

Lefties Should Have Rights

By Reg P. Wydeven
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Discrimination is a horrible practice that will hopefully be a thing of the past some day. Thankfully, the U.S. has a massive body of law, at both the federal and state levels, that seeks to prevent discrimination based on race, sex, religion, national origin, disability, and age. There is also a concerted effort to make discrimination based on sexual orientation unlawful as well. But one minority group, however, is still being oppressed – the left-hander.

Discrimination against southpaws has existed since the dawn of man, and many famous names have graced our ranks. From pharaohs like Ramses II to Roman emperors like Charlemagne, many lefties have been world-renowned figures. Joan of Arc, Alexander the Great and Napoléon Bonaparte were all left-handed. One of the most famous lefties, however, literally set back our cause thousands of years.

Julius Caesar, who oversaw the rise of the Roman empire, was a left-hander that sold his people out. While training his armies, he invented the right-handed handshake, saluting with your right hand, and even designed swords and shields to be used by right-handed soldiers.

Although we've had seven left-handed presidents – James A. Garfield, Herbert Hoover, Harry S. Truman, Gerald Ford, Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, and Bill Clinton – not one of them passed a law prohibiting discrimination against left-handers.

The U.S. has many laws prohibiting discrimination. Most of these laws apply to employers and preclude them from using discriminatory practices in hiring, promotion, termination, compensation, and harassment.

Some of these laws include Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which forbids employers to discriminate based on race, color, religion, national origin, or sex, which encompasses not only gender, but also pregnancy and childbirth. Employers are also prohibited from discriminating against employees over the age of 40 under the Age Discrimination in Employment Act.

The Equal Pay Act and the Fair Labor Standards Act mandate that employers pay employees equally when their jobs require equal skill, effort, and responsibility and are performed under similar working conditions.

Finally, employers may not discriminate against individuals with physical or mental disabilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act. The Act further provides that employers are required to make reasonable accommodations for employees with disabilities, such as ramps, elevators, and handicap-accessible restrooms or seating. The Act also requires these accommodations in public places, including stores and restaurants.

Perhaps the reason some of the most successful people in history happen to be left-handed is because of lefties' inherent ability to overcome. After all, living in a right-handed world is not easy and the oppression starts early. One-piece desks in grade school are designed for righties. Plus, most classrooms only had one pair of left-handed scissors, which were identified by its green handle that singled out and stigmatized its user like an adulterer's scarlet letter.

In the workplace, things aren't much better for lefties either. Number pads are on the right side of keyboards, drinking fountains are made for righties, and banks chain their pens to the right side of the teller's window. It can even be dangerous to be a lefty, as chainsaws and most power tools are designed for right-handers.

It's probably too late for me, but in time, I hope to make it an ambidextrous world for my left-handed son.

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