I'll never forget the day my dad came home from a company party and told us that one of his co workers had come in with another man and said, "Hey everyone, I'd like you to meet my husband". It was a statement that confused and bewildered me all night long. A guy marrying another guy? I was in 6th grade at the time and this was the first I'd ever heard of something like that.

The next day I recounted the story to a friend before school, doing my best to show her how absurd it sounded to me and expecting her to have a similar reaction. She didn't.

"Oh, they were gay?" she asked me enthusiastically, "Were they nice?"

I was at a total loss for words; I could never have imagined she'd respond like that. To avoid further conversation, I just told her I wasn't at the party and didn't meet them in person before hurrying off to class. The rest of my day was spent puzzling over this new word: gay.

Despite this initial confusion, thoughts of same-sex relationships didn't really cross my mind all that often for the rest of my middle school years. Whenever the topic did come up, I was still a little put off at first, but after a while I'd just shrug and say "whatever". For the most part, I didn't really care.

It wasn't until high school that I really started thinking about the LGBT community. I have no idea why, but somehow the vast majority of the friends I've made in high school are either gay or are strong supporters of gay rights. And as I've listened to their coming out stories and let them confide in me the struggles they face with their family and friends, my eyes were opened to something I was completely ignorant of for at least the past 10 years: the discrimination those of the LGBT community face.

It really amazes me the lengths people go to to express disapproval of someone's sexual preference. And by "amazes" I mean "disgusts". Parents shunning their own children, friends turning on friends, insults and violence from complete strangers… heck, there was talk about a month ago of an anti-gay law to be put up for vote in California that would make the act of being gay punishable by shooting. All this just because people love others of the same gender? Are you kidding me? What part of any of this is respectable treatment of human beings?

Any time the word "gay" comes up in the media, people rush to censor it. Anything and everything that slips through the cracks raises public outcry. Parents wish to hide it from their children because it's "a bad influence" and it's "harmful" for them. Really now? Because this is coming from the same people who think it's okay to let their kids handle guns and drive mini ATVs.

I dream of a day when homosexual relationships are just as normal and accepted as heterosexual relationships. I dream of a day when no one is ignorant of the meaning of the word "gay" like I was as a kid. I dream of a day when the word "gay" doesn't have to be censored everywhere. I dream of a day when my friends, my wonderful, precious friends, can finally be accepted by their families again.

I dream of a world that grants the LGBT community the rights it deserves.