



BY AMANDA EPSTEIN

The big twenty-and-one is highly anticipated by all American teens, marking the moment when they can discard fake IDs and finally consume alcohol legally. But this moment comes too late in life.

It is said that when a person turns 18, they become "legal." An 18-year-old can vote, be tried as an adult, smoke cigarettes, file lawsuits, and move away from home legally. What's missing from this picture is the right to drink alcohol.

The law does not stop young people from drinking. It never has and it never will. Lowering the drinking age will not only take that burden off of those who wish to sip, but it will

FIGHT FOR YOUR RIGHT

also take a burden off police.

Once a person turns 18 they can enroll in the army. It is an understatement to say that wars can have negative effects on soldiers. Picture nighttime attacks upon camps in Iraq: soldiers scattered about, thankful that they've lived through one more day. Young soldiers who have restlessly fought for their country; young soldiers who have put their lives in jeopardy; young soldiers who have had face to face encounters with death, and they cannot legally take a drink to unwind and forget, even for a second, the troubles of the world that haunt them even in daylight, if they are not already 21.

It is unreasonable to allow one to face death on a day-to-day basis but not take a drink to soothe the pain and stress.

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CON**



DO THE CRIME, DO THE TIME

"If I can vote and go to war, I should be able to drink!" This is a common phrase heard by young voices across the country. However, the changes one goes through in the three years of life between 18 and 21 are essential to learning the responsibility of consuming alcohol. This is why it would be dangerous to lower the drinking age to 18.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, ever since the drinking age was raised to 21 in 1984, traffic fatalities among drivers 18 to 20 have fallen 13%. The amount of college students who consumed alcoholic beverages decreased from 82% in 1980 to only 67% in 2000, according to the National Institute of Drug Abuse. In addition, a study in 2006 by the Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine found that teens



BY OSCAR TOLLER

who drink under the age of 21 are more likely to have an alcohol dependency than those who do not.

Drinking to get drunk is usually the main objective of young drinkers. Not only is this unattractive, but it poses a serious health risk. Over a long period of time, heavy drinkers can suffer from a series of liver diseases, not to mention damage to the heart, brain, and blood system. But in one night, playful binge drinking can lead to high risks of getting in a car accident, starting a fight, or even falling over and further damaging the body.

It is a simple matter of health and safety that the drinking age be left untouched.

EDITORIAL

That's So Gay

Amendment 2 should be overturned for the sake of civil rights.

History will look back on 2008 as the year America finally addressed its ugly racial divisions and elected the first black president, but also as the year the civil rights struggle for Florida's gay and lesbian community was set back a generation.

The passage of Amendment 2 with 62% of the vote is a glaring example of intolerance in an otherwise uplifting election. The so-called ban on gay marriage, which threatens the rights of heterosexuals and homosexuals alike, will prove to be an embarrassment to future generations.

The amendment, which was intended to discriminate against gays, has the effect of nullifying the domestic partnerships, civil unions, and common law marriages of even heterosexual couples, denying them the same rights and privileges now reserved for a "legal union." Elderly heterosexual couples that never bothered to get married may now

have to do so in order to preserve inheritance and visitation rights, but this option is not available to gays and lesbians, America's last group of second-class citizens.

Even though this amendment is now part of the Florida constitution, it should be overturned on the grounds that it violates the United States Constitution.

The fourteenth amendment clearly states that "No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States." The right to marry the love of one's life is something Americans have long since gotten used to.

This idea was put to the test before, forty years ago, in the case of *Loving v. Virginia*, when the Supreme Court overturned a state law that prevented blacks and whites from marrying.

It might be hard to believe in 2008, but when Barack Obama was born, his black father and white mother could have been arrested in nearly half of the American states, simply for being married to one an-

other. Today, teenagers look back on these injustices with a mixture of disbelief and shame.

So if it was wrong to keep Obama's parents from marrying in 1961, how can it be right to prevent gay couples from marrying in 2008?

Proponents of the ban will point to religion or biology to come up with an answer: Either gay marriage is immoral, they say, or else it is unnatural. But don't they see that the exact same arguments were used in the 1960s to prevent interracial marriage? "Almighty God created the races white, black, yellow, malay and red, and he placed them on separate continents," wrote one Virginia judge 40 years ago. "The fact that he separated the races shows that he did not intend for the races to mix."

In reality, the fact that

teenagers today laugh and cringe at the absurdity of these bigoted arguments shows what their own children and grandchildren will think of Amendment 2.

Perhaps the only silver lining of the vote was that while elderly voters voted 66% in favor of gay discrimination, only 52% of 18-24 year olds voted the same way. In fact, if only people under 40 had voted, the amendment would have clearly failed. The truth is that the older voters won't be here forever, and in another decade or two, the same generation that elected the first black President will finally accept marriage equality for all.

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