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AAA Celebrates Supreme Court Decision on Marriage Equality

The American Anthropological Association (AAA) joins same-sex partners across the country in celebrating the Supreme Court’s ruling in the landmark case of Obergefell v. Hodges, a consolidation of four marriage equality cases from Kentucky, Ohio, Tennessee and Michigan. The Court declared that it is in violation of the Fourteenth Amendment for states to deny same-sex couples the fundamental human right to marry. States will now be unconditionally required to recognize a marriage between two people of the same sex regardless of where the marriage was licensed and performed.

The decision is in alignment with more than a century of anthropological research on households, kinship relationships, and families, across cultures and through time, that supports the conclusion that a vast array of family types, including families built upon same-sex partnerships, can contribute to stable and humane societies.

Marriage conveys recognition, legitimacy and approval, of course, but it also counts in ways that are more than symbolic. It organizes economic rights; it is about property and economic access. More importantly, it is about the special bond and commitment two people have for each other, no matter what their orientation.

Jim Obergefell and his husband John Arthur, who died from ALS in 2013, originally started their suit against the state of Ohio so that their marriage would be recognized on Arthur’s death certificate. AAA congratulates the Supreme Court for making equality a reality, not only for Obergefell, but for a broad community of U.S. citizens.

The court’s ruling is a step in the right direction towards a culture of tolerance and understanding in the U.S., and it is a step long overdue.

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