



THE FREEDOM TO MARRY

A Discussion Guide for University Students

Package Contents and Screening Notes

Your package includes:

- 86 minute version of the film - the original feature length
- 54 minute version of the film - educational length
- DVD Extras - additional scenes and bonus material
 - “Evan, Eddie and The Wolfsons” (Runtime - 6:05)
 - “Evan Wolfson’s Early Predictions” (Runtime - 5:02)
 - “Mary Listening to the Argument” (Runtime - 10:29)
 - “Thalia and Their Strategy” (Runtime - 2:19)
- Educational Guides
 - University Discussion Guide
 - High School Discussion Guide
 - Middle School Discussion Guide
- A Quick-Start Discussion Guide (for any audience)
- Sample “Questions and Answers” from the film’s director, Eddie Rosenstein

Sectioning the film

If it is desired to show the film into shorter sections, here are recommended breaks:

- **86 Minute Version (feature length) - Suggested Section Breaks**
 - 1) 00:00 - 34:48 (Ending on the words “It’s really happening.”) Total run time: 34:38
 - 2) 34:49 - 56:24 (Ending on “Equal justice under the law.”) Total run time: 21:23
 - 3) 56:25 - 1:26:16 (Ending after the end credits.) Total run time: 28:16
- **54 Minute Version (educational length) - Suggested Section Breaks**
 - 1) 00:00 - 24:32 (Ending on the words “It’s really happening.”) Total run time: 24:32
 - 2) 24:33 - 36:00 (Ending on “Equal justice under the law.”) Total run time: 10:15
 - 3) 36:01 - 54:03 (Ending after the end credits.) Total run time: 18:01



Introduction

THE FREEDOM TO MARRY is the story of the decades-long battle over the right for same-sex couples to get married in the United States. Told from the perspective of the tension surrounding the final case at the United States Supreme Court, the film also interweaves the history of the LGBT movement, the campaign to win the freedom to marry, and the personal stories of key leaders and ordinary people who took action to change hearts and minds, and then the law.

It is a story of hope and sacrifice, strategy and perseverance, transformation and triumph.

This discussion guide is intended to provide thought-provoking questions around the topics and themes touched upon in this film, including U.S. History, Constitutional Law, Civil Rights, Social Change and Political Activism, LGBT Rights, and LGBT History.

These questions are designed to help viewers engage in meaningful conversation about the sometimes complex concepts surrounding the story and struggle shown in the film. THE FREEDOM TO MARRY team encourages you to frame the questions in a way so that viewers can express themselves freely. Students should know that conversation can bring understanding - and understand that regular people can, indeed, effect change.



When Evan Wolfson wrote his 1983 law school thesis advocating for the freedom to marry, gays and lesbians were “a despised minority”. He had little support for his call to action, even within the gay community. And yet, after decades of struggle, many flash points and battles and millions of conversations, the majority of Americans - both straight and gay - now agree that people should be able to marry the person they love, and the freedom to marry has become the law of the land. The takeaway is this: change is possible, and regular people have the power to make it happen.

We hope that, after thinking further about this story, viewers will feel inspired and empowered by this message.

TIPS FOR LEADING A SUCCESSFUL GROUP DISCUSSION

While we encourage university professors to make use of this guide, we recognize that there might be others using this resource, such as student campus groups, or university viewing parties. With a diverse audience in mind, we have included some basic tips for leading inclusive, meaningful discussions.

- Start by identifying a group facilitator. This person does not participate in the discussion, but helps to negotiate between speakers, summarizing and rephrasing ideas to help keep discussion flowing. The facilitator also works to ensure that one or several people don't monopolize the conversation.
- Establishing guidelines for any group discussions is essential. Consider beginning the discussion with a short introduction asking participants to respect all opinions, and that even as they disagree, the conversation should remain focused on the issues at hand, not personal attacks.
- The facilitator should ask follow up questions to clarify a speaker's opinion, guide to discussion, and keep participants on topic. Avoid taking a stance. Remember to ask open-ended questions to stimulate conversation (e.g Why do you feel that way? How else can we explain this?)
- Encourage alternate perspectives and ideas.
- Encourage participants to address each other, rather than the facilitator.
- In some groups using a 'talking stone' or other item that can be passed from speaker to speaker can help distribute speaking time among participants and curb interruptions and cross-talk.
- Deal openly and directly with conflicts if they arise.
- As time concludes, review any conclusions the group might have reached.



VOCABULARY

LGBT - Lesbian, gay, bisexual (attracted to either sex) or transgender (people whose gender expression differs from their assigned sex at birth.) Sometimes also referred to as LGBTQ - Q stands for queer, an umbrella term.

Transexual - Someone who desires, uses or has used medical assistance to physically transition from one sex to another. The preferred term now is transgender.

Amicus Brief - Legal documents filed in appellate (appeals) court cases by people or groups not directly involved with the case, but who have a strong interest or expertise in the subject matter. The briefs are used to provide relevant and/or additional information that the court might wish to consider.

Civil Rights - The rights of citizens to political, legal, social, and economic equality. Equality, in this instance, refers to equal treatment under the law as well as equal access to freedoms and opportunities.

Constitutional Democracy - A system of government that adheres to a legal framework such as a constitution as the foundational concept for how the nation is ruled. The limits of political authority are clearly stated in a foundational document and the system is designed so that the authority of the majority is limited and the rights of individuals and minorities are respected, even if the majority may not approve.

14th Amendment - Ratified in 1868, the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution addresses key aspects of citizenship and the rights of citizens. The most commonly referenced portion of the 14th amendment is the "equal protection" clause, which guarantees all people equal treatment by the government.

Stonewall (Rebellion) - The spontaneous demonstrations by members of the LGBT community against a police raid that took place around midnight on June 28, 1969, at the Stonewall Inn, a gay bar in the Greenwich Village neighborhood of New York City. The Stonewall riots are frequently used as a benchmark for the dawn of the modern LGBT movement.

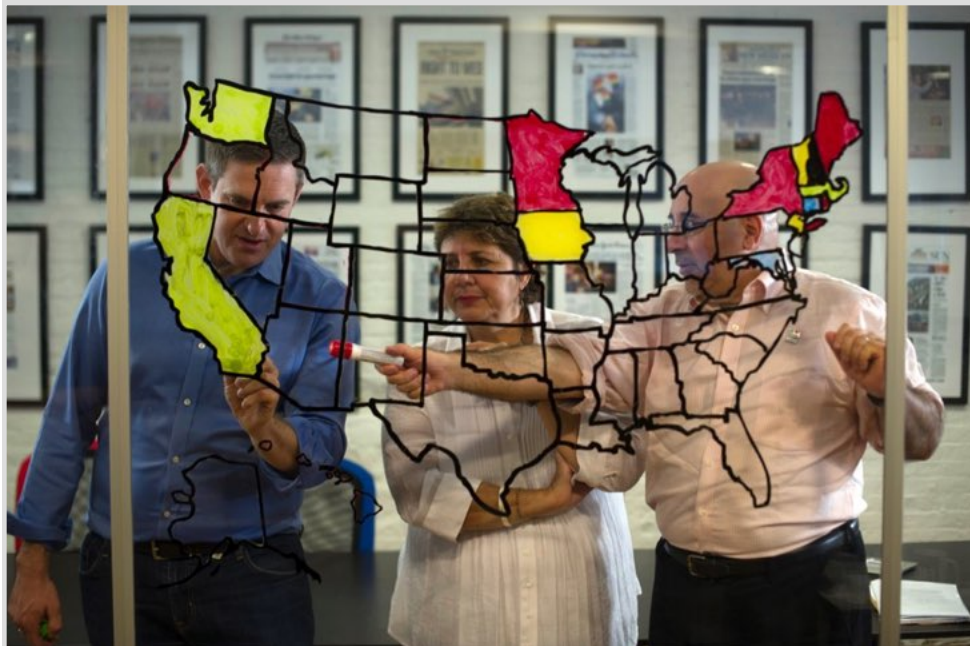
Goodridge v. Department of Public Health - A landmark court case in which attorney Mary Bonauto argued on behalf of seven same-sex couples in Massachusetts who had been denied marriage licenses. Bonauto won the case on November 18, 2003, and Massachusetts thus became the first U.S. state in which same-sex couples could legally marry.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The Freedom to Marry – The central right at stake in the decades-long struggle shown in the film. Freedom to Marry was also the name of the campaign and organization Evan Wolfson founded in 2001 to drive the strategy and leverage the movement, culminating in victory in June 2015.

DOMA – The Defense of Marriage Act was a law passed in 1996—before any same-sex couples had won marriage anywhere in the world -- to deny federal protections to same-sex couples who might legally marry, even though these protections were granted to opposite-sex married couples. DOMA also allowed states to refuse to respect the same-sex marriages which were granted by other states. In 2013, in a landmark case named **United States v. Windsor**, the U.S. Supreme Court declared the central part of DOMA unconstitutional.

Obergefell v Hodges - The June 26, 2015, United States Supreme Court decision in which the freedom of same-sex couples to marry was affirmed nationwide, making it legal for same-sex couples to marry throughout the U.S., bringing a victorious end to the decades-long campaign.



Seeing People as People:

- Consider what you knew about LGBT people before watching the film. Have your ideas shifted? In what way – and why?
- How did you think that the mother who argued with the protesters felt in that situation? How do you think the protesters who argued against the mother felt?
- In the film, Evan Wolfson mentions that it was not simply laws that changed in America, people's perceptions of who lesbians and gays are changed as well. How did this happen? And how did this affect the outcome?
- One of the opposition's main arguments against the freedom to marry was that same-sex parents could not do as good a job at parenting children as different-sex parents. Having seen April and Jayne's story, what is your opinion on this concept?
- One activist refers to the 'power of conversation'. How are conversations an important part of social change? What are the barriers to having successful conversations? For example, picture yourselves trying to explain to your families or friends that you are gay or lesbian, how would it go? And what are the risks?

Ethical and Moral Considerations

- After seeing THE FREEDOM TO MARRY, do you think that each of us has a role to play in tackling social change or just lawyers and the government?
- If you were in charge of the United States Government, what would you do to protect LGBT people, such as transgender youth? Do you think that government has a role to play in protecting LGBT people?
- Many other movements now study the marriage movement for lessons on how to achieve their goals. What lessons did you see in this film about how change can be achieved -- lessons that can be applied to other issues?
- Some people believe that homosexuality is against their religion. Do you think that the government should make its decisions based on some people's religious beliefs? Why or why not? What does the Constitution say about that?

- Do we have an obligation to treat others as we would like to be treated (the Golden Rule)? And how much effort should we put into protecting others? How about the government?
- After seeing this movie, do you feel more or less empowered to get involved in social change? What causes would you like to work on, and how do you think you can help?
- Although it is now legal for gays and lesbians to get married in the U.S., there are still many forms of discrimination against LGBT people in America. For example, in many states, gay people can still be fired because of their sexual orientation, or they can be denied a home or apartment without any legal recourse. Do you think there should be national anti-discrimination laws for LGBTQ people?

Make a difference

- Think about a time when you may have insulted someone because they were different. What would you like to say to them now? And how do you think it would help them, if you said it?
- Think about something that makes you different. Has anyone ever made you feel bad about that? How did that make you feel, and what would you like to tell them?
- What can your community, including your family, do to help make life safer and more equal for people in the LGBT community? What do you think prevents them from doing these things? How could you help them make different choices?
- What can your community be doing to help other people who are not being treated equally?
- How can you encourage local politicians to take action on behalf of LGBT people? What do you think that action should look like?

TAKE ACTION AT YOUR UNIVERSITY

Whether you are gay or straight, you can help foster greater understanding, awareness and acceptance of LGBT people in a variety of ways. Consider some of these options on your campus:

- Become involved in your campus LGBT Center, if there is one.
- Become a member of your campus or local GSA (Gay Straight Alliance) or local PFLAG chapter.
- Meet with your campus administration to discuss your school's anti-discrimination and inclusiveness plan.

In addition to LGBT issues, we encourage you to get involved with other causes, as well. Consider some of these options:

- Join campus Republicans or Democrats.
- Run for student office.
- Identify a cause near to your heart and identify ways in your area in which you can get involved.



“DVD EXTRAS” DISCUSSION GUIDE

**There are four “DVD Extras” available exclusively through this package.
Here is a description of each, with suggested audiences and issues to discuss.**

1) **“Evan, Eddie and The Wolfsons”** (Runtime - 6:05)

This piece gives an insight into what growing up was like for Evan Wolfson, how he came out as gay to his family, and how they all reacted. It begins with Wolfson and the film’s director, Eddie Rosenstein, taking a ‘walking tour’ of Taylor Allderdice High School in Pittsburgh, PA – which they both attended. (Rosenstein and Wolfson grew up in the same community.) The two men discuss what it was like for Wolfson, as a gay person in high school. You can see on Rosenstein’s face that these are not issues or concerns that he faced as a child, since he is not gay person. Then, we visit the Wolfson family, and Evan and his sister Alison discuss ‘being gay’ with their parents - and we learn how the parents handled that news.

Suggested audience for this extra:

- People who are interested in what it’s like to be gay as a young person
- People who are interested in an excellent example of how parents should react when they find out their children are gay
- People who are interested in how to discuss being gay with their parents

2) **“Evan Wolfson’s Early Predictions”** (Runtime - 5:02)

This piece shows the director of Freedom to Marry, Eddie Rosenstein, watching an archival clip of Evan Wolfson as he addresses a small gathering at the LGBT Center in Los Angeles in 1993. The clip shows how clearly Wolfson was able to predict - with stunning accuracy - many of the obstacles that the marriage movement would face in the coming decades, and what steps would be necessary to overcome them in order to win marriage nationwide.

Suggested audience for this extra:

- People interested in LBGT history and LGBT rights
- People interested in movement building, activism or social change
- People interested in law

3) **“Mary Listening to the Argument”** (Runtime - 10:29)

One of most interesting scenes in THE FREEDOM TO MARRY is Mary Bonauto reviewing the audio recording of when she argued before the Supreme Court. For those interested in further specifics of the case, here is the extended version of that scene.

Suggested audience for this extra:

- People interested in LGBT history
- People interested in the United States Supreme Court
- People interested in constitutional or appellate law

4) **“Thalia and Their Strategy”** (Runtime - 2:19)

Thalia Zepatos, the Director of Research and Messaging for Freedom to Marry, discusses how polling helped drive the campaign to win marriage nationwide. Zepatos shows how data informed the campaign’s messaging efforts. Then, by training volunteers to hold discussions nationwide, the public was successfully educated on the issue. This simple story is now widely seen as one of the keys to success for any social change movement.

Suggested audience for this extra:

- People interested in social change
- People interested in political science
- People interested in activism
- People interested in social science
- People interested in LGBT rights
- People interested in polling and data



RESOURCES

- **FREEDOMTOMARRY.ORG** - Though the campaign closed after it achieved its goal, it maintains a website housing important resources, history, and lessons.
- **ACLU.ORG** - The American Civil Liberties Union is a non-partisan, non-profit organization devoted to defending and preserving the individual rights and liberties guaranteed by the Constitution and laws of the United States.
- **GLAD.ORG** - One of the most important advocacy groups for individuals with legal concerns regarding sexual discrimination, GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders works to create a just society free of discrimination based on gender identity and expression, HIV status, and sexual orientation.
- **LAMDELEGAL.ORG** - The nation's oldest and largest legal organization working for the civil rights of lesbians, gay men, and people with HIV/AIDS.
- **NCLRRIGHTS.ORG** - The National Center for Lesbian Rights has been advancing the civil and human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people and their families through litigation, legislation, policy, and public education since it was founded in 1977.
- **HRC.ORG** - The Human Rights Campaign works to improve the lives of LGBTQ people by advocating for equal rights and benefits in the workplace, ensuring families are treated equally under the law, and increasing public support.
- **THETREVORPROJECT.ORG** - Leading national organization focused on crisis and suicide prevention efforts for LGBTQ youth. They operate a 24 hour nationwide hotline to provide assistance.
- **GLBTNATIONALHELPCENTER.ORG** - Provides free and confidential telephone and internet counseling, information and local resources for LGBTQ callers.
- **PFLAG.ORG** - The umbrella organization for over 400 PFLAG chapters across the country, PFLAG unites people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) with families, friends, and allies.

GET INVOLVED

- THE FREEDOM TO MARRY -learn more about the film, arrange a viewing of the movie to educate others, and to stay in touch.
 - website: **freedomtomarrymovie.com**
 - twitter **@Free2MarryMovie**
 - Facebook **www.facebook.com/FreedomToMarryMovie/**
 - email **info@eyepopproductions.com**
- **CONTACT YOUR REPRESENTATIVES:** text your own zip code to **(520) 200-2223** to obtain a list of your representative's phone numbers. For email addresses, go to **www.usa.gov/elected-officials**

