



We're equal in California

Pedro Julio Serrano
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“In view of the substance and significance of the fundamental constitutional right to form a family relationship, the California Constitution properly must be interpreted to guarantee this basic civil right [marriage] to all Californians, whether gay or heterosexual, and to same-sex couples as well as to opposite-sex couples.”

This excerpt spotlights the core and fundamental value put forth by the California Supreme Court in its landmark ruling last week that granted same-sex couples full civil marriage rights.

Just seconds after the decision was handed down, people all across California, and even 3,000 miles away here in New York (and no doubt, everywhere in between), were celebrating a decision which made real the promise of the founding principles of this democracy — that all human beings are created equal.

This decision was made possible in part due to the extraordinary efforts of many lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and heterosexual people, who have been educating the public for decades. This was made possible by knocking on doors and changing the hearts and minds of people, which in turn led to the knocking down of the legal barriers that impeded the legal recognition of the love and commitment of same-sex couples.

Two people who love each other — who develop a committed and trusting relationship — deserve the dignity and support that come with marriage. Nothing more, nothing less; just the same rights and responsibilities, the same dignity and respect that are afforded to married heterosexual couples.

This historic ruling makes real in modern day what Eugenio María de Hostos, a Puerto Rican educator and philosopher, already had espoused more than a century ago, “if equal are the obligations, equal should be the rights.”

Unfortunately, efforts are underway to overturn this decision, with a ballot initiative to put to popular vote a discriminatory constitutional amendment that would end the recognition of same-sex marriages in California. A cardinal principle of democracy is that the rights of the minorities be protected from possible abuse by the majority.

The California Supreme Court even suggested that marriage is such a basic right that “should not be eliminated by the electorate through the statutory initiative process.”

Once again, California is leading the way in affirming the inherent dignity of all people. The court did its job, ensuring that all Californians are treated fairly and equally under the law. We will fight to ensure that California, as we did in Massachusetts, remains as the second state in the country to recognize full civil marriage rights to its citizens.

For now, we feel like we're all Californians. We are working towards a day when all of us will be treated equally under the law in every city, in every state, in every part of this country.

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