The Few, The Proud, The Gays: Don't Ask, Don't Tell and the Trap of Tolerance

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THE FEW, THE PROUD, THE GAYS:
DON'T ASK, DON'T TELL AND THE TRAP OF TOLERANCE

SUZANNA DANUTA WALTERS*

I. THE ETHICS OF ANALOGY
II. ACTS, IDENTITIES, IMUTABILITIES
III. BEYOND GUNS AND TAFFETA

In 2010, the satirical news site The Onion put out two pieces “responding” to President Obama’s goal of repealing “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.” In one, a faux general gets on the faux news channel to argue against open service, saying “gays are too precious to risk in combat.” “Gays of America,” gravely intones the General, “are the only group left untouched by war. They’re special, pure, and rare, like a gleaming diamond or a snow-white colt. We must protect them... [we love them too much].” The other headline warns: “Repeal of ‘Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell’ Paves Way for Gay Sex Right on Battlefield, Opponents Fantasize.” The article goes on to quote a “soldier” who argues,

[t]he last thing I need after a 12-hour reconnaissance patrol is to know I’m hitting the showers with some guy who might be checking me out and who might, after seeing what I have to work with, find himself wondering if I too long for the firm yet tender embrace of another man.

Jon Stewart also skewered the anti-repeal diehards like Senator John McCain in segments portending the “Gaypocalypse,” while Daily Show regular John Oliver countered Stewart’s objections to anti-gay discrimination by repeatedly insisting (with handy signs),

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3. Id.
5. Id. (internal quotation marks omitted).
“[h]e is gay Jon” in discussing the dismissal of Dan Choi and other gay service members.\(^6\)

The attempted repeal of the odious policy of military exclusion emerges in this context of increased gay visibility (and not just among our progressive satirists), new “normalization,” and a more generalized integration of lesbians and gays into American culture.\(^7\) It is now more than forty years since the Stonewall riots, and there is no question that the America of the new millennium appears quite altered from that signal moment of frustration, when sexual and gender rebels—denied even the right to freely associate, much less share in the fullness of American life—erupted in street protests on a hot summer night.\(^8\) From nondiscrimination statutes and gay marriage (now fully legal in six states and the District of Columbia)\(^9\) to out gay celebrities and gay-themed cable networks, we have witnessed a veritable sea-change in American politics and culture.\(^10\)

Dig a bit deeper, however, and this seemingly brave new gay world reveals a half-finished project. For all of the clear changes, in both culture and society more broadly, many challenges remain. There may be gay wedding announcements in national papers but same-sex marriage is still decidedly illegal and unpopular in the vast majority of states, not to mention the federal government.\(^11\)

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8. See *American Experience: Stonewall Uprising* (PBS television broadcast Apr. 25, 2011), available at http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/stonewall/player/ (describing the Stonewall riots that began as protests against police raids and are now used to signify (simplistically perhaps) the beginning of the modern gay rights movement in the U.S.).


10. See Walters, *All the Rage*, supra note 7 (describing a more complete picture of this historic transformation); About Logo, *LOGO*, http://www.logotv.com/about/ (last visited Nov. 2, 2011) (detailing network specifically catering to a gay demographic).

state, California, even reversed itself on gay marriage, voting in an anti-gay marriage proposition that quickly challenged the marriages that were joyously celebrated only a few months earlier.\textsuperscript{12} Hate crimes continue to flourish;\textsuperscript{13} gay kids are still disproportionately likely to commit suicide and to be homeless,\textsuperscript{14} even as more gay youth come out and support services for them blossom; and the Employment Non-Discrimination Act still languishes in Congress.\textsuperscript{15} Even in the much-vaunted “gay-friendly” world of Hollywood and celebrity culture, precious few stars are openly gay, movies and television still feature more tokens than real characters, and the world of advertising continues to pretend gays simply do not exist.\textsuperscript{16}


\textsuperscript{14} There are various statistics on the higher rate of suicide among LGBT youth. Some state that LGBT youth are up to four times more likely to attempt suicide, whereas other sources state that one in three teens attempt suicide. \textit{Suicidal Signs & Facts, TREVOR PROJECT}, http://www.thetrevorproject.org/suicide-resources/suicidal-signs (last visited Nov. 2, 2011). On homelessness, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force reports that of the estimated 1.6 million homeless youth in the U.S., between twenty and forty percent are LGBT. \textit{NICHOLAS RAY ET AL., NAT’L GAY & LESBIAN TASK FORCE, LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL AND TRANSGENDER YOUTH: AN EPIDEMIC OF HOMELESSNESS} 1 (2006), available at http://www.thetaskforce.org/reports_and_research/homeless_youth. A recent large-scale study by the Children’s Hospital of Boston, published in the American Journal of Public Health, confirms the significantly higher rates of homelessness amongst LGBT youth. Heather L. Corliss et al., \textit{High Burden of Homelessness Among Sexual-Minority Adolescents: Findings from a Representative Massachusetts High School Sample}, 101 Am. J. PUB. HEALTH 1683, 1687 (2011).


\textsuperscript{16} \textit{See WALTERS, ALL THE RAGE, supra note 7, at 116–18, 287–88.}
Although I would never want to understate the very real changes hard-won by queer activists, the evidence is simply more tenuous and fractured than is immediately apparent. I would argue, instead, that contemporary homophobia is at once more insidious and curiously more explicit. It may no longer be easy to get away publicly with overt gay bashing (and all right-thinking people believe in equal rights and love their gay neighbors), but there remains not one schoolyard in America where “gay” (or “fag” or some variant) is not the epithet of choice.\(^\text{17}\) The most recent polls certainly reveal significant shifts around marriage rights, military service, and even “moral acceptability,” but for most of these issues, they are at best slim majorities, meaning a sizable minority still firmly come down on the “gays are immoral deviants” side of the equation.\(^\text{18}\) The new Virginia Governor, Bob McDonnell, removed sexual orientation from state anti-discrimination protections, and only a few news organizations covered it.\(^\text{19}\) Virginia’s Attorney General, Ken Cuccinelli, has gone even further, “urging” the state’s public colleges and universities to rescind policies that ban discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.\(^\text{20}\) A few years ago Scott Brown—the Massachusetts miracle boy adored by mainstream America—attacked fellow state senator Cheryl Jacques for her decision to have a baby with her female partner, saying the situation was “unusual for two women . . . in terms of what’s normal in today’s society.”\(^\text{21}\) If that is not open homophobia I do not know what is, and yet, it has hardly held him back in his move through political life.\(^\text{22}\) Outright opposition to gay equality—whether in the form of marriage equality, workplace equality, service equality, or sexual freedom—seems not to be a


barrier to political legitimacy at all. Just look at President Obama’s position on marriage equality—he is against it until he is for it sometime in the unspecified future, and he exhibited disturbing ease in inviting anti-gay leaders (e.g., Rick Warren) into the fold of official legitimacy.

Despite this more fraught reality, most gays and their allies believe access to marriage and the military are the brass ring of gay rights, and that once we have achieved these remaining goals, we will have essentially moved into a “post-gay” America. The predominant cultural narrative—among both the left and the right—is that the battle for gay rights has largely been won, and that this particular battlefront in the culture war is no longer a viable one. This narrative is made possible by the very real changes (both in policy and in public perception) and by the discourse of tolerance that sets the bar so low. For many commentators, the glass is more than half full, and there are just a few steps (federal marriage rights, inclusive military service, etc.) remaining in the quest for full inclusion. For example, longtime gay rights supporter and New York Times columnist Frank Rich recently wrote,

To a degree unimaginable as recently as 2004—when Karl Rove and George W. Bush ran a national campaign exploiting fear of gay people—there is now little political advantage to spewing
homophobia. Indeed, anti-gay animus is far more likely to repel voters than attract them. . . . Now that explicit anti-gay animus is an albatross, those who oppose gay civil rights are driven to invent ever loopier rationales for denying those rights, whether in the military or in marriage.  

Leslie Savan, a reliably progressive writer for The Nation, claims “the Republican Party that won the White House in 2004 by vowing to protect us from homosexual terrorists has simply lost on the entire issue.”  

For some, gays are close to full inclusion and acceptance. For these folks—gay and straight alike—the repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” (DADT) and the acquisition of marriage rights will give birth to the truly tolerant society that is in our reach.  

For others, however, all of these changes in the years since Stonewall leave us far from the early vision of an expansive and celebratory sexual freedom.  

For the more skeptical analysts, this is a dangerous moment of glib assimilation. The radical challenge to substantially dismantle homophobia gets dissipated in the rush toward “equality” and in the desire for “tolerance” or “acceptance” rather than sexual liberation or social transformation.  

32. The substantive differences between these two legal and political struggles is crucial to note, including, but not limited to, the site of the battlefield where the struggle for marriage rights is achieved through state politics, state legislatures, etc., and where the repeal of DADT is achieved through Oval Office initiatives and military approval; the symbolic salience of media-depicted “loving couples,” especially when figured with children, versus the more fraught image of the singular soldier; the fact that service in the military is not a “right” but a specialized institution that already requires certain qualifications and hurdles to jump to get in, whereas any (heterosexual) can get married. Gay people are already serving with honor and distinction in the military; the question is can they do so with openness, honesty, and job security. This is different from the marriage argument, where gays are fighting to be allowed simple access to an institution they have been formally excluded from. In addition, the military—unlike marriage—is seen as above or outside the rules and vicissitudes of everyday life. Courts have taken this position in various challenges to military law.  
34. See, e.g., Walters, ALL THE RAGE, supra note 7, at 19 (reviewing the arguments about assimilation and its discontents); Lisa Duggan, Beyond Same-Sex Marriage, 9 STUD. GENDER & SEXUALITY 155, 156 (2008) (criticizing “the emphasis of lesbian and gay
It is true that one significant marker in the march toward social justice has been irrevocably passed: silence and invisibility. The days of homosexuality as the unspeakable and unseeable, and as easy and acceptable targets for violence and denigration are forever past.\textsuperscript{35} There is no going back in that sense. But anti-Semitic and racist movements do not, for example, disappear simply because it is no longer publicly acceptable to utter racist and anti-Semitic remarks.\textsuperscript{36} Anti-gay animus does not simply retreat in the face of public “tolerance” of gays, as any quick glance at an evangelical website detailing the evils of homosexuality will tell you.

Indeed, what is even meant by “gay rights” is in question. The quest for equal treatment is often centered on a paradox. On the one hand, gays (and ethnic and racial minorities) argue that gayness doesn’t matter; in making laws, taking a job, raising a family, and serving in the military, it is irrelevant.\textsuperscript{37} At the same time, most groups have struggled mightily over this irrelevancy stance, and embraced and articulated difference with a vengeance.\textsuperscript{38} Gay pride, of course, was and is part of that history, demanding rights and recognition, identity and inclusion.

For most of its history, the gay movement has—like so many other social movements before it—focused on the simple, but curiously elusive, goal of equal citizenship.\textsuperscript{39} In a general sense, this quest for citizenship includes an insistence upon equal treatment in employment, housing, education, and law.\textsuperscript{40} Feeling fully included

\textsuperscript{35} See, e.g., Rich, \textit{supra} note 26 (discussing the increased acceptance of homosexuality throughout mainstream American society and the political world).

\textsuperscript{36} See, e.g., \textit{About the Anti-Defamation League}, \textit{ANTI-DEFAMATION LEAGUE}, http://www.adl.org/about.asp?ID=8 (last visited Nov. 2, 2011) (exemplifying the continued efforts of organizations to fight anti-Semitism and racism).

\textsuperscript{37} See WALTERS, \textit{ALL THE RAGE}, \textit{supra} note 7, at 18 (stating that “gay identity is made legitimate only through assimilation into the dominant heterosexual gestalt”).

\textsuperscript{38} See id. at 19; \textit{Mission Statement}, \textit{HUM. RTS. CAMPAIGN}, http://www.hrc.org/the-hrc-story/mission-statement (last visited Nov. 2, 2011) (stating that the “HRC strives to end discrimination against LGBT citizens and realize a nation that achieves fundamental fairness and equality for all” rather than asking the LGBT community to assimilate as a means to acceptance).

\textsuperscript{39} Diane Richardson, \textit{Locating Sexualities: From Here to Normality}, 7 \textit{SEXUALITIES} 391, 391 (2004) (stating that “[l]esbian and gay movements are increasingly demanding equal rights of citizenship”).

\textsuperscript{40} Id. at 394 (discussing gains in “healthcare, rights associated with social and legal recognition of domestic partnerships, immigration rights, parenting rights and so on”).
in the society in which you live, however, entails more than the formal acquisition of legal equality. For so many minority groups, legal or formal equality is but the starting point of a more thoroughgoing struggle for substantive inclusion.41 A truly robust citizenship signals a sense of belonging, a combination of shared responsibilities and shared rights. Throughout U.S. history, innumerable groups have struggled to acquire both formal equality and the often more intangible substantive equality offered through full citizenship and inclusion.42 Gays are no different in this regard,43 yet, the persistent fact of gay invisibility alters how these citizenship claims play out.

Americans are uniquely likely to assert a “post” right before we approach the finish line, effectively shutting off the real and substantive public debate needed for that final push.44 We did it with women’s rights, declaring an era “post-feminist” while women still remained lower paid, sexually vulnerable adjuncts to a still male-dominant culture.45 We are doing it now with racial equality, depicting the election of our first black president as an indication that the long struggle for civil rights is essentially over, even as poverty and incarceration rates disproportionately climb in African-American communities.46 Americans tend to look at the road ahead and see not where it continues to branch off and divide, but rather where it ends and comes to a full stop.47 Like a mirage of shimmering water

41. See Duggan, supra note 34, at 157 (discussing how the right to marriage is a minor aspect of equal citizenship and that the emphasis needs to be broader to gain actual equality and justice).

42. E.g., National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Press Kit, NAACP, http://naacp.3cdn.net/1746740dc694a593ba_u3m62w9bw.pdf (last visited Nov. 2, 2011) (describing the multifaceted mission of the NAACP as “ensur[j]ing the political, educational, social, and economic equality of rights of all persons and to eliminate race-based discrimination”).

43. E.g., Mission Statement, HUM. RTS. CAMPAIGN, supra note 38 (“HRC seeks to improve the lives of LGBT Americans by advocating for equal rights and benefits in the workplace, ensuring families are treated equally under the law and increasing public support among all Americans.”).

44. See, Fahrenthold, supra note 28, at A6 (quoting the vice president of the Human Rights Campaign as saying that same-sex marriage rights will flow naturally from the repeal of DADT and that “[w]e won’t have to say a thing”); Scott James, Celebration of Gay Pride Masks Community in Transition, N.Y. TIMES, June 26, 2011, at 27A (stating that “[o]thers, however, believe recent gay rights victories and greater societal acceptance have led to complacency”).


46. E.g., Peter Wallsten & David G. Savage, Voting Rights Act Out of Date?, L.A. TIMES, Mar. 18, 2009, at A1 (“The election of Barack Obama as president has been hailed as a crowning achievement of America’s civil rights movement, the triumph of a black candidate in a nation with a history of slavery and segregation.”).

47. See Fahrenthold, supra note 28 (noting how the repeal heralds the success of overcoming one of the last major obstacles because marriage equality will soon follow on the heels of the repeal).
on a hot and barren desert, we imagine we have found the source that will quench our national thirst for justice, even as it continues to stand just beyond our reach. We get part of the way there and, instead of doing the hard work of pushing through to the end, we prematurely declare victory.48 When it comes to matters of homegrown injustice, we get to the shores of Normandy and turn around and go back, comfortable in our conviction that we already know the outcome. By doing so, we pat ourselves on the back and avoid the deeper challenges.

We then set the stage to get angry with those who still claim disenfranchisement. We turn the tables and say we live in a “feminized” world in which boys and men are dealt a bad hand.49 We rail at “racial preferences” and claim minorities already have “too much” help from the government.50 We are doing this now with lesbians and gays, creating the fantasy that we have almost won, that gayness is not still an impediment to full participation and citizenship.51 We assert that gays already have too much political power and should back off.52 We claim gays want “special rights,” are pressing a “gay agenda,” and have been tolerated just about enough.53 By doing this, we prevent ourselves from crossing the finish line and achieving real integration and inclusion.54

The framework of “tolerance,” a framework that has come to dominate public discussion about gay and lesbian rights—including access to open military service—enables this fantasy of completion. At first glance, tolerance seems like a good thing. It seems to herald openness to difference and a generally broad-minded disposition. Indeed, one of the primary definitions of “tolerance” concerns sympathy

48. See id.
49. E.g., Tom Digby, Male Trouble: Are Men Victims of Sexism?, 29 SOC. THEORY & PRAC. 247, 247 (2003) (“[A]ntifeminism is a common theme in angry man discourse: feminism has ‘gone far enough,’ women have already achieved equality, now it’s men who are suffering from inequality, so it’s time to tilt the balance back toward men a little.”).
50. E.g., Terry Eastland, The Case Against Affirmative Action, 34 WM. & MARY L. REV. 33, 34 (1992) (“When examined in terms of both theory and practice, affirmative action deserves a negative judgment. Affirmative action cannot remain a way of life unless we wish to change for the worse the very essence of what it means to be an American.”).
51. See Fahrenthold, supra note 28.
52. Elyse Siegel, More Than Half of Tea Party Supporters Say Gays and Lesbians Have Too Much Political Power, HUFFINGTON POST (June 2, 2010, 3:08 PM), http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/06/02/tea-party-poll-more-than_n_597968.html (“Fifty-two percent of respondents also said that ‘compared to the size of their group, lesbians and gays have too much political power.’”)
or indulgence for beliefs or practices differing from, or conflicting with, one’s own. It is a word and a practice, however, with a more complicated history and with real limitations. The late Middle English origins of the word indicate the ability to bear pain and hardship. In more contemporary times, we speak of having a tolerance for something as the capacity to endure continued subjection to it—a plant, a drug, a minority group—without adverse reactions. We speak of people who have a high tolerance for pain, or worry about a generation developing a tolerance for a certain type of antibiotic because of overuse. In more scientific usages, it refers to the “allowable amount of variation of a specified quantity.”

Tolerance almost always implies or assumes something negative, or undesired, or even a variation contained and circumscribed. The crucial point is that it does not make sense to say that we tolerate something unless we think that it is wrong in some way. To say one “tolerates” homosexuality means that you deem homosexuality to be wrong (or bad or immoral or whatever), and at the same time that you are willing to put up with it. If there is nothing problematic about something—say, homosexuality—then there is really nothing to “tolerate.” This model of tolerance therefore skirts the issue of the “virtuousness” of homosexuality and can easily slip into a “love the sinner, hate the sin” obfuscation. It allows homosexuality to be designated as “less than” heterosexuality, as a problem, a dilemma, a threat to the moral good. Tolerance allows bigotry to stay in place and shores up irrational hatred even as it tries to corral it. Tolerance, like acceptance, is transient, dependent on circumstances and whims. It can turn on a dime. Tolerance can become intolerance in the blink of an eye, just as acceptance can easily lead to “except us” as history shifts about. And “tolerance” is surely the backdrop to the gays-in-the-military debate, as it is, sadly, for gay rights more generally.

56. Middle English Dictionary 856 (Robert E. Lewis et al. eds., 1995).
58. Id.
59. Id.
61. See Malhotra, supra note 60.
62. See id.
63. See id.
64. See id.
I. THE ETHICS OF ANALOGY

The trope of tolerance is most often tethered to historical comparisons and analogies. Arguments for gay rights have—unsurprisingly—long been couched in analogical terms. With both the military and marriage debates, analogies have been hard to avoid, particularly given the history of both institutions in this country as rife with segregationist ideologies and mandates. No public or legislative discussion around either can avoid analogies and historical comparisons, most potently—and perhaps most problematically—around race. Analogies, and even comparisons, are complicated rhetorical moves and even more fraught when used explicitly in legal and political contexts. I do not want to go into the merit of such analogies, but I am interested in how pliable and fluid they seem to be in the case of discussions around DADT. The analogical move itself becomes the playing field—with some, like Colin Powell, decrying the analogy in a move to displace the gay claim on historical struggle, and others arguing that the lessons of the analogy are central to overturning the ban.

When making comparisons and analogies, we typically focus on the difference of visibility that marks out the gay experience as analogically dissonant from that of its most frequent comparators—women and blacks. There is good reason to do so, for having difference marked on your body produces both specific discourses of the abject and different attempts to constrain and control. Therefore, the place of visibility and recognition figure mightily here. For example, while “coming out” may have changed in this new era of media visibility, internet access, and tepid social embrace, it remains a process almost uniquely “gay” in its very essence. Entry into the public eye becomes itself the sign of gay inclusion precisely because gays can assimilate so well, and can hide with such ease. These declamatory moments have unique resonance for gays: “I do” and “Don’t Ask,
Don’t Tell” reference a love that not only dare not speak its name, but that must traverse a metaphor of darkness to light, abject to normal, closet to community, in order even to utter itself into existence.

Because sexual difference is not typically marked on the body—unlike racial and gender categorization—it must be uttered, performed, or enacted to make it manifest to others (and sometimes to oneself).\(^{73}\) It must be made visible to be made legible.\(^{74}\) But also—and this is important to remember—because heterosexuality is so assumed, so much the default, so not in need of explanation, gayness is always placed, not as the simple parallel to heterosexuality, but as its hidden other.\(^{75}\) While both masculinity and whiteness are equally dominant in relation to femininity and “color,” they are—by and large—visible.\(^{76}\) If you appear to be a woman, no one typically assumes you are a man, unless you declare otherwise. The same can be said for racial identifiers. Thus, the potential to “pass” and indeed assimilate is quite different along these axes.

In addition, the gay experience differs along another axis: kinship. For most minority populations, the bonds of kinship temper social exclusion and the project of integration.\(^{77}\) When faced with a hostile world, African Americans and Jews can look at their immediate family as “like them” and take comfort.\(^{78}\) Gays, on the other hand, are by and large born into a family that differs from them along the profound trajectory of sexual identity and desire.\(^{79}\) To put it simply, most gays are raised in families comprised largely of heterosexuals; they literally and figuratively live in the very house of difference.\(^{80}\) This is one reason why questions of kinship, family, and the legitimacy of such bonds are so deeply felt among gays across the political spectrum even when they differ as to the best way to challenge gay exclusion from those practices and institutions. It might also go a long way toward explaining the perhaps excessive focus on access to marriage and other familial rights and why this issue (over employment rights

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73. See id.
74. See Sylvia A. Law, Homosexuality and the Social Meaning of Gender, 1988 Wis. L. Rev. 187, 193–94. Clearly, the drafters of DADT somehow “got” this; the status/conduct (or even speech/status) distinction puts gays in unique knots and special double binds that are premised on the closet as a livable default zone of unknowability.
75. Id.
76. DEP’T OF DEF., supra note 66, at 85, 87.
77. See, e.g., Richards, supra note 25, at 13 (describing how African-American familial relationships nurture self-respect in light of racial prejudice).
78. See id.
80. Id.
for example) has come to be understood (wrongly, in my view) as sine qua non of the success of the gay rights movement.81

For gay rights activists eager to locate military inclusion in the long trajectory of civil rights struggles now canonized as shining moments of American tolerance, reference to the history of racial and gender integration of the military is necessary. It justifies gay inclusion and makes the contiguous argument that open service will—like the integration of blacks and (partial) integration of women—have generally positive effects on military readiness.82 Surely, these analogies have been useful and hold some merit. They have been embraced by many, African Americans included, who see the “basic equality” questions that open service raises as similar to those faced by other oppressed minorities and women.83 While segregation and exclusion are not exactly the same as closeted presence and formal rejection, they are close cousins, both in their structural motivations (to instantiate second-class status, to legally discriminate) and their experiential effects (resentment, fear, isolation, loss of employment).84 The arguments used in both instances retain striking similarities with opponents invoking stereotypes of gays in a manner similar to stereotypes of blacks and women used in earlier eras.85 Similar antagonistic sentiments were expressed around desegregating the army, including arguments about isolation, unit cohesion, morale, etc.86 Surely, part of the resistance to the integration of blacks into the armed services derived from a prejudicial belief in the legitimacy of those whites who did not want to have to associate in such “close quarters” with blacks.87 Similar objections to openly gay service members invoke this “close quarters” argument as well, creating a heady mix of contagion fears, infiltration anxiety, and the sullying of the purity of (male, heterosexual, white) military culture. Of course, in the sexual-orientation

81. See, e.g., JONATHAN RAUCH, GAY MARRIAGE: WHY IT IS GOOD FOR GAYS, GOOD FOR STRAIGHTS, AND GOOD FOR AMERICA 94–95 (2004) (describing the argument for gay marriage, without as strong of a focus on other rights, such as employment).

82. One such positive effect will be the retention of Arabic and Farsi translators. Laura R. Kesler, Serving with Integrity: The Rationale for the Repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” and Its Ban on Acknowledged Homosexuals in the Armed Forces, 203 MIL. L. REV. 284, 291–92 (2010). This is particularly important today as the U.S. struggles with two wars and a stretched volunteer army. Open service and gay inclusion would stop the loss of translators necessary for the war effort.


84. Kesler, supra note 82, at 378–79 (justifying the exclusion of African Americans and women from military service because of the fundamental difference between the aforementioned groups and white men).

85. DEP’T OF DEF., supra note 66, at 81–82, 85–86.

86. Id.

87. Id. at 81–82.
in the mix.88

What is striking, however, is how the military—now faced with a president who has insisted on the full inclusion of openly gay service members—manages to create a hierarchy of analogy in order to maintain the legitimacy of anti-gay animus, while at the same time acknowledging the need for “tolerance.” In the DoD report that emerged from the recent congressional hearings, the military brings up the analogy of homosexual and racial integration only to make sure to differentiate the two:

In drawing parallels to racial integration in the 1940s and 1950s, there are similarities and differences between that experience and repeal of Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell today that we must acknowledge.

First, skin color and sexual orientation are fundamentally different. That said, the concerns expressed in the 1940s about the effects of integration on unit cohesion and effectiveness sound much the same as those voiced in this debate.

Second, there is a religious component to the issue of homosexuality that generally does not exist on matters of race. Many hold a sincere religious and moral belief that homosexuality is a sin. Many military chaplains today express opposition in religious terms to allowing gay men and lesbians to serve openly in the military. By contrast, there was no significant opposition to racial integration among military chaplains. In fact, the historical record of the period indicates that the military chaplain community, for the most part, encouraged followers along the path of racial integration.89

The analogy has weight, yet also does not hold water. The fundamental flaw that these military analysts—and indeed many conservative and mainstream writers on gay rights—find in the analogy is that, at bottom, the analogy doesn’t logically “work.” The animus against blacks, and the stereotypes underlying the animus, were proven to be simply and undeniably false and based on prejudice, whereas the animus against gays has merit.90 Moreover, visibility enters directly into the debate because “race is an obvious identifier; sexual orientation is not. Even if the law is repealed, it is likely that gay men and lesbians will continue to be discreet and private about their sexual orientation, as in civilian society.”91

88. Kesler, supra note 82, at 297–98.
89. DEP’T OF DEF., supra note 66, at 84.
90. Id. at 85, 131.
91. Id. at 85.
So, the official line from the military is that, while it is true that older arguments against blacks serving alongside whites in the military sound curiously like those used today against gays, one should not mistake the absolute difference between the two. The “absolute difference” is based on two linked arguments. First, that sexual “orientation” and racial identity are radically different forms of identity. As Colin Powell argued before the recent iteration of the debate, “[s]kin color is a benign, non-behavioral characteristic. Sexual orientation is perhaps the most profound of human behavioral characteristics. Comparison of the two is a convenient but invalid argument.”

For Powell, race is different because it is meaningless, the emptiest of signifiers. Yet, for others, including the DoD, race is different because it is much more meaningful. It is the ultimate signifier of illegitimate social exclusion, historical victimization, and discrimination.

Second, more elliptically and perhaps more dangerously, the race/sexuality analogy is challenged because the moral and religious justifications for anti-gay animus have merit and need to be respected. The DoD report repeatedly assures readers, soldiers, and the public that moral and religious objections to homosexuality deserve respect. The difference now will be that those with objections—while legitimate—must nonetheless treat “them” fairly. In other words, if you are morally and religiously opposed to homosexuality, the military will not “turn its back on you” and your legitimate animus towards gays will not be a problem at all, although you will now be required to treat “them” equitably.

Now again we see how the assumptions underlying the analogical moves are different. Imagine a military report assuring soldiers that it is really okay if they think blacks are animalistic inferiors who are immoral and simply wrong. Here is where the hierarchy of analogies becomes even more head-turning; the same report seems to indicate that resistance to women in the military had/has some legitimacy as well—and, indeed, women’s exclusion from combat roles is yet one more indicator of the acceptance of this ideology. Thus, anti-black animus is deemed a full-scale relic of the past and motivated wholly by prejudice and irrationality. Conversely, anti-woman animus

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92. Same Sex Marriage, supra note 69. Powell has since come out for repeal of DADT.
93. See DEP’T OF DEF., supra note 66, at 13–14.
94. See id. at 131 (noting that, in an effort not to make those with particular religious beliefs feel rejected, “individual service members are not expected to change their personal . . . beliefs” upon repeal of DADT).
95. Id.
96. Id.
97. Id.
98. Id. at 82, 84.
is deemed old-fashioned, but legitimately motivated by “traditional”—and therefore sanctified—understandings of the different “roles” of men and women in the world and the supposedly different physical capacities for warfare. Righteous anti-gay animus, however, is justified by reference to unchallengeable religious and moral objections that tautologically are backed up with the simple phrase from Jon Oliver of The Daily Show: “But he’s gay!” Therefore, heterosexual military men’s enforced “tolerance” of gays in “their” army coexists with official military tolerance of homophobia and anti-gay animus. In the DoD report, anti-gay animus is explicitly addressed as legitimate, and its legitimacy is framed largely through reference to morality, religion, and traditional values.

We might do better to make nuanced, historically specific comparisons rather than overarching analogies. In making the analogical case, it is hard to avoid the argument that gays are “like” blacks because, like skin color, gayness is something one does not choose; it is something one is born with through “no fault of one’s own.” Of course, the easy analogy conveniently obscures race itself as a social construction, a fiction. In addition, the analogy can’t help but reassert the troubling assumption of gayness as whiteness and blackness as heterosexual. This shores up the old opposition (all the women are white, all the blacks are men) that refuses to see not only the constructedness of these categories but of course also their overlapping or intersecting nature (e.g., some of those gay soldiers are black, Latino, etc.). Here, we cannot help but fear an analogical move that effectively causes black lesbian and gay service members to disappear. The easy and glib use of analogy can make racial and gender discrimination appear a thing of the past—a triumph of brave integrationism and tolerance over (now formally delegitimized) old school prejudice.

II. ACTS, IDENTITIES, IMUTABILITIES

If the debate over the validity of analogies is slippery, it surely hinges on a strange bifurcation largely invisible in the earlier moment of racial integration: the status/conduct distinction. Unlike other “suspect class” categories, the question of causation (i.e., “what causes homosexuality?”) almost always enters into discussions of gay

99. Dep’t of Def., supra note 66, at 86.
100. The Daily Show, May 14, 2009, supra note 6; see also Dep’t of Def., supra note 66, at 84 (noting the “religious component to the issue of homosexuality”).
101. Dep’t of Def., supra note 66, at 131.
102. See Nancy Levit, Theorizing and Litigating the Rights of Sexual Minorities, 19 Colum. J. Gender & L. 21, 57–58 (2010).
rights, whereas for women and blacks, the discussion centers more on the meanings of race and gender in terms of access, identity, behaviors, etc. Gays are inevitably caught up in a public discourse that engages both cause and effect and inevitably links the two—particularly in a moment of biological obsessiveness. As one analyst succinctly put it, “[p]rior to the 1940s, dismissal was based on conduct, that is, the commission of an act of sodomy; in the postwar era, the attention shifted to status or identity, that is, to sexual orientation.”

Many writers have thoroughly critiqued DADT around the dubiousness of the status/conduct distinction, but it seems that the various versions of that faux “tolerance” (for example, love the sinner, hate the sin) have been largely supplanted by another—perhaps uniquely American—normative trope. This trope has transformed into a kind of everyday truth and has enormous consequences both legally and politically.

If marriage and military access are conjured as the Oz of queer liberation—and tolerance is most assuredly the good witch—then biological and genetic arguments are the yellow brick road, providing the route and the rationale for civil rights. The medicalization of sexual identity, and the search for a cause, if not a cure, has a long and infamous history. This history includes not only well-meaning attempts by social activists to create a safe life for same-sex desire

103. See id. at 61 (noting that this is certainly true of hearings around same-sex marriage cases).
105. Id. at 137.
106. Jonathan Pickhardt, Choose or Lose: Embracing Theories of Choice in Gay Rights Litigation Strategies, 73 N.Y.U. L. Rev. 921, 931, 932 (1998). The status/conduct distinction seems specific to the language of DADT but has larger, albeit vaguer, iterations across the political spectrum (e.g., in appeals to “normaley”: do not be too gay, too flamboyant, too gender non-normative). DADT repeal efforts therefore illustrate well the limits of tolerance in the absolute refusal to address homophobia by positing an “acceptable” (just the same as you and me) gayness counterposed to an the still available abject queer. The interviews excerpted in the recent DoD report put gay service members, unsurprisingly, on the side of discretion and fitting in. DEP’T OF DEF., supra note 66, at 5. Like interviews with long-term couples desirous of the marriage option, interviews with gay service members largely mimic the hegemonic frame of “fitting in” and “discretion” that is often explicitly juxtaposed to those few flamboyant gays who give the rest of them a bad name. Id. at 6. In the move to repeal DADT, both gay advocates and reluctant military personnel repeatedly assert that it is much ado about nothing: that after repeal, little will change because most gay service members “will continue to be discreet.” Id. at 85; David Wood, Pentagon Asks for Repeal of ‘DADT’, Most Troops OK with Gays in Service, POL. DAILY (Nov. 30, 2010), http://www.politicsdaily.com/2010/11/30/pentagon-says-troops-ok-with-don’t-ask-repeal-gates-urges-qui/.
107. See Levit, supra note 102, at 54–55.
108. See HENRY L. MINTON, DEPARTING FROM DEVIANCE: A HISTORY OF HOMOSEXUAL RIGHTS AND EMANCIPATORY SCIENCE IN AMERICA 55 (2002); Levit, supra note 102, at 54–55.
through the designation of homosexuality as biologically predetermined, but also, more ominously, includes the long and sordid history of incarceration, medication, electroshock “therapy,” and numerous other attempts to rid the body (and mind) of its same-sex desires.109

Notions of homosexuality as “inbred,” innate, and immutable were endorsed by a wide variety of thinkers and activists, including progressive reformers, such as Havelock Ellis, and not so progressive conservatives eager to assert same-sex love as nature’s mistake.110 Richard von Krafft-Ebing in the 1880s and Magnus Hirschfeld in the 1920s and 30s—both pioneer sexologists and general advocates of “toleration,” or at least decriminalization—came to believe in some notion of “innate” homosexuality, whether through theories of brain inversion or vague references to hormonal imbalances and other (unsubstantiated) anomalies.111 These theories had little traction and no supporting evidence whatsoever. They were further undermined during the heyday of the early gay movement, which included a deep commitment to the depathologization and demedicalization of homosexuality, manifested in a long-term attempt to remove “homosexuality” as a disease category in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM).112

Theories of heritability, genetic, or biological origins of “gayness” have ebbed and flowed during different historical and social moments, most obviously intersecting with the rise of eugenics and other determinist frameworks in the early part of the last century.113 There is no question, however, that the romance with biological and/or genetic explanations for sexual “orientation” (really, same-sex orientation as the search for the hetero gene or the straight hypothalamus goes unexamined) has ratcheted up in recent years. This is due in no small part to the combined force of the gay marriage debates and the increasing “medicalization” and “geneticization” of behavior and identity,

109. MINTON, supra note 108.
110. HAVELOCK ELLIS & JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS, SEXUAL INVERSION 307 (1897).
This move to medicalize homosexuality furthered the already booming interest—both popular and scientific—in genetic bases for behavior, personality, and disease.115

Indeed, this turning of the century seems to provide a “perfect storm” moment in which the idea of immutability captured the public imagination. It is important to note that some of this impetus toward “hard” scientific evidence of homosexuality emerges at least in part as a reaction to the kinds of social/psychological theories that predominated in the 20th century and that attributed homosexuality to some version of stunted development, bad mothering, absent fathers, or failed Oedipal resolutions. In addition, this new moment is marked by the relatively unique phenomenon of openly gay scientists (e.g., LeVay, Hamer, and Bailey) conducting this research.116 Not only does this give an added legitimacy to the research, but many, if not all, of these researchers claim that they are doing this “for” gay people and in the service of furthering “tolerance,” if not gay rights.

No cultural moment sums it up like the otherwise quite illuminating debate that took place in August of 2007. LOGO—the all gay, all the time cable network—joined with the Human Rights Campaign to host the first ever Democratic primary presidential debate with primary candidates Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama, and all the other major and minor Democratic contenders.117 At one point, host Melissa Etheridge, a gay rights advocate, asked the inevitable “born with it” question to Bill Richardson who clearly gave a “wrong” answer when he responded that he did not know and even uttered the awful word “choice” in speaking about gay identities.118 Etheridge was quick to correct him, asking how or why anyone would choose to be gay? By the looks on the faces of Etheridge and the other hosts, Richardson had

114. See Robertson Allen Brookey, Reinventing the Male Homosexual: The Rhetoric and Power of the Gay Gene (2002) (highlighting the idea that many believe homosexuality is not a choice); Terry, supra note 113, at 40–73 (explaining how homosexuality is being medicalized); Allen, supra note 113 (describing how scientific advances, such as the Human Genome Project spurred an ever-increasing interest in the potential biological origin of homosexuality).

115. See Brookey, supra note 114; Terry, supra note 113; Allen, supra note 113.


clearly made an “error” and, sure enough, follow-up questions attempted to get him to rectify that error.\textsuperscript{119} Etheridge’s reaction feeds the insidious outcome of the genetic argument: that because it is genetic, people cannot help being gay (“born this way”) and therefore “tolerance” for this genetic aberration is the humane and appropriate response.\textsuperscript{120} It further takes the focus off of homophobia—the real social ill—and puts it on the “victim” of genetics.\textsuperscript{121}

Three years earlier, John Kerry made the same case in speaking of Dick Cheney’s lesbian daughter.\textsuperscript{122} “We’re all God’s children,” said Kerry when asked a “gay” question by the moderator.\textsuperscript{123} Referring to Mary Cheney, the lesbian daughter of Vice President Dick Cheney, Senator Kerry said, “she would tell you that she’s being . . . who she was born as. I think if you talk to anybody, it’s not [a] choice.”\textsuperscript{124} Strangely enough, it was George Bush who said, “I just don’t know,” once again demarcating the “choice” position as the conservative one\textsuperscript{125}.

Indeed, in our present political context, gay volition is like Voldemort—to dangerous even to be uttered.\textsuperscript{126} There is, unarguably, an overwhelming “born with it” ideology afoot, encompassing gay marriage, gay genes, and gayness as a “trait.” This is used by both gay rights activists and anti-gay activists to make arguments for or against equality.\textsuperscript{127} Central to recent claims for equal treatment has been a deep reliance on notions of heritability or biological determinations of sexual orientation. If there is one reigning ethos now, it is the belief that gays are “born that way.”\textsuperscript{128} Causality is—of course—the wrong question and will only get muddled answers.

It is intriguing, however, that immutability arguments—so generally pervasive and utilized so deliberately in many legal and social battles, including the marriage battle and earlier arguments

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  \item \textsuperscript{119.} \textit{Id.}
  \item \textsuperscript{120.} \textit{See id.}
  \item \textsuperscript{121.} \textit{See id.}
  \item \textsuperscript{123.} \textit{Id.}
  \item \textsuperscript{124.} \textit{Id.}
  \item \textsuperscript{125.} \textit{Id.}
  \item \textsuperscript{126.} \textit{See J.K. ROWLING, HARRY POTTER AND THE SORCERER’S STONE (1997) (developing a theme used throughout the book where people are afraid to actually mention Lord Voldemort by name, instead referring to him as “He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named”).}
  \item \textsuperscript{127.} \textit{See HAMER & COPELAND, supra note 116, at 197 (concluding that there is a gene relating to sexual orientation but, without corroboration, this observation can be used by either side to further arguments).}
  \item \textsuperscript{128.} \textit{See LOGO Gay and Lesbian 2008 Democratic Presidential Forum, supra note 118 (noting the moderators’ attempt to get Bill Richardson to “correct” his “erroneous” belief that homosexuality is a choice).}
\end{itemize}
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to overturn the anti-sodomy laws—seem curiously absent when it comes to the discussions around DADT and open military service. In the entire DoD report, there is not a single reference to issues of etiology, whereas, in the legal proceedings of gay marriage statutes or sodomy laws, immutability arguments stand front and center. Indeed, it was more salient in earlier iterations of this debate. In the 1993 hearings around DADT, key witness and longtime sexuality scholar Gregory Herek addressed the “born with it” question rather carefully by arguing that

Regardless of whether they are homosexual, heterosexual, or bisexual, people generally experience their sexual orientation as an essential part of their core identity, their sense of who they are sexually. Scientific research has not established why anyone develops a particular sexual orientation, but we do know that whether they are heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual, people generally do not choose their sexual orientation. Rather they discover it and come to understand it through a long developmental process.

The question of what a gay “is” (i.e., the question of “identity”) marks this debate in ways that are contiguous with the immutability debates but not reducible to it.

Largely cohering around the “status/conduct” distinction—which is the cornerstone of DADT—and challenges to it, the identity question also crops up in the issue of “unit cohesion.” The current hegemonic arguments against inclusion (excluding for the moment ones that express a simple and unadorned hatred of homosexuals) focus on the issue of unit cohesion. This is where the analogies of race and gender do make some sense, to a point. The argument is that many service members do in fact feel uncomfortable with, if not antagonistic toward, gays and therefore will not be able to function to the best of their ability if openly gay people serve beside them. This has

129. DEP’T OF DEF., supra note 66 (lacking any reference to immutability).
prompted at least one judge, in ruling against DADT, to note that “[T]he known presence of homosexuals may disrupt the unit because heterosexual members may morally disapprove of homosexuals. This is an outright confession that ‘unit cohesion’ is a euphemism for catering to the prejudices of heterosexuals.”134 Sometimes, the (fake) unit cohesion argument gives way to an alarming honesty, as in 2007 when General Peter Pace, then chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, offered a different rationale. “I believe homosexual acts between two individuals are immoral and that we should not condone immoral acts.”135 Of course, acts—specifically sexual acts—have always figured prominently in both gay rights acquisitions and discrimination itself.136 Identities (such as they are) have been brought into being, policed, punished, and legitimated through reference to specific acts.

The unit cohesion argument is the military parallel to the marriage disintegration argument: let gays in the military and all hell will break loose, and brave (hetero) soldiers will no longer be brave.137 Let gays get married and all hell will break loose, and hetero couples will find their own relationships—and indeed, the institution itself—wrecked on the shoals of homo love and lust.138 Ah, would that it were so! But of course, gay activists on both issues respond almost identically: gays in the military will only enhance unit cohesion and military readiness by allowing for openness and—importantly—utilizing every willing soldier in the world-wide battle to make the world safe for heteronormativity and unfettered capitalism.139 The argument that ultimately carried the day was that the military—and the nation—were suffering as a result of gay exclusion, as evidenced by the selective “stop loss” actions, when gays were deemed

137. See Rich, supra note 26 (arguing that the rhetoric and logic against gays in the military are “ever looper”).
138. Id. (describing a so-called “expert” witness testimony that same-sex marriage threatens traditional heterosexual marriage).
too essential to discharge over a stupid policy and by the loss of so many Arab translators. In other words, discrimination against gays is not just bad in a moral sense; it is actually bad for national security and the economy. And gays in marriage will not alter hetero marriage one bit, but will rather enhance the cachet of this rather tattered institution by pledging more bodies and lives to the altar of normative familialism.

The arguments against gays in the military not only claim gays will disrupt unit morale and effectiveness (by their very difference, their free-floating and unmoored desires, their effeminate or—alternately—their manly nature), but also claim they are not “fit for service.” Underlying both these objections is an argument about performance: gays cannot perform soldiering because they are not heterosexual, because they are aberrant, because they are unmanly, because they are too manly, or because they are morally corrupt. And the “pro” arguments generally respond in kind: gays are indeed fit for service. They may not be heterosexual but they are fighting machines—ready to die for God and country like any other normal, red-blooded American who signs up to serve. “Pro” arguments are filled with tales of brave gay service members and hetero service members supporting their brethren because they have seen firsthand how very soldierly they actually are. Because the military is seen as a “special” institution—not one open to all on a democratic basis but rather the few, the chosen, the Marines—the basic equality claims are invoked less frequently than, say, around marriage or employment rights. “Just as long as he is a good fighter/soldier” is the dominant supportive trope in DADT repeal discourse and one that simply cannot work the same way for the marriage question.

142. See RAUCH, supra note 81, at 94.
146. See id.
147. See, e.g., id. (describing anecdotal accounts of such bravery).
148. See id.
Indeed, DADT hinges precisely on this status/conduct distinction: that one can “be” gay without “acting” (performing) gayness. But what is often ignored in this discussion is that acting “not gay” (but being gay) requires a performance of another kind, and not simply the performance of the closet or of dissimulation. If gayness is conduct un-becoming an officer, then straightness is conduct becoming an officer, and straightness is not just marked through sexual acts but through the displacements of those acts into soldiering, into killing, into male bonding, and into brotherhood.

III. BEYOND GUNS AND TAFFETA

In the words of the late great Peggy Lee, “is that all there is?” And how significant have changes in the larger cultural milieu been to the decision to—finally—get rid of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell”? While surely the relationship between current ideologies concerning “gayness” and military policy is not a singular and linear one, changing ideologies of immutability, identity, citizenship, and public perception have played a part in the push to integrate. The polls have consistently revealed a growing majority in favor of open service and, to a much lesser extent but still significant, same-sex marriage. Many of our allies have had an open policy for years, with no “dire consequences” for morale or military effectiveness. And, surely, the more general cultural shift—reflected in polls but also of course in the by now banal visibility of LGBT folks in everyday life—makes it more tenable to repeal DADT (“the American people want this”) and pushes the military to match more closely the tenor of the times.

Freedom to marry and freedom to serve are the watchwords of the same-sex marriage and gay military service movements; both rely on classic liberal egalitarian and civil rights arguments to make the case for gaining access to these two social institutions. Both discourses depend (variously) on notions of immutability, discretion, and personal autonomy.

150. See Krygowski, supra note 143, at 931 n.487.
152. Gay and Lesbian Rights, supra note 18.
153. Goldberg, supra note 139.
154. See Gay and Lesbian Rights, supra note 18.
155. See, e.g., Correales, supra note 144, at 450–51.
156. See, e.g., RICHARDS, supra note 25, at 6–7 (comparing the civil rights and gay rights movements).
blending in to argue that gays in the military, or gays in marriages, will not “damage” the institution itself, nor even fundamentally alter it.\footnote{157}{Dep’t of Def., supra note 66, at 5; Richards, supra note 25, at 7.} And, for many activists and writers—given the centrality of military service and marriage to national status and citizenship—these two represent the nail in the coffin of institutionalized homophobia and the sign of full inclusion.\footnote{158}{See Rauch, supra note 81, at 94–95; Richards, supra note 25, at 152–53.} Even though anti-military activists have questioned our focus on repealing DADT, it is the marriage movement that has elicited much more robust internal gay debate.\footnote{159}{Jane S. Schacter, The Other Same-Sex Marriage Debate, 84 Chi.-Kent L. Rev. 379, 382 (2009) (describing LGBT internal debate over same-sex marriage).} There are many reasons for this discrepancy, but surely one is the simple fact that repealing DADT has direct consequences for those already serving in the military, and doing so in conditions that place them in positions of great vulnerability.\footnote{160}{See, e.g., Policy Implications of Lifting the Ban of Homosexuals in the Military, supra note 131, at 255 (asserting that the DoD believes allowing homosexuals to serve would cause problems).} In other words, the military is an employer and, moreover, an employer of largely working-class and minority youth.\footnote{161}{Amy Lutz, Who Joins the Military?: A Look at Race, Class, and Immigration Status, 36 J. Pol. & Military Soc. 167, 184 (2008) (explaining over-representation of African Americans and working class in the military).} While the economic benefits of married life have been well documented, entrance into it has largely been argued on intimate and symbolic grounds.\footnote{162}{See, e.g., Rauch, supra note 81, at 7 (describing the symbolic meaning of marriage).} While the military is an employer and, moreover, an employer of largely working-class and minority youth.\footnote{163}{See id.; Richards, supra note 25.} While the economic benefits of married life have been well documented, entrance into it has largely been argued on intimate and symbolic grounds.

While marriage and the military differ along these and other axes, they both retain enormous symbolic importance, particularly in their shared iconicity around citizenship and in the ways in which victory in these venues is seen by so many to signal a new era of tolerance and acceptance.\footnote{164}{See id.; Richards, supra note 25.} The two—tolerance and acceptance—are inevitably linked in American discussions of rights and difference. We tend to think there is an easy transition from tolerance of the despised minority to a broader and deeper acceptance of that same group.\footnote{165}{See Hans Oberdiek, Tolerance: Between Forbearance and Acceptance 152 (2001) (describing tendency to consider tolerance as almost acceptance).} We learn to tolerate and then we come to accept.\footnote{166}{See id.} Or so the story goes. But who is this “we” that tolerates? Who has the right to “accept” another? No civil rights movement worthy of the name has banked its future on being tolerated or accepted.\footnote{167}{See Malhotra, supra note 60 (discussing how “tolerance” leaves room for moral disapproval and that “[w]e tolerate those we consider inferior”).} Women did not demurely request tolerance; they demanded voting rights, pay
equity, and freedom from sexual violence.\textsuperscript{167} African Americans continue to struggle not for some bizarre “acceptance” of their skin tone, but for full and deep integration and inclusion in the American dream.\textsuperscript{168} Disabled Americans do not want to be tolerated; they want streets made accessible to them and laws strong enough to protect them from discrimination.\textsuperscript{169} Immigrants—Jews, Irish, Italians, and Latinos—who came into this country by the millions and over the hundreds of years of U.S. history—were often escaping persecution and discrimination.\textsuperscript{170} My grandparents were among them, Russian and Polish Jews leaving a world of pogroms and second-class lives. They, like today’s immigrants, came wanting—and often demanding—not simply respite from the tyranny of the majority but a robust integration into this promising new land.\textsuperscript{171} I cannot imagine that the word “tolerance” was central to their immigrant vocabulary. To live freely and fully is not to be “tolerated,” but to be included, even sometimes to be celebrated. The language of tolerance is, in fact, antithetical to the goals of civil rights.\textsuperscript{172} The ethical alternative to discrimination and bigotry is not tolerance, but rational thought and a commitment to equality.\textsuperscript{173}

For many gay liberals and their allies, tolerance and acceptance have been the dominant notes in the ongoing aria of American history.\textsuperscript{174} Like so many of the arguments for ending the ban on same-sex marriage, proponents of ending the ban on gays in the military advance a sameness argument (i.e., we just want to serve our country, or we just want to raise a family like everyone else). Colonel Margarethe Cammermeyer, a retired lesbian army officer who successfully challenged the military’s ban on homosexuals stated,

\begin{quote}
\textit{For many gay liberals and their allies, tolerance and acceptance have been the dominant notes in the ongoing aria of American history. Like so many of the arguments for ending the ban on same-sex marriage, proponents of ending the ban on gays in the military advance a sameness argument (i.e., we just want to serve our country, or we just want to raise a family like everyone else). Colonel Margarethe Cammermeyer, a retired lesbian army officer who successfully challenged the military’s ban on homosexuals stated,}
\end{quote}
what I hope to represent is a part of the normality of being homosexual, of not being in leather or shaving my hair, but rather showing how much we are all alike . . . . If people can see the sameness of me to you, then perhaps they won’t have the walls that makes it so they have to hate us without a cause.175

It is also the case that the movement for open military service is predicated on an understanding of “gayness” as a discrete, knowable, legible, and utterable identity.176 To oppose DADT means you assume there is something clear to be asked and to be told. This is, undeniably, one of the persistent dilemmas of civil rights legislation and litigation around stigmatized minorities: how to gain rights, access, and freedoms while at the same time not enshrining (and creating) the very categories of identity that many believe to be partially responsible for the very abridgement of those freedoms. What happens, in other words, when Foucault goes to court?

For many queer radicals, on the other hand, the present—with its display of gay identity as a fashion accessory, its commodification, its cleaning up and dumbing down—represents the death knell of a more vibrant gay sensibility.177 There is much truth to this, and I myself have added to the fears of what this kind of liberal inclusion excludes. But perhaps we are working with too weak a notion of inclusion or integration that does not distinguish it substantively enough from assimilation. Indeed, for gays and many others who cohere around a minority identity, both these terms have come to have a quite negative valence, as “inclusion” becomes the codeword for a kind of liberal “tolerance” that broaches no challenge to heterosexual dominion even as it lets a few queers sit at the table.178 There is a difference, however, between a robust, substantive integration and a thoughtless, commodified assimilation. For many gays, these are often confused. We so fear/reject the relentless project of commodified assimilation that the integrationist project gets tossed out in the process of resisting assimilation.179

179. See, e.g., Guidotto, supra note 177 (rejecting gay commodification).
Just as “tolerance” leaves a bitter taste in the mouths of many gays, it is vital to remember that justice is not identical to equality, just as gay rights may not fully institute gay belonging.\textsuperscript{180} And while there is healthy debate within the gay community on goals and strategies, it is nevertheless the case that while any individual gay person may not care much about pride or sexual freedom (and another may care a great deal), all gays desire equal treatment and equal opportunity and most deeply value inclusion.\textsuperscript{181}

Would “victory” be signaled by formal moves towards equality and equal access (e.g., marriage rights, equal employment legislation) or is a more abstract and elusive “liberation” being sought? Is “tolerance” and “acceptance” all that can be hoped for, or is a more vivid “rainbow” of civic inclusion the golden ring? And what would a “robust integration” that eschews simple assimilation but values the challenge offered by social and sexual difference actually look like?

The symbolic and iconic value of victories such as the two “m’s” of the military and marriage are heady indeed but, I would argue, not singularly or unambiguously “positive.” Surely removing structural barriers and challenging legalized discrimination are necessary, but not sufficient, conditions for full civic inclusion. But, by framing these gains in a discourse of tolerance, we set the bar too low. By avoiding thornier and more contentious and more challenging questions (e.g., how might full inclusion undermine the heteromasculinity at the heart of military culture? What can queer kinship say to bourgeois familialism? How can we detach acts from identities and still embrace egalitarian struggles?) we allow animus new tributaries and byways through our cultural waterways. Repeal, enjoin, sign up, and pledge your troth to God and country and legally wedded spouse. But do not imagine that this is all that we can imagine. It just might be that an army of lovers can only make war, not the queer new world that our electric bodies demand.

\textsuperscript{180.} See Schacter, supra note 159, at 395 (describing a proposal that would have afforded homosexuals rights but avoided assimilation).