

Ethan Stern-Ellis
Humanities-½
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Stern-Ellis

Stern-Ellis, my last name. Two different names, from two different families, combined to make one strong name. Two women set out to do something that seemed impossible. Sadly, what was impossible for them to do, was very possible for many other people. This impossible thing was to get married, and these two women are my moms.

The name, Stern-Ellis, signifies the accomplishment of my moms getting married. In 1992, it was not a common thing for a gay couple to get married. In fact, it was illegal. My parents decided to find a loophole, and have a “commitment ceremony” which, essentially, meant they were getting married. My mom said, “We’re going to do it anyways”, even though they had the knowledge of the challenges ahead. Not only was there the “issue” of them being gay, but one of my mom’s was Jewish, and the other wasn’t at the time. This caused a problem because, when they wanted to be married, they asked a Rabbi to conduct the ceremony and the Rabbi agreed to it. However, her boss made my mom go through several tasks before she could convert to Judaism. In the end, he wouldn’t let them be married in San Diego County by that Rabbi. Fortunately, the Rabbi gave them the name of someone else who would maybe be able to do the ceremony.

They wore beautiful white dresses and were so happy. Their smiles were as bright as the shining sun. A documentary was made of their wedding. The film was later nominated for an Academy Award. As I watch it today, I wonder how anyone could want to deny someone of that joy? It doesn’t make sense to me how people can dictate other people’s lives and decide that it’s wrong for them to love who they love. It is because of my moms’ story that my last name is so special

to me. My last name shows that discrimination can be overcome. The hate people give can be fought. My last name gives me hope. Hope that there can be a better future, free of discrimination, not just for gays, but for everyone.