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With This

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Exclusive 1-on-1 with SF Mayor Gavin Newsom

The Future of the Equal Marriage Rights Movement

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THE FUTURE OF FREEDOM THE COLORS OF OUR CRUSADE



Just before I put pen to paper, Washington State's Supreme Court upheld a ban on gay marriages. Yet a decade ago, Hawaii's Supreme Court affirmed same-sex couples' freedom to marry, only to have the decision overturned by a subsequently passed law that gave the state a newfound right to ban gay marriage. In 2000, in something of a placation, the state of Vermont (under Howard Dean's leadership) created a new matrimonial category—"civil unions"—that it has endowed with selected key rights and privileges of marriage. Finally, in May 2004, Massachusetts became the first state in the Union to legalize same-sex marriage (through judicial activism rather than the passage of an equalizing law), but that ruling may be effectively overridden by counter-initiative on the November 2006 ballot.

One might rightly call me both imperialistic and patriotic, but the United States has long seen itself—and been positioned by so many counties around the world—as a "light unto the nations." It's with intended irony that I describe a country embroiled in a long-overdue Equal Marriage Rights Movement using a quote from the Hebrew Bible, for that same holy book defines homosexuality as an "abomination."

In such light, perhaps it's thankful that modern and flourishing statehood has proven itself, time and again, to be veritably irreconcilable with a religious view of the world. (An Evangelist President waging an unpopular war in the formerly theocratic nations of Iraq and Afghanistan, and the Jewish State battling its Arab-Muslim neighbors for the umpteenth time in its 58 year history should certainly stand as cases in point.)

The colors of the movement are not a rainbow. They are red, white, and blue.

The affirmation of religious faith was outlawed as part of the Pledge of Allegiance; yet no judge or citizen has publicly challenged the religious roots of American morality— the sanctity of marriage as a case-in-point. "Any man who lies as a man as he lies with a woman—both have committed an abomination and shall surely be put to death." Thus sayeth the Lord in Leviticus 20:13…but no divinity can hold sway on the sovereign territory of these United States. Or did we forget that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof"?

Religion, it has been said, should unify people—still it tears our bonds asunder. Throughout history, religion has been pedestalled as the basis for curtailing freedoms, with abject disregard for the example it is supposed to set. So if it takes yet another movement to remind the leaders of this fine country that its citizens are exponentially smarter than even the Founding Fathers believed, and perfectly capable of wise tolerance, then *With This Ring* is proud to carry the colors of the Equal Marriage Rights movement.

The movement's colors are not a rainbow; they are more nuanced and profound than black and white. Its colors are red, white, and blue—searing and forever.

Ours is not a fight for gay rights. To celebrate love between individuals who wish to wed is to be straight, gay, black, white, brown, yellow, red, male, female, Jewish, Catholic, Muslim—and everyone in between. Mission accomplished, the gay community will be just one beneficiary of our collective success.

Ours is the same fight that Martin Luther King strode for throughout the 1960s; the same fight that San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom continues in 2006; the same fight that brought a Jew named Albert Einstein to Princeton seeking refuge in the 1930s; the same fight that brought Iranians to our ports in the 1980s and Russians in the 1990s; the same fight that brought Puritans to New England in 1620. If the "huddled masses longing to be free" are welcome to join the American rabble, then shouldn't rightfully proud U.S. citizens expect to live both unbranded and unhindered?

In 1892, the Supreme Court declared that separate could be equal (*Plessy vs. Ferguson*); in 1954, it acknowledged its

mistake (*Brown vs. Topeka Board of Education*). But at the birth of the 21st century, even while our understanding of the world is broader, deeper, and more refined than our ancestors could have imagined, a supposedly enlightened nation is gripped in controversy over the definition of marriage—with a stark generation gap to boot. Even the Czech Republic has proven itself more progressive: on July 2, 2006, it joined Canada, Spain, Holland, and Belgium as just the world's fifth country to legalization gay marriage outright.

Distinctions without differences are so often drawn among various "kinds" of weddings, as if the gender, race, origin, orientation—even the number—of loving parties involved somehow augments or diminishes the value of the commitment. Even respectful television programs like HBO's *Big Love*—a series about polygamists in Utah—while entertaining and innovative, invariably diminish the hardship of living one's chosen lifestyle underground for fear of retribution. To describe a "kind" of marriage is to box and objectify it counterproductively.

Marriage is marriage is marriage—as it should be.

Have we not yet realized that the "ghetto-ization" of any group leads not to flourishment or assimilation into the greater society, but rather, to resentment and disillusionment when fuller freedoms can be found elsewhere?

Do same-sex couples—loving, decent, law-abiding, privacy-cherishing couples—need to expatriate to have their equality acknowledged? Must they wear a "Rainbow Badge of Courage"?

Liberty should exist for them at home, if not for their American citizenship alone, then for the "inalienable" fact that "all men are created equal"—and women too. Nowhere in the incontrovertible truths of the Declaration of Independence is any notion of orientation—sexual, racial, religious, or otherwise—mentioned. This was no accident: rare indeed were the Founding Fathers' oversights. Plus we've had 217 years to grow up already.

Steadfastly yours,

Jonathon Scott Feit, Chief Editor & Publisher on behalf of *With This Ring* magazine

For Every Kind of Wedding

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S.F. MAYOR GAVIN NEWSOM: Walking tall In MLK'S FOOTSTEPS BY JONATHON SCOTT FEIT

With This Ring: You, of course, are the political face of the Equal Marriage Rights movement—young, vibrant, creative, and in some ways defiant. A hero to millions who feel underrepresented and shunned—

Mayor Gavin Newsom: And hated by many millions more!

I think every leader has that problem at some point. Before we get into the current and future states of Equal Marriage Rights, tell me: How do you feel standing in front of a social movement while also worrying about being chief executive of one of the country's most influential cities?

I never thought I was necessarily in front of a social movement. I think I'm standing side-by-side with people who are truly on the frontlines. People like Phyllis Lyne and Dell Martin, who are the real leaders of this movement. People who, through their own faith and love and endurance as a couple for half a century have demonstrated what commitment is all about. In that respect, I'm just a facilitator—a conduit, as it were—to their example....

They're not mutually exclusive. Meaning, being participatory in a social justice movement and being a conduit to the same, and participatory in the governance of a city that truly is one of the most diverse cities in the world's most diverse democracy, where we are celebrating—not just tolerating—that diversity, and trying to advance values that we believe can have an impact well beyond the borders of San Francisco. Those are things that, for me, are interrelated; they're interdependent.

Do you ever have a moment where you wish you could focus more attention on the social justice movement?

That's a good question, but here's the framework, here's the construct I, at least, try to operate on: you can't do much if you can't provide a level playing field for everybody. You've got to start from



that construct—that everyone has the right to be treated equally and fairly—the full promise of the Constitution afforded *every* citizen of this country. Once you've established that baseline, that framework, that foundation, then everything else is possible—you can build off that. Without that, other things collapse under their own weight. For me, the importance of focusing on the issue of equality, and marriage equality in particular, is profoundly fundamental. It's a current that runs throughout everything else we do.

There's an old adage: "The tyranny of 'Or' versus the genius of 'And." It's not that you're focused on that *or* something else, but you're focused on that *and* all these other things, and I don't ever feel that I'm neglecting other things. I think that thread carries through on everything else I'm doing.

Being so young—just 39 years old in October [2006]—and at the helm of so diverse a city, do you think you have a particular connection with a younger, more open-minded generation?

In many respects, certainly on the whole issue of gay rights—particularly as it relates to the issue of same-sex marriage—it is a very generational thing. It's remarkable how the demographics, in terms of support, shift in the context of age demographics, *dramatically*

It's going to take more than 17 months to win equal marriage rights, when you consider it took more than 19 years to deal with interracial marriage.

[greater support] in the younger generations.

So for me, I *intellectually* understand why people have an aversion or an opposition to same-sex marriage. But inherent in my own subjectivity, in my own experiences, I don't fully understand it. I intellectualize it, but it's not part of [my] generational experience, because to me, it's self-evident—it's rather obvious.

Then again, it is rather remarkable that the year of my birth [1967], sixteen states denied interracial marriage. I tell that to people who are my age, my generation, and they don't believe it, because they think that was their parents' or their grandparents' generation where that kind of race-based inequality existed. Quite the contrary, and that's something that, to me, is very profound. I equate the efforts on same-sex marriage and marriage equality *today* as an extension of that debate and that struggle between 1949 and 1967, when the courts finally adjudicated [in *Loving v. State of Virginia*] the utter absurdity of denying two people of different races the ability to live their lives.

When you read back in the *Loving* decision, and you read a lot of the articles of the time—and the polling, which is very suggestive there are two polls that show that about 70% of Americans opposed interracial marriage at that time. *Opposed it—seven out of ten people*, which is rather remarkable. Even today [there's] double-digit opposition to interracial marriage in America. I think it's helpful to look at the opposition to same-sex marriage in the context of that arc of history, because we are so much further along on same-sex marriage than we were—frankly, even in the 1960s—on interracial marriage. So that's what gives me some solid expectation that this is simply an inevitability.

I tell people all the time—those that are frustrated with the Supreme Court decisions in New York and Washington—that it's going to take more than seventeen months, when you consider it took more than nineteen *years* to deal with interracial marriage. There's no reason to be patient when it comes to civil rights or equality; we shouldn't be patient. But let us not be naïve to the struggle. It's going to take a great deal of time, undoubtedly, but it's inevitable.

Waxing historical, then, where do you think the Equal Marriage Rights movement stacks up against the Civil Rights or the Women's Suffrage movements?

It's very analogous. This is a country where the Supreme Court initially adjudicated [in *Plessy v. Ferguson*] that "separate but equal"

was constitutional, and then it took *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954 to determine that separate does *not* mean equal in this country. We ultimately get it right, but we codify discrimination and we have consistently in our history in law. We did it with women and their right to vote; we've done it on the basis of race at all levels, not least of which on the issue of marriage.

So for me, it's an extension of that same struggle and those same principles, and the same document that permeates those issues—the Constitution of the United States and its Equal Protection Clause. It's obvious to any objective mind that there is *nothing* in the [Federal and State] Constitution[s] that allows us to discriminate. I would argue strenuously that the President of the United States *agrees* with that point, because he wants to *amend* the Constitution of the United States. He wants to change the Constitution because from his perspective there's something wrong with it. From my perspective there's something inherently right about the Constitution.

Now, subjective minds can interpret the Constitution, and often have based on the politics of the day, and that's why over the course of history there have been so many interpretations of the same issues, but based upon a different set of eyes at the time, different judges, different social constructs and norms. Ultimately, then, there's an evolution of that interpretation and you've seen that example, again, in *Brown v. Board of Education*, the women's movement, and constitutional issues relating to civil rights on the basis of race and ethnicity. So I think it's—again—inevitable as social norms change on the issue of same-sex marriage.

As people increasingly recognize the legal validity to domestic partnerships [and] advance support for civil unions, the more comfort they have, inherently, with the notion that two people who love each other should have some basic framework of protections. Once you open that door—and we have already in this country, overwhelming-ly in fact—there's an inevitability. Then people will say, "Well, why are we running the 90-yard dash on *full* equality?" Separate does *not* mean equal. And it's inevitable that we go from civil unions to same-sex marriage. It's inevitable, as we've already begun to move from domestic partnership to civil unions in very short order. That next step is *fait accompli*.

This may be shooting myself in the foot a bit, but do you think there's a bit of a distinction without a difference between "civil unions" and "marriage"?

I equate the efforts on same-sex marriage and marriage equality today as an extension of that debate and that struggle.

I would never have given up my marriage for a civil union.

Yeah, I think you're right on that. I think it's a great question, and a lot of people—a lot of friends of mine, family members—believe that to be the case. I don't, for this reason: I would never have given up my marriage for a civil union, and the reason is that there's a social recognition to marriage.

There's a social understanding of what marriage means, and I wouldn't want to deny that in my marriage. I wouldn't have wanted to deny that in the context of our families coming together. I don't see a lot of people who support [civil unions] renouncing their marriage and advancing civil unions. That's suggestive, from my perspective, that a civil union is not—by definition—marriage, because of the social recognition of what marriage is all about.

"I'm looking forward to getting married"—you can't even use that phrase! That narrative doesn't work. "I'm looking forward to getting a civil union"—that hardly has the same resonance. "Getting engaged"—are you engaged before a civil union? Perhaps you are.

But I think there's something inherent about marriage, and *it's an institution people should have the right to join*, as much a right as interracial individuals should have that right. We didn't create a separate but equal distinction for African-Americans to marry whites, saying: "Well, you don't need marriage—let's make that a civil union." That would seem absurd, and patently unfair. And I would argue, if we're not arguing for *that*, why would we argue for samesex couples [to have a distinction]? We wouldn't dare say that to the Asian community, or the African-American community, so how dare we say it to the gay community?

It's almost demeaning to the gay community. Almost *more* demeaning in this respect: What you're saying, by supporting civil

Nothing in the Constitution allows us to discriminate.

I would argue strenuously that the President of the United States agrees with that point.

unions, ultimately—if you believe that civil unions have all the same legal rights and obligations [as marriage]—you're saying that you sanction that relationship...but not completely. Because if it were the same, you would give it the same status, ultimately by giving it the same institutional identity as marriage.

But good people can disagree. Obviously I'm in the minority on this point of view.

Do you think that your divorce has given you some kind of different opinion about marriage—what makes a marriage succeed or fail in this day and age of 52 percent-plus divorce rates? [Mayor Newsom and his wife of three years divorced in January 2005.]

I guess I'm not in a position to offer advice, by definition. Except to acknowledge the obvious: marriage is a difficult thing and should not be entered into lightly, but thoughtfully, with broad consideration. I think there's a lot of exuberance, particularly in the younger generation, for just jumping in, as if it's something that you can just recycle over and over again.

Watching Pamela Anderson on the beach in her bikini—you see those examples. Good for them, but I'm not sure that's the ultimate example. Or Britney Spears, getting married in Vegas, and two days later...you can't even turn the TV on. It's just ridiculous, so it's given a bad name. That's not to say people should be married to be married, in perpetuity and they can't stand each other, and their lives are being destroyed and corroded because of it, and their family members accordingly. That's not right either...

I think there's a lot of work that needs to be done on marriage, but I think the key is that the work needs to be done between the individuals, by definition. But also, there needs to be broader educational effort to really establish a framework of what marriage should be all about, and it *should* be a lifetime commitment. That was certainly my intent—to make it so.

But things happen and people change, constantly change. Sometimes people change in dramatically different directions, and that was certainly the case for my ex-wife and myself. I couldn't be Mayor of San Francisco living in New York, and she couldn't anchor a television program, fulfill her dream, live from San Francisco when it had to be in New York.

I would have thought you both thought about that before you ran for Mayor...

There's no reason to be patient when it comes to civil rights or equality, **but let us not be naïve**.

That's true. It was all happening at the exact same time. It was a remarkable coincidence, everything coming together at the same time. Out of nowhere, her opportunity to build this career that she had always dreamed of was taking shape. At the same time, the opportunity for me to run for mayor was taking shape, and neither of us was going to deny the other person that bliss.

Looking to the broader political sphere: For the Republican party, defeating the Equal Marriage Rights movement is a commitment, and there is a lot of energy being put into attempting to put through a ban, etc. Do you think the Democratic party is really behind the Equal Marriage Rights movement, or is it becoming a matter of opposing Republicans—a partisan versus ideological stand?

I don't think, as a party, the [Democratic] Party wants to lead on the issue of marriage equality. Quite the contrary: I think the party is coming to grips with it because there's been some audacious acts be it the Supreme Court decision in Massachusetts, or obviously what we've done out [in San Francisco]—that precipitate consideration of the issue and push it to the forefront.

But I don't think there's anything inherently political in the Democratic Party, and the values of the party certainly suggest—as the party of women's rights, of human rights, of civil rights; we have been a standard bearer in terms of gay and lesbian rights; we're just not running the full 100-yard dash on it—that it's simply being used *against* the Democratic party almost exclusively. It's become a *big* problem for our party, because it's being used as a wedge issue by the other party, and is putting the Democratic Party on the defensive.

The only way you get out of a defensive position is with a strong offense, and I think it's incumbent upon the party to come to grips with this issue. This issue will continue to haunt the Democratic Party—it will continue to be a wedge issue that will hurt our party, unless we come to grips with it, and unless we stand up on principle, and we stand up in the context of our historic principles that we've always stood for. That is, just get it out of the way and say, "Yes, we support *full* equality. Next question." Here's our position on education, health care, and the environment.

If we are uneasy about it—if we are weak in our stance and position, if we try to avoid it and hide from it—it will dominate. It will become a bigger issue, because [then] it goes to character, it goes to integrity, it goes to strength...

I can assure you in this city [San Francisco], 90% of the people

do not agree with me [on the issue of Equal Marriage Rights.] But a lot of people who disagree on the issue would still support me because they appreciate that I believe it, and I'm not trying to abdicate my private thoughts in a public setting. And *that's* what I think the Democratic party needs to do. Not every Democrat agrees, but I would argue the vast majority of Democrats I've talked to in leadership positions *quietly* agree. They just don't have the courage to give up their political future and their current jobs to say so.

You became the first mayor in California to allow marriage licenses to be issued. If a ban on same-sex marriage were passed in California, what would you do? Would you defy?

Boy, it's so important for people, from my perspective, to look back at what Dr. King wrote in those letters from Birmingham jail. It's unbelievable!

You read those letters—and I hadn't read them since I was in high school or something—and you re-read, and he talks about just laws and unjust laws. I think so much of what he was criticized for moving too soon, too fast—even by African-American clergy, not just the white or Caucasian community, is very suggestive of what's going on today, even within the gay community, where some members of the gay community *don't* support marriage equality. They think it is too much, too soon, too fast; they think civil unions are good enough.

I think that's a mistake, but I understand—I think it's inherent in struggle, from an historic perspective. There's been a lot of progress in the gay community on domestic partnerships and on civil rights; people don't want there to be a backlash because of the marriage debate. You've seen that backlash in some states that are now rolling back civil unions in an effort to combat same-sex marriages, and that is problematic. So I understand where that frustration comes from, but I don't think you abdicate a sense of purpose and responsibility to equality. You have to keep fighting. If you don't fight, who else will?

Pregnant brides, listen up! Miss Manners says it best: the only thing that should be altered is the dress.

Most brides will admit that the most significant decision she will make prior to her wedding day is which dress to wear. Not only is your wedding gown an emotionally charged purchase—it is probably the most financially significant addition to your wardrobe you will ever make.

> According to the Massachusetts Wedding Guide, the average bride in Massachusetts spends between \$1,400 and \$1680 (or about 7 percent of her budget) on wedding day attire. Needless to say, not just any dress will do; it must be the dress. And an expectant bride must remember one simple rule as she begins her quest: Never sacrifice style just because you're pregnant! So, where to start?

First, consider your timeline and your budget. If both are tight, you may want to seek out a maternity bridal gown—which thankfully can be found now in greater numbers and varieties than you might expect, given the slim styles that are prevalent among the pages of leading glossy bridal magazines.

Because maternity bridal dresses are designed for the pregnant woman's changing body, your options may seem limited to certain styles, such as empire waist cuts and a-line skirts. Specialized boutiques, though, offer a wide selection of gowns with quick shipping, affordable prices, and designs guaranteed to fit on your big day.

TEKAY DESIGN, a Houston-based online clothing retailer

offers maternity wedding dresses ranging from \$150 to \$800. By providing your measurements—including your dress size, bust, height (from the top of your head to the floor without shoes), waist, hips, dress length, shoulder to empire waist, and sleeve length—you can have your gown custom made and delivered in three to six weeks. (Exact delivery time depends on the style dress you select.) True, you may not have that moment in the mirror when you know you've found your dream dress, but you will have it fast and relatively cheaply.

MATERNITY BRIDE BY JESSICA KUSTURA, a new bridal company based in Santa Barbara, CA, offers a full line of genuine couture, yet affordable, wedding gowns. Designer Kustura founded Maternity Bride after her own experience trying to find a maternity wedding dress. "I was seven months pregnant, had less than a month until my wedding, and ran all over town trying to find a maternity wedding dress," says Kustura. "I finally gave up, bought a regular wedding dress and spent nearly \$400 on alterations—more than I spent on the actual dress!"

Exclusive in its approach, Maternity Bride is the only company that solely meets the needs of pregnant brides. "I care about my customers. I understand and respect them. My job is to make their life easier." Kustura also understands that time is often of the essence and can have gowns that are in stock delivered via priority mail in as little as two days. Custom orders and special requests can be delivered within five weeks. A special perk that comes with purchasing your dress from Maternity Bride is that the company will reimburse you for any additional fitting costs you decide to have done.

If you have a little more time—say, two to three months and a flexible budget you may opt to indulge in the bridal salon experience. While most shops prefer gowns to be purchased six months prior to the wedding, many are able to accommodate pregnant brides who need their gowns sooner.

"Be honest with the salon and the seamstress and make sure you are working with people who have experience with pregnant brides so that everyone is prepared and knows what to expect," advises Roseanna Martino, owner of **THE ALTERED BRIDE** in Boston. Once you arrive at the shop and divulge your exciting news, a sales consultant will talk to you about styles you typically wear and are comfortable

gowns to flatter your fecund figure

BY KELLY BRUMLEVE

with, and then select gowns best suited for your figure and tastes. They will depend on how far along you will be on the day of your wedding. "If someone's barely pregnant," says Martino, "then you can still do something that's tighter in the bodice and perhaps not drawing attention right to the waistline, maybe a lower cut or no waistline at all. At six months you can still wear a fairly contemporary shaped gown. It doesn't have to be the empire cut. However, if you are planning to get married around eight or nine months pregnant, the empire is definitely the safest choice because it allows for growth. You can't always predict how big someone's going to get."

Salons offer an array of hand made tiaras, romantic veils, elegant jewelry and stylish, yet comfortable shoes. A bridal salon's personal touch can help you create an ensemble that will leave you feeling like a princess on your special day. But if you still haven't come across the dress of your dreams, why not have it designed and custom made just for you?

ANA HERNANDEZ, who received Boston Magazine's 2005 Best of Boston Wedding Gowns award for Most Original Design, will design a cut that is sure to flatter your changing shape and fit you like a glove. In just two months, you can have your dress designed, cut, and tailored to your beautiful body. You may wind up spending more money-Hernandez, for example, typically charges a \$3,600 flat rate—but the dress will be fitted and created as you change so you do not have to pay extra for alterations. "We do about five fittings [per client], one every week at the beginning," says Hernandez. "When they're pregnant, the first thing that grows is their breasts, so at least I have an idea of what the bust line is going to be. After making the whole dress, I just leave the whole back open. Then I can mold the dress to her body. The zipper measurement is not done until seven to ten days before the wedding. As I do the fittings, I can also tell how fast she's growing; I get to the point where I know how much bigger her breasts will be." For the most part, any design can be accommodated to fit the bride's body. "The women who are pregnant nowadays, they look absolutely gorgeous," adds Hernandez.

Always dreamed of a celebrity wedding? One Boston

bride walked down the aisle six months pregnant wearing Jessica Simpson's wedding gown. "She would normally retail a size two, but our floor sample was a size ten. Our seamstress was able to fit it to her body," says Brianna Simpson, a VERA WANG sales consultant (with no relation to Jessica). A great seamstress can work magic on dresses. "It doesn't really matter what dress you select; if you like how a dress looks when you first try it on, a great seamstress will make sure it fits as your body changes." Even a pregnant bride can pull off a glamorous, designer look on her wedding day. Plus, as Simpson points out, "Less can still be more when you're pregnant."

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GLAAD honors Charlize Theron's vow not to wed until "the day that gays and lesbians can get married."

BY TIA ALBRIGHT

The past two decades have been filled with political and social changes across the United States. As women have taken to high-level positions in government and business, more men have transitioned to staying home with their children, and greater numbers of people choose to live together before marriage as a more open-minded generation has emerged.

Despite the evolution of social norms and erasure of many societal stigmas, same-sex marriage represents an on-going battleground of religion versus politics and tradition versus modernity. Supporters of same-sex marriage continue to crusade for true freedom of choice, love, and commitment, despite derogations as atheists, sinners, and outcasts.

Among the prominent fighters is actress Charlize Theron, who in 2004 won an Academy Award for her portrayal of convicted lesbian serial killer Aileen Wuornos in *Monster*. On November 24, 2005, while being pestered yet again about the status of her relationship with beau of four years, Stuart Townsend, Theron gave the television gossip show *Extra* an answer that stopped the questioning and demonstrated the depth of her support for the gay and lesbian community.

"We came up with a new idea," she said, "that we said

that we would get married the day that gays and lesbians can get married—when that right is given. We've decided that we're gonna use that in a positive way, so that the day that law gets passed then we'll get married."

Theron's ongoing and outgoing support of the GLBT community has not gone unrecognized by the people whose lives her support positively affects. On April 9, 2006—nearly two years to the day after winning Best Actress during the 76th Academy Awards, and in the same room at Los Angeles's Kodak Theatre—Theron was honored by the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) with its Vanguard Award. In winning the award, which "honors members of the entertainment community who have made a difference in promoting equal rights for lesbians, gays and transgender people," Theron joins the ranks of legendary performer-advocates like Whoopi Goldberg and Liza Minnelli.

GLAAD praised the "humanity" that Theron brought to the role of Wuornos, "who spent her life abused by men, but dreamed of a new life with her girlfriend, Selby [Wall]." In her acceptance speech Theron said, "Two years ago, I stood here and won my Oscar for *Monster*. Thank you for bringing me back here and letting me stand in this exact spot tonight to receive this wonderful award.

"There's one thing I'd like to say to the viewers out there: as mothers, fathers, teach your children to have tolerance and acceptance," she added. "At the end of the day, we're all the same."

In her acceptance speech and following the award ceremony, Theron said after seeing the struggles people in the com-

munity must overcome she feels fortunate to be in a heterosexual relationship. "I find it incredibly unfair that because of our sexual preference, we have the rights that we have. Because of someone else's sexual preference, they don't have those same rights."

Beyond popcorn fare like *The Devil's Advocate* and *The Italian Job*

and tearjerkers like *The Cider House Rules* and *Sweet November*, Theron's renown as an actor is built upon a willingness to stake her opinions in roles that humanize and even empathize with the lives that others have chosen—or been forced—to live. They set her far apart from other Hollywood leading women who fear the backlash of moviegoers, critics, religious groups, and fellow actors.

Monster is based on the true-life story of Aileen Wuornos, the United States first known female serial killer. Wuornos, a

lesbian prostitute, confessed to killing seven men, including a police officer and a missionary, but she was only convicted for killing six men because the body of the missionary was never found.

Theron, 31, not only starred in the controversial drama, but produced it as well. Despite her multiple roles in front of and behind the camera, Theron took on the task of accurately

> depicting Wuornos, and let no detail go unnoticed.

A former model in her native South Africa and a dancer for the Joffrey ballet, Theron's ballerina body and classic beauty were transformed to fit Wuornos. She gained than 25 pounds for the role, was layered in make-up while shooting, and wore prosthetic teeth and gel on her eyelids to make them droop.

But Theron's transformation went far beyond the physical: she sought to understand the jarring life events that drove a woman hungering for love to murder. Theron's Wuornos was more than anger and violence—she was desperate for love and respect, and pathetically human. That Wuornos was also a lesbian underscored and crystallized Theron's commitment to equal marriage rights, and she embraced the opportunity to pay homage to the genuine affection that Wuornos felt for her life partner, Selby Wall.

A Recent History of Hollywood's Movement Toward Equal Marriage Rights

"There's one thing I'd like to

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the day, we're all the same."

Back in 2004, CBS News reported that "The stigma of being gay is disappearing. This is a huge change. Gay people in general are feeling more comfortable in society—and society is feeling more comfortable with gay people."

Though America is remains divided on the question of legalizing gay marriage, since 2005 a dialogue has been underway that doesn't always favor the *status quo*. No indicator of our fading homophobia is starker than the prominence of Hollywood's "Velvet Mafia," an unofficial community-within-a-community that unites gay industry honchos to help new ideas—and newcomers—launch.

By 2003 (according to *Details* magazine) "Velvet Mafia" was becoming not a derogatory label, but rather a prideful identifier:

"**Max Mutchnik** is a co-creator of Will & Grace...a gay godfatheron-the-make. 'Coming out was the best business move I ever made,' says the 37-year-old mogul from his Studio City office... Meanwhile, in West Hollywood, most of the boys who brunch greeted the phrase 'gay mafia' with shrugged shoulders and situation comedy...There's never been a better moment to be young and homosexual in Hollywood." Boldface names are taking seriously the opportunity to advance a cause for social justice while the limelight is fixed on the future of Equal Marriage Rights. **Rosie O'Donnell** was among the first to jump in front of the bullet. On February 12, 2004, she married her longtime girlfriend in San Francisco, during the brief period when that city became the first in the nation to offer official marriage licenses. (Exactly one month later, the California Supreme Court halted the issuance of same-sex marriage licenses.)

The Human Rights Campaign tapped mother-daughter team **Ellen and Betty Degeneres** to rally familial support around the decision to come out, and in 2005 **Heath Ledger** and **Jake Gyllenhaal** courageously played gay cowboys in *Brokeback Mountain*.

Then, early in 2006, PFLAG initiated a major ad campaign centered on the close relationships that celebrities have with their GLBT loved ones. Among the notables were **Rosario Dawson** and **Ben Affleck**, and **Congressmen Dick Gephardt** and **Gregory Meeks**. Meanwhile, the country is still waiting for **Vice President Dick Cheney** to support his openly gay daughter, **Mary**. *—JSF*



STYLING & MAKEUP BY JOEY LYNN ACOSTA & MIRIAM HAIMOWITZ

> PHOTOGRAPHY BY VESTA GOODARZ LIGHTING BY TOM WINTER

CLASSIC BEAUTY

Black bubble skirt by **Santiago Couture** Black & white Swarovski crystal and pearl necklace by **Cristian Casciano Designs** (\$200) Veil and top—stylists own

RELAXED ELEGACE

ELEGACE Tuxedo bustier with lace by Santiago Couture White ball skirt with organza overlay by Santiago Couture Pearl flower and crystal necklace by Cristina Casciano Designs (\$150) Vintage shoes by Dyeable

SWEET ROMANCE ON HIM: Shantung double breasted suit by Emiliano Santillan Shoes-models own.

ON HER: Vintage cocktail dress Shoes by **Christian Louboutin** Black & white Swarovski crystal and pearl necklace by **Cristian Casciano Designs** (\$200)

OH HAPPY DAY ON HIM: Short-sleeved tuxedo shirt by Emiliar Bowtie by Brooks Brothers

ON HER: White cotton strapless bridal bustier by Santiago Couture Double strand mother-of-pearl and Swarovski crystal necklace with vintage clasp by Cristina Casciano Designs

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BY ROWENA YOW

The phrase "traditional wedding" brings to many minds a white dress, tiered cake, cocktail reception, and so on.

But what if it instead means a red dress, ceremonial figs and the lighting of firecrackers?

For many newly engaged couples, blending familial culture with a modern wedding style presents a tricky challenge. In a nation as diverse as the United States, with interracial coupling-thankfullymore socially acceptable than ever, colorful ethnic backgrounds are common.

What if you want to get married in a breathtaking, scoop-necked, pearl-encrusted white wonder, while your mother expects to see you wed in a kimono?

You want white bouquets-while your family sees white and thinks death.

You're Jewish, and love the hora, but a fear of heights means absolutely no chair dancing.



Infusing a wedding with culture is more than a wonderful way to share a personal celebration with guests-it's a tribute to the families who have come together. But how do you blend culture and modernity into a pleasing whole?

Needless to say, the stars of the wedding are the bride and groom. Don't forget that it is your day and no matter how much you may love your Granny Papadakis, it doesn't mean you should suddenly start serving lamb at your wedding after years of devout vegetarianism.

At the same time, the little things do count. Even the smallest attention to detail and outside-the-package thinking can elevate an otherwise cookie-cutter wedding into a distinctive affair that reflects the uniqueness of its celebrated couple and ensures an unforgettable impression.

Painting henna dye (that lasts a month) on the hands and feet of an Indian bride may seem a bit old-world, strewing flower petals around the floor to symbolize fertility and prosperity is a lovely touch.

- Vietnamese weddings aren't quite complete until the mother of the bride presents her daughter with pink chalk to symbolize a rosy future for the couple.
- A particularly sweet **French** custom is for the groom to first walk his mother down the aisle before arriving at the altar.
- The Dutch create "wish trees" at their weddings: At the reception a beautiful tree branch is placed next to the bride and groom's table, and paper leaves attached to pieces of colorful ribbon are placed at each guest's place setting. Guests write their special wish for the happy couple on their leaves, which the bride and groom can then read and hang on their "wish tree."
- In African weddings, delicate cowrie shells—which represent purity and beauty and add an appealing decorative effect to the ceremony-are scattered among the guests' tables.

In many cultures, both the bride and the groom add little ethnic flourishes to their outfits on the Big Day.

- Both an Irish bride and groom wear claddagh rings, which depict a heart held by two hands and adorned by a crown to symbolize a union "crowned" with love.
- The colors of many Native American weddings hold par-ticular meaning. While the bride may wear a white gown if she chooses, hues of white, yellow, blue and black will be pinned in her hair to signify East, West, South and North. Bringing them together imbues the new bride with the strength of the Earth Mother.
 - Scottish wedding tradition dictates that the groom and his family wear traditional tartans, evoking the pride of their clan.

In Czech weddings, the bridesmaids make a wreath of rosemary (instead of the traditional veil) for the bride to wear during the reception.

In Greek weddings, both the bride and groom are decked with crowns of gold and gorgeous orange blossoms.

Platters of traditional food can be elegantly interspersed with more typical wedding fare so that guests have the opportunity to experience the cultures of both the bride and groom during the reception. In fact, instead of the typical beef or chicken dish, one might consider serving a meaningful ethnic menu.

- Ducks and geese are known to mate for life, which makes them the perfect symbols for fidelity and honor in Korean weddings. They are often incorporated into the ceremony as main dishes, served with traditional juices or alcoholic beverages such as sangria or sake to accentuate the customs.
- In Chinese weddings, it is customary for the bride to serve tea to her parents and her new in-laws as a symbol of deference.

Readings by the bride and groom in their ethnic languages can be particularly striking to the guests in attendance. When vocalists sing in these languages, the effect is greater still. Traditional dance or instrumental performances—especially when performed by the wedding part—imbue the ceremony and reception with a extra degree of personal meaning.

A nice parting touch is a gift for your guests that reflects your heritage: silver fortune cookie place-card holders, Trinity Knot Celtic votive candles, "Novia" and "Novio" tasting flutes, Italian candy-coated almonds wrapped in delicate pouches of tulle.

Who has Spoken with (or Written for) Citizen Culture Magazine?

comedian Bill Maher actor Martin Sheen actress Laura Linney actor Christian Bale senator John McCain director David O. Russell NFL star Shaun Alexander Saturday Night Live's Kevin Nealon Playboy Playmate Divini Rae Sorenson





Perspectives for the Young Professional Citizen Culture www.citizenculture.com



Per-Issue Editorial Breakdown:

- 40% GLBT Weddings
- **30%** Interracial / Interfaith / Destination Weddings
- 20% Honeymoons, New Wedding Fashions
- 10% "Extraordinary Engagements"

Strategic Reader Outreach:

Media Kit: Part One

Expected Launch: 2007 / New York City 100,000 Mininum Launch Circulation

Next Launches:

San Francisco and Philadelphia Minimum Circ: 50-100K each Date: TBD

Future Regional Editions:

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- Los Angeles Atlanta
- Las Vegas - Washington, D.C.

- Controlled, free and retail circulation
- Political and legal advocacy
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- News racks in prime foot-traffic areas Constant media / public relations
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United States Census Bureau

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www.withthisring-magazine.com/advertise

53% of all LGBT Americans are ages 18-44.

~ The Gay & Lesbian Atlas by Gary J. Gates and Jason Ost (Urban Institute, 2004)

56% of all LGBT consumers sampled agreed that they trust brands more from progressive companies – with 41% reporting they "strongly agree."

~ Harris Interactive/Witeck-Combs Communication Survey (2001)

"A sharply higher percentage of gays and lesbians decide to marry than heterosexuals of marrying age."

~ Gary Gates, Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law; Co-Author, The Gay & Lesbian Atlas (Urban Institute)

"About 25% of gay couples have children."

~ Gary Gates, Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law; Co-Author, The Gay & Lesbian Atlas (Urban Institute)

Household Income of Same-Sex Couples (by Education Level) \$250,000 \$200,000 \$190,868 Sources: Gaydemographics.org; United States Census Bureau (2000) \$150,000 \$136.566 \$108,858 \$97,970 \$100,000 \$70,442 \$66,442 \$62,814 \$54.072 \$50,000 \$0 HS Graduate Less than 1 Yr. 1+ Yr. College A.A. B.A. Master's Ph.D. or Professional College (No degree) Degree Doctorate (M.D., J.D., etc)

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