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Legalizing Gay Marriage

Marriage is a special union two people share to show their love for one another. Married couples are given benefits regarding taxation, medical coverage, and family affairs such as child custody and adoption. Evan Wolfson, who is a gay rights litigator, once said, "Civil marriage is a powerful and important affirmation of love, a source of social recognition and support, and a legal gateway to a vast array of protections, responsibilities, and benefits" (Jost). So why is the United States prohibiting some citizens from getting married and having these rights and benefits with their significant others? The U.S. passed the Defense of Marriage Act in 1996 that declared, "the word `marriage' means only a legal union between one man and one woman as husband and wife, and the word `spouse' refers only to a person of the opposite sex who is a husband or a wife." (The Library of Congress). Therefore, the country has banned gay marriage in almost all states and left a large percent of U.S. citizens without the possibility of sharing this special recognition as a couple. Legalizing gay marriage everywhere would only be fair to the citizens of the United States because a number of the county's amendments are based on Equal Rights, and the arguments against gay marriage are poorly supported.

The United States government is formed around the country's Constitution. Within the Constitution are Amendments, some of which were passed to create equality for all U.S. citizens. Before these Amendments were passed African Americans did not have the same rights as Caucasian citizens, and women did not have the same rights as men. The country's people were not equal; some had more power than others. Today, the United States has evolved into a country of equality due to the Equal Rights Amendment and the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments concerning African Americans (Greenblatt). Citizens no longer consider slavery socially or legally acceptable and women are just as important as men, but apparently the government does not consider homosexuals to be equal to everyone else. It has been a long-term argument debating whether a person is born gay or not, but it should not matter. As a citizen in the U.S., one should be able to love another person without the government deciding if it accepts the relationship or not. Gay marriage causes no physical harm to any other human being, and homosexuals are just as successful and humane as heterosexuals. So why is the country treating gays differently? If the U.S. is all about equality then homosexual couples should have the same opportunities as everyone else, including tax benefits and being able to raise a child. Not allowing a person the right to be married due to their sexual preference could be considered discrimination, and in a country as "free and equal" as the United States it is unconstitutional to vote to take away a certain group of people's rights.

Legalizing gay marriage is threatening towards some people. They feel that a homosexual marriage will only hurt the heterosexual marriages. Opposite-sex unions

are already in trouble as is, and some feel that gay marriage will only put more pressure on the married part of the society (Jost). In defense, others say that recognizing gay marriage will have no negative affects on straight marriages and will only strengthen the same-sex unions. Attorney David Buckel claims, "Same-sex couples are interested in the exact same thing that different-sex couples are interested in. Any time you have people committing to being legally responsible for each other, that is good for communities" (Jost). Another issue regarding legalizing gay marriage is that it will ruin the institution of marriage. It has been custom that marriage is between a man and a woman, and some feel that we should not change that. It was also custom in the 1600s that African Americans were slaves, women had no power, and interracial marriages and abortions were not acceptable, but the country has adapted to those social changes of accepting one another. Whether a citizen agrees on any of the changes or not, their lives, marriages, and values are still the same. Historians argue that "allowing same sex-marriages represents the logical next step in reforming marriage to fit the evolving nature of committed intimate relationships" (Jost). Gay marriage or not, marriage is still a union of two people and will continue be sacred to every couple.

One of the biggest controversies surrounding the legalization of gay marriage is whether or not it will open doors towards other "uncommon" behaviors becoming legal. It is a common fear that if same-sex marriage is allowed then things like incest, marrying pets, and other outrageous acts would be argued about next. Gay marriage cannot be compared to incest, as incest is harmful to one's health. Incest has shown to be emotionally and psychologically devastating towards adults and children (Lechky). Marrying pets is ridiculous as well, an animal is not a human being and cannot give any

kind of consent towards a marriage. Political commentator, Andrew Sullivan, stated, “If you want to argue that a lifetime of loving, faithful commitment between two women is equivalent to incest or child abuse, then please argue it” (Jost). Homosexual couples are simply asking if two consenting adults can have the right to affirm their love for each other, legally, as every other couple in America does.

Legalizing gay marriage everywhere has been construed into an awful thing that would tear the nation and marriage, as we know it, apart; however, gay marriage is simply same-sex consenting adults seeking social recognition and legal standing with their partners. Homosexual marriage is not harmful in any way towards heterosexuals or their marriages, and cannot be compared to incest or bestiality. The government should not decide for any group of people whom they should marry, and furthermore, they should not be voting to take away a certain group of people’s rights. Some people will not agree with gay marriage, but their lives will go on, just as opponents of abortion or woman’s rights have continued with their lives. Denying someone’s right to happiness in order to maintain another’s sense of normalcy is not only heartless, it is unconstitutional.

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