For Those Who Will Never Know the Joy of a Father's Day

May 4, 2011 By Angel Mason

Mother's Day has come and gone and in a few weeks Father's Day will arrive, but thousands of children and young adults will miss the celebration because states like Virginia, Illinois and Arizona have recently moved to prevent same-gender-loving people from becoming foster or adoptive parents solely based on their sexual orientation and marital status. Moreover, discriminatory restrictions in other states, including Florida and Arkansas, have recently been the subject of heated ongoing legal action.will soon arrive but thousands of children, and young adults will miss the celebration because states like Virginia, Illinois and Arizona have recently moved to prevent same-gender-loving people from becoming foster or adoptive parents solely based on their sexual orientation and marital status. Moreover, discriminatory restrictions in other states, including Florida and Arkansas, have recently been the subject of heated ongoing legal action.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, approximately 30 percent of foster youth across the nation are black. What is even more troubling to me as an African American same-gender-loving man and parent is that black youth are found in disproportionate numbers in the foster care system. These beautiful children are prevented from being placed in permanent loving homes because they are hindered by discriminatory laws that make their placement in nurturing families almost impossible. You will be amazed to discover that African American children represent only 25 percent of the children who are adopted.

I know from my research as a global author and Civil Rights Activist that an estimated 10 to 15 percent of the population in the world is same-gender-loving people and since this is true, it stands to reason that thousands of these same children are also LGBT youth as well! Many conservatives who support these discriminatory laws publicly promote the perception (through media) that child molestation is directly linked to homosexuality, and boldly claim that this is the reason that same-gender-loving people are unfit to parent and should never be permitted to adopt. Perhaps, it's because many continue to falsely associate homosexuality exclusively with sexual behavior and thus believe children are not safe around gay men or lesbian women.

While on the train the other day, I heard two Black men talking about gay people, and one of the men stated, "They're okay; just don't bring them around my children!" But adoption experts, law enforcement agencies, and psychologists continuously declare in study after study that "A child's risk of being molested by his or her relatives' heterosexual partner is over one hundred times greater than by someone who might be identifiable as being homosexual." The study also found that out of 269 cases of child sexual abuse, only two offenders were found to be gay or lesbian, proving, that same-gender-loving people are actually less likely to molest children than heterosexual men or women. Unfortunately, these unfounded perceptions have led to widespread opposition to gay people parenting children in our

society, leaving thousands if not millions of children held captive and grossly deprived from loving families in a discriminatory foster care system.

As conservative politicians flex their political muscle in Congress and in the Senate, thinking nothing of disregarding the needs of the poor and disenfranchised by attempting to eliminate Medicare and other much needed social services; the question begs to be asked, “Who is going to care for and support these children?” I won’t even attempt to even estimate the staggering cost of caring for these children because I already know it is costing taxpayers multiple millions!

The National Black Justice Coalition recently pricked the consciences and hearts of millions all over the world by reminding us that there are already one million LGBT parents raising two million children in our country today and this number is growing! According to analysis of the 2010 Census data, a sizable number of these parents are African American and Latino, and they are raising their children to love their country, respect their neighbors, worship a loving God, and positively contribute to their communities.

Thank God that in addition to the National Black Justice Coalition’s ongoing mission to combat discrimination in our country; Congressman Pete Stark (D-CA) is also committed to do the same! Recently, he re-introduced legislation known as “The Every Child Deserves a Family Act.” This legislation if successfully passed would expand the number of qualified foster and adoptive parents for youth in the foster care system by banning all discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity and marital status. Subsequently, this would open up hundreds if not thousands of new homes to youth who desperately need placement.

Furthermore, I was alarmed when I was made aware of these additional staggering statistics revealed by Jody M. Huckaby, executive director of PFLAG National: “There are more than 500,000 children currently in the foster care system. While 120,000 of them are available for adoption every year, 25,000 of these youth will ’age out’ of the system without ever finding loving families to call their own (and many LGBT youth will remain homeless). Tragically, more and more states’ laws and practices are creating barriers for these children from accessing permanent homes. This legislation would remedy that problem.”

Last year, I was invited to Chicago Illinois on my birthday by several organizations. One of the organizations who sponsored and organized the book signing event called UCAN is responsible for placing children and LGBTQ young adults age 18 -- 24 in homes in Chicago, Illinois. My life was profoundly altered by meeting them! And I am now committed to aiding UCAN in their mission of placing these deserving souls in loving homes. There are no words that could express how impacted I was as I gazed into the eyes of these young adults while reading excerpts from my book. I secretly vowed to myself and to God that I would do everything within my power to ensure that every one of them was placed in loving homes with parents who could rear them and nurture them the way God intended for all children and young adults to be nurtured.

Just remember that when you phone your local restaurant this June to make dinner reservations for you and your father, in preparation to celebrate this joyous occasion, that there are millions of children and young adults who will not have the same privilege. They will have missed out on the joy of heading to the mall to secretly purchase that special Mother’s Day gift, and they will also be denied the opportunity to present their fathers with a gift in June, on Father’s day. And while this gift giving ritual may seem insignificant to some, these precious moments, bless the lives of youth and young adults. Because as they gaze into the approving eyes of parents they find validation, empowerment, and they come to the realization that they are truly loved!

In the upcoming months, when it’s time to vote on legislation like “The Every Child Deserves a Family Act,” I challenge you to recall how wonderful it felt to have a nurturing mother and/or father and the magical feeling of security that you felt in their loving care. Don’t buy into the homophobia, misinformation and discrimination spewed out by misguided conservative politicians and religious leaders, bent on depriving same-gender-loving people from enjoying their legitimate Constitutional rights, while condemning thousands of children in the Foster Care System to a life of missed opportunity, tragic abandonment, and unnecessary homelessness.

by Angel Mason, Global Author
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