Jumping the Broom

May 29, 2012 By Aundaray Guess

When New York City passed the rights for gay couples to get married it was definitely a happy and history making occasion. The same rights were now being given to those who were previously denied based solely on their sexuality. So from a gay African-American perspective I'll express my feelings on the rights of gays to marry.

Much has been stated in the news with Obama's recent announcement and the NAACP following suit by throwing their support behind marriage. You would think the flood gates of black America's acceptance of gay union was something all people of color were behind one hundred percent but honestly the announcement which was welcomed has not been accepted fully by black America as we're reminded that God created Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve. But that's another conversation to be had as if we truly looked at the words of the bible we'd all be sinners. But again I digress.

But personally I initially was not behind the cause not because it wasn't important or that I didn't think that life long partners should have rights. I just felt that at the time there were more pressing matters in the black community that should have taken precedence such as the continued rise in HIV in the community. It seemed that gay marriage was more of the white gay agenda and that train was going full, but HIV which was affecting blacks was an issue delegated to the caboose, being left far behind.

So my support for marriage was not as strong. I wasn't ready to climb that wedding cake not with so many people, my people, getting infected. I felt that way up until last year when the same-sex marriage bill in NY was passed. I personally had to reexamine my feelings as I was in a relationship and like others in NYC who were in a relationship it probably made them think, is this person who I want to be with all my life? Do I want to stay with one box of cereal when I can have a multipack of choices?

Choices.

That was the key word. In New York City why settle down with one person when you had choices. Why stay committed to a person and feel like you were stuck. Why be in this Loch Ness Monster we call 'relationship', a beast you hear about but never truly see. And if you see it, it doesn't last for long.

But I wasn't in that place. I had someone who loved me, despite my status. Someone who was negative and accepted me unconditionally, HIV and all. And over the 13 years in my relationship it hasn't been all sunshine, as there have been fights and arguments and even a period when we briefly took a break from each other. But during those times I learned two lessons. Sometimes we

don’t realize what you have until it’s gone and most importantly being reminded that a relationship isn’t a relationship when everything is going well. A true relationship is when you have a disagreement or something happens such as a break of trust and instead of running away you both work on it until you fix whatever was broken. That is a relationship. And that sometimes the consequences of having so many choices is that you never get that chance to build a foundation of love as your heart is always in transit to the next piece.

But marriage is a strong commitment that two people can make to each other. And I’m aware that a piece of paper doesn’t mean you’ll have eternal bliss or you won’t end up in divorce court, but for me it says that I’m ready to make this next step in this relationship despite knowing what I’m fully walking into.

And not to be a martyr but maybe by seeing a gay black man in a relationship, it can be seen as something that others can do. That it can actually be done. Maybe in a weird way the modeling of blacks in relationships won’t seem like a myth and perhaps, just perhaps it can go back to my resistance and have an impact on the HIV rate as gay men are giving themselves to only that special one. Or maybe I’m drinking too much of the Kool-Aid.

So on the Memorial holiday of May 1st I popped the question. I had made my choice. A choice made from the heart. Made from knowing what was right. And made from one thing that has sustained us all these years, love. A flower cannot blossom without sunshine, and man cannot live without love.

So now when someone asks me as a gay black man what is my opinion on same-sex marriage and whether I support it? I’ll simply say to them:

I do.

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