

**Topic:** Unequal Treatment in the United States/Gay rights

**Purpose:** To engage the audience in the topic of gay rights and unequal treatment and solve the problem of discrimination based on sexual orientation in this country

**Introduction:**

**Attention Strategy:** “Jerry Falwell, on the Pat Robertson program, stated that the September 11, 2001, terrorist attack that took thousands of lives was punishment for the growing influence of gay and lesbian groups”

This is one representation of the extremist end of the anti-gay movement; however there are many people in this country who share similar sentiments to a lesser or perhaps a greater degree.

**Orienting Material:** I am not pro-gay. I am not anti-gay. We as a society do not need to be pro-gay and we most certainly do not need to be anti-gay. But we do need to be pro-equality and that is the position from which I speak to you today; a position based in the foundation our country was founded on; a position that finds its roots in the principles and practices of equality.

- i. If we are to be a nation of equality, then we should be equal in all aspects of life; free from judgment, discrimination, and persecution based on race, gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. But this is not the way our country operates. We deny basic rights to our citizens based on sexual orientation which has begun to tear away at the fabric of our nation and create a division among its people. It is not enough to say that discrimination based on sexual orientation is morally wrong; it must be proven and appropriately dealt with.

**Thesis Statement:** In order to solve the problem of discrimination against the LGBT community, we need to be moral entrepreneurs by taking steps to achieve equality that reveal the truth about homosexuality not being a choice, reforming our language, and supporting legislation that will eliminate the perpetuation of unequal treatment based on sexual orientation in the United States.

**Body:**

- I. The LGBT community is a discriminated class in the U.S. (*Value*)
  - a. According to the National Association of Social Workers, there are more than 1,000 federal protections and responsibilities denied to gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender families because they cannot legally marry in this country.
    - i. If we all agree that the United States is a nation that is centered on equality, federal benefits should not be denied to a person based on sexual orientation.

- ii. These benefits are offered to all heterosexual married couples
  - iii. These benefits are necessary for most people to live secure lives
    - 1. LGBT persons do not have the automatic ability to make medical decisions for an incapacitated spouse,
    - 2. LGBT persons do not have the ability to purchase continued health coverage for a same-sex partner after the loss of a job
  - b. The United States is lagging behind other nations in this issue.
    - i. Marriage between same-sex couples was first made legal in the Netherlands in 2001. Since then six additional countries have passed legislation to recognize marriage rights for GLBT citizens.
      - 1. Spain is the only country in the world that recognizes same-sex marriage and heterosexual marriage under the same law
    - ii. As of now, five U.S. states -- Massachusetts (2004), Connecticut (2008), Iowa (2009), Vermont (2009), New Hampshire (2009 vote, 2010 enactment), as well as the District of Columbia (2009 vote, 2010 enactment) – recognize marriage equality
  - c. Thirty states have passed constitutional amendments or laws explicitly banning same-sex marriage.
  - d. On October 20, 2010, the first Spirit Day to recognize gay and lesbian teen suicide was held.
    - i. It shouldn't take 6 teen suicides for people to realize the impact that the discrimination against gay and lesbian teens is having in our country.
    - ii. According to Health Place America's Mental Health Channel, gay teenagers account for 1/3 of all teen suicides.
- II. In order to solve this problem, we need to take the initiative to become moral entrepreneurs in our society. (*Proof of success supported by history*)
- a. Howard Becker, renowned sociologist and author of Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance defines moral entrepreneurs as people who attempt to persuade society to make policy from particular moral viewpoints. Three steps must be made in order to achieve the social change that a moral entrepreneur attempts to implement.
    - i. The first is identifying a value; in the case of any civil rights issue, which is exactly what this is, that value is unequal treatment in this country is wrong.
    - ii. Then rules must be made to address this value.
    - iii. Lastly people must stand up and be enforcers of the rules.
  - b. Gay Rights is the Civil Rights issue of our generation
    - i. Gay is NOT the new Black
    - ii. Members of the LGBT population recognize the key differences between their own struggle and the struggles of the black population
      - a. Key differences exist

- i. the inability of a black person to voluntarily hide the fact that they are black like a gay person can hide their sexual orientation
      - ii. There is no comparison to the legacy of slavery that the black population has endured.
    - iii. To be clear I am in no way saying or supporting the idea that “gay is the new black,” however the way that the black civil rights movement progressed is **proof** that moral entrepreneurship can successfully solve the problem of discrimination that exists in our society today.
- III. Steps need to be taken to achieve equality in our country (*Rules and Enforcers*)
  - a. We must first recognize that homosexuality is not a choice.
    - i. Anti-gay groups operate under the assumption that unlike race and ethnicity homosexuality is not a choice.
      1. This is inaccurate, because according to Understanding Abnormal Behavior, by David Sue, Derald Wing Sue, and Stanley Sue, psychological and psychiatric research supports and provides evidence that homosexuality is “not simply a lifestyle choice but is rather a naturally occurring phenomenon linked to a biological disposition.”
    - ii. New areas of research have been developing to support this biological disposition in homosexual males.
      1. Genetics
      2. Birth Order
      3. Hormones
    - iii. This line of thought is further supported by the fact that the most recent Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Diagnosing Psychological Disorders does not include sexual orientation among its list of viable sexual disorders and hasn’t since 1974.
  - b. The first rule we should make is to reform our language.
    - i. “Sticks and stones may hurt my bones but words can never hurt me.”
      1. Words do hurt
    - ii. We don’t say things like “That’s Hispanic” or “That’s Black” so we shouldn’t say things like “That’s Gay.”
      1. ThinkB4YouSpeak
        - a. Yesterday on Twitter “FAG” was used 1500+ times
        - b. “DYKE” was used 747 times
        - c. ...”SO GAY” was used 1500+ times
    - iii. Speaking up when we hear it
      1. Call out your friends, family, and siblings; challenge someone when they make an off color joke about sexual orientation, race, or ethnicity.

- iv. Parenting
  - 1. Chastising our children for saying things like "Crap" and "Oh my God."
  - v. If we change our language we can begin to change our behavior.
- c. We need to support legislation that will eliminate the perpetuation of unequal treatment in the U.S.
  - i. Don't ask Don't tell is getting swept under the rug
  - ii. The Defense of Marriage Act is still hanging out there

**Conclusion:**

**Summary:** I come to you today as a moral entrepreneur. Moral entrepreneurship is the business of persuading the society to make policy from particular moral viewpoints and I'm asking you to join me in my fight against unequal treatment of our peers. In order to end discrimination against the LGBT community, we must recognize that science supports the claim that homosexuality is not a choice, and begin to take poignant steps to achieve equality in this country such as reforming our language and supporting legislation to end unequal treatment based on sexual orientation.

**Closing statement:** Andy Warhol said, "They say that time changes things, but you actually have to change them yourself"

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