish. And irrational. My experience is that people on the Left look at people on the Right and see a group of people that those on the Left deem to be evil, not merely wrong. In fact, the Left, in their encounters with the Right, can get so angry and full of rage that they cannot see straight. I am inclined to ruminate and say that it’s a good thing the Left doesn’t value thought, for their rage and fury makes rational thought virtually impossible to begin with.

Hatred animates the Left. One can see this in the tail end of Post #5, where Kate suggests in rather minacious terms that Churches should be stripped of their tax-exempt status if they supported Prop 8. That suggests hatred. Or Jake’s constant referring to those who disagree with him as “idiots”. That suggests hatred.

But it's not enough for Leftists to simply seethe with hatred themselves. On some level they know that this makes them look bad, so they deal with that by projecting their own hatred on to their opponents. Thus, in Post #23 (which is a post that Jake put on his own Facebook page), I am said to be wrathful. In post #25 I am said to be "condescending." In Post #26 I am said to be writing "hate-filled" posts. In Post #28 I am again accused of being hateful, even after I just finished stating unequivocally that I don't feel the slightest tinge of hatred.

12. Ignore your opponent's arguments. Simply don't respond to them.

Granted, while I am in possession of several cogent arguments on why Proposition 8 was good for our state (and our country) I never got around to developing them for reasons that become clear in Post #29 below. However, I did manage to ask a few questions that I considered germane. They were never really addressed by my opponents. Here are some of them:

In Post #9, I asked my friend Judith if she, like Jake, truly believes that those who disagree with her on this issue are "idiots". No response. I asked a number of other questions in that same post as well, most of which were ignored.

Early in the exchange, I had engaged my friend, Judith, by drawing attention to some of the follow up comments to Jake's original essay by one Sammy James St. Christopher, a gay man, who has posted some rather lurid, perverted thoughts. I wanted to get Judith to face up to how some in the gay community think and express themselves. I wanted to see if that caused any shock or discomfort when people like Judith come face-to-face with the truer sentiments of certain gay individuals. Judith initially replied that she had no problem with the comments of Mr. St. Christopher. Therefore in Post #15, to ensure there was no confusion over what I had in mind, I reposted Mr. St. Christopher's comments verbatim and asked Judith again if she found them acceptable forms of discourse, and whether she would have any misgivings about having her own children exposed to such sentiments. No response.

In Post # 17 I asked Judith, who seems to be ready to fight for the rights of those whose rights are trampled on, what she thought of the aspiring pilot in the Air Force ROTC who fails, through no fault of his own, to meet the minimum height requirement of 5'3". I wondered if she felt any outrage on the plight of that pilot. No response.

Also in Post #17, I asked Judith, who had earlier suggested we just all embrace each others' beliefs, how she could possibly do that when faced with a religious body whose beliefs condemn homosexual practice, and another secular body whose beliefs celebrate homosexual practice. How can the parties accept each others' beliefs? The two are mutually exclusive. If the religious body is asked to jettison their condemnation of homosexual practice, and instead, embrace homosexual practice, while at the same time the secular body is asked to

abandon their celebration of homosexual practice, and instead, denounce homosexual practice, we have two groups that swapped positions. But then, in Judith's naïve, child-like utopian world-view, the two groups would once again be in direct opposition to each other. And the process would have to repeat itself, with no end in sight. How do you imagine Judith responded to my query? Again, with utter silence.

In Post #27 I urged Jake to post 3 retractions (as he made three false allegations to his constituency about me personally.) I spelled out where he was wrong and asked him to make the retraction. He ignored me.

13. *When things get dicey and you believe you are about to get trounced, simply call off the debate. Either order your opponent to leave at once, or otherwise remove yourself from the exchange.*

Jake closed his essay (Post #2) by stating that he really wanted to open up a debate. But it was clear that neither Jake nor his colleagues were really up for any sort of meaningful debate, discussion, or dialogue. Judith, whose Facebook page served as the forum for this exchange, abruptly disinvited me from any further participation (See Post #29.)

As a college professor, I once had a student in one of my classes named Kris. She was a sharp young lady and very focused on the subject matter I was teaching, which was Entrepreneurship. She clearly liked me as a professor, and would often ask for my time outside of class to strategize on her various business plans she was trying to launch. She always appreciated the time I gave her, which was considerable. Her respect and admiration for me was apparent – that is, until one day in class I mentioned in passing my involvement with a Proposition 8 event. At that exact moment, I noticed the look on her face resembled a person who had been slapped across the cheek with a 2 x 4. She stared down at her desk, glazy-eyed, as if she was in shock, for the entire remainder of the class session. She never made a peep during that class session, nor during any subsequent class session, something highly uncharacteristic. Because her silence was so at odds with her usual behavior, I sent her an email later that day asking her if she was alright. She waited several days to reply (again, highly uncharacteristic of her) and when she did, she curtly asked that from here on out I limit my communications with her to strictly academic matters that pertain to our class, and nothing more.

I have often found that story instructive. The idea that a person could be seen as a highly valued resource until it is learned that that same person holds to a political philosophy different from your own, at which point that person is seen as beneath contempt, is a curious phenomenon. Nevertheless, it is part and parcel with many who are Left of center politically.

I think this is lamentable. It brings to mind the Isaianic ideal, “Come, let us reason together.” I hope that such a move towards reasoned discourse is possible, and I hope that those of us on the Right will not behave in ways that will make it difficult (if not impossible) for those on the left to relax a bit, put down their guards slightly, and embrace openness, reason, and good will. But even more so, I hope those on the Left will come to terms with the mature notion that we are all in this together, and that it does them no service to ostracize or demonize us simply because we see the world differently. We have much to learn from each other. I suggest we try. Again.

*Before I go any further, however, I want to take a moment and define my terms. Two terms need to be elucidated briefly to avoid confusion. When I use the label *Left* as in *left-of-center* I am referring to people who, in general, favor bigger government, trial lawyers, abortion, homosexuality, the Democratic Party, the rights of criminals, the legalization of marijuana, feelings over thought, equality, socialism, and the opening up of the borders to illegal aliens. Further, I am referring to people who, generally speaking (as there are exceptions), do not value (and more often than not, do despise) things like religion, republicans, the death penalty even for murderers who torture children, George W. Bush, the 2nd Amendment, Fox News, Rush Limbaugh, conservatism, American values, unborn babies, and talk radio. Conversely, when I use the label *Right* as in *right-of-center* or *right wing*, what I have in mind are people who, in general, believe America is the last bastion of hope and freedom, who believe in individual responsibility, who believe in conservative politics, who believe in a strong national defense, and who have a distaste for higher taxes.

Appendix

1 [Judith B-S](#) Written by a friend...Very well said...

2 **Jake L: Equal Rights vs. Special Rights**

Saturday at 11:01pm

In November 2008 I was living in Chicago when Barack Obama was elected President

of the United States. For many, this was the culmination of years of hard-fought battles for equal rights for the African American and Black Communities. I was in Grant Park that night. It was electrifying. The energy in the crowd was palpable and amazing. Finally, everyone could live in peace and harmony, right?

Not so fast, homo! California passes Proposition 8, stripping thousands of gay and lesbian couples of the right to marry, which the California Supreme Court had deemed constitutional. Based on some very confusing advertising and unclear language, voters overturned the State Supreme Court's decision. We were back to square one. Confusion reigned. Across the country, anti-gay groups felt empowered to repeal gay rights ordinances.

Gay rights groups everywhere sprang into action. On November 16th what started as a relatively small rally at Federal Plaza turned into a march of thousands. We shut down Michigan Avenue. The crowd that was expected was between 500 and 1000. The crowd swelled to estimates of upwards of 6000! It was amazing. Even more amazing than a few nights before in Grant park. This was much more spontaneous, and the birth of a new activism.

Why does that day matter? Well, I am writing this on May 22nd, 2010. Today would have been the 80th birthday of the face of the gay rights movement, Harvey Milk. If you don't know who he was, he was the first openly gay man elected to public office. His death at the hands of a fellow City Supervisor in San Francisco resulted in a march of 30,000 people in the Castro District. Many gay rights supporters consider him a touchstone in the fight for equal rights.

I joined a group of protesters this afternoon in New York City as part of the Harvey Milk Day of Action. There were veterans, high school students, seniors. Black, White, Asian, Latin, you name it. One thing we all had in common. We wanted equal rights. As one speaker was talking about his time in the Navy closet, a woman started heckling about 'special' rights and that we just cared about sex. She was quickly silenced by a passerby, and walked several yards away to tell someone how we wanted "special" rights.

That woman is an IDIOT.

And I will go out on a limb and say that anyone who thinks gay people want "special rights" is a--wait for it-- IDIOT.

So called "special rights" would be if gays and lesbians wanted the right to drive in a special express lane, or to always get 50% off at Bed Bath and Beyond. Equal rights mean that we don't have to go to a lawyer to have special paperwork so we get all the same rights and protections afforded to heterosexual couples with one piece of paper. Equal rights means being able to defend the country we love and live in without the fear that our livelihoods or our educations are in jeopardy. Equal rights

means that we are allowed to adopt unwanted, disadvantaged children to share our love and good fortune with. Equal rights mean not being fired because we are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered. Equal rights means that we are not persecuted in school to the point of suicide. Equal rights means that we are able to be with the partner of our choice, even if they are from a different country by allowing them to move to this country with a spousal sponsor.

I have some news for the people who say gay people are asking for special rights. For those people who say that being gay is a choice. For cherry-picking 'facts' from the bible.

You are idiots.

I have endured enough name-calling in my life to be able to stop and do some myself. In high school I was bullied by people with minds as small as the towns they came from. I have been pushed out of a job I loved because a manager had a thing against gay people. I have had friends in the Armed Forces who were so afraid to lose everything they didn't dare come out. I have dated a man from another country who was not able to get citizenship because "we have too many Mexican faggots" here already.

Newsflash, idiots. We don't choose these things. We don't choose persecution. We don't choose our sexuality. We don't want "special" rights. we DEMAND EQUAL RIGHTS! We are people, just like you. We love, we laugh, we fight, we pay taxes. Just like you. If you are reading this, and you are not a member of the LGBT community, you know someone who IS. It may not seem important to you, but it is. Because if no one stands up for equal rights for gay people, and those rights are taken away for just ONE group of people...they can be taken away from ANY group of people.

So I am leaving you with some homework. Tell one person you care for that you support EQUAL rights for gay people. If you don't support equal rights, think about why. Be objective. I know that it is a touchy subject, but if you take the bible out of the argument, does your argument still stand? There is a whole other essay in that argument, so we will talk about that another time!

*If you have been tagged in this note, please tag other people. I know it may seem egotistical, but I really would like to open up a debate. Thanks

Jake

- 3 [Kate B](#) We seem to have forgotten Alexis de Toqueville's observations on why American democracy worked. Important facets: avoidance of (1) the tyranny of the majority & (2) a connection between church & state. Time to make 'Democracy in America' mandatory reading in school again. Oh, and don't tell anyone on the Texas school board. Critical thought has been banned in Texas.

Sunday at 1:29pm

- 4 **Ara Norwood** I read it. Sounded like his main point is that if we don't see it his way we are, to use his word, "idiots." Personally I've read better reasoned arguments before. Here is one from Dennis Prager (which can be accessed at http://www.dennisprager.com/columns.aspx?g=9f2b18d6-49e0-492e-9114-b258cd5199f8&url=is_gay_the_new_black):

[NOTE: I had pasted in the entire text of Dennis Prager's essay, "Gay Is The New Black."]

Sunday at 3:22pm

- 5 **Kate B** Judith's wall isn't probably the best place for this discussion, but here it goes... Prop 8 was doomed to failure as an attack on equal rights until an unholy alliance of churches, fueled by Mormon money terrified voters into believing that their children would be taught to be gay in school. This is an example of a successful political campaign by churches to force their religious beliefs upon all citizens of California. Time for a change in tax-exempt status?

Sunday at 5:18pm

- 6 **Judith B-S** I know this is very elementary, but I'm going to say it anyway...EQUAL RIGHTS FOR ALL. Why can't just that simple statement be understood? It seems so simple to me...Why is something so SIMPLE so difficult for some? People, stop overthinking...embrace each other, embrace each others beliefs, embrace love, embrace differences, embrace others, and embrace each others desire to be happy in their own right.

Sunday at 7:07pm

- 7 **Kate B** You are so right. It is simple. It was clearly stated in Chief Justice George's opinion which gave rise to the Prop 8 backlash. Churches are powerful entities, the corporations of religion. They are as interested in advancing their agenda as any lobbyist. It is truly unfortunate that their agenda does not include equal rights.

Yesterday at 12:35pm

- 8 **Ara Norwood** Judith, I have a few more comments for you (and for Kate B momentarily). Let's start with this one: in reading Jake L's piece, how did you feel about some of the comments that followed it, such as those by one Sammy James St. Christopher? Should we just "embrace" (to use your word) such sentiments? What's your own personal take?

6 hours ago

- 9 **Ara Norwood** Judith, here is another thing to consider. In holding up a mirror to your most recent comments (those posted yesterday at 7:07 PM) you seem to want to think very simplistically about a rather complex subject. It seems also that you are

not fond of "thinking" but, as is the case with most who are left of center politically, you are a strong advocate of feelings-based sentiments, hence your admonition to "stop over-thinking." This may be one reason why you see things very differently from those who supported Prop 8 (such as myself.) Do you, like Jake L., truly believe that those who disagree with you on this issue are "idiots" (to use his mantra)? Are you able or unable to consider the possibility that others (like myself) could possibly hold to a divergent view for reasons that may in fact have some merit? Or is civil discourse impossible with proponents of keeping marriage defined as between a man and a woman on the grounds that we're, . . . swine? Do you even know what our thinking is on the matter? (Kate B certainly does not appear to, but that is another matter.) Finally, I would ask, Have you given much thought to the possible outcomes (good and bad) if same-sex marriage became legal? Or have you merely jumped on the bandwagon of the proponents of gay marriage without giving careful thought (there's that word again) to its potential long-term ramifications? I'm truly interested in hearing what you have to say if you are interested in such dialogue. If you are not interested in such dialogue, you are free to bow out and I will honor that. And, as far as I'm concerned, you will still be my friend.

5 hours ago

- 10 [Judith B-S](#) Ara, YOU see the subject as complex...I don't. It is a simple matter to me. I absolutely know what I am thinking on this matter and I feel very strongly about my beliefs...hence the posting of this link from my friend, Jake L. I don't see long term ramifications Ara, I only see that equal rights have been taken from a minority group and I am adamantly against RIGHTS being taken from anybody. My posts have not been centered around gay marriage (although I am ALL FOR IT!)...My posts have been for EQUAL RIGHTS (for this post, GAY RIGHTS)...the right to marry whom you want to marry, to serve in our military, to have your loved one covered by health insurance, to work in an environment without prejudice, etc.

5 hours ago

- 11 [Judith B-S](#) Im fine with embracing St Christophers posts...are you ANTI GAY Ara?? Are you anti equal rights? Anti Gay Marriage? Anti-anything but Mormon? What are YOU trying to say? (and don't write a book, please....LOL)

5 hours ago

- 12 [Jake L](#) Hey Judith, Thanks for the repost. And I stand by my statement. Anyone who thinks every human being does not deserve equal rights is at least an idiot and at most dangerous. If any group of people is excluded from certain rights based on something that is not a choice, and yes, being gay is NOT a choice for most, then we set a dangerous precedent.

Kate, you are so right. Many religions use the Bible as a weapon, and cherry-pick passages that fit their narrow view of what is considered "morally acceptable." If we continue to use Leviticus as a weapon, then anyone in polyblends or who eats at red Lobster should lose their basic rights, and our neighbors to the north and south

should be our slaves. Take the Bible out of the mix for most people and there is no reason all humans shouldn't have basic equal rights.

And Ara, I really truly believe that anyone who believes the LGBT community is requiring 'special' rights and not 'equal' rights is an idiot. As someone who has in the past and is currently living in the middle of this struggle, I can tell you without pause that it is not about equating LGBT rights with those of blacks during the civil rights movement. It is simply about not being a second class citizen. Just because my difference is not readily visible, does not diminish it.

5 hours ago

- 13 **Kate B** Ara has every right to his beliefs, but beliefs in my view do not make good law. No married person's status would be threatened by gay marriage. The institution of marriage is threatened more by divorce and people who procreate outside of marriage than by gay marriage. Before Prop 8 was passed married people suffered no indignities even though the Court had recognized the Constitutional right for gay people to marry. Ara is correct. I do not understand why his beliefs should be made law and why churches remain tax-exempt since they are so deeply involved in our political process. As for Jake Lambert... I don't think Ara can speak to the difficulties of being gay any more than I can, but writing emotionally about being discriminated against by the majority doesn't seem shocking to me.

5 hours ago

- 14 **Judith B-S** Institution of marriage? Lets talk about that for a moment...lets talk about a few people who have a heterosexual marriage and have completely ruined that institution...Larry King (ending his EIGHTH marriage), Elizabeth Taylor (NINE marriages), Tiger Woods (THIRTEEN mistresses), Jesse James (SEVERAL mistresses)...I dont think GAY marriage would ruin the fine institution of marriage....the hetero's have done a fine job of that. (and that is coming from a VERY happily married HETERO woman!) ;-)

4 hours ago

- 15 **Ara Norwood** Judith, you say you are fine with embracing St Christopher's posts. Just to make sure we are talking about the same thing, are you truly saying you are fine with the following:

Sammy James St. Christopher: "David...if it's any consolation, I do unnatural thing to other guys' bodies too...."

Yesterday at 2:10pm

Sammy James St. Christopher: "screw the cooler...I'll bring the lube...and the

cotton/wool blends....”

Yesterday at 2:13pm

If you are, that's revealing, and perhaps consistent, but frankly, from my vantage point, surprising to hear you say you embrace such posts. Are you comfortable enough to allow your children be exposed to them? Let me know, just so we're clear. I'll be engaging both your other posts and Kate's as time permits. Stay tuned. . .

3 hours ago

- 16 **Ara Norwood** Another thought jumped out at me, Judith. You posted that you "don't see long-term ramifications." And perhaps therein lies the problem. It would be one thing for you to say, you have studied the potential long-term ramifications and are not bothered by them, but when you admit you do not see something that others claim to see, I would merely invite you to consider the possibility that perhaps your feeling "very strongly" about your beliefs might benefit from greater circumspection. Thoughts?

3 hours ago

- 17 **Ara Norwood** Judith, you mentioned in that first post this evening, that you are "adamantly against RIGHTS being taken from anybody." Are you certain you wish to maintain that position? I would urge you to reconsider. Does any able-bodied man who wishes to be an ROTC Air Force pilot have a "right" to that job? If you say yes, you ought to put the same energies into fighting for men who fail, through no choice of their own, to reach a certain height limit (5'3"). They are not allowed to serve in that capacity. What about the rights of people to practice their religion? Ah, I see we now may have to make a choice here. . . You, Judith, may have to make a choice between advocating for the rights of one group who's values/beliefs clash with the rights/beliefs of another group. On what basis will you decide? Let's take an extreme example:

You come to find out that there is an organization with headquarters near your neighborhood called the Child Love Network. The CLN is distinctive for having membership consisting entirely of men in their 40s, 50s and 60s who believe in their heart of hearts that there should be no age limit on how young their sexual partners are. In others words, a given member, Chad Southwick, age 62, truly believes that it's silly and discriminatory for you to try to prevent his sexual partner from being under 18 years of age. He believes there's nothing wrong with his sexual partner being 16 years of age if she is consenting to his advances. Heck, why not a 13 year old girl, as long as it's consensual? In fact, he wonders, where does one really draw the line? If a 9 year old girl, or a 6 year old girl, or a 3 year old girl, or a 7-month old girl doesn't overtly resist Chad's sexual advances, what harm is there in a sexual union? The younger the better. Anyway, that is what he claims to be his right. Who

are you to challenge that? And if you do challenge that, I'd be interested to know on what basis?

3 hours ago

- 18 **Ara Norwood** To Jake L, who claims anyone who does not believe in equal rights for "every human being" is at least an idiot or possibly even dangerous, Jake: I do not believe in equal rights for everyone, so you can decide which end of the spectrum I fall (idiocy or dangerous.)

And if you stopped to think through the implications of your rhetoric, you probably don't either. I'll be a little coy here. Think real hard. . . See if you can come up with at least 2 or 3 scenarios where, upon deeper reflection, you yourself would have to modify your earlier opining. I'm sure you can do this if you are both intellectually honest and if you apply yourself. Go for it.

2 hours ago

- 19 **Jake L** I find it extremely repellent that you are equating the rights of consenting adults to the right to rape children. The whole pedophile argument gets bandied about quite a bit when people are confronted with the rights of homosexuals to serve openly in the military, enjoy the same rights given to heterosexuals in civil marriage, etc. It is a crime to have sex with an underage person. It is not illegal to marry. Therefore, granting homosexuals the right to civil marriage does not equate to pedophiles to have sex with children. Two men or two women who are of age in a loving, consensual relationship is far different from a 62 year old man having sex with a 7 month old child, and I think you know it. Equating pedophilia to a homosexual's civil rights is not only offensive on many levels, it ultimately diminishes any other argument you make. And while I wholeheartedly agree with your right to have and state an opinion, when you resort to something like that, I can no longer take anything you say seriously. In your attempt to diminish my argument for equal rights, you state an example that falls under the definition of special rights.

2 hours ago

- 20 **Jake L** Every person on Earth should have the same rights as everyone else. The choices they make in their life, whether they are gay or straight, black or white, etc. can in some cases diminish those rights. Convicted of a crime? Then yes, your rights will and should, diminish. Being born gay? Why should that person NOT have the same rights as someone born straight? Do tell. I am always interested in hearing people's justifications for denying someone basic civil rights.
- 21 **Ara Norwood** Ah, Jake, but you have taken me seriously, or you would not have responded. But I am delighted to learn that you do find SOME things repellent. That's a start. Now, since you took my scenario and jumped to the most extreme case study of it (i.e., the 7 month old) and assiduously avoided interacting with the least extreme case study (i.e., the 17 year old), I would simply point out the following: You

haven't really answered (let alone engaged) my real argument. Let me lay it out for you this way: You say it is a crime for a person to have sex with an underage person. True enough. But isn't it also a crime for gays to marry? (I am speaking legally here, and I'm referencing most states.) Just as gays demand the "right" to have laws changed so they can marry, so too do folks like Chad Southwick demand the "right" to have laws changed so they can have sex with, . . . we'll leave it at 17-year-olds for now so as not to get distracted. Tell me how you see the two as being fundamentally different.

2 hours ago

- 22 [Jake L](#) Gays and lesbians cannot be issued a marriage license in most states. In most states, the laws do not specifically apply to the couple, but to the person or agency giving out marriage licenses. It is not a crime to be married, but your marriage is not recognized by the state or federal government. If you are an official issuing a license or performing a ceremony without a license, you can be charged. The couple themselves have not broken the law. This is obviously not the case with 62 year old men having sex with underage people. The laws concerning statutory rape assume that someone who is not a legal adult cannot make the decision to consent. The laws that say gay people cannot marry assume that having a loving gay couple marry will somehow undermine sanctity of heterosexual marriage. They do not assume that the individuals themselves will be harmed.

Please explain why gays and lesbians should not have the same basic civil rights as straight people, simply based on their sexual orientation.

about an hour ago

Then, in a separate post, on his own Facebook page, Jake reports the following to his fans:

- 23 [Jake L](#) My new friend, [Judith B-S](#) posted my note about Equal Rights vs. Special Rights on her Facebook wall and is incurring the wrath of a ultra conservative who is equating gay civil rights with pedophilia. Low, huh?

2 hours ago

- 24 [Sandra R E](#) Judith, Your friend Ara is a bit of a douchebag.....eh?

about an hour ago

- 25 [Sandra R E](#) No, I am sorry. That was harsh....what I meant to say that he is

condescending. Why can't you argue your point without saying that she doesn't "THINK?"

about an hour ago

- 26 [Judith B-S](#) Ara, I just woke up to your hate filled posts. Are you SERIOUSLY comparing gay rights to pedophilia???? Come on Ara...

46 minutes ago

- 27 [Ara Norwood](#) OK, everyone, let's try to calm down just a bit. I am certain, as mature adults, we can keep this civil. Sandra R E, calling me a "douchebag" and then claiming I am condescending is like the pot calling the kettle black. The allegation that I am saying Judith doesn't think is based on her own posts wherein she urges us all not to over-think (I am merely urging that we not under-think.) And Judith, come on. Read my posts. They are not the least bit hate-filled. I don't have the slightest bit of hate in my heart as I write them. How is it that my doing little other than raising questions for you to think about constitute hate-filled posts? Are you really that sensitive? You've known me for ten years now. When you think back over our ten-year history, do you have a sense that I am "hate-filled?" I really doubt we would have a decade-long friendship if that were the case. And Jake, 3 things: your post on your own Facebook page to your friends, that I am 1) "Ultra-Conservative" is incorrect. If you think you know my politics, then name 3 public figures you believe fit the "Ultra Conservative" mold and I'll be 100% honest with you if I share their politics. (Chances are very high I do not.) 2) Telling our friends Judith is feeling "my wrath" is silly. There's no wrath in raising questions during a discussion of this sort. I don't think you can really find one shred of evidence of "wrath" on my part. Truthfully, I feel none. I haven't called anyone a "douchbag" for example. And 3) to say that I am morally equating gay marriage with pedophilia is again, either completely dishonest or simply demonstrates an inability to follow a line of argumentation. For the record, I do not now, nor have I ever, believed the two are moral equivalents. If you go back and actually read my point with the intent to understand that point, I think you will readily see that. Now, with all of that before you, will you kindly post a retraction of all three of those false allegations?

22 minutes ago

- 28 [Judith B-S](#) Your posts are hate filled because you do not believe that all people deserve equal rights. That is NOT a loving heart. . . . would you kindly consider retracting your comparison to gay rights and pedophilia?
- 29 [Judith B-S](#) Ara, you have your stance on this issue and we all (obviously) have ours. . . we agree to disagree. . . now, can you bow out gracefully from my profile page? ;-)