

Dear Colleagues,

I'll admit I am befuddled by the intense emotions surrounding Proposition 8. I personally do not feel that my marriage is threatened when gay and lesbian people get married. I do not understand the logic behind the argument that allowing gays and lesbians to marry one another will undermine the "family and society itself" as one pro-Proposition 8 individual claimed in this morning's *Press Enterprise*. I do not have the authority, moral or otherwise, to define "family." Many students and teachers live in loving families that are not comprised of the traditional married male and female individuals. I say "live and let live."

The question of what defines a "family" is why I believe CTA actively rejects Proposition 8. Some students, their parents, and teachers live in non-traditional families, and they deserve the same respect that is currently given to traditional families. If CTA supported Proposition 8, they would be promoting a climate wherein bigotry and prejudice against students, their parents, and teachers could prevail in certain schools.

I have personally witnessed harassment directed toward gay students and gay teachers. That's right, some students are gay and some teachers are gay. Some of our students' parents are gay. And some people hate them for that. Harassment has become such a problem that the California legislature passed [AB 537: The California Student Safety and Violence Prevention Act of 2000](#). AB 537 protects students **and school employees** (my emphasis) against discrimination and harassment at all California public schools and any school receiving state funding except religious schools. Harassment is defined as "conduct based on protected status that is severe or pervasive, which unreasonably disrupts an individual's educational or work environment or that creates a hostile educational or work environment." [Teachers have lost their jobs due to actual or perceived sexual orientation. Students have been beaten and killed because of actual or perceived sexual orientation.](#) Children have been ridiculed and harassed because they have gay family members.

CTA could have remained silent on Proposition 8, avoiding a subject that directly affects the lives and livelihoods of students, their parents, and teachers in our state. I, for one, am glad that CTA opposes Proposition 8. CTA stands up for the rights and protections of all California students, their parents, and teachers.

Stacy Swenck

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