

"They make it a crime to love someone what a twisted world this is, they could never bring us down for all forms of love will always exist," (Samantha Gabriel, Yahoo Answers Blog)



Law Before Humanity

By Jenny DuBois
Photos By Travis Gayler

“Being married to Elke has changed my life,” Margaret LaRue said. LaRue, 45, married the love of her life, Elke Reidling, 40, on June 17, 2008 in the Norwalk courthouse surrounded by a frenzy of media.

This was a historic day for the couple and society. It was the first day marking the legal wedding of same-sex couples in California. The pair was previously united in San Francisco in 2004, but the two women were soon frustrated when their marriage wasn't

sanctioned by the state. LaRue said they were hopeful for a change.

What if you couldn't marry the person you love? What if you weren't allowed to visit the person you loved in the hospital because they weren't considered family? What if the person you loved was killed in an accident and you weren't notified because you aren't legally bound as a couple? For some, the right to marry a partner has created a completely different meaning to their relationship.

“When the Justice of Peace announced us as spouses, everything changed. It didn't change our relationship drastically, but we experienced a new bond.” Growing up, LaRue faced many of the struggles and pressures that gay and lesbian young adults experience today. She said that she was born this way and living in our society can be tough, but it's something you can't change. That is the struggle the gay and lesbian community has been dealing with for more than twenty years. June 26, 2008 marked the historic decision of California as the second state to allow civil union and marriage rights to same sex couples. A decision that affects the entire nation, a decision that allows for change and acceptance. But most of all, a decision that creates a permanent bond between two loving individuals.

In the U.S., 44 states have laws restricting marriage to a man and a woman, and 19 states have constitutional bans against same-sex marriages. This November, eight more states are up to vote on constitutional amendments banning same-sex marriage. Massachusetts and California are the only states that permit these couples to marry, but once they leave or move to another state, their marriage is not recognized. Although society has come a long way in terms of equality for gay and lesbian couples, there still is a long way to go.

“Some aspects of the community are treating our marriage as a normal thing. There are still plenty of raised eyebrows and some of the discrimination didn't stop. It is this knowledge that allows me to continually deal with the mistreatment, the misrepresentation and the disrespect that still consumes our society,” LaRue explains. “This is probably very similar to many others who face discrimination for their own lifestyle choices. Whether we are too

far, too white, too dark, too old, too tattooed, too young, too poor or too whatever society wants to hate this time, we all must allow freedom and equality to win over our fears.”

Many couples, as well as gay and lesbian rights activists, are fighting to keep same-sex marriage legal. “One major argument we have is the idea that they could stop something that has been sanctioned by the state. I don't understand giving us rights and taking them away,” LaRue said.

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Organizations such as GLAAD (the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation), The Center in Long Beach, and the Gay and Straight Alliance at LBCC are working to create a voice for the gay and lesbian community, all realizing that this decision will likely change the institution of marriage forever.

“My partner, Elke, and I firmly believe that we can not gain our equal rights without the support and action of the straight community. Being a lesbian means being me and isn't that our entire goal in life? To discover who we are and live according to that knowledge,” LaRue said.

The future of these couples was finalized on the November ballot as Proposition 8 passed. Gay and Lesbian couples continue to fight to help society understand that they just