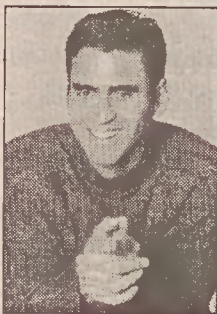


# Frank takes aim at San Fran gay marriages

Barney Frank calls California's same-sex ceremonies a 'diversion'

by Michael Alvear



Barney Frank is so wrong. He told the Associated Press that the granting of marriage licenses in San Francisco could damage efforts to defend the legalization of marriage in Massachusetts.

Huh?

Barney Frank is one of our most articulate spokespeople. On TV, I've seen him tie our opponents into such knots they walk away from the studio like drunken pretzels. But when Frank called the San Francisco phenomenon a "diversion" from our "real struggle," the man went from being pitch perfect to being tone-deaf.

A diversion? The spectacle in San Francisco was the best thing that's come out of gay marriage since Liza filed for divorce.

Some call it civil disobedience; others call it breaking the law. Some call it upholding the state's constitution against discrimination; others call it breaking the state's law against same sex marriage. Call it what you want, but recognize its enormous symbolic importance: It's the Stonewall of the 21st century.

Only instead of the streets erupting in violent protest, they're erupting in spontaneous celebration. Instead of fighting back,

we're loving back. Instead of exchanging blows we're exchanging vows.

All over the country people are witnessing the spectacle of thousands of loving couples waiting in line, thankful, grateful, reverential toward an institution they're supposed to be sullyng. People all over the country are dying to get out of marriage, and here we are witnessing thousands killing themselves to get in. Has anyone seen this many people this happy to get married?

How many straight couples would camp overnight in bone-chilling weather for the chance of a marriage license?

As straight people witness this incredible devotion toward a sacred institution, a question has to occur to them: How could anybody that loving and committed be a detriment to marriage?

Not only was middle America introduced to some of the tax paying, law abiding neighbors they've been so scared of, it also produced a rash of rather surprising public statements from other parts of the country. The best was clearly Chicago's Mayor Richard Daley.

In a press conference, the mayor scoffed at the suggestion that same-sex couples would undermine the institution of marriage. "Marriage has been undermined by divorce," he said rather testily. "You're not going to lecture me about marriage. People should look at their own life. Don't blame the gay and lesbian, transgender and transsexual community."

That's a diversion, Barney?

And on top of that, other areas of the country are thinking about issuing marriage licenses (Chicago) or already doing it (New Mexico — though the courts there put a restraining order on it).

San Francisco's marriage "Hearthquake" is a lesson in the evolution of civil disobedience. We've gone from "sit-ins" to "I Do-ins." Random acts of kindness are pouring in. Stonewall delivered punches, Hearthquake delivered flowers. People all over the country are sending flowers to the couples standing in line. Imagine, strangers sending bouquets to strangers. The grassroots movement is being dubbed "Flowers from the heartland."

Patti Ellis, a mother with a gay son, sent a bouquet to ... well, she couldn't say, really. It didn't matter. "Just pick somebody in line," she told Church Street Flowers, who promised they'd pick a couple and hug them for good measure. Patti, the creator of a website for parents of gay children ([www.familyacceptance.com](http://www.familyacceptance.com)), lives in Fayetteville, Ga. She knows people all over the country — Michigan, Kentucky, Minneapolis, who have sent flowers to anonymous couples. Why did Patti do it? "Because I feel so helpless," she told me. "It's a way for me to give congratulations to an event my own son might be prevented from ever taking part in."

That's a diversion, Barney?

You're wrong. The "I Do-in" isn't a distraction. It's the main event.

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