

The HRC red equals sign: Share & tell

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Not since [Kony 2012](#) has my Facebook feed been awash in such a prolific meme: red Human Rights Campaign equal signs. I'm not exaggerating when I say more than half my Facebook friends (with recent updates) either have changed their Facebook profile pic or shared and/or liked the image. We discussed the fad in my Faith and Leadership class yesterday. After that conversation, I'm somehow both less cynical about social media and more convicted about the power for meaningful conversations face-to-face.

Before class, the cynic in my said this: *jumping on the bandwagon and joining a few million others to put a red equal sign on your Facebook feed is quite possibly the least you could do in support of gay marriage*. I get rather annoyed when people confuse political yard signs or bumper sticks with true advocacy that effects meaningful change.

On the other hand—and this is what my class taught me—there is a power in marshaling Facebook in such a noticeable way. Firstly, it plain-and-simple raises awareness. Many of my super-busy students wouldn't have heard about the Supreme Court arguments had the HRC campaign not “painted the town [Facebook world] red.” We probably wouldn't have talked about marriage equality at all in class yesterday. So, even if the depth of the Facebook share is shallow, the multiplying affect to raise awareness runs deep.

(By the way, huge props to HRC's social media people for the viral campaign! And, I'm really impressed with how they've run with the [parodies](#) as well.)

Beyond raising awareness, however, the social nature of Facebook allows people to post a comment with the picture. Friends of mine have shared moving stories, lifted up gay family members, and quoted scripture as they posted. I suppose this allows for a bit of narrative testimony and that, usually, is a good thing.

But, and it's a big BUT, as many of us have found out the hard way: *a Facebook comment feed is a really crappy medium for arguing about politics and religion*.

Several of my students already had examples of conversations getting out of hand. In class, we read a brief caustic exchange from a friend's wall. When it comes to politics and faith, Facebook better allows for simple sharing than complex reasoning.

Which leads me to a simple plea: if support of marriage equality is important to you, have a real live face-to-face conversation about it with someone of a different viewpoint. It's these conversations (along with personal interactions with gays and lesbians) that change minds. Whatever way the Supreme Court rules, we will still have a long way to go before society truly welcomes all to marriage. So, fine, post a picture, and then...talk about it.

*Originally posted at [A Wee Blether](#)*