

A fight no one wins

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The Chick-fil-A hullabaloo is a sad commentary on our society. It is a proxy war for the civil discourse we're unable or unwilling to have over the issues that deeply divide us.

I'm not opposed to peaceful demonstrations; I've participated in some myself over the years. But remember Newton's third law of motion: for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. That's what we've seen here.

Mike Huckabee launched a Chick-fil-A appreciation day, on which conservatives all over the country stood waiting in line in support of the chain's CEO, who [implicitly opposed gay marriage](#). In a counter-demonstration, gays and lesbians vowed to put on [public displays of affection](#) in Chick-fil-A restaurants. These may have been feel-good events for their participants, but I don't see how either side advanced its cause.

[The only winner was Chick-fil-A](#). As a friend of mine said on Facebook, it's a "marketer's dream come true. The company could not buy that kind of publicity for millions of dollars." As someone else suggested, Chick-fil-A shouldn't be judged by its CEO's view on gay marriage. It should be judged by how the chickens are treated that they serve in their restaurants.

I suspect this latest round in the culture wars was precipitated by fear on the right that fundamental changes are happening in the way many Americans view homosexuality and gay marriage. Despite the lack of success in changing laws on a state-by-state basis, acceptance of gays and lesbians is happening at a rate faster than many people imagined. [Fifty-four percent of Americans](#) think gay or lesbian relations are morally acceptable. In 2001, 53 percent thought they were morally wrong. [Fifty-nine percent of millennials](#) (pdf) favor same-sex marriage.

I wish Americans could have a civil conversation about these shifts. The [world café model](#) would be a way to begin. Gather groups of six to eight people, with a mix of views for, against, in between and undecided. Provide food. Have an experienced

group-process person lead each group through a series of discussion questions: what are your fears about the future of marriage in this country? What are your hopes about the future of marriage in this country? How can we live with and respect one another in spite of our differences? How can we accommodate one another's views in the public sector?

The point wouldn't be for anyone to persuade anyone else. It would be to come to a better understanding of one another, with a view toward living respectfully together in our pluralistic society, despite fundamental differences about sex and marriage, love and intimacy. It would be to see if we can be creative enough to come up with some win-win strategies, instead of trying to defeat the cause of those on the "other side."