

## "Marriage: Sacred? Says who?" from page 15

status quo. Heterosexuality is not the only sexuality and is certainly not a norm. Sexuality is diverse and wonderful, and relationships of love are established every day between persons of any and all genders. These relationships are no less "normal" than any other relationship. Appeals to their detrimental effects on society are founded on irrational homophobic assumptions about sexual minorities.

It is clear that marriage has undergone major changes throughout the centuries. Marriage 3000 years ago was primarily a commercial transaction – a transfer of property from a woman's father to another man (her new husband). It remained this way in most places more or less until the end of the 19th century. Even today, this "property transfer" exists in some places and vestiges of it exist in our own U.S. marriage culture. Look at the "giving away" of a bride by her father, the tradition of the bride's father paying for the wedding (seemingly analogous to the dowry) and the taking of her husband's last name by a woman. All of these are signs of ownership of women. We have so diluted these signs today that we often don't even realize their origins. We must not let ourselves think that these traditions have no effect on us today. The commercial origin of marriage still affects the way men perceive women. In fact, until 1976 any woman could be legally raped by her husband in the U.S. It was her duty as his

wife to provide sex, and he could initiate it whenever he wanted. North Carolina was the *last* state to outlaw marital rape, and it waited until 1993 to finally do so. It's a good thing the institution of marriage *has* changed over the years.

The institution of marriage has changed dramatically in this century, and it's not finished yet. The sacredness of marriage is beyond the scope of the government's judgment. The institution itself, when restricted solely to contracts between "one man and one woman," violates principles of equality and dignity, not to mention common sense notions about the normal healthy diversity of sexuality. Those who call marriage misogynistic and patriarchal are not delusional. Only relatively recently have women been gaining civil rights. As late as 1940, married women were not allowed to make legal contracts in 12 states - we no longer disallow this right. Or what about anti-miscegenation laws dictating the illegality of interracial relations and marriage? The U.S. Supreme Court put an end to bans on interracial relationships in *Loving v. Virginia* in 1967.

Marriage today still contains remnants of patriarchy and misogyny. To keep it the same would do an injustice to women (and indeed all people) everywhere. Same-gender marriages would strengthen society by finally allowing the State to acknowledge the validity

of diverse sexuality and the rights of consenting adults to make marital commitments.

When interracial marriage laws were struck down in 1967, there were protests then, just like there are protests now about same-gender marriage. There were politicians who blamed "activist judges." Many privileged white people felt that the battle for equal civil rights for African-Americans was not their battle. Privileges gives people this right – the right not to think about discrimination, hatred, fear of death or injury and harassment. The same privilege allows many of my family, friends and colleagues to think that same-gender marriage is not a civil rights issue. Some of them even make speeches decrying "activist judges" in Massachusetts and elsewhere. These protests should not deter advocates for marriage equality. They are based on the same bigotry, homophobia, ignorance and even maliciousness that have oppressed women, people of color, the poor and LGBTIQ folk for centuries. I have hope though that the U.S. Supreme Court will one day intervene and declare laws banning same-gender marriage unconstitutional in a similar fashion. Am I an extremist? You bet. And indeed, as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. so eloquently said, "The question is not whether we will be extremists, but what kind of extremists we will be. Will we be extremists for hate or for love? Will we be extremists for the preservation of injustice or for the extension of justice?" I certainly know where I stand – do you? •

# Celebration Week: April 4 - 7

Celebration Week has been a UNC tradition of the LGBTQ and allied community for decades, and the GLBT-SA as well as numerous other student groups have organized a variety of events for the campus community. This is an opportunity for people from all walks of life to come together to celebrate diversity in all its forms, specifically in the range of LGBTQ sexual and gender identities. Although we have a long way to go in the pursuit of social justice and equality for all people, including sexual minorities, this week is a time for us to acknowledge how far we've come and how much there is indeed to celebrate. It is not just a week for LGBTQ-identified people. We aim to build a coalition of support that includes a large allied component as well. We hope to see a large turnout of students from all different walks of life.

### Sunday, April 4

7 p.m. - Potluck Celebration and Movie Night, Bingham 103

### Monday, April 5

11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m. - Brown bag lunch discussion on LGBTQ legal rights featuring attorney Sharon Thompson, Union Room 3206A

8 p.m. - Drag Show, Great Hall. \$5 admission.

### Tuesday, April 6

11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m. - Brown bag lunch discussion on violence in LGBTQ communities co-sponsored with Orange County Rape Crisis Center, Union Room 3102

7:30 p.m. - Augusten Burroughs speaks, Carroll 111

### Wednesday, April 7

10 a.m. - 2 p.m. - GLBT-SA and LGBTQ Office in the Pit with Advocates for Human Rights and Hunger Lunch Campus Y committee

5 - 6:30 p.m. - Social Hour and a Half (SHAH), Union Room 3201

### Thursday, April 8

11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m. - Panel discussion on the intersections of faith, spirituality, and sexuality, New Union 3102

### Notes:

The Celebration Week Drag Show has been a long tradition of the LGBTQ and allied community at UNC and in past years has filled the Union Auditorium consistently with a wide and diverse range of students and faculty. The Drag Show will be a combination of professional and amateur acts and will serve to both celebrate a variety of interpretations of gender as well as to entertain.

Augusten Burroughs, *New York Times* bestselling author, has received nationwide acclaim for his books and as a public speaker. He will attract an audience of students and faculty from across many disciplines and will offer a keynote address for Celebration Week that will touch on issues significant to LGBTQ and allied audience members alike.