



The Nuptial Deal: Same-Sex Marriage and Neo-Liberal Governance

Jaye Cee Whitehead

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Since the 1990s, gay and lesbian civil rights organizations have increasingly focused on the right of same-sex couples to marry, which represents a major change from earlier activists' rejection of the institution.

Centering on the everyday struggles, feelings, and thought of marriage equality activists, *The Nuptial Deal* explores this shift and its connections to the transformation of the United States from a welfare state to a neo-liberal one in which families carry the burden of facing social problems.

Governance and marriage are now firmly entwined. Fighting for access to marriage means fighting for specific legal benefits, which include everything from medical decision-making and spousal immigration to lower insurance rates and taxes. As Jaye Cee Whitehead makes plain, debates over the definition and purpose of marriage indicate how thoroughly neo-liberalism has pervaded American culture. Indeed, Whitehead concludes, the federal government's resistance to same-sex marriage stems not from "traditional values" but from fear of exposing marriage as a form of governance rather than a natural expression of human intimacy.

A fresh take on the terms and stakes of the debate over same-sex marriage, *The Nuptial Deal* is also a probing look at the difficult choices and compromises faced by activists.

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