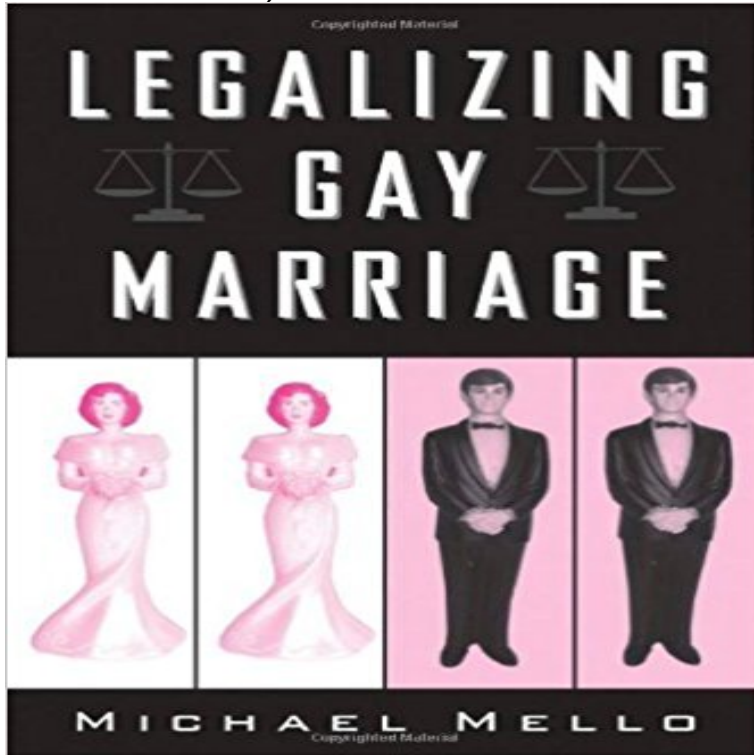


Legalizing Gay Marriage: Vermont And The National Debate (America In Transition)



Every day seems to bring news of legal challenges to existing marriage laws and the constitutionality of any form of union for same-sex partners. In this timely and accessible book, Michael Mello argues that the public debates and political battles that have divided Vermont and Massachusetts will be repeated across the country as state after state confronts the issue of legalizing gay marriage. Michael Mello examines recent landmark decisions in state and federal high courts granting civil rights protections to homosexuals. In Vermont, the Supreme Court's recommendation that legislators recognize the common humanity that links all individuals irrespective of sexual identity and consider the question of same-sex marriage resulted in the first state legislation to establish civil union. In Massachusetts, the court's ruling that gay marriage is a right protected by the state constitution has plunged the legislature into a contentious debate about a constitutional amendment. In both states, as in California and New York, public discussion of equal civil protections for gays and lesbians soon became mired in contending views of morality, religion, social mores, and the sanctity of heterosexual marriage. Mello regards the widespread and virulent opposition to any form of same-sex unions as proof that in Vermont, as elsewhere, homosexuals are indeed a despised minority in need of the law's protection. Thus, civil union laws represent only a partial victory because they create a separate and inherently unequal category of relationships for gay people. Mello's analysis of the issues provides an invaluable guide to the battles being waged in state legislatures and by politicians at the national level.

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