

Same-Sex Marriage

In this lesson, you will learn the history of how same-sex marriage became legal across the US. You'll also learn some new vocabulary and review reciprocal pronouns. Let's start by talking about the institution of marriage.



Pre-Reading

A. Warm-Up Questions

1. What is your definition of "marriage"?
2. In your country, what legal rights do married couples have that unmarried couples don't have?
3. Who can get married in your country? Are there any age or gender restrictions?

B. Vocabulary Preview

Match the words on the left with the correct meanings on the right.

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| ___ 1. union | a) the act of not acknowledging the existence of something |
| ___ 2. non-recognition | b) a joining |
| ___ 3. federal | c) related to the national government |
| ___ 4. bar | d) a remarkable achievement |
| ___ 5. benefit | e) to prevent |
| ___ 6. veteran | f) to promise |
| ___ 7. repeal | g) payment given to an individual to help pay for things such as health care and retirement |
| ___ 8. unconstitutional | h) not in line with the human rights cited in the constitution |
| ___ 9. milestone | i) a person who used to be in the military |
| ___ 10. vow | j) to make null, to cancel |

Reading

1. The Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) was signed into law in the US on September 21, 1996. Unlike other laws, it was approved quickly and easily. There were three main parts of the law. First, DOMA gave every US state the right to refuse to recognize same-sex marriages. Second, it defined “marriage” as a **union** between a man and a woman, and “spouse” as a marriage partner of the opposite sex. Third, it declared the **non-recognition** of same-sex marriages for **federal** purposes.
2. DOMA did not prevent same-sex American couples from getting married. Many couples married in other countries and eventually in states that legalized same-sex marriage. Section 3, however, **barred** these couples from receiving **benefits** that opposite-sex American couples received. For example, same-sex couples couldn’t file joint taxes. They also couldn’t receive spousal benefits, such as **veterans’** benefits, survivors’ benefits, or immigration benefits. In other words, even though they were legally married, they didn’t receive equal marriage rights due to Section 3.
3. Many legal battles ensued as same-sex couples fought for things like health-care benefits and hospital rights. Bill Clinton, the former president who signed DOMA in, became a strong supporter of its **repeal**. President Obama also supported the repeal, and on June 26, 2013, Section 3 of DOMA was ruled **unconstitutional**.
4. The 2013 ruling meant one important thing. The US federal government had to start recognizing the legal marriage of same-sex couples by offering them equal benefits. It did not mean that individual states had to recognize same-sex marriages. The day DOMA was struck down, 36 states still did not recognize same-sex marriage. Regardless of the battle ahead, same-sex couples around the world celebrated the US **milestone** and **vowed** to continue fighting for national marriage equality.
5. In 2015, in a case known as *Obergefell v. Hodges*, an Ohio man sued his state. He wanted the right to place his name on his husband’s death certificate. On June 26, 2015, the Supreme Court ended what Obama called “the patchwork system.” Same-sex marriages became legal across the US under the equal protection clause of the 14th amendment. Individual states are no longer allowed to ban same-sex marriages.

Comprehension

Practice asking and answering the following questions with your partner. Then write your answers in complete sentences in your notebook.

1. When did DOMA come into effect?
2. What definition did DOMA give for the institution of marriage?
3. According to DOMA, what was the definition of a spouse?
4. What did Section 3 declare?
5. Did DOMA bar same-sex couples from getting married in the US?
6. What does the reading say about former president Bill Clinton?
7. What was President Obama's opinion about DOMA?
8. What major change happened in the US when DOMA was initially struck down?
9. Why does the reading mention 36 US states?
10. What major change occurred due to the *Obergefell v. Hodges* case?

Vocabulary Review

Use vocabulary from page 1 to complete the sentences.

1. The women _____ to love each other in sickness and in health.
2. A 50th wedding anniversary is a major _____ .
3. A _____ law is one that affects the whole country.
4. Children were _____ from attending the wedding ceremony.
5. Laws that promote inequality are often declared _____ .

Grammar Review

A. Points to Remember

1. *Each other* is a reciprocal pronoun.
 - *Ella and Lisa love each other.*
(This means Ella loves Lisa, and Lisa loves Ella.)
2. *Each other* is always two words.
3. *Each other* always involves two or more people doing the same thing.
 - *They are talking to each other on the phone.*
4. *Each other* and *one another* are always interchangeable. They are both reciprocal pronouns. *One another* is more formal. It is commonly used when referring to more than two people.
 - *The teacher asked the students to be kind to one another.* (formal)
 - *The teacher asked the students to be nice to each other.* (also correct)
5. *Each other's* is the possessive form (NOT *each others'*).
 - *They held each other's hand as they walked down the aisle.*

B. Practice

Work with a partner and practice making sentences with "each other," "each other's," and "one another."

Discussion

1. Why is it useful for couples to be able to file joint taxes?
2. Is same-sex marriage currently legal in your country or hometown? If yes, when did it become legal? If not, do you think it will become legal in the near future? Why or why not?
3. Why do politicians change their opinions about important issues after they are no longer in power?
4. If you were the leader of your own nation, what rules, if any, would you want to make about the institution of marriage?