

Lesson 1: “LGBT Political Issues: Are Wedding Bells the Priority?”

Summary:

In May 2012, President Obama became the first sitting U.S. president to announce his support for the legalization of same-sex marriage. During this lesson, students will learn about and discuss the importance of various LGBTQ issues with a particular focus on same-sex marriage.

Materials: Issue cards (attached)

Goals:

1. Students will understand the importance of marriage equality while also understanding there are other issues that impact the LGBTQ community.

Objectives

1. Students will discuss why marriage is an issue for the LGBTQ community and whether other issue are more important.
2. Students will use “issue cards” to create a list of priorities for the LGBTQ community.

Session Outline

1. **Opening Essential Question:** *Do you think marriage is the most important LGBT issue?*
 - Ask this question to the entire group, and either answer around the circle or as a “pair share.”
2. **Issue Card Activity** Give students the “Issues Cards” provided in the “Resources” section below. These cards describe various LGBTQ issues along with a short description. Ask students to put the cards in order from what they feel are the most important issues to the least important. This activity will help youth better form their opinion for the role-model led debate.

Discussion Questions about LGBTQ Issue Cards

- What makes an issue “important?” Does the size of the group it affects make it important? Does the way it affects people make it important?
 - How do we decide which issues are most worthy of our attention?
 - What are the implications of putting the cards in this order? How would prioritizing the issues in this way affect our community
3. **Role Model (Optional):** Live Out Loud connects LGBTQ youth and their allies with role models from the LGBTQ community. The role-model will not only facilitate the discussion, but will also offer their own experiences and opinions throughout the talk.

Questions to guide discussion

- Why do you think marriage equality is such a “hot topic”?
- Do you think there are other issues that are just as important or *more* important

than marriage equality? Why or why not?

- Is something important just because it's controversial?
- Could marriage equality be important for some LGBT people and not others? Why or why not?
- Do you think most people think that marriage equality is the only or most important LGBT issue? Why or why not?

RESOURCES (ISSUE CARDS)

Issues to be used with the Conversation Starter activity:

Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation Job Discrimination: *Although some states protect the LGBT community, there are currently no federal laws prohibiting discrimination in hiring and employment on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity by civilian, nonreligious employers.*

Hate Crime Legislation: *In 2009, President Obama signed a law that makes it a federal crime to assault an individual because of his or her sexual orientation or gender identity. Unfortunately, on the state level, many do not explicitly make it a crime.*

Ordination of LGBT clergy: *The ordination of lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender clergy who are open about their sexuality and gender identity, are sexually active, or are in committed same-sex relationships is a debated practice within many religious communities.*

LGBT Immigration: *U.S. immigration law does not treat lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and HIV-positive individuals as equal. Many face discrimination when attempting to obtain U.S. citizenship.*

Adoption Issues: *Some U.S. states (e.g. Utah, Mississippi, Kentucky, Nebraska, Ohio, and Wisconsin) do not allow LGBT individuals to adopt children.*

Prison Reform: *There are many prison reform issues that affect the LGBT community such as decriminalization of sodomy laws, correct gender placement for transgender inmates, and distribution of condoms to reduce the spread of HIV.*

LGBT Youth Homelessness: *40% of homeless youth are LGBT. In comparison, the general youth population is only 10% LGBT.*

LGBT Elder Care Discrimination: *LGBT older adults may be as much as five times less likely to access needed health and social services because of their fear of discrimination due to their sexual orientation or gender identity. The elderly LGBT community experiences social isolation, which has a large impact on their health and well-being.*

Marriage Equality: *Same-sex marriage is still only legal in 15 states. Same sex couples who move to a state that doesn't allow same-sex marriage will not receive the same benefits on a state level.*

School Safety: *The Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network, in their 2011 school climate survey, found that 6 out of 10 LGBTQ students felt unsafe at school. Eighty-two percent of those students reported being verbally harassed because of their sexual and/or gender identity.*