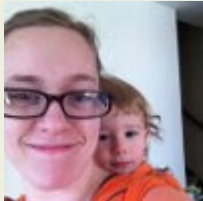


Equality in Illinois



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“Balancing on My Toes” is an original column appearing every other Friday at Everything-Voluntary.com, by Angel M. Ethell. Angel lives in the Chicagoland area with her family: sons Teen (13) and Lil G (2) along with their little sister Cassie Pie (dog), her partner Daddy G and father-in-law Grandpa G. She loves learning new things along with learning that she might not always be right... 100% of the time. Archived columns can be found here. BMT-only RSS feed available here.

It finally happened here. Equal rights for every couple in my state. I couldn't be more proud. I am a mostly heterosexual female but I have great respect for all life and believe that every person should be able to be free to be with whomever they please. My thoughts on this matter are strong. There is no reason that if two people care for each other they should not be able to be with each other and enjoy all the benefits this country (USA) allows for heterosexual couples.

Some of the advantages drawn from marriage are monetary and some are social. On the monetary side you have tax advantages. There are some disadvantages, but they are few. TurboTax has a succinct list that includes the ability to create a tax shelter if one spouse has a failing business which basically means the other spouse can use the loss as a write off. This is a pretty good benefit if the other brings in enough income to qualify for this shelter. Retirement planning for married couples is facilitated by certain laws that allow for a nonworking spouse to pay into an IRA if desired and couples can benefit shop using parts of each retirement plan they pay into and in the event of death marriage can protect their mutual estate. The estate is made up of any tangible assets and debt acquired by the couple and can be lost to the family without this protection. There are a few more benefits which range from charitable donations and time saving abilities, but these pale in comparison to the tax and retirement benefits that are allowed to married couples.

Not all people have enough money for all that to matter but the social aspect may be more important anyway. People in the LGBT community can be persecuted their whole lives. From childhood an un-accepting parent can do a lifetime of damage, not even to mention what a gay child goes through in schools. It may not be as bad for a girl child, but even still they can be subject to ridicule, bullying, and much, much worse. I don't need to go into it here because my blood will boil. Home life can be a nightmare, so can school. If a child

grows up unsupported and unloved he may feel later in life unworthy of love. This can create destructive/dysfunctional relationships. Then many religions frown upon homosexuality which started this whole mess which leaves little opportunity for a community to fit into. In metropolitan areas this can be less of an issue but rural areas are very often not as progressive.

On the other hand heterosexual couples enjoy many social benefits of marriage. There is the marriage itself which allows for gifts and money, celebration, vacation and joy. Marriages are a cause for great joy in many families and friends. These times are remembered fondly and there are always stories to be told. Children of course benefit from stable parental relationships and if a couple cannot have children of their own they can either adopt, or have their own natural children through medical methods with both parents names allowed on the birth certificate.

Side note: Did you know that if a female couple uses a sperm bank for growing their families and would like both women's names on the birth certificate they have to hire a lawyer not only for themselves, but also for the father's representation. That's right. Representation for the father who was an anonymous sperm donor. What a mess.

This whole mess started with religious persecution and fear. It has since crept into every corner of politics and society and influences our cultural norms. Politicians are either for or against and never for any reason other than they think its icky. What is the dark truth? Many of these politicians who are against are vehement because they are afraid. They could be afraid for many reasons and many of them are no doubt irrational, but the church says its bad so many people carry on this notion without ever giving it a real thought. I understand that people have beliefs and do not want to question them but really these beliefs are passed down through generations and aren't actually their own beliefs.

And all this leads to the question: If there are national tax benefits of marriage and there are social benefits of marriage and even parental benefits, why then cannot two people who love each other marry if they choose?

Because there are politicians and there are churches and even though there should be a separation of church and state there is not.

But there is a movement for equality and it is growing. Illinois has become the 16th state to separate the two functions of church and state. Because really while the wedding may be about religion the marriage is absolutely a state matter. The attitude is changing and slowly there will be more and more acceptance. I am thinking about this because a friend asked me if I was going to get married now that my home state has passed the vote. I had to laugh. I have been with my partner for over 12 years and have been asked "so when are you two getting married?" so many times through the years. My answer: I will get married

when marriage is equal for all.