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Mobile Activism: What Your Profile Picture Says About You

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Mobile Activism: What Your Profile Picture Says About You

Abstract

I know you've all been seeing [this image](#) all of your Facebook news feeds. All of the sudden a few weeks ago it became everyone's profile picture. People were sharing it, along with other images, explaining why Prop. 8 and the Defense Of Marriage Act should be repealed, and were generally expressing their support of marriage equality. [*excerpt*]

Keywords

Surge, Surge Gettysburg, Gettysburg College, Center for Public Service, sexuality, gender, gay marriage, marriage equality, same sex marriage, LGBTQ, Prop 8, DOMA, Defense of Marriage Act, Facebook, Social Media

Disciplines

Family, Life Course, and Society | Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies | Gender and Sexuality | Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Studies | Other Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies | Sexuality and the Law | Sociology | Women's Studies

Comments

Surge is a student blog at [Gettysburg College](#) where systemic issues of justice matter. Posts are originally published at [surgegettysburg.wordpress.com](#) Through stories and reflection, these blog entries relate personal experiences to larger issues of equity, demonstrating that –isms are structural problems, not actions defined by individual prejudice. We intend to popularize justice, helping each other to recognize our biases and unlearn the untruths.

SURGE

[VERB] : to move suddenly or powerfully forward or upward

MOBILE ACTIVISM: WHAT YOUR PROFILE PICTURE SAYS ABOUT YOU

April 15, 2013

I know you've all been seeing [this image](#) all of your Facebook news feeds. All of the sudden a few weeks ago it became everyone's profile picture. People were sharing it, along with other images, explaining why Prop. 8 and the Defense Of Marriage Act should be repealed, and were generally expressing their support of marriage equality.

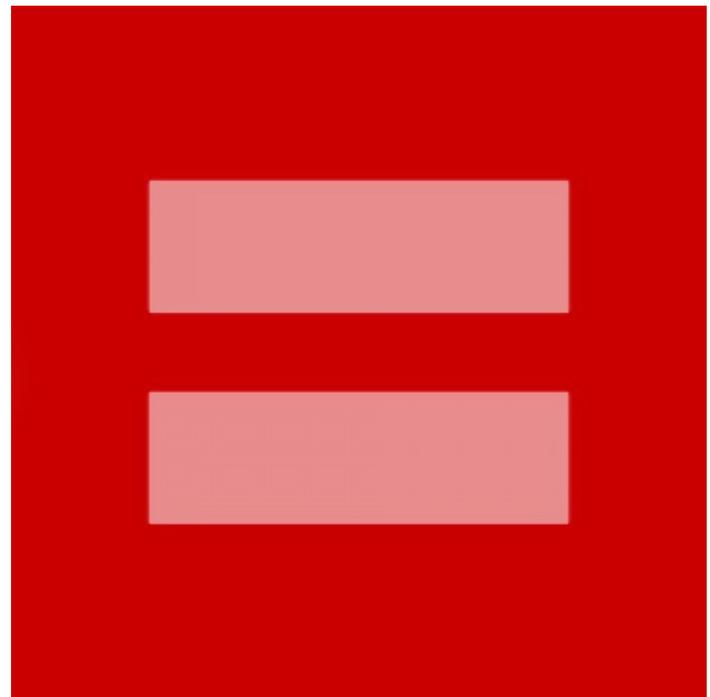
Celebrities were even getting in on it. Beyoncé was [posting her support](#): "If you like it, you should be able to put a ring on it." Ellen DeGeneres [tweeted](#) that she was "thinking of the Supreme Court" and hoping "that they remember what makes our country great, and support equality for all."

I was generally overwhelmed by the whole ordeal. On the one hand I was thrilled by the feeling of acceptance I felt by my Facebook friends' public displays of support. On the other, alarmed by the sheer number of people who were "coming out" as gay rights activists and using Facebook to do it. I felt like I was peering in on a gay rights activist party...and EVERYONE was invited.

There were just two qualifications for your invite to the party: You had to have Facebook and you had to have the ability to change your profile picture. And *voilà* – with the coming of Proposition 8 and Defense of Marriage Act to the Supreme Court, the "Facebook Activist" was born.

But what does it even mean to be a Facebook activist?

Part of me is inclined to scoff at such an idea. After all, isn't it a cop out to post something on Facebook if you don't advocate for it out in the real world? How effective is it for [millions](#) (that's right, **millions**) of people to change



their Facebook profile pictures but rarely say anything about marriage equality in an actual conversation? And what about those people who don't even know what the Human Rights Campaign (<http://www.hrc.org>) is or where that symbol really comes from?

Of course, this does not apply to everyone on Facebook. In fact, A LOT of my Facebook friends advocate for gay marriage outside of the interwebs too. But what about the people who don't? What kind of activism is that?

Facebook activism seems to me like it's the easy way out. It's just too easy to post a picture on Facebook and call it a day, when so many have been actively fighting for this to happen for decades (and don't plan on stopping no matter what the Supreme Court decides). I guess what I'm trying to say is that activism shouldn't be simple. It's really easy to jump on a profile picture bandwagon. It's not easy to stand up for the beliefs represented in your profile picture when all of your friends are spouting phrases like "no homo" and "that's so gay."

But then again, Facebook support is better than no support. I'd rather have millions of people posting pictures illustrating their support for LGBT equality than the Facebook world being silent while the Supreme Court is hearing cases that are extremely important for me and so many other people's futures. I'd rather be overwhelmed with acceptance than with anger and hate. Facebook activism is a good place to start (how did you find the link to this post anyways?), but I'm not content with a new Facebook profile picture as a means to real change in this country.

So how do we transition Facebook activism into the real world?

I know that all the Facebook activists on this campus do not attend ALLies events. Only a few call out their friends for making homophobic comments and even fewer are actively protesting to their state legislatures for marriage equality. So there's clearly a disconnect between what we do on Facebook and what we advocate in the real world.

It doesn't have to be that way, though. Maybe this is just the idealist in me talking, but if everyone who posted something on Facebook actively advocated for change in his or her daily lives, imagine the place that the LGBT movement could be in a year.

Maybe we should all adopt a brand new motto about the things we post on the internet.

"If I can put it in a newsfeed, I can talk about it in Servo [or Hanson, Quarry, Breidenbaugh, the Jaeger Center...you get the picture]"

Let's get out from behind our devices and take a few hours a week to advocate for the things in which we truly believe. It'll be more rewarding and equality will be achieved a lot faster.

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Staff Writer

Check out the [article](#) that fearless University of Pittsburgh student Rosie McKinley wrote in her school newspaper about marriage equality!

<http://surgegettysburg.wordpress.com/2013/04/15/mobile-activism-what-your-profile-picture-says-about-you/>