



An Open Letter from Country Music Artists on Marriage Equality

Traditionally speaking, country music, arguably more than any other genre, draws its inspiration from that inexplicable conundrum known as the human condition. Songs and stories of love, family, joy, and human imperfection are the root of its appeal. Imagine a world without Ray Charles' version of "I Can't Stop Loving You" or Johnny Cash's "I Still Miss Someone." To deny our gay brothers and sisters the right to legally ritualize their love – to marry – is to deny that they too experience the complexity of human emotion that make a song like Dolly Parton's "I Will Always Love You" the shared phenomenon that it is.

It's the artist's job to remind us that the heart is the place where our true holiness resides. It's why the word 'heart' is pervasive in so many great songs. Can the human heart ever truly be governed? Gay or straight, when two people are lucky enough to find each other and want to commit their lives to one another, it is nothing less than a blessing to us all.

Sincerely,

**"Big" Kenny Alphin
Mary Chapin Carpenter
Rodney Crowell
Emmylou Harris**