

An Open Letter to the LGBT Community

This was written by a friend, Aaron Batten, on his Facebook wall:

Dear LGBT Community,

I have been quite surprised at the overall support I've seen for the SCOTUS decision on same-sex marriage. Even five years ago, I don't think the support would have been there. It's a cultural change I believe is refreshing. Even among my highly religious friends and family I've seen support given for the decision - though there is much trepidation and some concern as well.

And honestly, they have good reason for concern.

I have been an active and vocal supporter of equal rights for all. I have noted that the First Amendment, which guarantees freedom of association, should guarantee same-sex couples the right to make contracts at common-law, and the right to exercise their religious preference, should they have one, on making a union. It was never right or proper for the government to define marriage to begin with. It has always been the job of the churches and the people to do so individually.

But this issue is nearly beat to death, so we'll leave it there.

What I believe is a legitimate concern for the religious is how this impacts their First Amendment rights as well. The same freedom of association that rightly should and finally does give same-sex couple the rights to marry has a great many other implications. It gives us the right to a free press, to express our opinions (no matter how controversial they be). It allows us to associate with people and to NOT associate with people. Notably, the freedom to not associate is just as important as the freedom to associate. They are the necessary

corollaries to one another. And on what conditions do you have a right to not associate with people – with me, let's say? None. You choose. Maybe you have enough friends, enough clients, or even a prejudice against bearded men, a fear of rugged good looks, endless charm, and sharp wit. Maybe you don't like Mormons, or dudes who pack an extra couple dozen dozen pounds (yes, that's, like, a dozen dozens). It doesn't matter. You can and should be able to choose to not associate with me, even if my feelings are hurt or if I feel like you're being unfair.

And there are literally only a handful of exceptions to this freedom that mostly arise around some kind of substantial harm and falsehoods (such as yelling "fire" in a crowded theater or such as slander and libel) – most of those I'd disagree with anyway as a matter of principle, but that's another topic for another day.

The legitimate concern, though, is that people who do NOT wish to associate with some people will now be forced. It's a legitimate concern because it's already happened. Some people have already had their rights suspended after being forced by ill-informed court rulings and law enforcement. The First Amendment makes no exception simply because a person decides to offer services to the public. No where in the Bill of Rights is there an asterisk that says, "Yes, freedom and all that good stuff, unless you're a baker, flower shop owner, or photographer. Then you MUST serve everyone regardless of your personal freedoms. We suspend them indefinitely while you offer those services."

That's not actually freedom at that point. It's involuntary servitude, for one, and a suspension of freedom of association – a CLEAR violation of First Amendment rights.

And that's not all. Some same-sex couples want to be married in

religious institutions that don't perform or condone the relationships. Are we to suspend freedom of religion as well? This sets a dangerous and ill-conceived precedent: that the government SHOULD regulate religious observances.

No. Not now, not ever. The government should never have been involved in marriage. They should not be involved in forcing business owners, and they should NOT be involved in forcing religious institutions. I fear that in doing so, the government runs a very high risk of violent revolution.

To the LGBT community – the old saying goes, “Don’t crap where you eat.” Don’t spoil your victory of regaining your full First Amendment rights by trying to use the force of law against the First Amendment rights of others.

I fought for you because it was the right thing to do. But I promise that if you wage this war, I will fight against you every step of the way. I will expose your hypocrisy and your inconsistent morals.

I truly wish each of you all of the happiness that life has to offer. I truly hope that when you marry, you find a good baker, a good florist, and a good photographer who will serve you, who are happy for you, and who are employed willingly in your stead.

Take your victory and live your lives happily. People are changing, slowly. Take your business to people who actually support you and will be happy for you. Choose a better path!

*Very Sincerely,
Aaron Batteen – An Ally for Equality*

Well put. This mirrors my own fears.

Skyler.