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Full Citizens at Last? Who is Next?

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The news coverage and media analysis that followed the arrival Monday of same-sex marriage in California was absolutely predictable. There was the inevitable flood of profiles and personal stories, along with celebratory reportage.

The general theme of much of the coverage was that same-sex marriage had become a reality and yet civilization continues. The same theme predominated after the legalization of same-sex marriage in Massachusetts in 2004.

Yet, even with that theme expected, *The Los Angeles Times* went even further over the top with its editorial comment. The editors celebrated the first same-sex marriages in the state and declared that the same-sex marriages meant that “these couples stand together as full citizens at last.”

Full citizens at last? These Americans were not full citizens at 5:00 pm on June 16, 2008, but they were a minute later when they were granted legal marriage applications?

This leads to other urgent questions. Who else is now being denied full citizenship? Does this mean that others denied access to legal marriage as the recognition of their sexual relationships are being denied status as “full citizens?” Would the editors dare name who these might be?

This editorial is further evidence of a phenomenon that is now standard in many circles — the assumption that all moral and legal discrimination is wrong. That is a disastrous assumption. Civilization requires discrimination between right and wrong behavior, what is legal and what is criminal, what is celebrated and what is condemned.

America has had to go through moral convulsions at times to learn that some forms of discrimination are morally abhorrent — such as discrimination on the basis of race. But other forms of discrimination are required by common sense and moral discernment.

Adolescents are qualified to apply for a license to drive at a certain age, and no younger. One day they are denied the right, the next they may be allowed it by law. Would the editors of *The Los Angeles Times* have us to think that they are “full citizens at last” only when they are granted this right? Are younger youth denied this right now to be liberated from this discrimination?

The editors also offered a collection of other arguments deployed to celebrate same-sex marriage and to encourage the defeat of a constitutional amendment that will be on the November ballot. That amendment would reverse the decision of the California Supreme Court that legalized the same-sex marriages that began on Monday evening. The paper’s editors bemoaned the very fact that California citizens would have the right to revisit the question:

In California, the initiative process allows voters to amend the state Constitution directly, and unfortunately, a measure on the November ballot will give them the chance. The question won't be whether same-sex marriage is right or wrong — that's a matter of personal conviction — but whether those who believe it is wrong should have the power to deny marriage to those who seek its protections.

Again, the logic of the editorial breaks down instantly. The fact that speeders are arrested for breaking traffic rules is because a majority of Californians believe that it is “wrong” to drive at excessive and unsafe speeds. Does believing that something is wrong represent baseless prejudice. Do the editors of *The Los Angeles Times* believe that anything is wrong?

They do, of course. But they believe that their list of wrongs is superior to that of those who believe that same-sex marriage is wrong. Thankfully, the voters of California will have their say in November.

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