The Greatest Gay Rights Battle of Our Time

June 19, 2008 By Peter Staley

This week we're witnessing a great moment in gay history, as thousands of gay and lesbian couples are saying their wedding vows in California. Being a Californian by birth, the state has always been one of my homes, and it made me proud this week.

In today's LA Times, there's a must read editorial about gay marriage. Here's just a bit of it:

> Opponents of same-sex marriage often deplore this expansion of the meaning of marriage because they view it as threatening to traditional unions. As they use this day as a rallying point for a proposed amendment to the state Constitution to ban such marriages, it's time to ask them directly: How does marriage of one type threaten others? Why do many heterosexuals feel that the beauty of their own marriage vows is in no way changed by today's weddings, while others feel theirs have somehow been diminished?

Perhaps the next few months will ease these fears, as

same-sex couples begin their married lives together. Those couples will settle into communities without disorder or threat; they will bring legal protection to their bonds of love. Those bonds can only be good for society -- children gain from being raised by married parents, and communities are stronger when residents are legally committed to one another. As more and more Californians marry, society will grow stronger, not weaker.

The November ballot initiative to reverse all this is now the greatest gay rights battle of our time. Anyone who cares about the advancement of gay rights should consider joining this fight in some way.

Phyllis Lyon (right) and Del Martin cut their wedding cake as Mayor Gavin Newsom and a crowd of onlookers cheer in San Francisco's City Hall.

Personally, I plan on writing a big check this summer to Equality For All, the lead group that will be fighting the November ballot initiative. I donate to various gay groups each year, but I'm giving them all a year off, and sending the money to EFA instead -- it's that important.

If you are unable to donate, there's a handy "tell a friend" button on their website, so you can help spread the word.

I'm well aware that many in the gay community are lukewarm at best about the concept of marriage. I'm not running to the altar myself. The bf and I aren't feelin' that kind of tradition... yet. But the very fact that those who hate me -- those who hate us -- are insisting my relationship is unworthy of this option,

makes my blood boil. I reject any view, implication, law, or ballot box vote that tells me my relationship is less than anyone else's.

So gay marriage isn't the most important right we've ever fought for. But the bigoted religious right has decided this is their heaviest club for beating us down. It's time to shatter that club for good. If we win this fight, it will be the biggest "in your face" the religious right has ever received. And it will go down in history as the first nail in the coffin of the Bush-fed culture wars.

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