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Marge;

Thanks for your long, informative and considered response to my letter to the *Valley News*. I had a long talk with Judith over the phone, and I enjoy and welcome the chance to participate in the discussion. As Judith may have mentioned, my wife and I have been interested in international adoption for some time, and since becoming parents ourselves, we have become more directly involved in the politics and ideas of adoption: writing, talking about it, and of course trying to implement our ideas at home.

Judith sent me some of the task force literature, but even when I read the news article I realized that the Task Force would not use a word like "natural," and that it was a (very typical) AP/Valley News mistake. As I'm sure you realize, this common linguistic misuse, which PACT calls "adoptism" is both widespread and pernicious.

The issue of single-parenting and its ramifications for gay couples was more complicated of course, and I am finding that it varies tremendously from state to state. My letter was more an attempt to elucidate the reality and complexity of the situation, actually in the form of congratulating the progressive and non-homophobic nature of the Task Force's work. Your letter interests me tremendously in this regard. For while I am sympathetic to your social and psychological (and developmental) viewpoints on gay parenting, and appreciate your experience (much more than mine I'm sure), I find myself in strong disagreement. This disagreement is not based on what I would or would not "recommmend" to prospective parents (that's a very personal thing), but in the way that these kinds of insights and reflections (and to some extent conclusions) are manifested legally.

While "normalcy" may be desirable in most cases, and a big issue for adoptive kids, I believe we need to be very careful about not legislating it in any way. It's a dangerous concept, as I'm sure you know. There are many types of unusual families, and in fact, if our goal is to ensure that kids grow up happy, well-adjusted, and strong it seems to me that homogenizing the family unit is less urgent than eliminating racism, poverty and just plain ignorance, which seem to me to do a lot more damage towards children's development than a non-conventional family structure. I don't believe there's a direct correlation between hetero/homosexual parents and screwed up kids, but I do believe there is one between ignorant, violent or racist families and kids who grow up with difficulties.

Achieving "normalcy" should not even be a secondary goal. I'm sure that your experience as a social worker is far more poignant in this regard than mine as a musician. It's easy for me to advocate an idealist position, while you have to deal with its results (even though you probably will tend to see more of those adoptive families who do have problems). Nevertheless, I think the price we pay for restricting these kinds of diversities is much more serious than the difficulties kids have to deal with because of them. The government should not be involved in regulating the nuances of social and personal adjustment of its children by normalizing religious, sexual, racial or cultural norms. We need to recognize and encourage differences, not try to legislate them away.

I've known many adopted adults, and in my (limited) experience their really serious personal issues regarding adoption are more a result of the way their parents dealt with them than with the way society did. In our own case, I'm far more frightened of society's stone-age approach to "racial" differences than I am of my daughter's adoptive status. I don't want to even remotely imply that I believe your argument "that adoptees feel somewhat like alien freaks even in the best of normal heterosexual families" has a racist parallel, but the logic has a strange resonance. African American, Native American, Asian American, heck, even female children in our society are made to feel somewhat "alien." In other countries (like China and Korea) those kinds of legislative decisions have been made regarding female children, and we are horrified by this situation, and our race (the human one) has a long history of making similar kinds of legal decisions with respect to race, gender, situation of birth, and various perceived "disabilities." Who's to say what is normal? All kids feel different, in some way. I am afraid of the "normalcy"

argument leading quickly to propounding some kind of plurocracy, where things are best simply because they are most common.

Gay families have the right to be unhappy and happy, just like all other families, and so do their children. We cannot excuse any kind of discrimination or phobia (homo- or racio-) based on the the punishment the victims receive because of their differences. The argument that gays should not be in the military because their lives would be made too difficult by all the homophobes in the military is a frightening one: the victims of ignorance are made to pay for that ignorance, the ignorant are not held responsible in any way. The Hawaii case currently before the state supreme court interests me in this way, since it seems to be showing that there is absolutely no constitutional basis for the homophobic marriage laws. I hope that gay couples in other states will initiate similar legal test cases.

Your letter had the best possible effect, it made me think through what my argument is in this regard. It's a highly personal argument, and one not tempered by any practicalities but my own. I only really have to deal with one set of victims if I'm wrong (my own family). Still, sometimes it's nice to be an idealist and just take your lumps.

I would very much like to try and participate in a summer meeting, and in general contribute to the activities of adoptive politics in our region in any way. Please feel free to call me at any time, and notify me of any upcoming events. I congratulate you for what you and the Task Force were able to acheive, and also appreciate the chance to learn about my own opinions on these matters by studying what you have done.

I will also, by the way, send a letter immediately to John Bloomer about S-118.

Thanks a lot, all best

Larry Polansky