

# Senator, “Do You Have a Personal Animosity Against Gay Americans?”



A reporter in Texas recently asked GOP presidential candidate Senator Ted Cruz this question: “Do you have a personal animosity against gay Americans?”

Why would a reporter ask a Republican, running for president, such a question? I don't know the reporter so I can't say with certainty, but it wouldn't shock me if he were trying to start trouble; if he were trying to trip up the senator into saying something negative about gays and getting some national publicity for himself in the process. But there's another reason, I think, for the question. There's no hiding the fact that some conservative Christians – *not a majority, maybe only a fringe* – do indeed have animosity against gays. And since Ted Cruz is a conservative Christian ...

So how did Ted Cruz answer the question? With a question of his own for the reporter.

“Do you have a personal animosity against Christians, sir? Your line of questioning is highly curious. You seem fixated on a particular subject. Look, I'm a Christian. Scripture commands us to love everybody and what I have been talking about, with respect to same-sex marriage, is the Constitution, which is what we should all be focused on. The Constitution gives marriage to elected state legislators. It doesn't give the power of marriage to a president, or to unelected judges to tear down the decisions enacted by democratically elected

state legislatures.”

When I heard that, I wondered why Senator Cruz didn't simply say, “Of course I have no animosity toward gays. Next question.”

It might be because he and a lot of other conservative Republicans running for president live in fear of what the well-organized organizations of the Christian Right might do if they answer the question the “wrong” way. The reporter may have been trying to be needlessly provocative, but still, can't a Republican simply say “No” when asked if he has animosity toward gay Americans?

But on the question of gay marriage, Senator Cruz thinks the decision should be left to the states. The Justices of the U.S. Supreme Court will soon tell us if they agree with the senator or if a majority believe that gay marriage is a fundamental civil right that can't be overridden by the states.

This question has come up before in our country. So let's take a brief trip down memory lane. On June 12, 1967 the Supreme Court ruled that states could not forbid interracial couples from getting married. At the time laws banning interracial marriage were fairly common. Seventeen states, all in the South, had such laws on the books.

But the Supreme Court threw out every one of those laws, ruling that, “Marriage is one of the “basic civil rights of man, fundamental to our very existence and survival.” The vote was 9 to 0.

I'm sure that Senator Cruz, and others, would argue that banning *interracial* couples from marrying is not the same as not allowing *gay* couples to marry. For what it's worth, I disagree. They both involve fundamental civil rights, the way I see it.

But since Ted Cruz almost certainly does see a difference, I hope some reporter asks him what he thinks the difference is. Does he think that while race is not a choice, homosexuality is?

And since the senator brought religion into the discussion – “Look, I’m a Christian,” he told the Texas reporter – it might be worth noting that religion was also deeply-rooted in the thinking of southern legislators and judges back when interracial marriage was illegal.

The case that went to the Supreme Court in 1967, started in Virginia, where a judge named Leon Bazile said this in upholding the state’s ban on interracial marriage:

“Almighty God created the races white, black, yellow, Malay and red, and he placed them on separate continents. And but for the interference with his arrangement there would be no cause for such marriages. The fact that he separated the races shows that he did not intend for the races to mix.”

Change *race* to *sex* and you hear the same arguments from conservative Christians today. They’re against same-sex marriage, they say, because God is against it. (Trust me on this: I get truckloads of emails from angry viewers whenever I tell Bill O’Reilly I’m for same-sex marriage. Almost all quote, directly or indirectly, some portion of the Bible to make their case.)

Maybe gay marriage is not the same as interracial marriage. As I say, when it comes to the law I think it is, but I’m not one of the justices on the high court. So we’ll see soon enough.

One more thing: The interracial couple in Virginia did not attend oral arguments before the Supreme Court, but the husband in the case, Richard Loving, gave his lawyer a note. This is what it said:

“Tell the Court I love my wife, and it is just unfair that I

can't live with her in Virginia."

Looking back, decent people can clearly see how unjust those racist laws were. Though I suspect there are still a few who think interracial marriage is not only morally wrong but should also be illegal. As for gay marriage, I understand the sentiments of opponents. Their opposition to same-sex marriage doesn't automatically mean they're bigots, though unfortunately (based on the emails they send me) some are.

But one thing is clear: They are on the wrong side of history. No, not the way racists were on the wrong side of history decades ago. But they are on the wrong side of history, nonetheless.

America is changing whether they like it or not.