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# The Term Homophobia Is Improper

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This is now my third post in a row on the issue of homosexuality and same-sex marriage. The fact that I am writing on this topic is utterly ironic because I had long ago refused to touch the issue in a post because I didn't want to risk it negatively impacting people's response to the wide variety of other topics I cover with regard to family law, mediation and related issues. My response to such requests was that I cover a great many topics in my writings and that someone else can take on that subject. However, by ignoring this topic, I was not being true to myself.

Common themes run through most, if not all, of my writings and one of them is the concept of fundamental fairness. In fact, on more than one occasion, [Forrest \(Woody\) Mosten](#) has mentioned to me that he admires my inherent sense of fundamental fairness. He has also stated that he respects my "willingness to 'stir the pot' in the name of enlightenment [and referred to me as] a poster child for a successful peacemaker." Considering that Woody is a pioneer in the field of family law mediation, it seems that a person can 'stir the pot' and still be "an excellent mediator."

With regard to this series of posts alone, [Stacey Neil, LMFT, CPT](#) commented, "Wow... some of those comments are unbelievable. You have really got everyone all fired up. Way to go!" and another person said, "You sure know how to stir the pot." My response was, "Someone needed to stir it -- these discussions are LONG overdue."

As might be expected, I have received both "hate mail" and praise as a result of my addressing this topic. I'll leave the content of the "hate mail" to your imagination, other than mentioning that it was religious based. However, I would like to share the following email I received:

"I just read your Huffington Post article, '[The Cause of Homosexuality is Irrelevant.](#)' I'm just about to click the link to read '[The Same-Sex Marriage Debate.](#)' but I wanted to take a moment to thank you for such a thoughtful & insightful article. There are times when I fear we will never see equality. That there are those who still insist it's 'my choice' to be homosexual, does breed a feeling of futility. But then people like you & Jon Stewart & Brendon Ayanbadejo & so many others take this stand and I see that there are those who do just get it! It does make such a difference. I may not be the best at expressing it, but I'm confident in the knowledge that I speak for scores of LGBT folks, when I say, "Thank you!"

No doubt some of you are going to have a similar reaction to the following comment I received on LinkedIn in 2012 with regard to a different issue pertaining to the LGBT community: "If you think getting correspondence from a Gay and Lesbian Center is a good thing, enjoy. It helps me understand your comments." That comment was made in a LinkedIn discussion pertaining to a [press release that was issued](#) based upon an article of mine. Specifically, the comment was in reference to an email I had received from Nellie Sims, J.D., Director of Planned Giving Development for the L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center. The email stated in pertinent part as follows: "This is fabulous! Mark, may I use your news story 'California Attorney Says Federal Law...' as the lead story in the next Shared Vision, the Center's planned giving newsletter? I think it's great." I agreed to Ms. Sims request and the article was [published in the Fall 2012 edition of that newsletter.](#)

In any event, the following comment made by [John McConnell, Ph.D.](#) in the Marriage Counseling & Therapy Network LinkedIn group in a heated discussion pertaining to my article titled "[The Cause of Homosexuality Is Irrelevant](#)" explains a great deal:

"To people whose lives are guided by certain passages of the Old Testament on the issue of sexual orientation, the question regarding the cause of sexual orientation will always be relevant because they cannot reconcile the notion that their God would both have 'made' people LGB and at the same time (1) Divinely inspire the passages in scripture these people believe condemn LGB activity as a sin while (2) NOT giving LGB persons the ability to choose a different orientation. Such a God would be capricious or sadistic. This is inconceivable to such people, so the question of causation and choice is important because it addresses their [cognitive dissonance](#)....

Yes, a person could be attacked, beaten or murdered for being gay. And yes, intolerance by Christian fundamentalists is one of many potential sources of that potential violence but there are many potential causes.... My own sense is this violence evolves from a form of malignant narcissism: the conscious mindset is that 'I am better than you and my reality is the only one that counts.' Typically, underneath that is an unconscious self-loathing that comes from a childhood where the narcissist was valued by parents not for themselves and their own feelings, but for what they did to bolster the parent's self esteem. In the original myth Narcissus never loved another because he had never learned to love himself - and that was because he was never loved for himself (only for what others thought was 'beautiful'). This creates a coldness to others feelings that can border on the psychopathic (being unable to feel remorse for harm done to others)."

According to [Fernando J. Gutierrez, EdD, JD](#), "It's not only narcissism. It's reaction formation." Along those lines, on September 29, 2014, [California became the first state to ban](#) the so-called 'gay panic' defense." The fact that such legislation is even necessary is disgraceful, but it is most definitely necessary.

Meanwhile, members of the LGBT community suffer discrimination and abuse solely because of other people's cognitive dissonance, malignant narcissism, or reaction formation. It is no surprise to me that [students from a Catholic School](#) beat the living daylight out of a gay couple recently. To be clear, this is only the most recent high profile example of such gay bashing. What do you think happens when you vilify such people? It amazes me that the Catholic Church can't understand why people of religion would do such a thing. It seems to me that our society, with the help of religious beliefs, manages to justify such behavior with regard to the LGBT community.

As far as scripture is concerned, I will quote Pamela Edwards-Swift, a family law colleague of mine:

"Any type of intolerance is unacceptable. When it is made by a religious group, it makes it even worse. Mark, you know that I'm a Christian, we've had this discussion, but I am truly embarrassed by people who claim to be Christians yet spew hate. To me, they aren't Christians at all. Jesus, a Jewish man, would have a lot to say about today's 'Christian,' and it would not be good."

What I do know is that discrimination, abuse and violence against the LGBT community because of sexual orientation -- something that they have [as much control over as the color of their skin](#) -- is far from empathic. Like it or not, same-sex marriage is now legal in many countries and in many states in the U.S. (and those marriages are federally recognized). The fact of the matter is that the legal actions that led to this result were caused by society's abuse and discrimination against the gay and lesbian community. This is what happens when people lack empathy. Faith, as practiced, led to this result because it is judgmental, alienating and hateful. Consider how differences in religious ideology play out in the Middle East.

I respect one's right to believe in God or to hold any given religious beliefs. Nevertheless, the belief in God is something that must be accepted on blind faith. It also bears mentioning that blind faith is involved in the belief that the Bible contains God's word, with absolutely no human editorial at all. Considering that different religions worship different Gods, how many Gods are there? What makes anyone so certain that their God is the God and that the Gods that others worship are imaginary? Nevertheless, it is somehow expected that people who don't believe in your God (or God in general) should do as your Bible says.

I am just trying to understand why the Bible, something I studied in my college humanities course along with Greek Mythology, is somehow the arbiter of right and wrong and dictates how things must be. I am considered well-read and have traveled quite a bit in my lifetime. The religious explanations of things in the Bible are no less inconceivable than the explanations set forth in other religions. Nevertheless, believers of whatever faith accept such explanations as fact and tell those of other faiths that their beliefs are right and anyone who disagrees is wrong. I would like to know of one religious person who believes anything other than that their religion and beliefs are right. The problem is that they can't all be right or factually based because they are inconsistent, among other things. Which aspects are fact and which are fiction? The answer to that question depends upon any given person's personal background and life experiences, which shape their biases and belief system.

The vast majority of conflict in the world has been the result of different religious ideologies. Considering that reality, people are obviously willing to fight and possibly die in support of their religious ideology. Yet, the religious beliefs that someone else is willing to fight and die for are somehow less real. Meanwhile, those holding any given religious ideology expect and demand that everyone else live in accordance with their belief system.

Along those same lines, many people separate distinguish between a person's sexual orientation and their choice to act upon it. As I recall, [Catholic priests were originally allowed to marry](#). However, [the Church got greedy](#) in that it didn't like the financial consequences associated with the families of the priests. Thus, the Church decided that priests must be celibate. It seems to me that it has been a damn good hiding place for gay men, many of whom have not been so celibate. From what I understand, many heterosexual priests and nuns aren't so celibate either. Expecting others to do what a great many priests and nuns have failed to accomplish when they chose that lifestyle for themselves, is incomprehensible to me. Nevertheless, those same people then judge gays and lesbians for not being celibate and refer to them as "sinners" and other such things. While I prefer not to judge others, I admittedly judge those who judge others.

Religion aside, I firmly believe that those who argue that homosexuality is a choice do so in order to justify senseless beatings of gays and lesbians, and continued discrimination and mistreatment against them. I also believe without a doubt that it is a choice to be a nasty human being. Unfortunately, people and society are hurt when someone makes that choice.

Let me be extremely clear -- homophobia is not the proper term for such behavior. Someone suffering from arachnophobia does not typically harm or kill spiders because they are too frightened of them. For that same reason, a person who suffers from ophiophobia does not typically harm or kill snakes. There is a huge difference between hate and fear. As I have written about in the past, words have meaning. Let's not

mince words.

I actually posted that last remark on Twitter and received the following response from [Gregory M. Herek, Ph.D.](#): "I agree strongly. I've long argued that we must get beyond 'homophobia' to understand sexual prejudice." I was thrilled with Dr. Herek's response, especially considering that he is an expert on the subject.

As an aside, I would like to point out that long before same-sex marriages were taking place, I knew of a heterosexual married couple wherein the husband had a sex change operation. The couple decided to remain married, even though the husband's gender had since changed to female. Under the laws of the land, that lesbian couple was legally married. I have since learned of other such couples. Life is not black and white and people need to stop pretending otherwise.

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