



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on August 11, 2011

Progressive Group Pushes for Marriage Between Bert & Ernie

Pro-gay groups have turned to a popular children's television show to push their agenda further: Sesame Street. Following New York state's legalization of same-sex marriage, some "progressive" (formerly called "liberal") groups are feeling emboldened and have now advocated Sesame Street to push the envelope further. Change.org is asking Sesame Street to find a way for Bert and Ernie to "tastefully" tie the knot.



Change.org, an advocate of "social change," has posted a petition on its website for the creators of *Sesame Street* to hold a same-sex marriage for Bert and Ernie in a "tasteful way." The petition [reads](#):

In this horrific age of LGBT kids taking their own lives, they need to know that they ARE BEAUTIFUL and their lives are worth living. Aside from those that are committing suicide, the bullies that facilitate these tragedies need to learn that homophobia is NOT okay. They need to know that acceptance of their fellow human beings would indeed plant a seed of peace that will reverberate throughout the world. We are not asking that Sesame Street do anything crude or disrespectful by allowing Bert & Ernie to marry. It can be done in a tasteful way. Let us teach tolerance of those that are different. Let Sesame Street and PBS Kids be a big part in saving many worthy lives.

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Whether Bert and Ernie were intended to give the allusion as gay partners has been the subject of controversy for a long time. My Fox New York [explains](#):

For decades the pair have shared a close friendship, a bedroom in a small apartment with separate beds. (The duo even wear similar striped shirts.)

But the friends are gender neutral, the show's creators have said and not homosexual.

Throughout their history together, the TV characters have sent the message that no matter how different they might look from each other (Bert was designed with a banana in mind and Ernie with an orange as an inspiration — hence the shape of their bodies) they are more alike than different and differences should be respected.

Change.org is the same group that advocated for the "outing" of Bert & Ernie. They circulated a [petition](#) for that as well:

It's important for our children to be educated that it's okay to be gay. For over 40 years, our beloved Sesame St. characters, Bert and Ernie, have been living as "roommates" and we would like



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PBS and Sesame St. to allow them to live as a gay couple and maybe eventually, marry. It would show children and their parents that not only is it acceptable but also teach children that homophobia is wrong, bullying is wrong and that Sesame street should recognize that there are LGBT relationships, families, and include them in their show.

We're not here to debate our mission but we are here to educate. Please share our link with other friendly walls and join us in our quest to bring Bert and Ernie to the forefront of educating our children, to say "Gay is okay" !! ☐

While opposition to this suggestion can certainly be predicted from those on the Right, most could not predict the resistance that is coming from the Left as well. Not all progressives are in favor of using Bert and Ernie as pawns in a game of political agendas. Andrew Sullivan, a gay writer for *The Daily Beast*, asserted in his blog that the two characters should be left alone and that the notion they must be married imposes an entirely different agenda, one that not all groups support:

My gripe is that I've not just been fighting for gays to have the right to marry for two decades; I've also been fighting for them to have the right *not* to marry, if they so choose. And that applies to Bert *and* Ernie.

Likewise, Tracy Clark-Flory of Salon.com [calls](#) the petition a "silly waste of time." She also says that a marriage between Bert and Ernie would undermine one of many positive aspects of the program: "You don't have to be a homophobe to find it kind of sweet that most *Sesame Street* puppets are asexual and romantically unattached. In fact, when the show has ventured into the love lives of muppets, it's been to the dismay of many liberals — and for good reason."

Clark-Flory's assertions are similar to those made by the Sesame Workshop, which issued a statement that reads, "Even though they are identified as male characters and possess many human traits and characteristics...they remain puppets, and do not have a sexual orientation."

Clark-Flory also contends that the show has already addressed diversity "in progressive but age-appropriate ways."

Similarly, liberal writer Alyssa Rosenberg of *Think Progress*, who does not adhere to the notion that Bert and Ernie are gay, [believes](#) that forcing the two to be married complicates the understanding of heterosexual friendships:

I think it's actively unhelpful to gay and straight men alike to perpetuate the idea that all same-sex roommates, be they puppet or human, must necessarily be a gay couple. Having close, affectionate friendships with another man doesn't mean that you two are sleeping together, just as liking fashion doesn't automatically flip a switch on your sexual orientation and make you only interested in dudes. Such assumptions narrow the aperture of what we understand as heterosexual masculinity in a really strange way.

After all, the Sesame Workshop contends of Bert and Ernie, "[They're] best friends. They were created to teach preschoolers that people can be good friends with those who are very different from themselves."

Furthermore, Rosenberg begrudges the violation of creators' rights in the push for the gay agenda in *Sesame Street*, "People may want them to be gay, but the Sesame Workshop has repeatedly denied that either character is homosexual and that they are a couple, and I'm pretty firmly in favor of creators' rights to determine basic facts about their characters."



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Even comments on the change.org page itself include those opposed to the petition. One user, identified as Heather Davis, wrote that though she supports gay rights, she does not believe its appropriate to push the issue with young children. "I don't feel like it's right to let little kids watch it," she wrote. "If you get older and decide you are LGBT, then that is your choice but to instill it in children is wrong."

[Thus far](#), the petition has nearly 5,000 signatures, while a Facebook page linked to the same petition has 2,000 supporters.

In response to the petition, an oppositional petition was launched on change.org, but has garnered less than 100 signatures. That petition [reads](#):

For crying out loud people, the target audience for Sesame Street has no idea about sexual orientation. Seeing strictly heterosexual friends Bert and Ernie on tv or seeing them as a gay married couple with neither prevent nor cause kids to kill themselves for being "different". Get a grip, Jim Henson should be rolling over in his grave right now. I'll leave you with a Demetri Martin quote: "I'm in a weird position, because I like rainbows, but I'm not gay. So whenever I go out wearing a rainbow shirt, I have to put "Not gay." But I'm not against gays, so under that I'll have to put "... but supportive." It's weird how one group of people took refracted light. That's very greedy, gays. "

The makers of *Sesame Street* are adamantly opposed to the forced marriage of the two beloved characters, so it seems, at least for now, the innocence of Bert and Ernie's relationship will be preserved.



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