

Commentary

PLATFORM

Sword of Oppression

THOMAS F. COLEMAN is executive director of the Family Diversity Project, a Los Angeles-based non-profit research group that promotes respect for human differences. Commenting on a state appeals court ruling that the religious rights of a Downey couple would be violated if they were compelled to rent to an unmarried couple, he told The Times:

The decision is very alarming. As a result, the rights of unmarried people to choose a living companion is at stake.

Those landlords likely to take religious exception to unmarried couples are likely to be even more opposed to a gay or lesbian couple living together.

The ramifications of this ruling extend beyond unmarried couples. Some landlords will try to use this ruling to circumvent civil-rights laws. If some landlords don't want to rent to a black person, they could ask the applicant questions in search of a comment or lifestyle and reject that person by using the religious sensitivity claim.

The freedom of religion provision in the Constitution is designed to shield us from government oppression. The state appeals court ruling allows religion to be used as a sword to oppress others.