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[Family](#), [Marriage](#)



Kathleen Jolicoeur Ms. Packer Junior Language and Composition 5 March 2013 Minorities in America: The Similar Plights of the LGBT and African-American Communities Throughout history, society has shown a particular dislike for groups of people who did, or did not follow the "social norm;" two groups that fit this criteria are people of the LGBT and African-American communities. With laws and other restrictions such as interracial and same-sex marriage bans, and the Jim Crow laws being passed against them, LGBT and African-American people have faced many trials. African-Americans were denied the right to be called human because of their skin color. LGBT people were denied their right to be called human because they did not find themselves attracted to who society felt they should. After reading George Chauncey's "The Legacy of AntiGay Discrimination" and Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech, it has become apparent that there are many similarities between people of the LGBT and African-American communities. African-Americans had things very, very hard after having liberated themselves from hundreds of years of slavery. With a new amendment in place that made slavery unconstitutional, and therefore "making every man equal," it was now time to rebuild themselves through many generations to come. The first way of making that even closely feasible was through employment. At first, the only jobs available were through domestic work. Domestic work was a legal contract, binding the workers for however long the contract dictated to be the employer's servant. Later on, as domestic work became less popular, African-American people began looking for other sources of income. People of the LGBT community had things just as hard, too. According to George Chauncey, fifty years ago, there was an executive

order passed by Dwight D. Eisenhower which prevented homosexuals from being employed with any government-affiliated denominations, and for them to be purged from them if they were suspected of being homosexual (Chauncey 261). This is where workplace discrimination could easily get out of hand. Since the executive order dictated that anyone who showcased suspicious behavior similar to that of openly gay people, any person could have lied and said that they saw a coworker behaving in that manner and potentially get them fired. Like the African-Americans, once the LGBT people have been accused of something they were not in anyway responsible for, there was almost always no going back. Not only would that happen, but, they, along with the African-Americans, did not have the proper representation in the courts as long as they did not have civil rights.

Touching back upon the issue of the Jim Crow laws effective only in the South, marriage was a very difficult process for people of the African-American community. To keep the gene pool separated, and to prevent the integration of African-Americans and whites, there was a Jim Crow law that prohibited interracial marriage between African-Americans and whites. If there was a couple who disobeyed this law, the marriage would simply not be recognized. There were also very serious consequences to those who chose to deviate from it. In comparison to the African-Americans, LGBT people were not and still are not able to marry each other legally due to the long-term debating going on within the U. S government. Up until the 2010s, states were all on the same page on gay marriage. Gay marriage was not even in the question when it came to law-making. If a gay couple were to marry, their marriage also would not be recognized, and there were also

repercussions for those who chose to disobey. Nowadays, states are slowly beginning to make gay marriage legal, with some still hesitant to hop on board. When it came down to the nitty gritty in the media, African-American people were not allowed to do much. They were not allowed to be a part of popular shows, plays, or other productions, unless it was for them to be ridiculed, in some cases. In a way, the LGBT community faced the same restrictions. “ The US Post Office banned the Mattachine Society newspaper from the mails in 1954, and in some cities the police shut down newsstands that dared to carry it” (Chauncey 262). This is similar to the way that African-Americans were treated because they were discriminated against for something they could not help being. They also were not able to participate in any form of media that would promote their lifestyles for they would be almost immediately targeted by society. According to George Chauncey, the use of gay characters, discussing gay themes, or the referral of the existence of homosexuality was prohibited in Hollywood (Chauncey 261). For at least thirty years or so, these laws were in effect, which further oppressed the LGBT community. This also put the producers, directors, screen , and music writers in a tough position, where, if they were a gay or lesbian person, they could not “ come out, ” for they would almost immediately be exposed to society and shunned like their fellow gays and lesbians. “ Fifty years ago, there was no Will&Grace or Ellen, no Queer Eye for the Straight Guy, no Philadelphia of The Hours, no annual Lesbian, Gay, bisexual, and Transgender(LGBT) film festival” (Chauncey 261). This also proves that to further make things difficult for those in hiding, they could not freely express their feelings about the prevalence of homosexuality without being

immersed in infamy for deviating from the ideals of the harsh society two score and ten years ago. There have been many a time in which people being systematically abused, whether physically, emotionally, or mentally, have risen and set their feet down in protest once they reached their breaking points. With African-American and LGBT people being the topic of focus, they, in a way, have fought these abuses together. For one, they both fought against their abusers in the Civil Rights movement, whether through civil disobedience, violence, riots, etc. They both faced harsh discrimination against them for invalid reasons, lost many members of their communities to their tormentors, and were not given a chance to prove themselves worthy of the people of society's respect. In retrospect, it goes without saying that these two particular communities have experienced similar strife throughout the span of time.