



Because every dream deserves a chance to succeed.



REPLAY

learn more

Newsweek

GET 4 FREE TRIAL ISSUES

CLICK HERE

Jerusalem is not a settlement; it's our capital Netanyahu NYT

Newsweek

Search

SUBSCRIBE

BLOGS: THE GAGGLE DECLASSIFIED TECTONIC SHIFTS HUMAN CONDITION MORE BLOGS SHOP »



Get 4 FREE Trial Issues of Newsweek

CLICK HERE →

LIFE/HEALTH

THE WAY WE LIVE AND WHY

HEALTH LIFE STYLE HEALTH CARE

Julia Baird

Why Ricky Martin's Coming Out Wasn't Big News

And why nations with more progressive attitudes about homosexuality are happier and healthier.

Updated: 6:55 p.m. ET Mar 31, 2010

Share: Facebook | Digg | Tweet | LinkedIn | Buzz up! | Tools: 3 Post Your Comment | Print | Email



"Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter." That's the Martin Luther King Jr. quote that singer Ricky Martin [posted on Twitter](#) shortly after he came out—finally, at the age of 38—as gay. The relief in his voice was palpable. Prompted by writing a memoir and the birth of two sons (through a surrogate), Martin wrote on his Web site that he had [decided to tell the truth about his sexuality](#): "I am proud to say that I am a fortunate homosexual man. I am very blessed to be who I am." Martin, born Enrique Martin Morales, and most famous for songs like "Livin' la Vida Loca" and "She Bangs," had been advised by close friends to keep his sexuality a secret for years, he said, because they thought it would ruin his career. He wrote: "Allowing myself to be seduced by fear and insecurity became a self-fulfilling prophecy of sabotage. Today I take full responsibility for my decisions and my actions ... Enough is enough. "

Email the Author
Biography
More by the Author

SUBSCRIBE | Click Here to subscribe to NEWSWEEK and save up to 88% >>

You could feel the burden lifting from his shoulders. And what was the response? A drawn-out, collective yawn. Martin has been around for a while, and his insistence that he was straight never really convinced large swaths of his fan base, many of whom are gay. Those tweeters who knew who he was rolled their eyes: "Duh," "In other news fire is hot [and] Tiger likes hos." The most hostile responses, according to Ian Johnson, CEO of the global gay marketing group OutNowConsulting, were from gay men wondering what took him so long. But every time a famous person comes out of the closet, it is hugely significant, especially for struggling young gays and lesbians, Johnson says. "First, they make it easier for other gay public role models to do so, and secondly—and more importantly—they send a subtle but powerful message that gay people are everywhere. They can be your doctor, your teacher, your florist, a flight attendant, a sports person, a priest, or a singer."

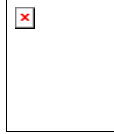
Still, while it may have been a wrenching decision for Martin personally, there was something refreshing about eye rolling replacing homophobic invective. We should want his coming out to not be a big deal in whichever country we might live in. New research shows that tolerance of homosexuality is likely to mean we



PHOTOS A Changing Tide

Gay rights make progress, amid protests, around the world

Video: Calif. Couple on Prop 8
Video: The Conservative Case for Gay Marriage



From District of Columbia and Driving?
New changes allow District of Columbia residents to get 50% or more off car insurance. See if you qualify. [Read More](#)



Refi Rates Hit 3.62% APR
Only 150,000 homeowners have taken advantage of Obama's refinance plan. Calculate your new payment now! [Read More](#)



Washington - Mom Lost 46lbs Following 1 Rule
I cut down 46lbs of stomach fat in a month by obeying this 1 rule [Read More](#)



Acai Berry Exposed (Official Test)
Want to use Acai berry? Do not use. Read this warning now. [Read More](#)



A Washington Mom's Anti Wrinkle Secret
See how a Mom from Washington discovers the secret to eliminating wrinkles within weeks! [Read More](#)



Drivers From District of Columbia Wanted!
New changes allow residents of District of Columbia to get 50% or more off car insurance. Enter your vehicle's information. [Read More](#)

POPULAR LIFE/HEALTH

Viewed E-Mailed Commented

1. undefined
2. undefined
3. undefined
4. undefined
5. undefined

A Mom's White Teeth Trick
Dentists don't want you to know about THIS \$2 teeth whitening secret. [consumernewsreporting.com](#)

Washington! Mom Makes \$6795/Month
She Lost Her Job But Now Makes \$6795/Mo Working 2hrs/Day Doing... [News13JobsReport.com](#)

Washington: Mom Discovers \$3 Whitening Trick
Dentists Do NOT Want You To Know About This Teeth Whitening

live in a democratic, developed, wealthy country. It should also mean we live in a well-educated country. And it may well mean we live in a relatively happy country.

New data from the World Values Survey, for example, has found a strong correlation between economic growth and more tolerant attitudes to homosexuality. Will Wilkinson, a research fellow at the Cato Institute who has been analyzing the numbers, says the reason for it hinges on what we need to survive: "According to University of Michigan political scientist Ronald Inglehart, the head of the World Values Survey, under conditions of relative scarcity and insecurity, individuals tend to develop values oriented toward survival," he said. "In such conditions, the family is like a little mutual insurance society, and adherence to traditional family values is high. Respect for authority and conformity is also high. As economic prosperity advances, individuals naturally begin to worry less about how to simply get by and to worry more about making life meaningful. Wealth tends to produce a syndrome of 'self-expressive' or 'emancipative' values that includes a stronger sense of individuality and greater tolerance for diversity."

So some of this is simply due to economic growth. But, Wilkinson argues, it is also due to *how* the economy has grown. "As we've transitioned from an industrial to a service/information economy, education and the ability to make independent decisions has become more valuable and therefore more widespread," he says. "The need of the changing economy for increasingly educated, independent thinkers has helped create less conformist and more open, tolerant citizens."

One of those independent thinkers, Richard Florida, author of [The Rise of the Creative Class](#), takes this research one step further, [arguing that more enlightened attitudes can actually make people happy](#). He believes that it is not just the wealth of well-developed countries that affects happiness, but values as well. In a recent paper written with Charlotta Mellander (Jönköping International Business School) and Peter J. Rentfrow (University of Cambridge), Florida analyzed a global survey of life satisfaction conducted by Gallup and found that "all else being equal, national levels of life satisfaction are closely tied to post-industrial values of tolerance and acceptance of minorities." The most intolerant societies are, generally, those with the highest levels of suffering.

There are sure to be caveats, but the central thrust of this research rings true. Justin Wolfers, associate professor of business from the University of Pennsylvania, who wrote a paper with fellow economist Betsey Stevenson establishing the link between wealth and happiness, believes that while there is clearly "something associated with economic development that appears to lead to more liberal attitudes to homosexuality," it is not clear what that is. "I find it hard to believe that the link is simply 'happiness,' but one can easily see how development leads to a more enlightened public through all sorts of forces (democracy, education, time for reflection, less of a fight for survival, etc.)."

So what does this mean for Ricky Martin? It means, at the least, that our increasingly more enlightened attitudes to homosexuality do not mean that the feral forces of secularism—or hedonism—are taking over the country. Au contraire. It means you are more likely to be living in a prosperous, democratic, well-educated nation. This is what shaking off prejudice means.

And it is why we should be cheering the fact that so many people have shrugged off Martin's great confession. The fact that he is no longer ashamed will inspire others. He wrote, defiantly, on his Web site that "acceptance has to come from within." But it comes from with-out too. And the truth is that a better attitude to homosexuality may well reflect a better life for all of us.

© 2010

**If you died today,
who would take care of your family?**



age	male	female
35	\$16.89	\$19.95
40	\$19.95	\$23.17
45	\$23.17	\$26.39
50	\$26.39	\$29.61

10-Yr Level Term Life Insurance \$500,000 Policy (monthly premiums)

For A Free Quote [CLICK HERE](#)

AccuQuote

NEWSWEEK ON DIGG

- 420 [Drawings of Near-Death Experiences](#)
- 233 [Papal Problems Through the Years \[pics\]](#)
- 240 [Bin Laden Is 'Healthy, Giving the Orders'](#)
- 350 [How Prepared Foods Are Secretly Getting Healthier](#)
- 331 [Newsweek: Should Spouses Be Able to Sue Their Mates' Lovers?](#)

POWERED BY: **digg**

THE HUMAN CONDITION

- [Cornell's Suicide Problem: Invented by Journalists?](#)
- [In Surprise Ruling, Court Declares Two Gene Patents Invalid](#)
- [Five Things You Should Know About Donald Berwick, the New Medicare/Medicaid Chief](#)
- [Ari Ne'eman and the Controversy Over an Autism Cure](#)
- [A Mother Shares the Pain and Pleasures—Not Politics—of Raising a Child With Autism](#)

MULTIMEDIA MORE



The Daily Obsession: A Palin-Levi Reality TV Duel
3/31/10: The 'family that keeps on giving' stirs up more made-for-TV drama as the former Alaska governor's 'grandbabydaddy' pitches his own Alaska reality TV show.



The Daily Obsession: Club Hopping...