

On a pleasant August afternoon in 1963 a black Baptist minister from Georgia was finishing his speech until a woman beside him implored him to continue with “Tell them about the dream Martin”. In response, Dr. Martin Luther King launched into an almost entirely impromptu speech about his dream for America. In the powerful brass tones of a preacher delivering a sermon, King spoke of a time when people were judged on the merits of their character and not the colour of their skin. A time when all people were not only seen as equals by the law, but as equals by one another. Nearly half a century later in America has seen us move towards this vision, but there is still much work to be done to insure equality among its citizens. In this case, rather than the colour of a person’s skin being a basis for discrimination, a person’s sexual orientation can deny them rights guaranteed to them by the constitution. Homosexual couples who desire to become lawfully committed to one another cannot do so and receive the same rights as a heterosexual couple. Recent attempts to adjust the definition of marriage to allow for gay couples to be joined together under it have failed in states across the country. To rectify this there must be an increase in the information available to the general public, an increase in the proposals and cases placed before the legislative and judicial branches of government, and their needs to be more action taken by individuals who recognize it for the inequity it is.

A concerted effort to inform the general public about the specifics of the issue of gay marriage through the written and spoken word is a major part of fixing this. Educating the general public is perhaps the most important step because many people are misinformed. For example, there are those who believe that the options of civil unions and domestic partnerships for gay couples provide adequate substitutes for marriage and others who believe that allowing gay couples to marry is an affront to the institution of marriage itself when neither is the case. Learning the facts about how limited civil and domestic unions are and how many gay couples have lasting and loving relationships could easily dispel

these. The means of getting the facts to people can go through so many different channels of media that it is a wonder that everyone is not already aware of them. Newspapers, magazines, television and the internet are all ways to get the facts to the people who don't already have them and organizations with the funds to use these must not neglect any one of them. Gaining rights for homosexual couples that have been denied for the entire history of a nation will require people in opposition to have their eyes opened to the truth of the issue in as many ways as is possible.

In conjunction with this, there needs to be an aggressive effort to appeal to the legislative and judicial branches of government. Appealing to the course of judicial review concerning instances where a person was denied a right they would have had had they been married is a very important step towards changing the law's treatment of homosexuals. The *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* is a historical example of the effectiveness doing this. The many instances of gay couples not being able to receive the same tax benefits as heterosexual ones or even visit one another in the hospital would certainly carry enough weight in the courts to provide precedents for allowing gay couples to marry. From a legislative standpoint, initiatives at the state level that create domestic partnerships guaranteeing all of the rights that conventional marriage would provide is more practical for our time than initiatives that change the definition of marriage to accommodate homosexuals. They are more practical because they neither change the definition of marriage nor offend those who consider marriage to be the exclusive province of a man and woman and would provide a greater chance of passage as a result. Of course, this reeks of hypocrisy and is reminiscent of the phrase 'separate but equal'. I'll not deny that it does. The fact of the matter is that the best way to secure gay couples rights now is to create a domestic partnership that provides all the rights granted to married couples by the state and federal government. The difference in definition would perhaps lead to discrimination in

some forms, but would inevitably bring us closer to the goal of equality.

From an individual standpoint, participating in fundraisers, marches, and votes that support gaining homosexuals their rights are obvious and excellent ways to help. As for myself, I would choose a more personal approach as my main focus. I have read about the different sides of the issue of gay marriage and know the rights denied to gay couples but don't have the stories that go along with what I've read. It seems to me that the human aspect of the issue of gay marriage is somewhat lost once it has been fed through whatever way it takes to get to the media available to me, and I would like to change that. Travelling to as many places as I need to around my neighborhood, state, or country I would listen to the stories of gay couples who encountered hardship because of the discrimination they face by being denied the right to marry. I could deliver these untold stories behind the issue of gay marriage to others through writing and perhaps restore the element of pathos that this issue seems to lack in the quantity it deserves.

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