

Problem

Imagine being born different than everyone else. It's not that hard; people are born every day with different needs and abilities than the "average" person. These people learn to cope with their differences, even if they are setbacks in their life, and can overcome these differences to live a perfectly normal life. But what if the special occurrence that makes one different was something that is judged and scorned by millions and told that it is an abomination or morally wrong to live this way, even if it was something that a person was born into and could not help? This is the problem facing millions of gay or lesbian individuals, a problem which they have to face every day. Most brush off this problem and say there are bigger things to worry about in the world, like solving world hunger or global warming, but this problem affects not only those who are gay, but anyone who knows someone who is gay. In a land of "equal opportunities" there are millions being told that just because they are a little different, that they deviate from the norm of society, they aren't privileged enough to have the exact same rights promised to them in the Constitution. Ironically, America was founded on the promise of freedom to those who didn't believe what the rest of society was told to believe, yet millions of people are denied freedoms on the exact principle our country was founded on.

Living life with the identity of a gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender is not an easy life. Although in the United States, LGBT [Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender] have been making strides and are seen as being treated fairly well compared to other countries such as Saudi Arabia, every day is a struggle compared to the life of a single person. Homophobia, or the fear of gay individuals is, unfortunately, extremely perseverant in America. As a gay person

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begins to realize their sexual orientation, they must struggle with the secret, not really sure who to tell or who they can trust. My best friend came out to me and I watched him struggle every day to keep the secret from his closest friends and family, scared of who would judge him or how they would react to the news. For months, he had anxiety attacks and when the word eventually reached out to people around him, it spread like wildfire and before he knew it, people who really didn't know him knew about his lifestyle. He was under stress trying to figure out a way to tell his parents, and luckily for him, they understood and accepted him. This isn't always the case though; not everyone in the world is as accepting as his parents were. Some parents go as far as disowning their children, or sending them to therapy to try and turn them straight, as if it were just as easy to change back and forth between the two. Others pretend or ignore the fact that a person is gay, even though this is a major part of their life.

Gay individuals may not even participate in everyday conversation in the workplace, because if they talk about their partners or even what they did over the weekend with their partners, they run the risk of their peers rejecting them because of who they are. They must continually censor what they say and how they say it for fear of offending people or losing close friends who may be homophobic. People who discriminate against gay individuals believe that this is a lifestyle that they choose, rather than being born this way. Though there isn't much scientific proof or a single "gay gene" would these people really choose a life of persecution and carefully watching what they say all the time? My friend told me that he'd rather just be straight and save all of the trouble and worrying. But he was born this way and there is nothing he can do about it, so he embraces who he is and shows pride at being different, instead of shunning away from his setbacks.

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Even the word “gay” has a negative connotation. It’s not uncommon to walk past a group of teenagers or young adults and here the phrase “that’s gay” to describe an event or an object. This connotation associates the word gay with something that’s stupid, something that isn’t good and teaches people to associate gay people with something negative. This play on words has also been used in several other areas, like the phrase “that’s retarded” which uses someone’s condition to describe something stupid. Much like the politically correct movement to stop using “that’s retarded”, the phrase “that’s gay” needs to be changed in order to change people’s attitude about homosexuality. Just this phrase alone shows how America is intolerant of gay Americans and the attitude we have about gay people.

The dream of growing up, getting married and having children is a common dream of today’s society. It’s the natural life plan that everyone is expected to follow, and even though there are those who decide not to get married or not to have children, this is the basic frame in which we outline our lives. But, there are only five states as of today that recognize the marriage between same-sex couples and three states that don’t perform marriages, but recognize the marriages from those five states if a couple was to move to these states (cite). Out of fifty states in America, only five of these give equal rights to same sex marriages. If a gay couple wanted to get married in a state, they would only be restricted to those eight states in order to be recognized as a legitimate couple. If they have to move because of financial situations or job offers, then there is nothing they can do. Marriage has evolved into more than just “I do’s” in this day and age. Marriage is now legal contracts that binds two people and lets them have exclusive rights that other couples don’t. If a LGBT’s partner was in an accident and under intensive care in the hospital, they may be denied the right to see them or make important medical considerations, even if this person is the partner’s only important person in their life. In most cases, a gay couple

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doesn't have the resources, unless using a surrogate, where they can have children and may be only open to adoption services. Under marriage law, married couples have the right to joint adoption or foster care. If gay couples are refused the right to marry, they may not be able to perform a joint adoption or foster care, hindering their wishes to have children. In a society where getting married and having children are crucial for the "ideal life plan" being denied the right to adopt children as a joint family can seriously affect a gay couple. There are millions of unwanted children who are trying to find a home and this is denying the chance for both the couple to have a child and the child to find a proper, loving home.

Being discriminated or fear of being rejected isn't the only fear of those who are gay. There is actual violence against gay individuals, such as "jumping" a gay person, where they are surrounded by a group of people and beaten until they can't stand up or run away. This problem isn't just for older gay individuals, either. Bullying is common in our school system, with a shocking 282,000 children physically attacked each month in secondary schools. (cite) Teens and young adults that are gay or suspect they might be gay are skipping school or being forced to change schools because of the bullying they are forced to go through each day. There are four types of bullying: physical, which includes being hit, kicked or punched, verbal, which includes name calling and teasing, indirect, which includes spreading rumors or being excluded from a social group, and cyber, which is done over the internet or via communication devices such as cell phones.