

# WU?@therep

## GUESS WHO'S COMING TO DINNER

by **Todd Kreidler**

Based on the screenplay

*Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* by **William Rose**

Directed by **Seth Gordon**

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# the 411

At The Rep, we know that life moves fast—okay, really fast. But we also know that some things are worth

slowing down for. We believe that live theatre is one of those pit stops worth making and are excited that you are going to stop by for a show. To help you get the most bang for your buck, we have put together **WU? @ THE REP**—an IM guide that will give you everything you need to know to get at the top of your theatergoing game—fast. You'll find character descriptions (**A/S/L**), a plot summary (**FYI**), biographical information (**F2F**), historical context (**B4U**), and other bits and pieces (**HTH**). Most importantly, we'll have some ideas about what this all means **IRL**, anyway.

## CU@therep!



### The Teacher's Lounge

In an effort to make our educational materials accessible to students and easy for educators to incorporate into the classroom, our study guide is written in a student-oriented format. We hope that you will circulate this guide among your students in the weeks preceding your visit to The Rep, encouraging them to browse it before and after class and as time allows, using it as a launch point for both pre- and post-performance discussions. You may also want to visit our website, [www.repstl.org](http://www.repstl.org), for additional information including activity suggestions and behind-the-scenes information. Any materials, either from this guide or from our website may be reproduced for use in the classroom.

**NEATO!**

As always, we appreciate your making live theatre a part of your classroom experience and welcome your feedback and questions.

## WELCOME!

The desire to learn, insatiable when awakened, can sometimes lie dormant until touched by the right teacher or the right experience. We at The Rep are grateful to have the opportunity to play a role supporting you as you awaken the desire for learning in your students.

What happens when the principles we hold true for the world affect situations closer to home? This provocative play shows two families who have to decide where they stand when their cultural beliefs and their love of family are put to the test.

It would be a good idea to take a minute on the bus to give your students these quick theatre etiquette reminders:

- This show has one intermission; there will be time for bathroom breaks before the show and halfway through.
- The actors can hear the audience and appreciate the laughter, gasps and quiet attention to action. However, talking, moving around and eating is very distracting to others and can dampen the energy of what is happening on stage.
- Pictures, phone calls and texting are not allowed at any time during the performance.

Live theatre won't allow your students to take a passive role—they must work with us to create the experience which takes the learning deeper. Our unique ability to fuse words and images onstage allows your students to explore new ideas as well as excites their imaginations. We will do our part so your students will be stirred to understandings and self-awareness while delving into new and familiar worlds. You are doing your part by using The Rep to extend your intellectual and aesthetic curriculum.

Thank you!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marsha".

Marsha Coplon  
Director of Education

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# A/S/L

**MATILDA "TILLIE" BINKS:** mid 50s, black; has worked as a maid for the Draytons for the past 27 years

**HILARY ST. GEORGE:** early 40s, white; works as the associate director of the Drayton Gallery

**CHRISTINA DRAYTON:** mid 60s, white; Joanna's mother, runs the Drayton Gallery

**MATT DRAYTON:** late 60s, white; Joanna's father and the publisher of San Francisco newspaper *The Guardian*

**JOANNA "JOEY" DRAYTON:** early 20s, white; Matt and Christina's daughter who recently interned for a medical research hospital in Hawaii

**DR JOHN PRENTICE:** mid 30s, black; a medical research doctor who is renowned in his field and worked in the same hospital as Joanna

**MONSIGNOR RYAN:** mid 70s, white; longtime family friend of the Draytons

**JOHN PRENTICE SR.:** early 60s, black; John's father who works as a schoolteacher

**MARY PRENTICE:** late 50s, black; John's mother who works as a department store clerk

# R/B/T/L

## GENERATION GAPS

It's no surprise that older generations still feel the effect of racial discrimination. While this gives younger generations historical context for complex issues, the older generations sometimes find it difficult to believe things can change. John may understand and respect his father's anger over the prejudices he's faced in his own life, but he resents his father expecting him to feel the same anger that would deny him the happiness of marrying Joanna. He describes his father's expectations as "dead weight." John feels his father has influenced him in many positive ways, but he yearns to be respected as his own person.

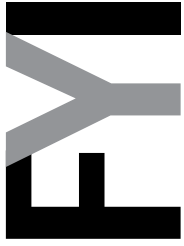
## HYPOCRISY

Christina and Matt are staunch liberals who always taught their daughter that all races are equal. However, they are greatly disturbed by Joanna marrying a black man. One could argue that they're only concerned about the safety of their daughter, but many would claim that it's a result of a subconscious prejudice of which they may not even be aware. As unintentional as it might be, their reaction strongly discredits their lifelong standpoint on equality.

## SALVATION

The most prominent character flaws in this play are prejudice and narrow-mindedness, and it comes from the type of people who seem very respectable "on paper." Christina and Matt are pillars of their community. Tillie is a loyal, hard-working woman. John Sr. and Mary have each worked very hard to provide their son with opportunities they never had. Just when it seems their biases will tear them apart, nearly all the characters have an awakening that allows them to evolve and mature, which is fairly ironic considering they're all part of the older generation. The play even ends on a meaningful note when all the characters bring John Sr. (arguably the most stubborn character) to the table to show there's even hope that he will see the light with their help.





## SPOILER ALERT!

IT'S A SPRING DAY IN 1967.

Christina and Matt Drayton are an upper-class, white, married couple who live in an elegant home in San Francisco. Today Christina and her assistant, Hillary St. George, are preparing for the visit of a wealthy potential buyer. Matilda "Tillie" Binks, a black woman who has been the Draytons' housekeeper for 27 years, is setting a table for the lunch meeting and trying to get Matt out of the house to play golf, but he can't resist one more phone call to the office to check on things. Christina and Tillie scold him about ignoring his doctor's recommendation that he cut back at work.

MATT IS ALSO ANXIOUS because he's expecting a call from his and Christina's 23-year-old daughter Joanna, "Joey," who recently completed an internship at a hospital in Hawaii. Matt doesn't understand why she hasn't come home yet since her internship ended two weeks ago. Christina tells him that she's probably just enjoying her early 20s and will be home next week. However, shortly after Matt goes off to play golf, Joanna arrives—but she's not alone. She's brought along Dr. John Prentice, a black man in his late 30s. Joanna explains to Tillie that he can only be in town a few hours as he has to fly to New York that night. When John is in another room making a phone call, Joanna confesses to Tillie that she's in love with him. Fearing Joanna may be being naïve because of her young age, Tillie tells her she doesn't trust John. She tells Joanna: "You don't know like I know. He ain't got no business getting mixed up with you."

WHEN JOANNA SEES her mother, she tells her all about her new beau and how they met while working at the hospital together. She warns her mother that he's older, but before she has a chance to continue, John walks in. Christina cannot hide her surprise to see that he is black. Just then, Matt

runs through the door thinking something's terribly wrong because Tillie left a message at the club that he should come home right away. Joanna tells him that nothing's wrong, and she introduces him to John. Together they tell Matt and Christina that they plan on getting married in two weeks, and they ask for their blessing. Shocked, Matt tells them he needs time to think and then rushes out of the room to call his friend, Monsignor Ryan, whom he left abruptly at the golf club when he got Tillie's message. Joanna tells John he just needs time to brood, and she suggests they go to visit a friend of hers. However, John tells her he wishes to stay behind so that he can freshen up.

LATER, MATT AND Christina are discussing their reservations about the situation. John interrupts to tell them he will not marry Joanna unless they give their approval. Even though Joanna is set on getting married no matter what, he believes she will eventually resent him for the broken relationship with her parents. John then leaves them. Christina reminds Matt that they'd always talked to their daughter about equality regardless of race, so they'd be hypocrites not to give their blessing based on the fact that John is black.

AFTERWARDS, JOHN and Matt are getting to know one another, when Matt tells John that he doesn't see them as being different from each other. John appreciates the sentiment but tells Matt his and Christina's apprehension is obvious. Not long after Joanna returns home, Monsignor Ryan shows up, concerned because Matt told him he had to leave the golf club because of a "problem at home." Joanna introduces John to Monsignor Ryan, who is very impressed to be meeting the Dr. Prentice whom he's read is doing amazing research work in Africa. Meanwhile, Joanna confides in Tillie that she's invited John's parents to dinner.





LATER ON, things get heated in various exchanges. Monsignor Ryan accuses Matt, a self-professed liberal, of being a hypocrite; John is obviously a very accomplished man, and Christina and Matt raised

Joanna to be a smart, conscientious young woman so they should trust her choices. Soon after, Hilary arrives telling Christina that she'll be there for her no matter how shameful her daughter's choices are; Christina responds by firing her. Then Tillie tells John that he might be able to trick Joanna into believing he's an honorable man, but she claims she can see right through his lies.

CHRISTINA WITNESSES John and Tillie's interaction and apologizes to John for the uncomfortable reception of his and Joanna's news. John admits to her that he doesn't think his parents would welcome the engagement either. John then warns Christina that Joanna plans to leave with him tonight, not in two weeks like they had originally planned, but he assures Christina that he won't let her without her parents' approval. Christina immediately tells Matt and says that if Joanna can bravely face the tumult that's going on in her own home, then perhaps she is ready for other prejudices she and John will face. Christina tells Matt that their support will only make the young couple stronger. Matt still refuses to give his approval because he fears for his daughter's safety. Christina tells him she plans to stand by her daughter.

SOON, JOANNA is forced to reveal her surprise to everyone that John's parents are coming to dinner. John is the most shaken and confesses that he has not told them

yet that Joanna is white. Joanna is disappointed in him and tells everyone that they all need to be more open-minded. Just then, John's parents arrive. They all make uncomfortable conversation, but

it's not long before John Sr. makes it clear how angry he is with his son for springing this on them. He agrees with Matt that the marriage is a terrible idea and would have dire ramifications for John, whom he believes is "throwing away everything." John becomes furious with his father for trying to project his own generation's battles and fears onto him, and they get into a terrible argument.

AFTERWARDS, WHILE everyone is cooling off, Tillie sees what a truly good person John is and makes peace with him. The conciliatory mood continues when John is speaking with his mother and tells her that falling in love with Joanna was the best surprise of his life. Mary then tells John Sr. that she stands by her son's decision even if she doesn't fully understand it. The important thing is that John's happy. She tells her husband and Matt that if they can't understand John and Joanna's desperate desire to be with each other, then they must have forgotten the passion they had for their own wives when they first fell in love. This hits a note with Matt who says those memories are as clear as yesterday, and if John and Joanna feel even half of what he felt for Christina, then that matters more than anything. After this speech, John, Joanna and each of their parents, sit down to have dinner together.







## THE SCREENWRITER AND THE PLAYWRIGHT

### From the Silver Screen. . .

Although there are many movies based on plays (*Into the Woods*, *August: Osage County*, *The Odd Couple*, etc.), *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* is unique in that it's a play based on a 1967 film, which was directed by Stanley Kramer and starred acting legends Sidney Poitier, Katharine Hepburn and Spencer Tracy. The film was controversial and polarizing as interracial marriage was still illegal in some states. However, one of art's great powers is the ability to create a conversation, which is exactly what *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* did.

The man behind the seminal story is screenwriter William Rose, who was already well established in Hollywood, having penned three Oscar-nominated comedies. He was also a millionaire from the 1963 epic comedy *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World*, which was also directed by Stanley Kramer and starred Spencer Tracy. But it was *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* that finally won Rose an Oscar.

Born in Jefferson City, Missouri, Rose voluntarily joined the Canadian Army during World War II before the U.S. was even involved. Having been stationed in Scotland, Rose returned to the Britain after the War and worked for Pinewood Studios. In addition to several other accolades, Rose received the Laurel Award from the Writer's Guild of America in 1973 for his lifetime achievements. He passed away in his adopted home country of England in 1987.

### . . .to the Stage

To adapt a film known not only for its artistic significance but also for its social and political impact would seemingly be too intimidating of a task for most people and playwright Todd Kreidler was, at first, no exception. In fact it wasn't even his idea. A

friend in the business suggested the job to him. However, the idea of taking a poignant story from a film made almost 50 years ago and seeing how it still resonates today eventually appealed to Kreidler so much, he decided to seize the opportunity. He said in a 2013 interview that he felt the story's themes "provoke a conversation we still need to have."

Kreidler got his start in theatre by doing basically everything in addition to writing. He worked in sound design, stage management, the box office, as a master electrician and as a director, but he's said writing has always been his passion. Kreidler was told to follow his dream by none other than August Wilson, the famous Pulitzer- and Tony Award-winning playwright of *Fences* (1985). At one point Kreidler worked as Wilson's dramaturg and had the eye-opening conversation with his mentor in 2000 in which Wilson told him that if he wanted to write, he should "stand up and claim it."

And claim it he did. Although many may argue that because interracial marriage is now legal in every state, the storyline would mean nothing more to audiences than a historical account of "the way things use to be." However, Kreidler has argued that racism is still a very present issue.

*"The systemic racism and the endemic attitudes are cloaked, but they're still very much alive," he has said. "Just look at the disproportionate amount of blacks living in poverty or the criminalization of young black men...You either say that young black men are somehow more criminally bent, that it's built into them to be more violent or more criminal, or you believe—as I do—that this is our American legacy from slavery that we are still struggling to redress."*



Todd Kreidler

Kreidler, who also wrote 2014's *Holler If Ya Hear Me*, a musical using the music of rapper Tupac Shakur, has said that he's drawn to character-driven stories that show a critical aspect of American life, and theater has a unique way of connecting audiences to those themes.

"I find theatre very supple for the exploration of character and the layered aspects of our lives," he has said. "There's a way to evolve those things and really try to cover the individual humanities of the characters and to make what I think is an argument and transformation about attitudes towards race."



**MONSIGNOR:** title for high-ranking priest

**PHILANTHROPIC:** charitable

**THE MISSION:** a neighborhood in San Francisco

**VANGUARD:** a position at the forefront of new developments or ideas

**MOMA:** the Museum of Modern Art in New York City

**RALPH WALDO EMERSON:** a 19th century American essayist, poet and proponent of Transcendentalism, a religious and philosophical movement that values independence and self-reliance

**TIBETAN MONKS:** religious individuals who practice Buddhism in Tibet and live their life in prayer and contemplation away from mainstream society

**CURMUDGEON:** someone who is cranky and considered a wet blanket

**PRESUMPTUOUS:** bold to the point of rudeness

**BROOD:** to mope or fret

**PANHANDLERS:** people who beg for money from strangers

**AP:** the Associated Press, an American multinational nonprofit news agency

**CANDID CAMERA:** an American hidden camera/practical joke reality TV show that premiered in the late 1940s

**LOUIS VS. SCHMELING:** two famous fights in 1936 and 1938 between boxers African-American Joe Louis and German Max Schmeling, which symbolized for international audiences a battle of democracy vs. fascism; Schmeling won the first fight and Louis won the second

**ULTIMATUM:** an uncompromising demand or challenge

**WATUSI:** a popular dance in the 1960s

**LIBERAL:** open-minded and politically or socially progressive

**PULPIT:** a platform in a church from which a clergy member speaks

**BIGOT:** someone who is extremely intolerant of differing religions or races

**PIETY:** piousness or self-righteousness

**MARTYR:** someone who endures severe or constant suffering for a belief or cause

**ELIXIR:** a drink that has magical powers

**COOT:** a foolish or crotchety person

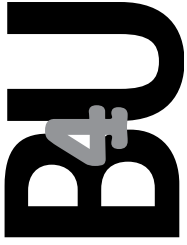
**ROUND TABLE:** a term used to describe a conference or discussion of some subject; the table is said to be round to show that all who sit at it are equal

**STOIC:** enduring or resigned

**PONTIFICATING:** preaching or speaking pompously

**SOZZLED:** slang for drunk





## INTERRACIAL MARRIAGE IN THE U.S.

**Matt:** *I happen to know that they wouldn't have a dog's chance—not in this country, not in this stinking world!*

**Monsignor Ryan:** *They are this country. They'll change this stinking world!*

It's difficult to believe that less than 50 years ago, interracial marriage was illegal in some states. Although it was legal in California where *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* takes place, tensions surrounding the issue were still high around the country, which explains many of the characters' fears. To give a greater context on the history of the issue and how people feel about it today, here is some background.

### LOVING V. VIRGINIA

After the Civil War, the U.S. government enacted the Civil Rights Act of 1866, which outlawed slavery and enabled black citizens to enter contracts with white citizens. However, officials in many states said that there was a definitive line between **political equality**, which allowed formal access to government processes, and **social equality**, which allowed for personal relationships. Over the years, state governments began to repeal their bans outlawing miscegenation (marriage or cohabitation between two people of two different races), but as of the late 1950s, there were still 16 states where interracial marriage was illegal, Virginia being one of them.

The beginning of nationwide change came in 1958, when two Virginia residents, Mildred Jeter, a black woman, and Richard Loving, a white man, got married in Washington, D.C. When they returned to Virginia, they were charged with violating the state's anti-miscegenation law. The Lovings pleaded guilty and were sentenced to one year in jail, but the trial judge offered them the alternative of no jail time if they were to leave the state and not return for 25 years. The judge was also recorded as telling the Lovings: "Almighty God created the races... and he placed them on separate continents... The fact he separated the races shows that He did not intend for the races to mix."

The Lovings decided to move to Washington, D.C. and appealed their conviction to the Supreme Court saying they were entitled to certain rights under the 14th Amendment's Equal Protection Clause, which states: "No state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws."

In 1967, the Supreme Court ruled unanimously in favor of the Lovings and overturned their conviction. It also struck down the law and stated: "The freedom to marry has long been recognized as one of the vital personal rights essential to the orderly pursuit of happiness by free men...To deny this fundamental freedom on so unsupportable a basis as the racial classifications...is surely to deprive all the State's citizens of liberty without due process of law." The historic decision overturned anti-miscegenation laws in the remaining 15 states.

### HOW THINGS HAVE CHANGED

Since the landmark *Loving v. Virginia* case, the number of interracial marriages in the U.S. has increased dramatically. According to Pew Research Center data, nearly 15 percent of new marriages in 2010 were between spouses of different races or ethnicities—





more than double the number in 1980, and this figure doesn't even include unmarried couples who live together. Researchers described the change as "the fading of a taboo." A September 2011 *USA Today*/Gallup poll found that 86 percent of Americans approve of marriages between black and white spouses, as compared to 48 percent in 1991. And the data shows likely increasing acceptance going forward; the study found that of the younger generations, ages 18-37, 97 percent approved.

## FAMILY TIES

Researchers have attributed one of the reasons for increasing acceptance to the change of family dynamics in which older generations have less power over younger generations' decisions. In an interview regarding the poll results, Michael Rosenfeld, associate professor of sociology at Stanford University, said that parents' ability to limit who their son or daughter marries has "dramatically declined," and it's one of the reasons "we have so much more family diversity, including interracial diversity."

Rosenfeld said one of the factors playing into younger generations' increased independence is that the average age at first marriage has risen for men and women. In 1960, the average age was around 22 for men and 20 for women; in 2010, those numbers were approximately 29 and 27, respectively. At these ages, people "have an education and a job and are pretty independent," said Rosenfeld. "If they choose a partner and if Grandma does not want to talk to them anymore, that's Grandma's problem... (Parents) have to adapt to whatever partner their child chooses."

However, that's not to say older generations' opinions have become completely irrelevant. Although sons and daughters are more assertive in making their own decisions, the lack of family support often causes a strain in their relationships that some couples can

never overcome—which was the reason for John's objection to marrying Joanna without the Draytons' blessing; he felt it would put too much of a burden on their marriage. Rosenfeld described families as creating an "extra layer of static."

"Somebody's future mother-in-law is just not in agreement, and they think, 'Am I going to have to put up with this the rest of my life?'" he said. "Family still represents a substantial bar a lot of couples can't get past."

## A MELTING POT

The famous metaphor to describe the United States is also playing a significant role in the increasing number of interracial marriages. Steady immigration has led to an increasingly diverse America, causing the number of interracial marriages and multiracial children to soar. The government responded to this boom in the 2000 census, which allowed Americans for the first time to identify themselves as more than one race.

There are two sides of the debate on how beneficial this is for younger generations. Minorities fear their children will forget where they came from and lose their cultural identity. Though others feel like it's a move in the right direction for seeing beyond race. Harvard law professor Randall Kennedy addressed the topic in his 2004 book *Interracial Intimacies: Sex, Marriage, Identity, and Adoption*.

"Malignant racial biases can and do reside in interracial liaisons," he wrote. "But against the tragic backdrop of American history, the flowering of multiracial intimacy is a profoundly moving and encouraging development, one that lends support to Frederick Douglass's belief that eventually 'the white and colored people of this country [can] be blended together into a common nationality, and enjoy together...the inestimable blessings of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.'"



## THE LEGAL JOURNEY OF SAME-SEX MARRIAGE IN THE U.S.

***Monsignor Ryan: I've known a good many marriages between races. Curiously enough, it usually works out well. Perhaps because it requires a special quality of effort, more consideration and compassion than most marriages seem to generate these days.***

What do you think Monsignor Ryan meant in saying this? Why would marriages not accepted by all of society require “a special quality of effort” and “more consideration and compassion”? It seems Monsignor Ryan is saying that couples don't need to overcome any hurdles when it comes to committing to each other—but rather, the real challenge is how their commitment is accepted by those around them. The strongest relationships seem to be the ones that have been tested—and what's a more demanding test than the government prohibiting you from making your union legal?

Our country is currently in the midst of a nearly identical civil rights issue as discussed in *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*: legalizing same-sex marriage state by state. To get a greater sense of how this hot-button issue has evolved over the decades, here's a timeline of developments and setbacks that have led to where it stands today:

### 1972

In the decision *Baker v. Nelson*, the U.S. Supreme Court dismisses a case brought by a gay Minnesota couple, Richard Baker and James Michael McConnell, who challenged a state court ruling that denied them a marriage license in 1970. The Supreme Court stated the appeal failed to raise a “substantial federal question.”

### 1973

The American Psychiatric Association removes homosexuality from its list of mental disorders.

Maryland becomes the first state to pass a statute banning marriage between same-sex couples and enforces a “Family Law Code” that states: “Only a marriage between a man and a woman is valid in this State.”

### 1977

Harvey Milk is elected to San Francisco's Board of Supervisors becoming the first openly gay person to be elected to public office; he is assassinated a year later.

### 1982

Wisconsin becomes the first state to outlaw discrimination based on sexual orientation.

### 1993

The military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy is instituted by the Clinton administration; the policy prohibits military personnel from discriminating against closeted homosexual or bisexual service members or applicants, but bars openly gay or bisexual persons from service.

### 1995

Utah passes a law prohibiting same-sex marriage

### 1996

President Clinton signs the federal Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) into law, which mandates that states can refuse to recognize same-sex marriages granted under the laws of other states.





### 1999

California becomes the first state to create a domestic partnership statute, allowing same-sex couples to receive some—but not all—of the government benefits afforded by marriage.

### 2000

Vermont becomes the first state to legalize same-sex civil unions.

### 2003

The Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court rules in favor of same-sex marriage.

### 2004

Massachusetts becomes the first U.S. state to allow same-sex marriage. Opponents attempt to amend the constitution to prevent the change, but are defeated when more than 75 percent of the state legislature votes in favor of allowing same-sex marriage.

### 2005

California legislature becomes the first state legislature to pass a “freedom to marry” bill, but it is soon vetoed by then Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger.

### 2008

Connecticut's Supreme Court rules same-sex couples have a right to marry.

California's Supreme Court overturns its gay marriage ban in May, legalizing same-sex marriage, but voters approve a constitutional amendment, known as Proposition 8, in November to prohibit it again; similar amendments are passed in Florida and Arizona.

### 2009

Legislators in Vermont, New Hampshire and Washington, D.C., legalize gay marriage.

### 2010

CNN releases the first poll to show that the country's majority, 52 percent, supports the legalization of same-sex marriage.

### 2011

*February:* President Barack Obama and Attorney General Eric Holder declare that the Defense of Marriage Act is unconstitutional per the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment. The Obama administration files detailed briefs that renounce the history of the federal government discriminating against same-sex marriage. Although this meant the administration would continue to enforce the law until Congress repealed DOMA, it would no longer defend the statute in court.

*June:* New York's legislature approves gay marriage.

*September:* The military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy is repealed.

### 2012

*May:* President Obama becomes the first sitting president to endorse same-sex marriage. In an interview with ABC News, he states his support with the following statement:

*"I have to tell you that over the course of several years as I have talked to friends and family and neighbors, when I think about members of my own staff who are in incredibly committed monogamous relationships, same-sex relationships, who are raising kids together, when I think about those soldiers or airmen or Marines or sailors who are out there fighting on my behalf and yet feel constrained, even now that Don't Ask Don't Tell is gone, because they are not able to commit themselves in a marriage, at a certain point I've just*



## FYI

*In law, an en banc session is a session where a case is heard before all the judges of a court—in other words, before the entire bench—rather than by a panel selected from them.*

# 12

*concluded that for me personally it is important for me to go ahead and affirm that I think same sex couples should be able to get married."*

**May:** The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) joins the growing movement and endorses same-sex marriage. In the following weeks, other civil rights organizations do the same, including the National Center for La Raza (NCLR) and the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC).

**June:** The full U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit denies a petition for an en banc rehearing of the Proposition 8 case. The denial of the petition means that the Court's decision from February 2012, which found Proposition 8 to be unconstitutional, will stand.

**September:** The Democratic Party becomes the first major U.S. political party in history to officially endorse same-sex marriage

**November:** On Election Day, President Obama is re-elected, becoming the first president ever to have run on a platform endorsing same-sex marriage. Maine, Maryland and Washington become the first states where voters legalize gay marriage.

### 2013

**March:** Former President Bill Clinton renounces his signing of DOMA into law 17 years earlier and urges the Supreme Court to overturn it.

**June:** The U.S. Supreme Court strikes down DOMA as unconstitutional, making several

federal benefits available to legally married gay couples.

**August:** Laws legalizing same-sex marriage are passed in Rhode Island and Minnesota, making a total of 12 states that legalize it, along with the District of Columbia.

### 2014

**March:** A national poll finds that 59 percent of Americans support the right for same-sex couples to marry. It also shows that, for the first time, support is at 50 percent or higher in every region of the country, and there is broad support from both political parties, with 40 percent of Republicans polled supporting same-sex marriage.

**October:** The Supreme Court strikes down requests for review in five different marriage cases, which means lower court rulings against bans on same-sex marriages will

stand, and gay couples can legally marry in Utah, Oklahoma, Virginia, Indiana and Wisconsin. The decision also paves the way for legalizing same-sex marriage in Colorado, Kansas, North Carolina, South Carolina, West Virginia and Wyoming—30 states have now legalized same-sex marriage.

**Today:** As of November 20, 2014, same-sex marriage is legal in 35 states. Of the 15 states where it is illegal, gay marriage bans have been overturned in 7 states (Arkansas, Florida, Kentucky, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Texas), but the cases are still in progress in appeals courts. Missouri's situation is particularly complex as same-sex marriage is legal in St. Louis, an independent city, even though the state's ruling is currently at the appeals level.

