

An interview with ERIC MARCUS, author of *Is It a Choice?*

IS IT A CHOICE?

It's not as simple as "yes" or "no." We all make choices about how we conduct our lives and what we do with our God-given feelings, including our feelings of sexual attraction. However, we *don't* choose our feelings of sexual attraction any more than we choose our eye color or right- or left-handedness.

I could choose to pretend to be heterosexual. I wouldn't like it, and I doubt my female partner would like it. The only people who would be satisfied are those who wish they could wave their magic wands and make homosexuality disappear. I'm not living my life to make these people happy, so *my* choice is to live my life honestly and openly. And I'd like to know how that hurts anyone?

WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON THE CURRENT DEBATE OVER GAY MARRIAGE?

Gay marriage is a red herring. If you ask the people who are leading the fight against extending legal rights to gay and lesbian couples, you'll find that they're motivated by a religiously-based opposition to homosexuality, period. They're making cynical use of the gay marriage issue to raise money and organize opposition against gay people in general. If they had their way, gay people would be forced to "repent" for their so-called sins and compelled to commit to a life of celibacy. And try asking these anti-gay fanatics what should be done with gay people if we don't repent and/or remain celibate. From what I've heard, their final solution for gay people sounds less than Christian.

DO YOU EVER GET DISCOURAGED BY THINGS LIKE THE PASSAGE OF STATE LAWS BANNING GAY MARRIAGE?

I like to take the long view when it comes to the struggle for equal rights for gay people. And from that perspective, these are the best of times.

That said, I certainly get disgusted and angry when political leaders use me and other gay people for personal gain. But that disgust and anger just motivate me, and millions of other people like me, as well as our loved ones, to work harder to change attitudes and laws. We're not going away. We're not going back in the closet. So unless the government is prepared to lock us up or ship us off to Syria, you might as well learn to live with us.

SHOULD GAY PEOPLE BE ALLOWED TO HAVE KIDS?

Straight people should be grateful we're not debating *their* right to have kids. Did you know that anecdotal evidence suggests that more than 99 percent of criminals and child molesters have been raised by heterosexuals?

I think gay people should be subject to the same laws and regulations regarding children—having them, adopting them, raising them—as straight people. I'd like to see the evidence that suggests otherwise.

HOW HAVE THINGS CHANGED FOR GAY PEOPLE SINCE YOU WROTE YOUR FIRST BOOK ON THE SUBJECT BACK IN THE MID-1980S?

So much has changed and I'd be happy to go into excruciating detail if you like, but let me start by simply saying that what's different now is that gay people aren't the oddities we once were. In 1986 we were still invisible enough to the general public that people could get away with thinking we were somehow fundamentally different, even creepy, by comparison to the average heterosexual. But as my grandmother used to say, "now gay people are everywhere" and we're nothing special.

Let me tell you a quick story I read about a newspaper columnist and his six-year-old son who accidentally crossed paths with the New York City gay pride parade this past June. The columnist and his son came upon the parade just as a car, filled with rather exotically-dressed gay men, drove by. The boy became very agitated and said to his father: "Daddy, those people aren't wearing seatbelts!" He demanded that his father report the lawbreakers to the policeman standing at the corner because he didn't want them to get hurt if they got into an accident.

HOW DO YOU EXPLAIN GAY REPUBLICANS AND GAY PEOPLE WHO ACTIVELY WORK AGAINST GAY RIGHTS?

I can't.