

# [For as long as the institution of marriage has bee](https://assignbuster.com/for-as-long-as-the-institution-of-marriage-has-bee/)

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n around, so too has the belief that itrepresents the union of one man and one woman. Now gay men and lesbians are challenging that   
institution. They believe that their relationships mean the same in their sphere as heterosexual   
marriages do in our sphere. Homosexuals would like to see their marriages legalized.   
In 1991 three gay couples filed a lawsuit, in Hawaii, for denying them marriage licenses.   
They claim that the refusal amounts to gender discrimination, which violates the Equal Rights   
Amendment. Judge Kevin Chang ruled, in 1996, that same-sex couples have the right to legally   
marry. This ruling makes Hawaii the first state to recognize that gay and lesbian couples are   
entitled, by law, to the same privileges as heterosexual married couples (CNN). Under the Full   
Faith and Credit clause of the Constitution, this also forces all states to recognize these marriages   
as far as federal benefits are concerned. Congress has approved a bill, the Defense of Marriage   
Act, that will allow states to decide whether to recognize homosexual marriages. The second part   
of the bill would define " for federal purposes" as the union of a man and a woman. Under such a   
definition gay and lesbians, even if they win the right to marry in Hawaii or elsewhere, would not   
be able to file joint federal tax returns, claim federal pension, or survivor's benefits, or be allowed   
to file for green card status (Gallagher 21).

I don't feel that marriages between gays or lesbians should be given the same status as   
heterosexual marriages. Since when do gay people think they can broaden the institution of   
marriage to include themselves? They shouldn't be able to. The institution of marriage is   
recognized by the church, homosexuality isn't. I don't feel that gay people have given a reason   
that carries enough weight for the government to legalize same-sex marriage.

Should gay people fight for the right to marry? Gay rights activists say absolutely. Gay   
couples should be afforded the same benefits as heterosexual couples. The legal status of   
marriage rewards the two individuals with substantial economic and practical advantages.   
Married couples can file joint tax returns. Social security provides benefits for surviving spouses   
and their dependents. They can inherit money and property from one another without a will.   
They are immune from testifying against a spouse, and marriage to an American citizen gives a   
foreigner the right to residency in the United States. Another advantage would be health   
insurance provided by employers. These benefits usually include the employee and their spouse.   
Employers generally will not include a partner who is not married to an employee, whether of the   
same sex or not. Very few insurance companies will extend benefits to domestic partners' who   
are not married (OUT/LOOK 234-235).   
Gay marriages are highly emotional topics in the 90s. Many people feel that gay marriages   
would show heterosexual people how much two people can love each other even if they are of the   
same sex. Homosexual relationships are more than just sex with someone of the same gender.   
Homosexual relationships include feelings and being able to share those feelings with the person   
you love. " People have become used to the idea of defining gay people solely in terms of sexual   
acts," says Gregory Herek, a research psychologist at the University of California, Davis.   
I think many heterosexuals get very nervous when they have to think of gay   
people in terms of relationships, because it challenges the way they have always   
thought about gay people. I find it interesting that the same people who condemn   
homosexuality as being a promiscuous lifestyle also say they're against gay   
marriage because they wouldn't want to recognize stable gay relationships, says   
Herek (Gallagher 24).

Rep. Barney Frank asks, " How can you argue that a man and woman in love are somehow   
threatened because two women down the street are also in love?" Later, he put the question in   
more personal terms. Frank said he respects the marriages of fellow committee members but   
added, " I don't understand for a minute how I demean them by living with a man" (U. S. House).   
Most people, when asked the question " What is your opinion of gay relationships?", their first   
response encompasses sex, promiscuity and AIDS. When asked about heterosexual relationships   
they generally answer with love, companionship, and families. If same-sex marriage is made legal,   
the next generation won't think of it as taboo. It will just be another way of life. All of the   
controversy has opened the door to discuss families, parenting, and equality for lesbians and gays.   
They believe that they will be able to raise children in a stable, loving household as most children   
have with heterosexual marriages. The law generally favors marital relationships as they will do   
everything to enhance the rights of individuals who enter into it. And marriage will end a   
negative: their sexual lives no longer will be considered felonious, which negatively affects fights   
ranging from child custody to civil rights (Graff 12). Lesbian and gay men do not seek a special   
place in America but merely to be a full and equal part of America, to give back to society without   
being forced to lie or hide or live as second-class citizens. Andrew Sullivan, senior editor of The   
New Republic says, " At some point in our lives, some of us are lucky enough to meet the person   
we truly love. And we want to commit to that person in front of our family and country for the   
rest of our lives. Gay marriage seeks to change no one else's rights or marriages in any way. It   
seeks merely to promote monogamy, fidelity and the disciplines of family life among people who   
have long been cast to the margins of society" (Sullivan 26).

Some religious leaders are the most forceful advocates of same-sex marriage. In Hawaii   
alone, many faiths such as the Reform and Reconstructionist branches of Judaism, Quaker,   
Buddhist, Episcopal and many individual Protestant congregations are involved in the   
pro-marriage campaign (Rotello 16). On the opposite side of the coin there are many faiths that   
condemn gay marriage. They feel that these people defy the Bible.

Ultimately the battle may not be so much about winning the right to marriage as about   
winning new levels of respect for gay relationships. Evan Wolfson, senior staff attorney for the   
gay group: Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund says, " Winning or losing any particular   
battle over marriage is not all that's at stake here. What's at stake is a historical moment to   
change the position of gay people in society. If we do the work right, all kinds of gains will come   
from it, apart from the outcome of any particular battle," he says (Gallagher 36).

Opponents of same-sex marriage feel that giving recognition to this new way of life will   
break down the value system set up by heterosexuals. " We need to strengthen, not weaken, the   
institution of marriage," said Governor Pete Wilson (Capps G9). Ministers say marriage is one of   
the most impenetrable institutions in modern society. It provides the ultimate form of acceptance   
for personal intimate relationships in our society. People in today's society can talk about   
homosexuality with a group of friends without feeling like the issue has been dropped in their lap.   
When faced with the situation, many people don't know how to act in the presence of gay or   
lesbian couples. They tend to walk on eggshells for fear that they will say something to offend   
that person or their lifestyle.

For example, my Uncle Steve is a gay man that lives in San Francisco. My immediate   
family knew of his lifestyle many years prior to this incident. He came to California for the   
holidays in 1990. The entire family was invited to my mom and dad's house for Christmas dinner.   
My Uncle showed up with his boyfriend Troy. Some of my extended family and friends weren't   
aware of his lifestyle; therefore, were extremely offended when they saw them hug each other. I   
even had to remind myself not to stare at them because I'm not exposed to this behavior. It made   
most of us very uncomfortable. Both of them felt the tension at the dinner table so they tried to   
lighten up the mood by explaining how they met and their subsequent relationship, however the   
conversation quickly turned into an argument about morals; nevertheless, they went back to their   
hotel early.   
Children are influenced by their parents and peers on issues such as divorce and   
inter-racial marriage. They hear negative responses to inter-racial marriage from parents from the   
" old school". Children of divorced parents have formed opinions of how marriage should be. If   
we allow same-sex marriage, children will be more confused by social relations than they already   
are. " Children do best in a family with a mom and a dad," said House Majority Whip Tom Delay,   
(R-Texas). " Accepting same-sex marriage," he said, " will only take us further down the road to   
social deterioration" (Weitzstein G14). " Government recognition of same-sex marriage," wrote   
Martin Mawyer, President of Christian Action Network, " will forever change the American family   
as we know it. Forced homosexuality will be thrust upon America in public schools, homosexual   
marriage will be taught as a normal, healthy relationship" (Rotello 16+).

Gay activists have been fighting for many years against discrimination based on sex and/or   
sexual preference. Many of us didn't look twice at their protests and literature about what they   
believe. Now that they want the same recognition religiously and financially, as heterosexual   
couples, the silent community speaks out. " There is no other issue on the American landscape   
where there is such a strong political consensus - Americans oppose homosexual marriages," said   
the Rev. Lou Sheldon, chairman of the Traditional Values Coalition (Gray E2). A survey   
conducted in June 1995 found that only 33 percent agreed with the persuasively phrased   
statement, " If two people love each other, they should be able to get married even if they are of   
the same sex" (Gallagher 36).

Randy Thomasson of the Christian group called Capitol Resource Institute says that   
sanctioning gay marriage in California could cost " Hundreds of millions of dollars for businesses,   
and potentially above one billion dollars a year," through health care coverage alone (Capps G10).   
This would be from claims filed by partners that were previously not covered.