

The Homosexual Choice

Alongside the gay marriage propaganda machine, it has become universally popular among gay people to assert that homosexuality is not a choice. We are born gay, just like some people are born black, and we have no choice in the matter. All that is left to do is accept or rebel against the circumstance. This concept is so important to the contemporary gay psyche that individuals who assert otherwise, usually anti-gay propagandists, are promptly condemned. The media happily serves as the forum for this contentious pseudo-debate.

Propaganda is endemic to modernity. Propaganda must always be properly considered, read, and evaluated, however, according to its subtext—its underlying meaning. What exactly is the propagandist saying beneath the hype? Anti-gay propagandists, who suggest that homosexuality is a choice gay people make, conceal the assumption, just beneath the surface, that gay people don't deserve toleration or acceptance, because the profane choice is optional, like alcoholism is optional. Clearly, this subtextual comment is absurd. Whether gay people deserve toleration or acceptance has absolutely nothing to do with whether it is optional. Profession is optional—one can be a secretary or a hit man—and yet the relative desirability of secretary versus hit man has nothing to do with the fact that either profession is optional.

Why don't gay propagandists counter with this fact? Why do they instead focus on the issue of choice? In order to figure this out, we have to consider the subtext of the gay propaganda surrounding the concept of choice. The propaganda reads something like this: homosexuality is no choice. All gay people will tell you that they were born that way—it never presented itself to them as a choice. The only choice involved is whether to accept the facts on the ground or not.

Well, first of all, by countering with this particular argument, gay people miss the chance to criticize the anti-gay assertion that just because something might be optional, it is therefore not deserving of any kind of approbation. They let it stand. I have even heard pro-gay speakers suggest it overtly. The subtext of the gay propaganda is that being gay resembles a genetic fact, which science can't alter as yet, and over which the gay person has no control.

The second layer of subtext in the gay propaganda, implied by the first, reads as follows. Given the biological fact of homosexuality, a gay person and the people around him or her have to accept that fact or face a continuous state of stressful rebellion against it. Healthy gay people learn to accept their homosexuality, just like a woman with breast cancer must learn to accept a mastectomy. We can now drag the entire message of the gay propagandists out into the light. Homosexuality is not a choice. Believe us, if it *were* a choice, we definitely would have chosen otherwise. (I am not making this up. Read the blogs; ask gay people yourself.) Gay people almost universally use the verb *accept* to refer to the process of dealing with their own homosexuality. "Lord, give me the strength to change the things I can change, the ability to accept the things I cannot change, and the wisdom to know the difference." So, we can see, gay people *themselves* think of homosexuality as a disorder akin to a genetic disease.

My story is radically different. When I was twelve years old, I chose to be gay. I was on a bus, going to my grandmother's house, and I started thinking about the sexual choices I had on my plate. And I chose homosexuality, because it was the most appealing choice. It was what I wanted. Also, I choose it anew every single day. I wake up and I lie there thinking, and one of the things I think is how lovely it is to be a homosexual man. I thank God that I got to make that choice, and that I chose apparently quite wisely, because my choice has made me very happy.

I have tested my choice, and I reconsidered it when I was younger. I made out with girls. I slept with a woman who was a close friend. I sustained an erection, and had a great time with her, but it was not enticing enough for me to change my mind. We even considered getting married and having children together. However, that never materialized; we both chose to go our own way. One might argue I was actually bisexual, and that's how I was able to choose homosexuality. But I could have chosen bisexuality, and I did not. I chose homosexuality.

Furthermore, if homosexuality is disordered, like drug abuse, then give me more. I love being homosexual. It has contributed to a life so fulfilling, so fantastic, that I am ready to die at forty-seven because I just don't think one person deserves so much happiness. If I die tomorrow, I die happy. I have even written emails to friends and family asserting the *superiority* of homosexuality. That didn't go over well. Apparently it is a universally held belief that heterosexuality is clearly superior to homosexuality, not the other way around. Perhaps I am simply overexuberant about my choice.

This suggests that my assertion that homosexuality is a choice, that I chose it, is itself an opposing propagandistic argument. However, I have offered up all the subtext in *my*

argument. I have not concealed it. The subtext reads: *Homosexuality is awesome*. Yet I don't remember ever hearing that from a gay person before. Even my own seventy-four-year-old life partner claims he would rather have been straight. He has said outright that his life has been a compromise, largely because of his sexuality, and that everything in his life is second choice. It often seems that I am the only homosexual I know of who thinks being homosexual is first choice. Judging by the gay people I see represented in the media, writers on blogs, comments to articles on news outlets, all the other gay people seem to agree with my partner.

However, my propaganda does have some theoretical support. In fact, it has every bit as much theoretical support as does the propaganda of my opponents. All they argue is that they didn't experience being gay as a choice. They must feel that much of their lives resembles a tempest-tossed boat on a turbulent sea. However, I can offer evidence from my life, which every sexual person can empathize with, in favor of my feeling that it has been a choice of mine.

The first time I encountered a man performing anilingus on another man, I was appalled. I wondered at how filthy, and potentially unhealthy, that activity was. Within a year, I had developed the headspace for the activity, and while it is not my favorite sexual act, under the right circumstances I have something of a lech for it. The process between my first glimpse of anilingus and my full-blown participation in it was a *conscious* one. It was a transformation I chose to engage in, and then did so successfully.

One might object that anilingus is not a sexuality; it is a sexual practice. However, Leathersexuality *is* a sexuality. It is made up of certain desires and sexual headspaces overarching a large group of sexual practices. Gay Leathersexuality consists of male-on-male desires and activities, but the desires are for a certain kind of hyper- or strongly masculine man. So

calling oneself a Leatherman resembles calling oneself gay in all the important ways. When I was young, I knew nothing about Leathermen; I learned about them later. I had to actively seek them out, engage them, and learn about them, in an effort to develop my own Leathersexuality. Now, Leather inhabits my soul, just like being male inhabits my soul. But it was a choice. I developed my interest from scratch. If analingus and Leathersexuality are choices, as they clearly are, why isn't being gay a choice?

It hasn't been easier to be gay anytime in the last 1,400 years than it has been post-1969. Still, gay people whine about how miserable a state it is to be gay, how it is not a choice by any means, which suggests just how deep self-loathing in the gay community runs. However, if you need any convincing that being gay is a choice, consider the world pre-1969. Most gay people lived perfectly normal heterosexual lives, replete with house, car, children, friends, the works. They did not come out. They chose heterosexuality. They passed. They may have dreamed at times about another world (a world which we now have), but they clearly chose heterosexuality. Gay people younger than me haven't the foggiest clue how good they've got it.

All propaganda ultimately distorts the truth. That's the nature of propaganda. I chose to engage in propaganda earlier in this essay to fight fire with fire. If a gay man says to me, "Being gay is no choice," I snap back, "Yes, it is, and I chose it." If, on the other hand, a gay man were to say to me, "OK, I believe there might be at least some element of choice to it, but I just didn't experience it that way in my own life," I will relent.

The truth about the issue at hand—defensive gay outbursts, psychotherapeutic opinion, and popular belief notwithstanding—*must* lie somewhere between the bipolar propagandas. I'm quite sure that I was aware of a sexual in-

terest in men before I embraced it in that bus at twelve. But embrace it I did, which was tantamount to choosing. Perhaps the inherent biological urge toward same-gender sex acts synergistically with a pattern of endorsement of that sexuality on the part of the individual. A full-blown sexuality at fourteen years, for example, might be the result of *both* predestination and free will. This would be the case even in individuals who neurotically detest their same-gender feelings. In such an individual, only part of them detests those feelings. Another part, the part that activates when the young person becomes aroused, for example, approves of the feelings.

Whatever the case, shame on the psychology profession for resting on a simpleminded “no choice” answer to the question. We *know* psychology is hopelessly subtle and complex. Why would we stop thinking about this question once we find such an easy out? “Sexual orientation comes out of nowhere, full-blown from the head of Zeus.” I chose it, however, even if my choice was only available to me as the result of the genetics-influenced biology of my mind. The choice to develop and sustain my interest in men, instead of reversing course and developing an interest in women, was my free will in action. And certainly, my decision to live life as a gay man, instead of marrying a woman and posing as a straight person, was a reasoned, heartfelt choice I made from scratch, without any influence of biology.

All that matters to me is that the reader take away from this essay that I *like* being gay. When you have lived in this world as a gay man for thirty-five years as I have, you will come to agree with me that most gay men really wish they weren't gay. They grudgingly *accept* it. That's what the no-choice propaganda embodies: self-loathing. I've proposed two alternatives, one propagandistic, the other a set of possibilities

that must approximate the truth on the subject. I love gay men, but I despise people plagued with self-loathing. Imagine how difficult it is to live with that contradiction.

— PUP

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