

Many struggling for marriage equality feel they are in it alone—without the representation of state lawmakers, the acceptance of the community and the support of their loved ones. But people of color and their white partners have fought this battle, and won, in the eyes of the law. Today's marriage equality movement is reminiscent of the fight to end anti-miscegenation laws prohibiting marriages between people of different races.

Prior to 1967, when the U.S. Supreme Court declared anti-miscegenation laws unconstitutional in *Loving vs. Virginia*, marriage regulations were left for states to decide. Interracial relationships were called "unnatural," "illicit sex" and "contrary to God's will" by judges. Not until 2000 did Alabama remove the anti-miscegenation provision from its state constitution. Oregon's ban on interracial marriage, one of the toughest in the nation, was lifted in 1951. Today, these laws are a shameful and embarrassing distant memory.

When Elsie Garland announced her engagement to her high school sweetheart at age 18, instead of booking a chapel, her mother consulted an attorney. It was 1963 in Hillsboro, and Garland's mother believed the marriage would not be legal because Garland, an Irish American woman, was in love with a Korean man.

"When my mother learned of our intention to marry, she inquired about the law against it because at that time she wanted to prevent it," says Garland, a Northeast Portland resident and juvenile councilor for Multnomah County.

Her mother warned that their children would be mocked and that life would be difficult in a marriage not accepted by society.

"The argument I heard amongst older adults, including my parents, is bigotry against the biracial children. They said,

'People aren't going to treat those children right, and the children won't know where they belong,'" Garland remembers.

Those are the same arguments used today by many critics of marriage equality. "We've come so far, but we have so far to go," Garland notes.

The marriage, which lasted 19 years and resulted in four daughters, won the approval of Garland's family and stood strongly as America slowly shifted its disapproval toward another controversial union.

Chapel of Love

Jamie Bolyard didn't envision her wedding day beginning by standing in line at 3 a.m. in the cold and rain. And she certainly didn't anticipate protesters shouting



Jamie Bolyard (left) and Abby Haywood marry March 3, 2004, outside the Multnomah Building

"You are in danger" during her wedding ceremony outside the Multnomah Building.

Bolyard says she wasn't able to picture her wedding day at all, until Multnomah County commissioners permitted the issuing of same-sex marriage licenses March 3, 2004, in a controversial move aligning the county with few other cities, including San Francisco and New Paltz, N.Y.

Bolyard and her wife, Abby Haywood, both 33, say they knew they would spend their lives together. They began their relationship three years ago in Nashville, Tenn., without the approval of their parents.

Not only are Bolyard and Haywood lesbians, but also an interracial couple, which they say adds to the burden of popular approval.

"My mom told me in response to Jamie, 'I always prayed that none of my daughters would date white men, but I wish I'd prayed that you not date any-

one white,'" says Haywood, who is African American.

Nearly two months ago, Bolyard and Haywood relocated from Southeast Portland to Madison, Wis., to further their educations at University of Wisconsin. Bolyard plans to focus on African American studies and find work in the civil rights arena. Haywood is finishing a degree in music therapy and landed an internship in that field.

"We're not going to find a lot of peers that are supportive," says Haywood. "In the lesbian community there's racism, and that's difficult. It would be different if we were the same race and if I could go to the black lesbians and get a lot of support, but I can't do that because I'm [married to] a white woman."

Bolyard says she and Haywood have lost friends and the support of their families because of their choice to be together.

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Opposite page: A multicultural family photo of Elsie Garland (right) with daughters Shauna Hardy (bottom, with daughter Chanté) and Ramey Holsman (top, with partner Kate Cooper and Macy the Chihuahua). Shauna and Ramey are half Irish American and half Korean American. Chanté is half African American and a quarter Korean American.

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