

The United States of America was founded with the fundamental principle that we are all created equal. As the nation grew, citizens challenged this idea by saying that we aren't all that common. Regardless of our differences, the treatment towards Americans should stay the same across the board. It doesn't matter what faith you practice, how you identify yourself, or even who you love. The constitution guarantees all Americans equal protection to the law, and that is final. Former President Obama, beautifully wrote in his article for TIME, "America is a place where you can write your own destiny." Our nation used to have major intolerance for people of color. We have looked back to those times, and felt disgusted by the way we treated African Americans, in particular. So how is it okay that our nation has regressed, and is still refusing to understand how diverse America is becoming?

Throughout history, Americans have protested against the stigma towards differences within our nation. One of the most recent controversies is love. In previous years, someone may have defined love as a passionate feeling towards the opposite sex. However, love is not governed by society. In the words of Lin Manuel Miranda, "love is love is love is love is love is love is love is love" regardless of your sexuality. Love is happiness. Love is pure. Love is safe.

Unfortunately, on June 12th 2016, the Pulse Nightclub in Orlando, Florida was attacked. The opposite of safe. This club has grown to become a hub for the LGBTQ+ community. That night, 107 people were affected physically. Out of those 107 people, 49 of them were pronounced dead. The other 58 were wounded, but fortunately survived. This shooting truly opened our eyes, and showed us the level of hatred towards these loving people, who seek nothing more than freedom and happiness. People who believe with every ounce of their being that love is pure, love is safe, and that love is happiness.

However, if love was happiness, how come a 17 year old girl committed suicide because of who she loved? If love was happiness, why is it that people like Tony Perkins, and Mike Pence put members of the LGBT community in conversion therapy trying to 'un-gay' them? According to The National Center for Lesbian Rights, California, New York, New Jersey, Vermont, Oregon and Illinois are the only states that stood against conversion therapy. It was when 17 year old, Leelah Alcorn wrote a four paged suicide note after her first conversion therapy session, that President Obama called an end to it. He brilliantly said that these "folks who were willing to endure bullying and taunts, and stayed strong, came to believe in themselves and who they were." They fought endlessly, just to earn the freedom to love. They continued to put all their faith into the belief that love is safe, love is happiness, and that love is pure.

On the contrary, religious concerns have also been thrown into the mix, saying that those of the LGBT community are very unholy, not pure. Let me remind you that the word love is repeated within The Old Testament 319 times, and 232 times in The New Testament. Pope Francis once said, "If they accept the Lord and have goodwill, who am I to judge them?" He explained how he has no right to judge someone based on who they love. If one of the most religious influencers supports these people, who are you to say that they are unholy for not

following your idea of what is normal? Their intentions are pure, for love is pure. Love is safe,
and Love is happiness.