

Standpoint Essay

I am not sure when I was first made aware of the meaning of the word “gay”. I remember being exposed to terms like “gay” and “faggot” early on in life, but the first time I can really remember knowing what they meant was in sixth grade. There is not a time I can remember when I thought that being gay was wrong, and it was not until I was in high school that I was taught that according to my religion, I should be repulsed by gay people. For as long as I can remember, my family was made uneasy with even the mention of equal rights for gay people. It never made any sense to me though; I do not know why, but when it came to marriage equality, I always pushed against what my church and family told me. I have had many experiences throughout my life that have influenced who I am today, and through a combination of my education, religion, and who I associated with, I became the advocate for marriage equality that I am today.

I think one of the most major influences on my attitude towards marriage equality were the gay people I met that ended up being a huge part of my life. Schyler and Travis are two of my best friends; I met them in sixth grade. That was the first time I remember knowing what the word gay meant. Schyler and Travis are both gay, and they both got picked on a lot for it in school. I did not know that when I first met them, though. To me, they were just really fantastic people. Travis lived in my neighborhood and he was over at my house often. We played basketball, computer games, and watched movies together regularly. Schyler lived on the other side of town, but he was in all my classes, so we spent a lot of time together. He quickly became someone I trusted and confided in. We sat together in class, at lunch, and we always hung out before school. Travis and Schyler were there for me all the time; sixth grade was when my parents really stopped getting along, I noticed them fighting all the time. Whenever it got to the

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point where I would start crying, I knew I could count on Schyler to talk me through it, or for Travis to invite me over. When I found out that Travis and Schyler were gay that did not change my opinion about them at all. I understood that they were different; they like boys, not girls. That did not make them any less caring, though. They were still there for me when I needed them, and I for them. Whenever I hear people talking against gay rights and marriage equality, I think about Travis and Schyler. Even all these years later, they are still extremely good friends of mine. I can't imagine how people could hold so much hate for people I find so amazing. My love for Schyler and Travis has definitely lead me to advocate for marriage equality. I have been lucky enough to see Schyler fall in love with a man named Chad. I want to see them married; I want them to be able to have the same joy that everyone else has.

My church and family could not oppose my views more. Ironically enough though, that is what part of what taught me to be so accepting and caring. I have heard so many hateful things being preached by people that call themselves Christians. When I was little, I was taught that Jesus loves everybody, no matter how bad they are, and that we were supposed to as well. That became my mission in life: to show love to everyone, even people that I did not like and people that were mean. I thought that if someone as important as God could love them so easily, I could do it too. I found out very quickly, though, that the church did not actually mean what they taught me. I see hate every day from the people that taught me love. "God hates fags" signs are strewn everywhere, and "gay" is used as a synonym for "stupid". I even remember a time at youth group; I was talking to my leader about Schyler. He kept poking and joking, asking if he was boyfriend and if I loved him. After a while, I got annoyed (as a child does when an adult is picking on them) and blurted "Well he's gay, so no, I am not dating him". My youth group leader then replied, "Oh, so he's defective. He's probably not someone you want to be around". I

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could not believe that the same people that teach me to love on Sundays are so quick to hate every other day of the week. I knew it was wrong, what he was saying. We all know the verse where God says to love thy neighbors, but he also says “My children, we must not only talk about loving people; we must also show we love people by what we do for them. We must really love them” (1 John 3:18). This is one of my favorite verses from the Bible; I have always loved it. A lot of Christians do not show their love for others, but that is what really motivates me. Christians are the biggest group that opposes gay marriage, but they are the ones that are supposed to love everyone. Seeing their distasteful actions towards the gay community further encourages me to advocate for them, not only so they can get the same rights as everyone else, but also in hopes that others will see my love and know that that is how Christians are supposed to love.

In recent years, I have become stronger in my belief for marriage equality. Moving to Bellingham was a big part of that. Back home, it is risky having a different view than everyone else. I love my family and my church a lot, so it is scary knowing that we have such a different opinion on something that is so important to me. It feels as if when they find out what my views are, I will be judged, and they will try to change my beliefs. I do not feel that threat here, though. People in Bellingham are more accepting of different views. Not just that, but there are a very large group of people here who share the same beliefs as I do. It is easier to be an advocate when those around you support you instead of being against you.

The introduction to Macklemore and Ryan Lewis has also strengthened my belief. Macklemore is a rapper from Seattle; Macklemore and Ryan Lewis recently released their debut album, *The Heist*. One of the more popular songs on the album is called *Same Love*. In this

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song, Macklemore tells a story about thinking he was gay when he was a little boy, thinking that it was a bad thing. He then goes on to explain what our society views gay people as, saying:

Call each other faggots behind the keys of a message board; a word rooted in hate, yet our genre still ignores it. Gay is synonymous with the lesser. It's the same hate that's caused wars from religion, gender and skin color, complexion of your pigment. The same fight that lead people to walk-outs and sit-ins. (Macklemore, 2012)

Macklemore is saying that even though rap artists might not be against gay rights, the word “faggot” is still around because people do not think about the hateful root of the word. He says that gay is a synonym for “the lesser”. People use the word gay to put people down; they say things like “he’s so gay” alluding to someone they do not like, even though they are not gay. Macklemore then goes on to advocate for marriage equality and says “We press play, don’t press pause. Progress, march on” (Macklemore, 2012). I love this part in the song. He calls other people to support him in his advocacy for marriage equality. This song definitely helped strengthen my beliefs; it gave me hope that change can and will be made.

Although I am very strong in my support for marriage equality, I understand that there may be things that I do not fully understand. Having always been in support of same-sex marriage, I do not understand the other side of the argument. My standpoint is based on feelings and my relationships with others. There may be other arguments that I do not see. I know I do not understand what makes people feel uncomfortable around gay people, and maybe fully understanding that would change my perspective.

Being in full support of same-sex marriage can be hard sometimes. It affects the relationships I have with those around me, and I am sure it will affect the relationship I can have

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with my clients in the future. My view opposes that of my family and my church, even some of my friends. That makes my relationship with them a lot harder, because it is something that I am very passionate about, and I have a tendency to take it personally when they do not like my gay friends simply because they are gay. It makes going to church hard, I know people in the congregation judge me. Being a Christian, I am supposed to believe what they tell me; I am supposed to believe that being gay is a sin. They think I am a bad Christian, maybe not even a Christian at all. That makes it very uncomfortable for me to go to church. I understand that my views can also make any future clients uncomfortable. If I get a client who opposes my views, it might make them uncomfortable that I support marriage equality. On the other hand, though, my views can be very helpful. Being in support of same-sex marriage, I have the potential to change the lives of many. If I get a client who shares my beliefs, that can help us bond, it gives us some common ground. They will be more likely to trust me if they know that I share their standpoint.

I am not usually a person who has a very strong opinion on issues, but marriage equality is something that I am very passionate about. There are influences in my life that have pushed and pulled me in opposite directions. My church and faith is very important to me, and I try my best to follow their teachings, but sometimes I cannot help but think that what they are teaching me is wrong. I cannot disregard the rights of some of my best friends just because they are not like everybody else; they are still people, and they deserve the same rights that I have. I believe in love above all else. In everything I do, I show love to those around me. Part of doing so is advocating equal rights for everyone. It is not my place to tell Schyler that he cannot love Chad, and I believe that they should have every right to be married.

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Resources

Macklemore, & Lewis, R. (2012). *Same Love*. On *The Heist* [CD]. Seattle, WA: Macklemore LLC. (2009-12).