

Privatize marriage to make room for gays

Recent events in San Francisco and Massachusetts have inflamed the controversy over gay marriage.

Unfortunately, both proponents and detractors of gay marriage have ignored the larger issue: Why should government interfere in *anyone's* marriage, no matter his or her sexual orientation?



MATT BANDYK

Before they can enjoy the legal benefits of marriage, such as hospital visitation rights and joint income tax returns, married couples have to jump through regulatory hoops in order to get their marriage licenses. In nearly all states, couples have to pay a fee, prove that they were married by a minister of a faith, and, most controversially, not be of the same sex.

I contend that these regulations amount to an unjust and unnecessary limit on the benign choices of individuals. It should not be the government's concern as to who is getting married as long as the marriage process does not harm anyone's person or property. The sex of those being married, or whether the marriage was sanctioned by a religious organization or not, does not substantively affect anyone other than the two being married.

The very idea that the state needs to sanction our most private relationships with our loved ones justifies a constant state presence in the intimate details of our lives. Apparently the government can apply whatever subjective moral basis it wants for imposing regulation on our personal affairs.

State governments should privatize marriage by removing marriage licensing laws. Individuals, rather than government, would define the terms of their marriages or life partnerships. Spouses, provided that they are old enough to give consent,

would go to court and make voluntary contracts with each other and set the terms of the marriage however they wish. The government would no longer grant us benefits for marriage we would make them ourselves.

The religious right says marriage laws are necessary because government should do all that is necessary to uphold the sanctity of marriage in order to preserve the family. This argument rests on a naive faith in government's effectiveness in influencing human behavior.

Why should government interfere in anyone's marriage?

People get married and start families because of a biological drive to seek companionship and produce offspring, not because of any action on the part of government. The family will outlast marriage laws, as it has existed long before them.

The right's argument that same-sex marriage will undermine marriage as an institution is equally flawed. First, straight and gay marriages are not in competition with one another; heterosexuals will continue to marry regardless of the status of gay marriages. Second, if keeping people in marriages is our first priority, then we should ban divorce. Clearly, the right cannot realistically apply their argument with much consistency.

I have only scratched the surface of this issue, as I have not even addressed the questions of polygamy and adoption by gay parents. My point here is that gay rights activists who argue that the state should lift arbitrary limits on homosexuals' right to marry do not carry this argument to its logical conclusion: The state should lift all arbitrary limits on the right to marry.

Terrorized elections

BY DANNY TROY
Guest Columnist

On Sunday, the people of Spain voted the incumbent Popular Party out of office. The election, in which PSOE, the socialist party led by Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, emerged victorious, came three days after the devastating terrorist attacks that left 200 dead in Madrid. Prior to Thursday's attacks, the polls had shown a 4-5 percent lead for the Popular Party, led by Mariano Rajoy. Former prime minister Jose Maria Aznar opted not to run for a third term after eight years in office. Within three days, however, the Popular Party was out of office as Rodriguez Zapatero and PSOE won with a 4-5 percent margin.

Only one factor could have prompted this massive voting shift within three days: Thursday's attacks.

Granted, the government did not help themselves by insisting it was the Basque terrorist group ETA, against whom they had consistently taken a hard line, when it was becoming increasingly obvious that al Qaeda had some sort of role in the attack.

They were left with little option, however, as they knew exactly what the public's response would be if it was known that al Qaeda was responsible, and they were right. In a country that so vehemently opposed the war in Iraq, the Spanish people voted emotionally on Sunday rather than politically or rationally.

The voters paid little attention to al Qaeda's claim that the attack was not just because of the government's support in the war, but also for their participation as part of "Crusading Europe" in the war on terror. The Spanish-American alliance, given Spain's large Muslim population and proximity to North African hot spots such as Morocco, is among the most important for the United States.

Terrorists: 1, Good Guys: 0. The people of Spain played right into the terrorists' hands.

Rodriguez Zapatero, while more moderate than some of his PSOE counterparts, was an extremely vocal opponent of the war in Iraq and is now threatening to remove the 1,300 Spanish peacekeeping troops if the entire operation in Iraq is not brought under the auspices of the United Nations by mid-year, a feat that is unlikely to say the least.

Terrorists: 1, Good Guys: 0. The people of Spain played right into the terrorists' hands.

While Rodriguez Zapatero is probably sincere about his desire to defeat terrorism, this move would not be a helpful step in doing so, and would likely splinter the increasingly strong relationship between the United States and Spain.

Finally, even more frightening is the thought that the same thing could happen in this country. Hopefully, if, God forbid, an attack should take place in the United States prior to the November election, American voters will remain sober and rational.

Hopefully they will not allow emotion to cloud their minds and prompt them into a knee-jerk reaction, merely to spite the incumbent by voting for a candidate who they otherwise do not support. Hopefully, people here would not let terrorists fool them into voting for such a candidate who they know will turn over American national security to a feckless and often-corrupt international organization.

Pop culture maintaining racial stereotypes

Having openly embraced senioritis, I have been staying up till around 4 A.M. doing basically nothing almost every night this semester. Nothing often involves a movie or TV—usually Comedy Central. The last few months, I have noticed how frequently jokes based on racial stereotypes dominate the conversations. Comics discuss everything from how black people don't do well in school, to how white people are either clueless dorks or evil rich people.

It got me thinking about the whole idea of race and racial stereotypes. Not exclusively at Davidson, but in general. One of the comics made the observation that if a black child does well in school they are insulted by their black friends and referred to as white. It brought to mind a personal experience I had from middle school. There was a black student who had very high test scores and was doing really well in his classes. So the school administrators decided to move him up to the advanced classes, which had virtually no black students in them.

I happened to have a gym class with this student. One day in the locker room he and another black student started yelling at one another. The other black student called him white. His response was to punch him then to hit him several times with a chair. He was suspended from school, and after a few weeks he chose to drop out of the upper level classes.

I saw similar experiences throughout my middle and high school years. It wasn't just with black students either. White

kids who wanted to act black adopted poor grades along with baggy clothes (and the occasional FUBU jersey).

The whole situation confuses the hell out of me. The myth that black people are intellectually inferior to whites was a lie started and perpetuated by racist whites. Somewhere along the way this myth became commonly accepted as fact, and now black and white people alike are suppressing themselves by buying into it.

I don't believe that this image is accepted by everyone. However, I have had some startling discussions with white friends about racial issues. Friends who claim not to have any racial prejudices, but would still have serious problems with things like interracial marriage. When questioned, however, they admit that their main reservations come from an image of black people as less intelligent, less well-spoken, athletic, angry, thuggish characters.

It's not the skin color that causes fear, but the culture associated with that skin color. A culture they see in schools across the country. A culture they see in popular music and television. My question is, where does that misconstrued image of black people come from? Is it still being forced on to the black community, or is it a stereotype now being embraced by the community it harms and peddled by some of its entertainers for profit?

As usual, I don't have the answer. But, I would be open to hearing any ideas anyone else has on the matter. As long as possible answers don't blame hip-hop and don't involve some crazy, Al Sharpton-esque conspiracy theory involving the CIA.



MIKE GALDO

Battles over ideology must include all sides to be effective

BY RICARDO AMPUDIA
Staff Columnist

It seems that colleges similar to Davidson are not doing an adequate job in preparing the children of the ruling class to remain in control of the economic and (particularly) the ideological dynamics of society.

Some would argue that, generally, this phenomenon goes along well with a crisis in capitalist ideology. But, more narrowly, this might be the result of what appears to be a failure by these colleges to enable their students to come to understand the concerns that haunt vast segments of the population, especially the working class.

This failure has been exemplified in a number of instances. But consider a recent example in our campus' political discourse: in recent issues of both the *Libertas* and *The Davidsonian*, a number of students including Richard Guyer, Matt Bandyk, and John Pitts have dismissed various analyses about capitalist mechanisms, dismissing them as, for instance, the result of a failure to take "Econ 101" or "being allergic to history."

The validity of these analyses is secondary to our present concern even though these have been initially conducted by some of the most erudite intellectuals—including economists,

sociologists, philosophers, and psychologists—from practically every corner of the world: Noam Chomsky, Adolfo Perez Esquivel, and Ralph Miliband are only a few examples. What is important is that, despite the background of these intellectuals, a high proportion of Davidson students dismiss these analyses as the result of a failure to grasp the most basic concepts. Sometimes they are even dismissed as the result of mere stubbornness or even a desire to criticize negatively.

But a great proportion of working class students and intellectuals in Great Britain, France, Argentina, Brazil, and everywhere else in the globe seem to agree with the arguments that these Davidson students have dismissed so quickly. Suppose that any of these working class students were to somehow pick up a copy of either of our campus publications and read their arguments. What, then, would be their reactions?

Prima facie, anger, disgust, disappointment, and outrage are possibilities that are not out of the question: a bourgeois college undergraduate has been quickly written off a plausible and serious economic/political/psychological argument as an elementary mistake!

This hypothetical situation mirrors what often happens outside of college campuses. There, individuals watch, listen to, and read bourgeois ideologues in mediums like *The Econo-*

mist, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *The New York Times* who continuously set aside as mere hippie jabber (in somewhat obscure articles) a great number of serious arguments that, to those at the lower end of the economic spectrum, appear more convincing.

These ideologues like to talk of fiscal discipline, lower costs of production, and market and trade freedom while the vast majority of the world's population has to deal with scarce healthcare, mass layoffs, and IMF bailouts. A Welsh musical band vividly describes this situation: "Liberty Bell speaks of freedom while Memory Lane reminds us of misery. No wonder why public dissent results when ideology fails!"

If Davidson students and those who attend similar institutions are to form part of our society's bourgeoisie, then they need to come to understand the concerns that haunt the working classes. A capitalist society needs to remain organic if it is to remain flexible. A society is to remain flexible if it is not to break. Likewise, a capitalist society's ideological discourse is successful only if it is able to maintain a sufficient amount of the population as its subjects.

Failing to appropriately address the concerns of the masses prevents ideological discourse from successfully taking into account the views of everyone in the population. . . .