

# 2012 MCC Creative Writing Contest

## Nonfiction Category

**First Place:** “*In Favor of Same Sex Marriage,*” by William Cromwell

As a gay male I am often posed with the question “Why is gay marriage and equality such a huge issue, and what does it have to do with who is president of the United States when marriage is a religious issue and not a rights issue?” After being asked this so many times it seems like it wouldn’t be so hard to answer, but I always have to sit back and think to myself what I need to say to get my points across. I always go into a kind of an outline in my mind and first, talk about the party the president belongs to and the stance of equality from both of the major parties: democrats vs. republicans. Next is the government benefits of marriage, and then there are religious points.

The thing to start off with is that when there is a democrat or liberal president, GLBT persons have a better chance of progression to obtain equality protection just like every other minority group of people such as women, African Americans, people with mental illness or handicaps and so on. Whereas if the president is republican or conservative, who often bring their religious beliefs to office with them, that president is more like to block bills or amendments that will include GLBT people in equality laws.

Married couples are allowed to make medical decisions, should their spouse become unable to make the decision for themselves. They are also allowed spousal insurance, and to jointly file taxes to their benefit. This is discrimination against GLBT people as a result of not being legally recognized as spouses. To bring it into light, my partner and I have been together for eighteen years, in most states if something were to happen to him, I would not be allowed to know what is going on with him if something should happen, unless a power of attorney is in place. Also, if I were to become unemployed, instead of being able to be allowed to be on his insurance, I would have to find private insurance for myself, which is usually quite a bit more expensive.

Often times I have to get the person who asks me about it, to narrow down, and define religion. Then I further explain that from a religious view point, the majority of Christian churches say that homosexuality is wrong, let alone same sex marriage; however there are many other religions, and even denominations and sections of those denominations that are inconsistent with that idea. For example Hinduism and paganism do not shame homosexuality. On the other hand, most of the Christian churches regularly speak out against homosexuality and same sex marriage. There are a lot of inconsistencies with in Christianity. Take Methodists for example, one church will go out and protest gay marriage demonstrations, whereas another openly welcomes them.

So now we have narrowed it down to one question. Is marriage a government issue, or is it a religious one? I always state that if it is a religious issue then the government should not recognize any marriage or make money on it, and that all of the decisions of whether a couple is allowed to marry or divorce should be left to the church. On the other hand if it is a government issue; first, a same sex couple that loves each other so much should be afforded the same privileges as a heterosexual couple, second religion should not have any say in the matter. This

goes with the first amendment of the constitution, which intended to be a barrier to separate church and state.

## JUDGE'S COMMENTS

"In Favor of Same-Sex Marriage" weaves personal experience into this argument piece. The author takes the reader through his response to those who ask why marriage equality matters. He explains why electing a democratic president is critical to obtaining marriage equality and discusses the separation of church and state. However, the most compelling aspect of the essay is when the author clearly explains privileges afforded to heterosexual couples that he does not receive. This strengthens his argument by giving it a human face.

*Elissa Cahn was the contest judge. She is an MFA Fiction student at Western Michigan University, where she teaches composition and serves as the nonfiction editor for Third Coast. Her work has appeared in: NANO Fiction, Midwestern Gothic, Harpur Palate, and Quarterly West. She is currently at work on a story collection.*