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Finally, State Legalizes Same-Sex Marriage

Susan Campbell

October 11, 2008

As it turns out, marriage *is* Adam and Steve.

It's also Beth and Jody, and John and Garrett, and Janet and Carol and all the couples who've been waiting for the state Supreme Court's decision in the landmark marriage equality case, Kerrigan et al. v. Commissioner of Public Health et al.

In a 4-3 vote Friday, the court legalized same-sex marriages in Connecticut, saying that segregating loving heterosexual and homosexual couples into different institutions — straights to traditional marriage, gay men and lesbians to marriage lite, or civil unions — is discriminatory.

Separate, Justice Richard N. Palmer eloquently wrote, is not equal in this case.



Susan Campbell

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The opinion is historic and fraught with emotion. Gay and lesbian couples (and their straight supporters) have chafed under the yoke of less-than-full-citizenship. At an afternoon press conference, Anne Stanback, executive director of the state's marriage equality organization, Love Makes a Family, exulted that Connecticut can now honestly call itself the "Constitution State." Janet Peck, who with her partner Carol Conklin was among the eight couple-plaintiffs in the suit, said, "For 33 years, my heart has ached" for marriage. Jeffrey Busch, a plaintiff with his partner, [Stephen Davis](#), said simply, "Today, it feels like the world has changed."

All along, their most vocal opponent, the Family Institute of Connecticut, has breathlessly said that homosexual marriage signals the end of civilization. That's just fear talking. Homosexuals already marry in [California](#) and [Massachusetts](#), and

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rises and people go about their everyday lives. It's just that now those everyday lives include same-sex couples who — finally — have the same marital rights of their opposite-sex neighbors. This is no threat to traditional marriage. This is an enhancement. We all do better in a world that's fair.

I believe that one day we'll look back on the pre-court-decision days with the same sadness we view the bad old days of overt racism. In the interim, I suggest that people who are nervous about granting this most basic of civil rights go out and befriend a homosexual — take a gay or lesbian to lunch, as it were — and learn to recognize the humanity of the people they've opposed for so long. Personal relationships go a long way toward destroying barriers.

Come to think of it, we could all use a little reflection. Members of Connecticut Clergy for Marriage Equality have been active in their support of marriage equality. They'll hold a worship service Monday at 5:30 p.m. at First Presbyterian Church, 136 Capitol Ave. in Hartford. Maybe that would be a good place to start the healing. Let's not shout right now.

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