



"The Court now holds that same-sex couples may exercise the fundamental right to marry. No longer may this liberty be denied to them." – Justice Anthony Kennedy

To the GLSEN Family,

There are moments in life that bring people of diverse backgrounds together as one. To rejoice in what is just. Sometimes those moments happen in an instant. Other times, they take decades. And the victory is that much sweeter. Today is one of those days.

Today is a day to honor and thank those who made this happen. The Supreme Court's decision is a huge step forward, establishing the equality of our relationships before the law in every county and state in the nation. It is one of many important steps on the road to equality for LGBT Americans and sends a strong message, especially to youth, that our love is equal and worthy and to be celebrated. It sets a foundation for the next victories, and a precedent for our ability to change the world.

Justice Kennedy, in his majority opinion wrote:

"No union is more profound than marriage, for it embodies the highest ideals of love, fidelity, devotion, sacrifice, and family. In forming a marital union, two people become something greater than once they were. As some of the petitioners in these cases demonstrate, marriage embodies a love that may endure even past death ... Their hope is not to be condemned to live in loneliness, excluded from one of civilization's oldest institutions. They ask for equal dignity in the eyes of the law. The Constitution grants them that right."

When I graduated from high school in 1986, a very different Supreme Court decision – *Bowers v. Hardwick* – sent me a very different message: lesbians and gay men were outlaws, and unworthy. May this decision resound as powerfully for youth graduating today and for years to come. May it help to undo the stigma and undermine the violence leveled against LGBT people. May our joy and our victorious love provide the fuel for our on-going struggle for social justice.

This is an historic day for our country, for our communities and for families across America. It is a day for all of us to celebrate. When love and family prevail, we all win.

Robert Kennedy once said: "Moral courage is a rarer commodity than bravery in battle or great intelligence. Yet it is the one essential, vital quality of those who seek to change a world which yields most painfully to change."

Congratulations to the generations of LGBT people and their allies who had the moral courage to begin this quest for equality and persevered through unspeakable acts of violence and bigotry to celebrate this day. While much work remains in the fight for equality on all levels, today is a day for reflection, celebration, joy, love, and thanksgiving.

Thank you for being part of our family, of this struggle, and of the resolute community that will lead us on to our next victories.

Onward,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Eliza Byard". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Eliza" and the last name "Byard" clearly distinguishable.

Eliza Byard
Executive Director