

Gay and Lesbian Rights - 1997

...gay people, too, are made in God's image...
made, that is, by God, in God's image...
and their lives and their monogamous relationships...
can partake of the same kidushah, the same sense of holiness,
as that found in the monogamous, committed, caring and loving relationships of heterosexuals.
(M. Feshbach, "In God's Image—Judaism and Homosexuality," in Kulanu,
New York: UAHC Press, 1996, p. 12)

Issue

Lesbian and gay couples are routinely denied the same legal, economic and social privileges with their correlative tax benefits that are accorded married heterosexual couples. Examples include: shared medical insurance, pension arrangements, certain joint property and inheritance rights, family hospital privileges, custody arrangements for children and the right to sue for wrongful death.

Background

At the 38th Assembly (1991), Women of Reform Judaism resolved to support legislation and regulations providing lesbian women and gay men with civil rights protections, particularly in regard to employment, housing and public accommodation. In 1993 the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC) observed that "committed lesbian and gay couples are denied the benefits routinely accorded to married heterosexual couples." The UAHC resolved to support legislation that affords individuals in committed lesbian and gay partnerships spousal benefits, the right to rear children and a "means of legally acknowledging such relationships." On February 5, 1996, the Executive Committee of the Commission on Social Action interpreted the 1993 resolution to mean civil marriage. The Central Conference of American Rabbis in 1996 adopted a resolution to support the right of gay and lesbian couples to share fully and equally in the rights of civil marriage and resolved to oppose governmental efforts to ban gay and lesbian civil marriage.

Resolution

In accordance with WRJ's commitment to the idea that all human beings are created *betsalem elohim* (in the divine image) and entitled to share fully and equally in the rights and benefits accorded to committed heterosexual couples in our society, Women of Reform Judaism calls upon its affiliates to:

- 1) Inform their members about the areas in which lesbian and gay couples are subject to discrimination and how such discrimination can be alleviated.
- 2) Urge support of federal, state, provincial and local legislation that will require spousal benefits for lesbian and gay individuals in committed relationships.
- 3) Seek the enactment of legislation in all necessary jurisdictions that would legalize same sex civil marriage.