The morning dew was still sticking to each blade of grass as I passed my neighbor’s yard. My bike was straining against the effort I put in to slowly struggling my way up the hill. Today just felt like a normal North Carolina day. I woke up to the sound of my dog scratching at my door, I walked downstairs to find my parents talking in whispers to each other, and yet I was too tired to care. The radio was on and I remember hearing the familiar sound of National Public Radio like I always did in our small kitchen.

As my school slowly crept into view and my eyes adjusted to the new light, two cars sped past my brother and I. Our friends waved at us from inside blackened windows as their parents hurriedly got them to school. We slowly made our way down through the entrance of our school after putting our bikes away, every step felt like a relief from the uncomfortable ride there. Smiling teachers and cheerful students passed us in bundles as we made our way to our cubbies. A friend jumped out from behind the corner of the stairwell and startled my brother and I, we all loved to scare each other and make every one jump. We talked about our weekends, who we hung out with, and what mischief we could get into without our parents knowing. Our conversation lasted until we sat down for homeroom and began taking attendance. Every student sat quietly as our teacher explained to us what we had to do this morning. I heard the teacher say, “Tell us what you did with your mom and dad this weekend” and began to lose focus on her words. The first student was three seconds in to his story before he began stuttering and getting nervous. Eventually I ignored the chain of students that were called up to present to
everyone. I could hear the chirping of the birds outside the window as the morning breeze shook the branches of the trees outside our classroom windows. I was slowly picking the knots out of the linen in the carpet, tugging with my fingernails. I hadn’t realized it, but our teacher had been calling me over and over again before I finally heard her.

I walked up to the front of the class while all the other kids dozed off or spaced out.

“Well this Saturday my brother and my mom went to my grandma’s house to help build a shed. As my little brother stayed home with a friend, my mom and I went to Home Depot for more wood”, I slowly stated.

Almost immediately the kids in my class began to regain focus and acquired a puzzled look on their face.

“Wait, how did you go with your mom to Home Depot if she was at your grandma’s house with your brother?” someone from the class asked.

“Well I have two moms, Stephanie and Marcia,” I calmly answered.

“What about your dad?”

“I don't have a dad, my parents are gay”
Unlike Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who was well known and a good speaker, I was an awkward 8 year old boy standing in front of his 2nd grade class trying to explain how he didn’t have a father. I did not know how to react to my class, my friends, asking me and pestering me on how my family functioned and worked with two gay people. When it came to these issues, there was, and still is, an endless combination of rude behavior and inappropriate questions that apparently come naturally to curious people, but like Dr. King, I had to deal with this head on.

Even before hearing about my parental predicament, kids would constantly toss around the words “fag” and “gay” like it was no big deal. I would have to watch what I say around people to make sure someone didn’t say “that’s gay” or simply scream out “gay!” The idea that homosexuality is something to be made fun of and used as a clever prop to a joke has dominated the minds of the adolescent recently. Children are committing suicide across the United States because they are afraid that they will not be accepted, either by their friends, or even their own parents. And still, the idea that homosexuality is something to joke about is continuously brought up in every day conversation.

Was it not decided years ago that equality is part of this nations foundation? Why should one man, woman, or child be subjected to certain rights and privileges that another is not? Maybe we still live in the day and age where equality is too scary a thought. However I believe differently. I believe that each person deserves exactly what the next person deserves.
Before, being white and being black was disputed as being right vs. being wrong. And still, despite the enormous steps we have made towards becoming a fair and equal society, that goal eludes us. As Martin Luther King Jr. put it, “This note was a promise that all men would be guaranteed the inalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” Dr. King was speaking not only for the rights of African Americans, but also for the rights, equality, and freedom of every man, woman, and child to grace this land of ours. Except his dream has not been fulfilled and that promise has not been kept. How can it be when people continue to oppress and discriminate against struggles like homosexuality? Until people realize that the struggle for equality is the struggle for a nation built around its people, and not it’s superstition, we cannot and never will be a free people. Homosexuality is not a sin and should not be talked about with hushed tones and worried looks. Allow the freedom of self-expression and freedom to be you take its full effect by treating every one as your equal, and no one as your lesser.