

GAY MARRIAGE SERVES AS MAJOR TURNING POINT FOR THE U.S.

EDITORIAL

People celebrate gay pride at the Chicago Pride Parade on Sunday, June 28, 2015. The 46th Annual Chicago Pride event is held just days after the U.S. Supreme Court decision upholding the right for same-sex marriage.

Michael Terchal/Chicago Tribune

As hundreds of brightly colored rainbow flags flew in the air, a plethora of tearful embraces were shared by Americans across the country. The gay rights flag took social media sites by storm and for their supporters, it was a victory. After years of activism and pleas for a change to be made, it seemed as if prayers had been answered. The country was overcome with emotion in the decision made by the Supreme Court when it appeared that “love had won”.

Making the U.S. the twenty-first country to legalize marriage nationwide, a social milestone had finally been met. But now more than ever, it is important to make sure that progress doesn't get mistaken for the end goal. In all the buzz surrounding the Supreme Court decision, Representative David Cicilline put it best by saying, “In most states, a person can get married on Saturday, post photos of their wedding on Sunday, and get fired from their job or thrown out of their apartment by Monday just because of who they are.” In thirty one states, LGBT people can be legally married, but there is still no state legislation preventing them for being or evicted for it as well. As it

stands, South Carolina is still one of them.

Being one of five states to unsuccessfully urged the Supreme Court from South Carolina is infamous for its conservative ways and at times being backwards and late with progressive ideals. This issue of the LGBT community

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facing prejudice and exclusion because of the Supreme Court's decision seems like one that will be around for a long time. With this decision comes a new way of thinking which many Americans and South Carolinians will not be open to.

Some people have even gone as far to reject the court's decision and decline LGBT's to marry, one of whom is Kim Davis, a Kentucky County Clerk, who was

jailed for refusing to issue a marriage licence to a same-sex couple.

Even most Americans are confused about this. One 2014 poll found that 62% of Americans thought it was already illegal under federal law to fire someone for being gay or lesbian. At this point, it's clear that even if LGBT discrimination isn't illegal yet, people believe it already is. It just sounds like it should be by now.

Of course, the Equality Act was introduced this August to include civil rights protections based on sexual orientation and gender. This would prohibit LGBT discrimination in employment, housing, education, jury service and in public accommodations. It would easily take the place of the failed Employment Non-Discrimination Act that died in the House of Representatives in 2013 and has strong support in both houses. If it passes, then as a country, we will have finally achieved the bare minimum of equal rights.

As there are still obstacles to overcome, we can only hope that in the end equal rights are given to all. As a state, it's important to exhibit growth and acceptance of new ideals and ways of life.