

## Gay-marriage ban is bound to seem antiquated one day



**BARB GUY**

To paraphrase the bad grammar and weird reasoning of Utah State Sen. Chris Buttars: What is the morals of a married person?

When Buttars famously met with reporter/filmmaker/humanitarian Reed Cowan, he asked, "What is the morals of a gay person?" Then, without waiting for an answer (although what Cowan would have managed to say I can't imagine), Buttars continued, "You can't answer that because anything goes!"

No. The reason it cannot be answered is because everyone's different. What are the morals of a married person? Same thing. You can't answer that. Not because the group has no morals as Buttars was intimating about gay and lesbian people when he said "anything goes," but because we are as different as snowflakes.

Individuals, it should be obvious, can have any kind of moral makeup. Each one is different.

Buttars wants all married couples to consist of a woman and a man. I'm in complete favor of women and men marrying one another. Really, it's a great idea. Where we get into trouble is when we act better than everyone else and certain that God likes the way we do things but not the way other folks do.

The problem is that heterosexuality is not proof of any particular moral mooring, any more than religion is.

Is your friend the Mormon youth leader a kind and truly Christ-like man or a raping pedophile? What about your friend the Catholic priest or the Sunday School teacher daughter of a Baptist pastor? Probably a lovely person, but maybe a monster.

What is the morals of a church leader? You can't answer that because anything goes.

Among the dozens of gay couples I have loved and known well, I've never seen a monster, but I sure have seen the gamut. Some couples pledge to stay together forever, have a child, and break up. Some are amazingly good at parenting while others struggle. Some lose the thread that held them together while others become

life-long partners. Just like boy-girl couples.

Gay marriage will become legal in the United States. I hope it's soon, but there's a lot of work to do before we get there, and some folks are not interested in coming along to the inclusive new world.

What makes the most sense to me is a proposal I read in a *Tribune* editorial a long time ago. Let's have city hall-type marriage open to every couple who dares to take the leap. Then religious denominations can decide which couples they would like to allow to be married within their institutions.

As of this month, city hall-type marriages are now open to gay and lesbian couples in Iowa and Vermont. In Iowa's case, it was the state supreme court's decision; in Vermont it was the state legislature. Gay and lesbian couples can now tie the knot at city hall and follow up with a church wedding if they wish, at a church that welcomes them. That's progress.

Some people favor a special non-marriage status for lesbian and gay people, but what we were meant to learn in *Brown v. Board of Education* (which Sen. Buttars also famously denounced) is that separate is never equal.

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On April 3, a group of people, gay and straight, poor and not poor, from many religious traditions and of many professions, joined in a toast to the Iowa decision. We celebrated together because it's a victory for human rights and because each little triumph gets us closer to the day when a United States that bans gay marriage will sound as distant and absurd as it rightly should.

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