

# YES TO LOVE, NO TO MARRIAGE

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NEWSWEEK

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Last year, during a family barbecue concluding our annual visit to my beloved Jeff's Michigan hometown, his sister-in-law pulled him aside to ask why we weren't moving our relationship down a church aisle. "I thought there would be an announcement," she said. Jeff reminded her that we had shared good news about buying a house together, a significant step in our three-year relationship.

"You two are doing it backward," she said.

I am a 42-year-old woman who has lived life mostly on my own terms. I have never sought a husband and have still experienced intense, affirming love. I have explored the world and myself and sought understanding, knowledge and a sense of how I can best contribute. Ten years ago I left a New York career to return to California and pursue a writer's life. Shortly thereafter I met an intelligent teenager, also determined to live life on her own terms, who is now my fabulous foster daughter.

Meeting Jeff—an intelligent, creative, thoughtful man—became the icing on the rich cake of a life not wasted cruising singles bars and pining over lost loves.

Last year Jeff asked me to marry him, and I willingly gave my heart to the intent of his question. We are committed to spending our future together, pursuing our dreams and facing life's challenges in partnership.

Yet I do not need a piece of paper from the state to strengthen my commitment to Jeff. I do not believe in a religion that says romantic, committed love is moral only if couples pledge joint allegiance to God.

I don't need a white dress to feel pretty, and I have no desire to pretend I'm virginal. I don't need to have Jeff propose to me as if he's chosen me. I don't need a ring as a daily reminder to myself or others that I am loved. And I don't need Jeff to say publicly that he loves me, because he says it privately, not just in words but in daily actions.

Our married friends say you can make a wedding—and a marriage—what you want, but that is not true. It's a specific institution with defining principles and values. If it weren't, there wouldn't be so-called marriage-protection laws in the majority of this country's states.

And for me, that's the bottom line when I consider cashing in on all the benefits our heterosexual relationship is entitled to. My gay friends can't do that. I don't want to send a message to anyone, including my daughter—who may someday choose a same-sex life partner—that the value of her relationships can be determined by law and the affirmation of others.

Nonetheless, however unengaged I am to the institution of marriage, Jeff and I began to talk through the possibility of holding some sort of celebration of our relationship. But we wonder about

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Jeff's family. "It'll be hard to get them to cross a state line for a commitment ceremony," he warned.

If it's not a wedding, if there's no priest or piece of paper from the state, some people just don't give any weight to your commitment—despite high divorce rates that remind us that such formalities offer no guarantee the relationship will endure.

Undeterred, we've begun planning for a daylong event near the ocean that would allow time for us to enjoy the company of friends and family without wasting time on obligatory cake cutting and flower tosses.

I look forward to sharing that day with my parents and their respective spouses, my brother and my extended family, who have all become accustomed to my independent life choices.

But I want Jeff's parents to be there, too, so I can honor their role in raising such a loving son. I want his brothers and sister, their loved ones and children to join us and share in our joy. They are loving people who have been accepting of me, and I would cherish the chance to introduce them to my daughter, my family and our friends.

Nonetheless, while I know the word "married" would mean something to them, something tangible they could use when describing our life together, I can't do it. I am Jeff's partner, his friend and his lover, and he is mine. The terms "husband" and "wife" wouldn't even begin to describe our relationship.

We've set a date for July to hold our big event. No, we won't get married. But I hope our friends and family still come.

## COMMENTS REGARDING THIS ARTICLE

Something about the way she says she doesn't need all those things implies that those who have chosen the marriage route are needy and insecure. It would have been better phrased another way, rather than implying that marriage traditions are vain. It's great to do your own thing, but it is just my opinion that it is no different to criticize a traditional bride's wishes than it is for a traditional bride to criticize someone else's choice. I doubt most brides "need" a white dress to feel pretty (I didn't), or that they are making any allusions about their virginity on their wedding day. Marriages come in the same wonderful varieties as any other relationship, and the relationships and choices of couples who choose to include marriage in their life deserve just as much respect as couples who don't.

My concern with making major life decisions (like purchasing a house) with someone you are not married to is that in the event of a breakup there is little precedent of how to divide the assets. My husband had purchased a house with a girlfriend who, over the course of the relationship, became rather unstable and when he ended things with her, refused for many months to sell the house, buy him out, allow him to remove things from the house, transfer utilities into her name etc. It took many months and thousands in legal fees to sort out something that would have been much easier to deal with had they been married. It is important to get things in writing (almost like a prenup for the unmarried) before entering into any sort of financial entanglements.

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I'm amazed by how offended many of the commenters are by this article.

My, and my boyfriend's, decision not to get married doesn't cheapen or somehow lessen your decision to marry your partner. My boyfriend and I aren't religious, so declaring a union before God is out of the question for us. That leaves declaring a union before the government - we're finding that it's more lucrative for us to continue sharing our lives without that bit of legal interference. We intend to spend the rest of our lives together and we're so secure in our commitment to each other that we don't need anyone outside to give it some kind of made up validity.

If you need that validity for yourself and your relationship, that's fine. No one is trying to make you conform to Bonnie's ideas.

However, many people on this thread are angry that people like Bonnie, myself and my boyfriend AREN'T conforming to THIER idea of what's proper and right. Instead of attacking Bonnie for her stance, perhaps you should take a hard look at yourself and your relationship. You're obviously not that secure in it if you feel the need to force your marriage belief on others.

Reading these comments, it's interesting to me why so many people seem offended by the author's choice not to marry. This is exactly why the non-married need to be speaking up! Like her, I am committed for life to my partner (now of 13 years) and neither of us wants to get married. We'd like not to explain it or defend it..it's just right for us. But when well-meaning people, like Jeff's parents in the article, would push us to get married it becomes important to explain what marriage means to us. So if you don't agree with what Bonnie is saying, remember why she is saying it! She is simply defending and explaining her choice and her viewpoint against people who assume marriage is the ONLY way for EVERYONE, when she (and I) believe that one size does not fit all.

In reading this article there were many shallow arguments for her not to marry Jeff. Why are divorce rates on the decline in America? Is it because more people are committed to marriage for the long haul? No! The true reason is that more Americans are simply living together, and outside the bond of marriage. She claims to be committed to Jeff, but when his request was for marriage commitment ended! Is it love then? My personal opinion is that it is not love, because love is selfless and giving to the other. The problem is more than just "I love Jeff and that is enough," but it is rooted in a selfish and sensual lust masked as love. Marriage is the ultimate commitment which shows true fidelity and selfless love!

Feminism is about female equality, not selfish power. Feminism is about being viewed as a human being worth respect, not as a "man" (which really goes against feminism, to think that we should be treated just like men).

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There are TWO halves of this species - male and female. We work together to make this world work. Neither is more superior than the other (including ms bonnie and emdeecee). Each one has their own strengths and weaknesses. RESPECTING each other is crucial.

Ms. Bonnie was proposed to by a man who wanted to get married, but she did not respect HIS wish, and instead continued to indulge in her own. HE wanted commitment and to display his commitment in a bond that (if broken) could potentially hurt him more than her. He was willing to sacrifice his own autonomy and put his trust in her commitment to him by seeking a legally binding union with the woman he loved.

SHE spurned the marriage idea, in acceptance of an individualized relationship that both are free to walk out of with no repercussions (except some hurt feelings). She does not need to put any trust in his devotion as far as legal standings go, she is as committed as my 16 year old brother is to his girlfriend.

THIS is not feminism at its finest. It does not uphold the idea that women are equal to men, it does not uphold the strengths that women have (on a social or individual level). It tears down a social institution that may be abused, may have lost some cultural relevance due to that abuse, but is no less relevant (and if you disagree, provide me with good reasons why not).

Believe it or not, life is not relative. It actually is not all about you.

(Begin the parade of 5 year olds all crying out "ME ME ME")

There is a large community of people who, like the author, believe in alternatives to marriage. Many of those people communicate and advocate for policy change through the Alternatives to Marriage Project, a national nonprofit working to end marital status discrimination and the stigma against being single.

I completely respect the author's decision not to get married. However, what confuses me is she desperately wants others to accept and acknowledge her decision while her article feels as though she doesn't respect the decision of others to get married. While marriage may not be right for you it is right for others and it's not fair to belittle a choice others have made. Deciding not to get married does not make you any hipper or better than anyone else, it just means you made a choice. Do not assume your relationship is any better, stronger, or more loving than that of a husband or a wife.

Men should stay single, especially in California, where women initiate >70% of all divorces.

There's so much I could say here. First, it's contradictory for you to claim that your relationship with Jeff symbolizes your commitment to each other when, without that "piece of paper," you can still walk away whenever you want. That's not commitment. Plus, theoretically speaking, it shows that he doesn't

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have to be fully committed to you, either (and vice versa), because he is not bound to the morals and values that marriage publicly emphasizes. Living together is a safety net, while marriage was instituted to solidify and protect the sacredness, the goodness and the devotion between a man and a woman. In a nut shell, marriage equals commitment. Anything less than that is pure selfishness.

Was this a junior high essay? It's hard to comprehend an adult writing the equivalent of "You don't understand! No one has ever felt this way before!" Anyone who believes that marriage is about a piece of paper is too intellectually barren to write for a national magazine. Except, perhaps, for Newsweek.

Misery loves company I guess. Most marriages are full of ambivalence to say-"get marred or society will crumple like a house of cards in a tornado is bullshyte and full of male privilege. Quite frankly, it's no one's damn business what of legal age adults do with each other.

Bonnie, I agree with you completely! Thanks for putting this out in the public sphere -- maybe people will realize that getting married is not necessary (nor sufficient...) in order to have a committed, loving relationship. In my opinion, it is just an out-dated social institution.

People who really don't care about marriage don't plan "events" to take place on a beach in front of a big audience, nor do they imagine that every single member of the family has an opinion about the situation.

Ms. Eslinger is as self-absorbed as any comical TV bridezilla. She patronizes her "in-laws" even when she is only imagining them discussing her live-in arrangement: "While I know the word 'married' would mean something to them, something tangible they could use when describing our life together..." With whom would they be discussing her? "Entertainment Tonight"?

And as for the sentence, "The terms 'husband' and 'wife' wouldn't even begin to describe our relationship," is a slap in the face to every one of us who has the guts to measure up to the word every day. During my husband's long coma, I was called, "his wife" dozens of times a day by hospital personnel, and it was my honor. And he was damn lucky to have me, because he needed a Wife, not a cockamamie, "partner, friend and lover."

If all the customs of marriage are purely for 'inner emotional' reasons as Ms. Eslinger assumes, who needs the ring, dress, ceremony, family etc. But, the ring is a reminder of public vows, not a reminder of how someone feels. Feelings vacillate. That's why you make vows. She wants to shack up, on a semi-permanent basis. What's new here? It sounds very open-minded, inclusive etc. But what would she say if she found Jeff cheating or ditching her. If she really were the soul mate she claims, she'd feel hurt, betrayed, and want to hold him to a standard of love that is publicly held, "you cheated on me, and lovers don't do that." She says she wants to be liberated from all norms, history, customs and so on. But

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she's very naive as to what that would mean, or what expectations she would run to if she were hurt in this relationship.

So it's better that she be stuck in a marriage with a liar and a cheater than be able to walk away from it. Yeah, let me guess, another martyr who's chosen to suffer and wants to see everyone suffer, too.

Do you just spend your days arguing with people and trying to make them feel stupid? Do you really believe that all of these people must be in or have experienced bad marriages and that is the only reason they could feel differently from you and Bonnie? Do you realize how angry, bitter, and obnoxious you sound?

Wow - when I came this site to put my two cents in I was amazed at all the diversity in the comments. All I wanted to say was that I found a wonderful man in my fifties and was never married before. It was a comment from an acquaintance who had recently married her long time partner after 20 years that made me consider marriage which I hadn't considered at all. I was like the author, owned my home, financially secure, etc. Her comment was being married was "different and better". What does that mean?? Getting married was the best decision I ever made. Notwithstanding all the legal and tax benefits mentioned, it's just "different" when you get that piece of paper. It means that you have made the huge commitment that marriage demands and I couldn't be happier.

As I remember from my college days the original meaning of sophomore is 'wise fool'. Or as one of my professors used to put it 'a person who has read one book too few.' Which is exactly how I feel about this article. Another sophomore who has just discovered something that has been tried countless times before and is now going to enlighten the rest of us. Apparently Bonnie slept through most of her history classes otherwise she would have learned that this idea was tried during the 60s and 70s along with a number of other 'with-it' and 'tuned-in' relationship twists. Notice how many of them are still being practiced. You're about thirty years late with this one, Ms. Eslinger. We've already seen this one. Now grow up and join the rest of us in the real world. Oh, by the way, if I remember correctly after a certain length of time living with someone constitutes a common law 'marriage'. Good try though.

Your reply is hilarious! I, too, felt like I was watching an old "Phil Donahue" show. This article was a relic, and you brought that out so well.

Yawn. Logical fallacy: "Appeal to tradition." As for "growing up" and "join[ing] us in the real world," that's the "real world" full of divorce lawyers and so forth, right? Incidentally, most states no longer recognize common-law marriages.

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Logical Fallacy: Appeal to the majority.

Simply because the majority (really not even, as I believe it is around or below 50%) can't hold a marriage together does not prove that marriage is not an institution worth preserving, recognizing, and honoring.

The people whose marriages fail would have the same conclusion if they hadn't been married - the relationship ends...just no way to legally acknowledge that and track it to show that its at the same rate as divorce.

Give a real argument against marriage rather than appealing to "most marriages fail". That doesn't work.

Sad and defensive. Not to mention her thinking contains no nuance.

Is there the 'right' way to live your life? Who's there to fine this' is right or that is wrong? And who cares if you choose marriage or not. Please do not be full of yourself and think that people care how you live your life. I am not being sarcastic but being genuine here. We are not significant at all. We are just like a speck of dust and are only here for a very short time. But however you live your life, go by your heart and try not fulfill your own desires or make your self happy at the expense of others.

Sounds to me like a bash against the institute of marriage. I have been married for 23 years, am committed for life and have a silly piece of paper. Yes the divorce rates are high but then again there are no statistics as to the rate that poeple simply walk away from a relationship, which Jeff could do at any time. I agree that a marriage certificate is no guarantee for a lifelong relationship with one person. Too many poeple rush into a marriage and then it fails. That is not a good reason to bash marriage. If your relationship is that strong than instead of being the free thinker that you claim to be, get married. It won't ruin your relationship, I guarantee it

I'm happy for you, that you found a life partner. I agree, that a piece of paper makes no difference in a committed relationship. What really matters, is your relationship.. Marriage is a tradition whose patriarchal roots is not supportive of an equality in a relationship. What a great idea, to have a committment celebration!. I'd be there, if I was in the area

Bonnie - think very carefully about this - like it or not, there are abundant legal reasons to marry - You can trot off to a courthouse in your shorts if you want to - no one needs to know. I personally know a couple who were happily not married for over 24 years - things were fine until...she developed cancer, and issues of insurance (after she was forced to retire before vestiture) and pensions started rearing their ugly heads. \$\$ talks, and they got married in a hurry. What happens if Jeff is suddenly in the hospital,

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and his parents do not allow you to be there( they do not have to you know) - of course you can go to attorneys, and get many forms, POA, executor of the estate, medical power of atty - blah blah. It still will not do what that silly piece of paper will do. That silly piece of paper will protect you, your daughter and Jeff. It will ensure your rights, and the ability of your beloved to follow your wishes if needed. Otherwise in the eyes of the law, and possibly your families, you are just shacking up - no reason to respect your relationship. This doesn't matter if the whole thing only lasts a few years. But.... a lifetime brings many changes, and marriage may then be your best friend.

In response to Sandie, yes i always thought of marriage as a security blanket of some sort for me and the kids but it turned out not to be so. In fact, when my husband fell into alcoholism, got fired from his job, and didn't bother looking for another one, then lost his phony disability claim against the company, divorce seemed like the only option for me. Because we had been married he was legally entitled to half of all my financial assets which included an inheritance from my dad that had been used to pay off the mortgage on the house. However, because he had no income, the only child support the judge deemed he could afford was fifty dollars a week (3 kids). There were many times when I wished i had maintained my single status....in the end the kids and i would have been much better off financially. So although i agree that your argument holds true in many cases, it doesn't work that way in all...and certainly not in mine!

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Seriously. What a ridiculous column. I'm offended, not religiously, cause I'm an atheist, but I'm offended by the "better than you married couples" attitude of the whole column. She said, "The terms "husband" and "wife" wouldn't even begin to describe our relationship." Well, whoopee. I've been married for 12 years, since was 20, and I'm just happy as you are. Editors, this truly was drivel.

One of the silliest stories I have ever read in My Turn. It sounds like Bonnie's personal rant against marriage carries extreme undertones of personal self-affirmation. It seems a paradox that Bonnie refuses to proclaim her love in a court or church on grounds that her shared love is "private" intimate and inexplicable, yet she is willing to publish it in a widely read magazine column. It sounds to me like Bonnie has made it abundantly clear that a couple's love should be exclusive, so why not keep it that way? If Bonnie is standing up for gay rights, there are plenty of ways to do that. Many of my gay friends showed up at my wedding with congratulations rather than a chide. I think the main point is that this article is self-defeating. In much the same way that I find preaching about one's personal relationship with Christ disgusting, so too do I find preaching about one's personal relationship with Jeff. This article solidly puts to death the cliché that men are afraid of commitment. It looks to me that women are just as scared.

Bonnie, this was an excellent article to generate discussion... maybe not agreement, but good old 'town meeting' talk. What is marriage? When did it begin? Why did it begin? For health benefits? For legal aspects? To justify the procreation of offspring? Only one word comes to mind, COMMITMENT. No ceremony, no certificate, no religion, no institution or government can tell anyone about their commitment to a relationship or contract. Times may have changed but the human mind stayed the same. Those of you on either side of this issue will continue to 'hold em' and maybe bluff your way through life, but the 50% divorce rate speaks volumes louder to the multitudes of illegitimate children about your commitment to the ancient and sacred institution of 'marriage'. Did the populace have pieces of papyrus in hand to garner themselves Social Security benefits or the rights to the child they just bore some 2100 years ago? I believe the weak individuals are the ones that stand amongst the status quo and are afraid to be the one to stand alone. Bonnie, "you go girl"!! You are truly a heroine in my book!!

I am a straight married woman and I feel that my relationship with my husband is more intimate, defined, and beneficial than it was when we were just living together. I have always gotten a lot of crap for being young and married, like I somehow gave up my feminist principles. But isn't the point of feminism to let women make their own decisions in life? I made the decision to get married because I found my life partner, not because of society. And society can mind their own business when I decide to be a stay-at-home mom for a couple of years too. Again, being a feminist means I have the choice to work or not work, and I will choose not to. Marriage is an institution that exists for a reason, to protect the union of 2 people, and the results of that union. If it weren't so important, I wouldn't fight so hard so that my homosexual friends could benefit from the same god-given right. The

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author's attitude is a slap in the face to me. If she doesn't want to get married that's fine, but she doesn't need to preach her lifestyle like it's the only way.

Not every decision a woman makes, even one who calls herself a feminist, is a feminist choice. Plenty of feminists who choose to wear makeup or pantyhose will tell you quite frankly that these choices have little to do with their feminism. Getting married isn't a betrayal of feminism, so the friends of yours who have "called you on it" are off-base (and rude). And you're entitled to live life any way you see fit, so long as you're not hurting or impinging upon anyone else. But let's not pretend that dressing up like June Cleaver and coming to the door every night in a teddy and high heels with a martini on a silver tray is some sort of "feminist" choice, 'k?

Because you choose that "real" feminism is masculinity with boobs?

I'll go with being a feminist owning up to the rights of being a woman and all that entails - including being the fairer half of the species. You can go be a man, me and this woman will be women :)

While the author might not need a piece of paper to prove that she's committed to her partner for life, she does need that piece of paper to enjoy the over 1000 legal benefits that marriage bestows upon a couple. From tax-free inheritance through community property (even without a will), hospital visitation rights, making medical decisions to receiving a deceased partner's pension and Social Security benefits, these benefits are why we gays and lesbians are fighting so hard for the right to marry. If these rights could be obtained contractually, it would be less of an issue, but many of them cannot. The churches love to portray marriage as a "sacred institution," which is their prerogative; however, the legal union is simply for benefits and protections that society offers no one else. All marriage should be civil unions, and the churches can make marriage rules as they wish.

Kudos to the author for bucking society's expectations. Truly, she and Jeff ARE the only ones who know how committed (or not committed) they are to each other. However, what she doesn't seem to realize is that, for better or worse, marriage is the main way that our culture views whether or not a [heterosexual] couple is committed to each other for life. I hope she understands where her partner is coming from if they choose not to make a huge trek and spend a lot of money to attend her commitment ceremony. They are used to certain cultural norms, and even if the author is "independent-minded," she can't logically expect everyone else to be. And as for her implication that she is against marriage because gays can't get married -- well, I certainly applaud her support of gay rights, but I believe some of the major gay-rights organizations have come out and said that they do NOT want heterosexuals boycotting marriage as some sort of solidarity. Why not help them fight for equality instead? Check out Lambda Legal and Human Rights Campaign, for instance.

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While I fully respect the author's decision to reject legal marriage, the only argument she makes against it that I do not find offensive is her statement about the exclusion of gay couples from the institution. Everything else was belittling, presuming that all married people need a formal marriage ceremony to feel good about themselves and their relationship. Many "official" weddings are no different from the commitment ceremony she herself describes planning, a celebration with one's friends and family, white dress or no. The choice to obtain that "piece of paper," as well, is simply another way to communicate the nature of one's relationship to the community at large. Eslinger talks a lot about not "needing" a ring, dress, piece of paper, etc. to feel secure in herself and her relationship. But her need to make this argument in dismissive blanket statements betrays, at least to me, an underlying insecurity of her own.

What a refreshing article. It's a wonderful country that allows us to choose what relationships we choose to participate in. I'm in a loving relationship that we have chosen not to justify with a marriage certificate. I don't think that how I choose to love my partner is condescending any more than those who choose marriage are condescending to me. It's just a choice...

Bonnie, congratulations for spending the time to evaluate what your relationship means to you. Writing this public declaration of your love expresses how much this relationship means to you. That speaks volumes in my mind...

The issue isn't how you love, but that you love, and that the relationship works for both people in the relationship. I'm not sure why anyone's relationship should so influence others outside of the relationship enough to lead them to find this public expression of love as condescending.

I also felt this was condescending when I read it. I have a live and let live attitude. As part of that, I do not impose my judgements or will on other people. By writing this article, she has taken a strong stance that marriage is a waste of time and she is above such foolish whims. Based on all of her assertions, it is logical to assume she must pity all of us poor fools who did fall into the trap of marriage, as she is clearly above that. I am happy she is living life the way she wants, the way that makes her happy. That doesn't mean that she should be so judgemental (that is how her article felt) of those of us who chose different paths and did get married. There is also a lack of discussion on her part of how Jeff really feels about this whole thing. The fact that he proposed suggests he doesn't view marriage as the big sham that she does. I just hope her strong views aren't as one-sided in her relationship and she and Jeff are really entering this road together, as she states.

I applaud the authors view of the bigger picture. She has pointed out the hypocrisies in the institution of marriage that don't work for her and her partner to be. People who call her selfish really miss the boat, This person is sensitive to the unfairness that ensures if she is to embrace an institution that says only some are allowed. The very reason this article is so good is because of how alarmed and threatened some get at mere questioning of the status quo. Go Bonnie! You and your partner are obviously off to a healthy beginning b/c you both think and care about each other and the world you live in!!!!

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Methinks a lot of the critics are teed off because “Well, \*I\* suffered for years in an unhappy marriage, so by gum, so should \*she\*! Harrumph! Harrumph!”

It seems the point of this article didn't register with the people who decided to attack Bonnie's character/personality rather than make an intelligent statement on how you disagree with her choice not to marry her partner. I read this article and wonder which part of this story was pompous and condescending. It's one person sharing her views about the institution of marriage, so there's no need to get snippy and petty with name-calling. Now who is acting like an adolescent?

I celebrate this author's commitment to the bigger picture. Her example, intent, and thought -ful actions, consider how her choices effect more than herself and her family. She is a conscious of the hypocrisies of the institution of marriage and sensitive to the unfairness of states that will not see that any couple in love deserve the same rights by law. Ms Eslinger i applaud your choice and wish you a long and happy relationship. You obviously have a healthy start .

Could Bonnie suck anymore charm out of the idea of two people in love? I wouldn't want to come to her party. She's way to humorless.

Could Bonnie Eslinger suck any more charm out of the idea of a party for two people in love. Her psuedo-cerebral view of marriage is so utterly emotionless? I wouldn't want to come to her party. It would probably be way too serious.

Yeah, so much worse to have a “pseudo-[note correct spelling]-cerebral” view of marriage than to plunge into it because “OMG WER IN LURVE AN I WANT A BIG CHURCH WEDDING AN PRESENTS!!!”, then find yourself in divorce court within a few years.

1) The author wonders if Jeff's family will come to the commitment ceremony. If they don't, they will probably do so on the grounds that they love the couple dearly, but don't feel the need to participate in an obligatory ceremony to demonstrate their love 2)pompous and condescending 3)perhaps not so much pompous as adolescent. Segments of the article sound eerily similar to comments from our 16 year old.

You have a birth certificate. You will have a death certificate. You and your 'friend' will have a title to the house you are purchasing. You need a drivers license to drive. You must have a social security card with number to work. You need proof of insurance in order to drive an automobile within your state. You receive a graduation certificate when you matriculate from high school and college ... BUT ...

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THESE ARE ONLY PIECES OF PAPER! Who are you kidding? You fashion yourself as being so 'secure', 'mature', 'loving', 'caring' and yet you fail to understand that 'pieces of paper' are required proof for the essential elements of our lives. Marriage is the last step in removing your insecurity. Apparently you do not truly believe that this 'friend' of yours is 'the one'. Nice try young lady . . . it just doesn't wash.

"The last step in renouncing your insecurity"? What the HELL does that mean? Britney and K-Fed, to name the culprits of only the most recent trainwreck of a celebrity "marriage," certainly don't strike me as the most secure people. As for the "young lady" remark...yawn, another right-wing \*\*\* talking down to a woman who makes a decision said \*\*\* doesn't agree with, no matter how well-thought-out. (Incidentally, the author is 42, which is \*more\* than old enough to know her own mind. How old are \*you\*, M. Danielek?)

I bet you're a Republican, right? You believe in personal freedoms, too, I bet. However, you don't give the author her freedom to choose not to marry. You're a hypocrite and you're extremely condescending. You call her "young lady," you call her insecure. She's the furthest thing from that, if you actually read the article. Comparing marriage to a birth certificate are ridiculous. You're the one who disgusts me.

Reading this article saddened me for the author. She should count the times she chose to use "I, me, and my" throughout the course of her writing. Marriage is about commitment to the other person, and Bonnie is clearly thinking only of herself and manipulating the definition of marriage to suit her agenda. Being married is satisfying and beautiful when both parties are committed to the process, and a "piece of paper" does NOT define what a marriage should be. It does, however, show that you are willing to let go of yourself a little bit, in order to become a unit with your spouse. Marriage cannot be a selfish endeavor in order to work. It takes maturity, a willingness to adapt at times, and most of all, a common focus. The fact that Jeff proposed and she refused shows a lack of willingness to completely allow herself to be his "beloved". Bonnie is showing selfishness, rigidity, and that she is not interested in giving up her heart to someone else. Giving up some control can be a wonderful thing when you've found the right person. It has nothing to do with anything she wrote about in this article.

"She should count the number of times she chose to use 'I, me and my' throughout the course of her writing." Yes, dear, because it's called MY TURN. And again, I'm amazed that this woman is being labeled "selfish" because her SO proposed and she declined. Oh, wait, too many people still haven't evolved beyond the notion that without a rock on her finger and preferably a passel of brats too, a woman's life is pointless.

"Passel of brats"? Wow. I think children are incredible. Hardly anything brings me as much delight in my life as my children. I'm thankful your point of view won't last more than one generation...

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The contrast that this writer presents between marriage and her own ceremony of commitment is so unconvincing it's quite infuriating. I have no problem with her not wanting to marry. But her dismissal of marriage is solely based on her erratic assumptions of the marrying people - her case is weak, ignorant, and annoying. And in my personal opinion, her attitude toward marriage seem to stem from her own selfishness. It seems that her partner wanted to marry. But her response to this was mere gratitude of his intent? What? Come on!!!!!!

What, she was \*obliged\* to marry him just because he wanted her to? Oh, dear, she's pulled the rug out from under the whole idea that us single gals are just pining away for a mayyy-unnnnnn to validate our pitiful existences by proposing to us! The poor menz and the Smug Married Wifeys, how will they ever cope???

In my opinion it is a beautiful commitment to choose to be together-- not as mandated by a legal document, or because it's what expected in our society-- but because it's that person you want to be with every day. Some people may find marriage (the legal aspects) or a wedding (the ceremony, tradition, the dress, rings, etc) to be important to symbolize of the commitment of lifelong love, and that can be so meaningful and beautiful to some. But there are those who don't have this option, and for others marriage just isn't necessary. Whether or not to make the traditional, legal, or a symbolic commitment is up to the couple to decide, and if people forego it, it in no way signifies some kind of deterioration of our society. Relationships exist within the institution of marriage, and exist defiantly outside of it, but we should be less concerned about the institutions, and more concerned about the relationships themselves.

The decision to "get married" and to "be married" are not one and the same... I believe that many failed marriages, especially very short ones, occur because the participants believe that the ceremony is all that matters. The decision to "be married" is what counts. Years ago (early 1940s) my mother's theology professor asked who makes a man and wife a married couple. After all the students answered, he told them they were wrong. It isn't the state, or the Church, or the person officiating. The man and woman (remember, this was 1942!) are the ones who make themselves married, their commitment. The ceremony is a public and legal acknowledgement, but it is the partners who make it official.

I hope she and Jeff have prepared legal documents granting power of attorney and health care proxy, if they want to be the parties responsible for one another when illness or mental deterioration enter their lives. If not, Jeff's sister or her adopted daughter will have the upper hand in deciding what's best for their legal relative.

I have an issue with "the words 'husband' and 'wife' don't even begin to describe our relationship." What does she think those words mean, then? Does she think other married couples do not regard

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themselves as lovers, friends, and partners? I think the author feels that her relationship is so much more meaningful and deep so as to transcend marriage, when she is describing her mate as millions of women would describe their husbands. I am happy for her that she has found love, but need she be so dismissive of other married couples in the process? Pretty presumptuous, in my opinion.

Yes of course! To profess one's love for another isn't enough... How could one possibly believe his or her partner's words, thoughts, emotions and actions? Sounds like blasphemy! Trust no one... say you love him or her... but, don't ever fall into the trap of trust.

This article has blatantly violated the rotting fabric of institutionalized marriage. It has cast some light into a dark, false and pretentious custom epitomized for centuries because humans lost their trust in themselves and as a result, in others.

It's so glaringly pure that the world won't be able to swallow it into its miserable depths.

???

It is those who fear voluntary commitment that succumb to documenting a relationship. One can have a host of excuses to justify the institution of marriage but nothing explains its validity. As for the common question I've been asked in the past?? But, If you love someone, why don't you marry her????? You fear commitment, don't you????? All I could offer this friend in reply is that ?? It is precisely because I love her that I refuse to deface our relationship with the tag of marriage.??

I quote the author, ?? I am Jeff's partner, his friend and his lover, and he is mine. The terms "husband" and "wife" wouldn't even begin to describe our relationship.?? Those who understand this will understand what I mean. It takes a lot of honesty in dealing with this issue?? honesty with yourself and then your partner and then the rest of the world.

What a bunch of bull. This has been one of the most disappointing articles I have read on Newsweek thus far. What young girl doesn't dream of getting married and having a family. Of course, as we get older, priorities change and goals do too. However, one thing I do honor is marriage and what it represents. Although you can have commitment, love and stability in a relationship regardless if you're gay or straight, marriage is an option for both parties. What example are we setting for the younger generation? It's your choice to marry or register as a domestic partner, or do neither. Go ahead and commit yourself to a man/woman--don't get married...we wonder why we have such problems in society...and like the writer had emphasized that her parents were no longer together, what example are you setting for your daughter. In my own perspective it's like she's stating marriage is fake, it doesn't last, don't do it--BUT do live with them, DO sleep with them, DO commit yourself to them and if you have some children....OH WELL!?! She never got married because it inconvenienced her...it's all very stupid and selfish...

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“What young girl doesn't [sic] dream of getting married and having a family.” Well, dear, \*this\* woman certainly didn't dream much about that stuff when I was a kid, because not all girls are girly-girls who buy into the fairy-princess brainwashing. (Oh, incidentally, I \*have\* a family, even though I have no desire to have children. Do you think that those of us who have declined to reproduce sprang from pods or something?)

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All of her excuses are what one would call a cop out. I am all about same sex marriages, not just unions and everyone having the right to choose a partner. But I am so tired of people who are commitment phobic using that as an excuse not to be married until 'we are all equal'. Obviously, her parents are divorced as she said 'my parents and their spouses'. So she is a child of divorce, which is probably more of an issue than she lends credence to. I too am an independent spirit. I traveled the US and overseas for years in my career as a nurse. Then I met the man of my dreams and wanted nothing more than to be called his 'wife'. Some people spout off about emotional commitments being more real than legal or religious ones because you are there without a law telling you you have to be. Whatever!! Just an excuse. If she really loved him, she would've accepted and made good on his proposal. No, he doesn't own you and nor does my husband own me. Quite the contrary. But I would never have it any other. Stop with the excuses. Even Gloria Steinem got married!

To the person who commented that “if she really loved him, she would've accepted and made good on his proposal.” - That's the stupidest thing I have ever heard. I understand that marriage is very important to you, and important to your relationship, but it's ludicrous to assume that it means the same to everyone else. Marriage is an institution that some people identify with and wish to participate in, and some people don't identify with it and would rather not participate. It is certainly not a measure of how much you love someone - what a ridiculous and outdated notion.

Ridiculous and outdated? I would hope that if I would've asked my husband to marry me first, he would honor our love and accept my proposal. Outdated and I am a liberal who is barely 30 years old.