

Witnessing Margaret Court

Sophia Alex-Bailey. ABC pic of Margaret Court

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In my professional capacity as Co-Convenor of Rainbow Labor Tasmania and Co- Chairperson of The COPP (coming out proud program) I come up against many people wishing to oppose LGBTI issues and rights. Most recently those opposing the fundamental human right for LGBTI (Lesbian Gay bi-sexual Transgender and Intersex) community members to marry with no special treatment or requirements, just the same rights graced on our heterosexual friends and family.

Two weeks ago I attended the Senate enquiry in Victoria into Senator Hanson – Young’s bill to change the marriage act 1961 to allow marriage equality.

I sat opposite Senator Eric Abetz whilst he made his thoughts clear to me as to why he opposes these changes with great passion, whilst our rebuttal was colourful to say the least I still respected that this nation allows us all the quintessential right to be heard.

I then sat opposite Guy Barnett and had to listen to a tirade of anti-gay sentiment firing off his right wing views as to why this nation shouldn't wouldn't and couldn't include the rights of gay lovers to marry, the venom in his deliverance was well noted.

What came next was something so much more disturbing, introduced as one of Australia's living treasures I watched horrified as Margaret Court stood like a silent assassin speaking to a crowd wanting permission not only to oppose gay marriage but to affirm it was ok to treat LGBTI members with disgust and distain.

Mrs Court came across as a gentle, patriotic, loving grandmother that can easily draw you into her sermon until you listen carefully to her dialogue. My colleagues and I were astonished at her warnings to the congregation that came thick and fast as to what may happen to this great nation if gay marriage became legal. We also respectfully listened on as she quoted flawed statistics into the relationship between paedophilia, molestation and child abuse within the gay community and most disturbing the words, "beware of any one of them mentioning to your children at a time of confusion that they may be gay as that may be all they need to push them into that sinful lifestyle".

I have never seen anyone hiding behind the bible in their hand justify bigotry and hatred to others in recent times like I did Mrs Court.

She spoke of the success of her evangelical church to pray the gay away. I for one have tried that and found myself living a lie for everyone else but me. She spoke of those that believe of the choice to be gay, to just follow heterosexual life and eventually this will prevail.

I was convinced as a young gay woman this was a phase and that if I didn't act on it and entered heterosexual relationships it would subside, all that lead to was self-loathing and life threatening hatred not to mention the heart break for my then male partner and myself when I had to take ownership and decide the facts are I am gay and there was no choice to be made in it.

I now live with integrity, authenticity and an abundance of happiness.

Margaret Court would have us think these things mean nothing if you are not heterosexual, well ask my daughter and foster son that these things don't matter, they matter in every day that I smile through.

The bible she preached from also states beware of false prophets, I believe we witnessed one in her Thursday night.

God's book also states the devil comes to us in ways we know and readily accept, even in the form of a champion tennis player.

You will never convince decent caring members of society not just gay ones that it is ok to be bigoted and inspire hatred in others using the word of the lord as your defence. Call it what you will it breaches fundamental human rights and the rights in this country for a fair go for all.

Apparently gay marriage will even destroy this nation as we know it, that there will be a new stolen generation of children that will not know their biology yet my children have their biological fathers set firmly in their day to day lives.

All I ask for is unity in marriage, when I asked my same sex partner for their hand I meant it with all my heart and refused to say civil union or relationships register as the idea was put across that that should be enough but it wasn't and isn't. What I said was marry me, that can't possibly be a bad thing that hurts anyone.

As Mrs Court closed her eyes raised her hands and began prayer she asked god to protect Tasmania from my fellow LGBT community, next to me stood up a couple his hand in hers and the only sane words we heard for two hours were offered, "guy's keep up the fight, good luck dealing with what is just homophobia, and by the way, we will marry when you can".

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