

Five LGBT Rights Lawsuits That Have Changed Our Nation

FROM THE CLOSET TO THE COURTROOM



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CARLOS A. BALL

"[A] uniquely illuminating account of gay rights litigation. [Ball] is a believer of the hidden names of lawyers who litigated the major gay rights cases."
—KENJI YOSHINO, author of *Covering: The Hidden Assault on Our Civil Rights*

Over the years, the fight for LGBT rights has seen significant progress in many countries. Rights that were once denied are now being recognized and protected by the law. This article will explore five landmark lawsuits that have played a pivotal role in shaping our nation towards a more inclusive society.

1. Obergefell v. Hodges

In 2015, the United States Supreme Court made a historic decision in the case of Obergefell v. Hodges. This ruling legalized same-sex marriage nationwide, overturning previous state bans. It was a major victory for the LGBT community, affirming the fundamental right to marry for all couples, regardless of their sexual orientation.

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"An engaging, illuminating account of gay rights litigation. Ball is a scholar
—and his storytelling brings the litigated life into gay rights cases."
—SEN. WENDO, author of Country: The Hidden Lives of Our Civil Rights

From the Closet to the Courtroom: Five LGBT Rights Lawsuits That Have Changed Our Nation (Queer Ideas/Queer Action Book 4)

by Carlos A. Ball (Kindle Edition)

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

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Screen Reader : Supported
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
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2. Lawrence v. Texas

In 2003, the Supreme Court struck down sodomy laws in the landmark case of Lawrence v. Texas. This ruling invalidated laws that criminalized consensual sexual activity between same-sex adults. It was a significant step towards decriminalizing homosexuality and recognizing the rights of LGBT individuals to engage in private, consensual relationships without fear of prosecution.

3. United States v. Windsor

In 2013, the Supreme Court ruled in *United States v. Windsor*, declaring a key provision of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) unconstitutional. The ruling granted federal recognition to same-sex marriages and ensured equal treatment under federal laws. This decision paved the way for subsequent marriage equality victories across the country.

4. Employment Division v. Smith

In 1990, the Supreme Court handed down a decision in the case of *Employment Division v. Smith*. While not specifically an LGBT rights case, it had a profound impact on the fight for equality. The ruling restricted the ability of the government to enforce laws that burdened individuals' religious practices, creating a legal framework that has been instrumental in combating discrimination against LGBT individuals based on religious beliefs.

5. Goodridge v. Department of Public Health

In 2003, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court made history in the case of *Goodridge v. Department of Public Health*. It became the first state court in the United States to rule that same-sex couples had the right to marry under the state constitution. This groundbreaking decision paved the way for other states to follow suit in recognizing and legalizing same-sex marriage.

In

These five LGBT rights lawsuits have played a critical role in the fight for equality and have significantly impacted our nation. They have helped shape our laws, challenge discriminatory practices, and ensure that the rights of the LGBT community are recognized and protected.

While there is still work to be done, these landmark cases serve as a reminder of the progress we have made and the importance of continued advocacy for LGBT

rights. By understanding the history of these lawsuits, we can appreciate and further contribute to the ongoing fight for equality and acceptance.

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The advancement of LGBT rights has occurred through struggles large and small-on the streets, around kitchen tables, and on the Web. Lawsuits have also played a vital role in propelling the movement forward, and behind every case is a human story: a landlord in New York seeks to evict a gay man from his home after his partner of ten years dies of AIDS; school officials in Wisconsin look the other way as a gay teenager is repeatedly and viciously harassed by other students; a lesbian couple appears unexpectedly at a clerk's office in Hawaii seeking a marriage license.

Engaging and largely untold, *From the Closet to the Courtroom* explores how five pivotal lawsuits have altered LGBT history. Beginning each case narrative at the center-with the litigants and their lawyers-law professor Carlos Ball follows the stories behind each crucial lawsuit. He traces the parties from their communities

to the courtroom, while deftly weaving in rich sociohistorical context and analyzing the lasting legal and political impact of each judicial outcome.

Over the last twenty years, no group of attorneys has helped to transform this country more than LGBT rights lawyers, and surprisingly, their collective accomplishments have received relatively little attention. Ball remedies that by exploring how a band of largely unheralded civil rights lawyers have attained remarkable legal victories through skill, creativity, and perseverance.

In this richly layered and multifaceted account, Ball vividly documents how these judicial victories have significantly altered LGBT lives today in ways that were unimaginable only a generation ago.



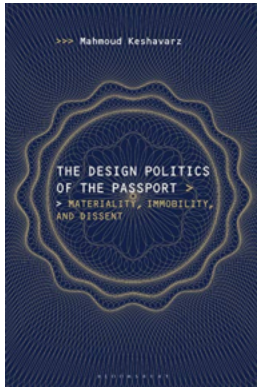
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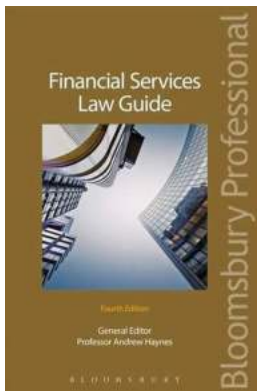
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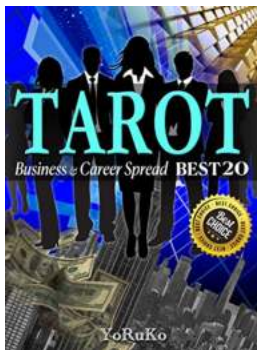
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