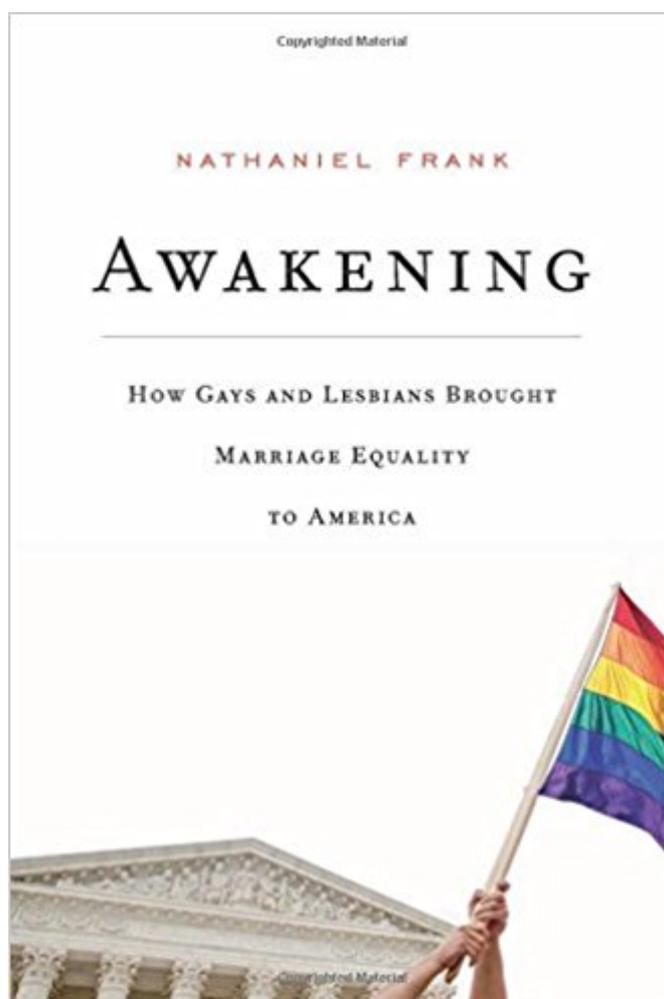


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Awakening: How Gays And Lesbians Brought Marriage Equality To America



Synopsis

The right of same-sex couples to marry provoked decades of intense conflict before it was upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court in 2015. Yet some of the most divisive contests shaping the quest for marriage equality occurred not on the culture-war front lines but within the ranks of LGBTQ advocates. Nathaniel Frank tells the dramatic story of how an idea that once seemed unfathomable—and for many gays and lesbians undesirable—became a legal and moral right in just half a century. Awakening begins in the 1950s, when millions of gays and lesbians were afraid to come out, let alone fight for equality. Across the social upheavals of the next two decades, a gay rights movement emerged with the rising awareness of the equal dignity of same-sex love. A cadre of LGBTQ lawyers soon began to focus on legal recognition for same-sex couples, if not yet on marriage itself. It was only after being pushed by a small set of committed lawyers and grassroots activists that established movement groups created a successful strategy to win marriage in the courts. Marriage equality proponents then had to win over members of their own LGBTQ community who declined to make marriage a priority, while seeking to rein in others who charged ahead heedless of their carefully laid plans. All the while, they had to fight against virulent antigay opponents and capture the American center by spreading the simple message that love is love, ultimately propelling the LGBTQ community—and America—immeasurably closer to justice.

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Customer Reviews

Awakening traces the dramatic struggles that finally resulted in same-sex couples winning one of

the most important rights of citizenship: the right to marry and have their marriage recognized by state and federal governments. In our present climate of political uncertainty, Nathaniel Frank's gripping history of the tenacity and determination of lesbian and gay people will serve as vital inspiration for whatever battles may lie ahead. (Lillian Faderman, author of *The Gay Revolution: The Story of the Struggle*) Nathaniel Frank has written the definitive account of how the United States went from every state prohibiting homosexual activity in 1961 to every state allowing marriage equality for gays and lesbians in 2015. It is an amazing story filled with compelling figures and many triumphs and setbacks. Frank tells the story masterfully in beautiful prose that made this book impossible to put down, even though I already knew the ending. (Erwin Chemerinsky, University of California, Irvine School of Law) How did a pipe dream in 1990 become a reality by 2015? Nathaniel Frank traces the concatenation of disparate forces—the steadfast believers, the infighting, the allies, the happenstances—the maneuvering through over twenty years of setbacks to gain the goal of marriage equality for same-sex couples. There's no better account of this phenomenal social and legal movement than Frank's gripping narrative, rendered in fluid prose backed by deep research and thoughtful analysis. (Nancy F. Cott, author of *Public Vows: A History of Marriage and the Nation*) As the battle for same-sex marriage in the United States slides into history, it has found a powerful chronicler in Nathaniel Frank. Even those steeped in the gay rights movement will find much to admire in the novelistic detail and scholarly erudition that distinguish this book. (Kenji Yoshino, author of *Speak Now: Marriage Equality on Trial*) Nathaniel Frank has written the much-needed definitive history of how gay people and gay lawyers fought for the right to marry and won. It's a story of courage, determination, and lots of smart strategizing, very much worth telling for its own sake, and full of key lessons for other social movements. (Emily Bazelon, author of *Sticks and Stones: Defeating the Culture of Bullying and Rediscovering the Power of Character and Empathy*) Frank's attention to historic detail is comprehensive and impressive, as is his ability to breezily recapture the trials of marriage equality and weave them into the general narrative of American LGBTQ history. With verve and a crisp, authoritative tone, the author sweeps readers through a history of civil rights campaigning in the 1970s, domestic partnership ordinances in the 1980s, and the story of how AIDS and protest movements produced an unshakeable solidarity. Frank's strikingly detailed, essential reportage reminds readers of the gay community's enduring fight for equality. (Kirkus Reviews (starred review) 2017-03-01) Unlike most histories of gay marriage, Frank's account dates back to the postwar era, setting itself within the context of the larger social history of the entire movement for gay rights. Readers will find it to be an accessible and worthwhile read. (David Azzolina

Library Journal 2017-03-03)A fascinating account of the modern battle for equality. (Matt Baume Vice 2017-04-25)Frank uncovers the history behind the political uprising of the LGBTQ community leading to the passing of equal marriage in the United States. Frank's new book comes at a time when the country has taken a hit from the election of Donald Trump much like the LGBTQ community did in 2008 [with the passing of Proposition 8]. As the people of the United States rise to revolt, they take yet another page from LGBTQ people who rose to action for marriage equality. (Annette Semerdjian The Pride L.A. 2017-05-07)A comprehensive look at the decades-long fight for marriage equality, and how some of the biggest challenges came not from the culture wars but from within the ranks of LGBTQ activists who weren't convinced they needed to make marriage equality a priority. (Mackenzie Dawson New York Post 2017-05-14)It is a powerful, vastly rich and moving narrative, with a cast of thousands, stretching from the 1950s to the decision of the U.S. Supreme Court in 2015 affirming the rights of same-sex couples to marry. While this is, of course, a book about law and legislation, about cases and courts, it is far more about the people involved: the lawyers and lawmakers, the activists, the ordinary gay men and women seeking recognition of their love. Awakening is a captivating read because of this. (Steven Vaughan Times Higher Education 2017-05-11)Frank provides the kind of account that makes for fascinating reading. He correctly places the beginning of the marriage movement in the LGBTQ community's grassroots and notes that the desire to wed among gay and lesbian couples began decades before any of the community's advocacy groups conceived of suing for marriage or lobbying any state legislature to enact it. Frank also discusses the debates that occurred among the attorneys who brought marriage lawsuits about where to sue, when to sue, and what arguments to make. An excellent read and an important book on the marriage movement. (Duncan Osborne Gay City News 2017-06-08)Frank paints the obstacle-filled path to the Supreme Court's decision, highlighting key characters (known and lesser-known) who worked to push their visions of equality forward, and those who stood steadfast in their way. Frank's latest book affirms his far-reaching expertise on the LGBTQ movement. The book is brimming with details of the countless incremental changes and historical forces that shaped dramatic shifts in attitudes about same-sex love. A rewarding read. (Claire Sasko Philadelphia Inquirer 2017-06-25)A truly impressive, nuanced, fair account. It relays the lung-filling highs and stomach-churning lows of the long trek toward gay dignity. Better still, it brings into focus the small band of disparate individuals who somehow brought what was unimaginable into reality. Many people think marriage was won overnight. This book proves it wasn't. But its chief merit is

that it explains for straight people and the younger gay and lesbian generations just how deeply divisive this issue was in the gay world for so long. It's easy, in the wake of victory, to forget that story but Frank covers its nuances better than anything else I've read. And he gives everyone their due. An indispensable account. (Andrew Sullivan New York 2017-06-23) Might very well be the definitive book about the history of the struggle over same-sex marriage in the U.S. (Brian Bromberger Bay Area Reporter 2017-06-22)

Nathaniel Frank is Director of the What We Know Project at Columbia Law School.

Most major movements for social change take decades, even generations to attain their goals. A good example is the movement for women's suffrage which was launched in 1848, only achieving its goal in 1920. With the marriage-equality movement the time frame was much shorter. While same-sex marriage had figured sporadically among some gay groups and individuals in the 1950s and 60s, it was not until the Baehr decision by the Supreme Court of the state of Hawaii in 1993 that it came to be seen as a real possibility. Initially this proved to be a false dawn. Some gay-rights advocates concluded, overoptimistically, that all that was needed was for some gay and lesbian couples to leave their own state, get married in Hawaii, and then return home, where their marriages would be recognized. It did not turn out that way, for there was a huge conservative backlash, producing punitive legislation in many states. In Hawaii itself the recognition was overturned by an amendment. For their part many GLBT leaders concluded that the time was not right. Countering this discouragement was a lonely band of determined lawyers, with Evan Wolfson and Mary Bonauto in the lead. With the Obergefell decision of 2015 in the US Supreme Court marriage equality became the law of the land. This carefully researched book now ranks as the definitive account of this extraordinary development. Still, even though I was a minor participant in the movement, I found it hard sometimes to follow the intricate detail of the narrative. Perhaps an executive summary would have helped. All the same, this book is the indispensable go-to resource for this huge, positive development. The author does have a larger perspective. This is just a guess, but I imagine that he comes from a left-leaning background. Nonetheless, he is above all an objective scholar who holds that true integration of LGBT people means a visible presence in all of the key institutions of society, including the military, the law, religious groups, and marriage.

Awakening: How Gays and Lesbians Brought Marriage Equality to America., is the first full-scale history of the marriage equality movement in the U.S., and draws on years of research, participation

and exclusive interviews with 50 of the key players who made this movement happen. Extremely interesting!!!Very insightful!!! I highly recommend it.

I'm glad I bought it. The idea is a really good one. However, there are many gay people whose image never suffered from their gayness, and their gayness was well known. They seem to have been liked or even loved for other reasons which caused people to ignore their gayness. This should definitely have been discussed. I am talking about people such as Roy Cohn, Rock Hudson, and Liberace. Gradually people's attitudes toward gays changed probably because they came to know gays in their own lives rather than because of gay celebrities and icons. However, I think it should have been discussed. In spite of this it is a wonderful book.

When Margaret Court caused the French Open to start with a bang by declaring derisively that the tennis circuit is full of lesbians and that transgenders are the *work of the devil*, it merely emphasise how far more the journey is for the LGBT community in the world. Germany and The Netherlands took the lead in Europe in recognising gay marriage in the beginning of the 21st century but the world seemed to be waiting for America, whose Supreme Court recognised gay marriages only in 2015. Since then several conservative countries have followed, including India and Taiwan. More will surely follow. America's path had not been easy. Nathaniel Frank's book provides a detailed account of the long and difficult path to LGBT liberation in America. He sets out to answer the question he posed at the start of his book: *The question at the heart of the story appears simple: how did an idea that once seemed so unfathomable become, in just half a century, not only a legal right nationwide but a moral good in the eyes of a substantial majority of Americans?* Indeed, when the backlash began almost immediately after her comments, Margaret Court took to blaming gay activists in America for the conspiracy in attempting to remove her name from the Australian tennis arena named after her. Back to Frank's *Awakening*. From the established conservative ideas about marriage being heterosexual, small movements began when there were sufficient pockets of people who were naturally different and hoped that that one day that difference will no longer matter. The road was long and difficult even in the 1960s and 70s, the generation of Woodstock and free love. Perhaps as a result of that, when the AIDs epidemic swept the world and homosexuals were thought to be spreading the disease, recognition for the LGBT (referred to in the book as LGBTQ, with *Q* for Queer) community found the road blocked. The

Republicans were a major and steadfast political obstacle. Frank also discusses how the movement swung over the fickle Obama administration. On Friday night 27 June 1969, gays and lesbians gathered at the Stonewall Inn in honour of Judy Garland, a gay icon who had committed suicide the week before. Stonewall Inn was a gazetted private club whose owners reportedly had links with the Mafia and on that count, had hitherto received warnings before a raid. Frank tells us that this time was different, this time the police gave no warning. And this time was also different because the crowd fought back and a riot ensued. And with that incident a movement was born.

The movement reached its adolescence, according to Frank. From just a few dozen gay organisations, within five years there were almost a thousand of them, including the Gay Liberation Front, and the National Gay Task Force (the forerunner of the LGBTQ Task Force). The 1970s were heady days for the LGBT community according to Frank. Attention began to turn to legal rights, and in 1973 the Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund was created to provide pro bono legal services for the LGBT community. New ideologies developed, drawing from sexual and feminist movements. The institution of marriage became a target. The 1980s saw the LGBT community holding fast to their relationships as constituting no less than heterosexual ones. They learnt two big lessons in the 1980s. First, popular protests can be effective in the much needed political mobilisation of the movement. Second, that when they take their cause to the courts they can expect to lose. This was proved a valid concern as Frank noted as he continues with a study of the cases that went to the courts. *Bowers v Hardwick* ended in defeat for advocates of gay sex. Byron White delivered the US Supreme Court's majority decision to the effect that there was no fundamental right to homosexuals to engage in acts of consensual sodomy. From there, shifts began. In 1989 Andrew Sullivan's article for gay marriage, *Here Comes the Groom*, became well and widely received. Thus the gay marriage became a more viable alternative to a mere domestic relationship between gays. Then came *Lawrence v Texas* that held the Texas law that criminalised gay sodomy but permitted straight (male-to-female) sodomy to be unconstitutional. More cases followed, and so did the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA). Frank ups the tempo (perhaps history was responsible) and the rest of the book can fill the majority of books on constitutional law, philosophy, politics, biography (especially the lawyers involved like Roberta Kaplan and Ted Olson), and sociology all rolled into one. As from the ashes the phoenix rises, so too the LGBT marriage equality movement after Proposition 8 (restricting marriage

as an institution reserved for heterosexual couples), and DOMA (denying states the right to recognise same sex marriages) were passed. First came *U.S. v Windsor* and, finally, on 26 June 2015, The Supreme Court in *Obergefell v Hodges* recognised the constitutional right to same sex marriage. Love, it seems, knows no bounds in America finally..

Written with great clarity, the author takes us beyond the specific gay marriage topic to provide a powerful perspective on our country's always evolving social framework. Compelling reading for anyone interested in the evolution of societal norms.

Nathaniel Frank's new book *Awakening* is a reminder of how democracy works at its finest. It's a moving historical account of an American love story not just a story of same-sex love, but the story of how a majority of Americans came to know and respect and even love their LGBT neighbors, friends and family. With this book about true redemption, the harsh retaliatory meaning of Sodom and Gomorrah may finally be laid to rest.

An incredible history of the fight for marriage equality in this country. This is a must read considering the present political climate. It's really an amazing story.

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