At the same time, the lesbian and gay movements have achieved tangible accomplishments in the political arena at all levels of government, but especially in communities throughout the United States.

But for all of the so-called progress, lesbian and gay men remain second-class citizens in many ways.

What does all of this mean for the contemporary lesbian and gay movements conceive of their political organizing strategies, especially given the determination by the Christian Right to use lesbian and gay issues, such as same-sex marriage, as wedge issues in elections at all levels of government?

Throughout their relatively short history, the lesbian and gay movements in the United States have endured searing conflicts over whether to embrace the assimilationist or liberationist strategy...The assimilationist approach typically embraces a rights-based perspective, works within the broader framework of pluralist democracy,... and fights for a seat at the table.

A second approach, the liberationist perspective, favors more radical cultural change, change that is transformational in nature and often arises outside the formal structures of the U.S. political system.

The assimilationist approach recognizes that the American political system and the policy process growing out of that system are characterized by slow, gradual, incremental change.
Same-sex marriage is the issue that has dwarfed nearly all others on the lesbian and gay movements’ policy agenda in recent years.

The answer is we need to build on the best of what the assimilationist and liberationist strategies have to offer.