

Changing His Mind, Changing Mine
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There are many things I never thought I'd be doing in my life: spending a day with my favorite author; sitting in a fourth-row center seat at the opera; perching on a catwalk and showering confetti upon a U.S. president. But indeed I've done them all.

Now I can add admiring a Republican to the list. Recently San Diego Mayor Jerry Sanders, a Republican, signed a resolution to overturn California's prohibition on same-sex marriage.

When he campaigned in 2005, Sanders said he favored civil unions, but not marriage for same-sex couples. Two years later, his thinking has changed. It turns out his daughter is a lesbian, and several of his staff members are gay.

Sanders said that, "In the end, I could not look any of them in the face and tell them that their relationships – their very lives – were any less meaningful than the marriage that I share with my wife."

Watching the mayor choke back tears and say he was choosing to lead with his heart was, for me, akin to witnessing a miracle. While conservatives say he has flip-flopped, I would call the mayor's change a matter of personal evolution.

"Two years ago, I believed that civil unions were a fair alternative," Sanders said. "Those beliefs, in my case, have changed. The concept of a 'separate but equal' institution is not something that I can support."

Sanders' move illustrates one of the greatest things about life – that we can grow and change based on our experiences.

Staying rigid in our beliefs requires us to refute clear-cut evidence before us, to reconstruct the truth to align with those beliefs. It means abandoning our real connection to the world outside us. The inevitable – and sadder – next step is disconnecting from what is inside us.

That's not how I want to live and apparently that's not how Jerry Sanders does either. Changing his mind by listening to his heart is not a matter of weakness. It's what people do when they're strong enough to be open.

I remind myself of this as I pry the sticky fingers of my own belief system off all Republicans. I'm proud to say that now I admire one.