

## **“Reaching your Dreams by Choosing Optimism”**

Achieving your dream is never easy. However, I believe what allows people to achieve their dreams is their ability to choose optimism. When you need to battle the world to achieve those dreams, optimism is instrumental in your success.

In America, two people, of the same gender, holding hands in public is considered inappropriate - a significant right that most people take for granted today. Although, people nowadays are less worried about being openly lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, etc. (LGBTQ+) in public, members of the community, back then, would be incarcerated, unemployed, and homeless if someone told somebody of power that they were LGBTQ+. Consequently many people kept their true sexual orientation and gender identity a secret, but that doesn't mean it was hidden.

There were a handful of locations that welcomed members of the LGBTQ+ community, especially in New York in 1969. Police raids of these locations were fairly common, since homosexuality was illegal. However, in the next few raids, members of the community would reach closer to their dreams of attaining the same God-given rights that everyone else is bestowed upon (4).

The Stonewall Inn was one of these bars where LGBTQ+ people were welcome to hang out, drink, and have fun without anybody judging or threatening them. June 27, 1969, the police raided the bar, rounding up “cross-dressers” and employees. When police arrested Stormé DeLarverie, a lesbian who dressed in traditional men's attire, many were enraged and started taunting police officers. The officers started hurting people with pepper spray, tear gas, and using violence just because they were LGBTQ+. This escalated quickly to people throwing bottles at the police officers (4).

After the incident, the bar quickly became an organization for LGBTQ+ activists looking to use this as a platform to reach their dreams of equality through optimism. Many of them organized the first pride festival in New York City in 1970 to show their strength. Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera, both of whom are trans-women of color, led the pride movement. Both became famous later for their contributions in fighting for equality. Other people felt inspired by this and decided to create pride

celebrations in their own cities years after. Many at the time were optimistic for the future of LGBTQ+ rights (4).

Fast forward, after homosexuality is decriminalized, to the 1980s. Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher were influential politicians to the LGBTQ+ community. During both of their reigns, a virus, AIDS, circulated around and soon enough was declared an epidemic. The primary demographic of those getting infected was homosexual men. Instead of treating this issue, both governments downplayed the epidemic because helping homosexual people were viewed as “deviant”. They didn’t want this to tarnish their image, so both governments ignored the issue. Besides that, homosexuals were afraid of receiving help due to high rates of homophobia in the 80s. This stagnated the movement. However, the LGBTQ+ community continued to choose optimism and continued to fight for their rights through lawsuits (2).

In 2003, a court case was presented upon the Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS), *Lawrence v. Texas*. This case challenged whether or not homosexual intimacy should be outlawed. By a vote of 6-3, homosexual intimacy was permitted. Those who were committing acts of homosexual intimacy, between two consenting adults, could not be arrested or fined anymore (5).

In August 2014, another court case was challenged to the SCOTUS, *Obergefell v. Hodges*. This court case would determine the fate of same-sex marriage nationally. Conservatives defended the foundation of marriage, stating that marriage is only between a man and a woman. Liberals, on the other hand, weren’t so concerned about who someone chose to love and were more in favor to advocate for same-sex marriage. Many showed up around the Supreme Court, optimistic that their fight for love may win. By a vote of 5-4, same-sex marriage was enacted by the SCOTUS. This set a new precedent everyone would have to follow nationally (1).

A third major court case was issued to the SCOTUS, with a 6-3 majority, stating that LGBTQ+ people are protected from being fired based on gender identity and sexual orientation. Many were optimistic for the future for equal rights along the way since the SCOTUS declared that discrimination in the workplace infringes on the Civil Rights Act (3). The community wants to expand this to healthcare, housing, and education.

The LGBTQ+ community has gone through many events that have either benefited or hindered their message of equal rights, no matter the sexual orientation and gender identity. Through protest, police brutality, epidemic, and lawsuits, the community has always remained optimistic for their future. Even when the hill got steeper, the up-hill battle for LGBTQ+ rights has gone a long way by choosing optimism to further achieve their dreams.

### Works Cited

1. The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica . “Obergefell v. Hodges.” Encyclopædia Britannica, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., [www.britannica.com/event/Obergefell-v-Hodges](http://www.britannica.com/event/Obergefell-v-Hodges).
2. Florêncio, João. “AIDS: Homophobic and Moralistic Images of 1980s Still Haunt Our View of HIV – That Must Change.” The Conversation, 7 Oct. 2020, [theconversation.com/aids-homophobic-and-moralistic-images-of-1980s-still-haunt-our-view-of-hiv-that-must-change-106580](http://theconversation.com/aids-homophobic-and-moralistic-images-of-1980s-still-haunt-our-view-of-hiv-that-must-change-106580).
3. Liptak, Adam. “Civil Rights Law Protects Gay and Transgender Workers, Supreme Court Rules.” The New York Times, The New York Times, 15 June 2020, [www.nytimes.com/2020/06/15/us/gay-transgender-workers-supreme-court.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/15/us/gay-transgender-workers-supreme-court.html).
4. Pruitt, Sarah. “What Happened at the Stonewall Riots? A Timeline of the 1969 Uprising.” History.com, A&E Television Networks, 13 June 2019, [www.history.com/news/stonewall-riots-timeline](http://www.history.com/news/stonewall-riots-timeline).
5. Urofsky, Melvin I. “Lawrence v. Texas.” Encyclopædia Britannica, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., [www.britannica.com/topic/Lawrence-v-Texas](http://www.britannica.com/topic/Lawrence-v-Texas).