

OPEN

In July 2012, David Mullins and Charles Craig walked into Masterpiece Cakeshop in Colorado to order a cake for their wedding. Owner and baker Jack Phillips refused, saying he could not make a cake for a same-sex wedding because of his religious beliefs.

Mullins and Craig filed discrimination charges, and, in 2015, a Colorado civil rights commission ordered Masterpiece to provide cakes for same-sex marriages. Phillips's lawyers appealed and the case progressed all the way to the Supreme Court. In December 2017, the court heard oral arguments. A decision is expected by late June of this year.

Bekah Brunstetter grew up in the Baptist faith in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, where she set The Cake. While she is straight, when she heard about the Colorado cake case, Brunstetter started to wonder what would happen if she brought a female partner home to meet her parents. Brunstetter has always been in favor of gay marriage, while her parents have always been against; whenever the topic arose, they avoided it. Her play is a way of having the conversation with them, and with all of us.

Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission opposes freedoms of religion and artistic expression against the individual's right to equal service. The baker's religious beliefs are sincere and deeply held: Phillips does not even make Halloween desserts. He serves same-sex couples on other occasions, he just has a moral objection to creating a cake for a wedding he sees as condemned in the eyes of God. Additionally, as Andrew Sullivan, an author, blogger, and early proponent of gay marriage, wrote for *New York Magazine* online, much of the movement for marriage equality was based on a "live and let live" ideology. Isn't it hypocritical to

Masterpiece Cakeshop in Lakewood, Colorado.
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force this baker to live against his truth? Mullins and Craig, after all, were able to get their cake from another baker.

But what would have happened if the second baker had turned them away? The baker's art, after all, is also food. Could a diner refuse to serve a gay couple? Or a hotel? Forcing gay couples to beg for basic accommodations, afforded to straight couples without question, strips them of their dignity. It relegates them to second-class citizenship, in a way uncomfortably similar to how African-Americans were treated in the days of segregation.

The Cake is a play about hope. It is about those friends with whom you do not discuss politics, about finding with them that elusive middle-ground. It challenges us to look directly at "the Other" and see them as human. In a world that feels more polarized than ever before, it is a play about taking baby steps towards each other. Taking one tiny step, pausing, trying another, falling hard. Getting back up, standing on wobbly, unsure knees. Taking another small step. Finally, another. Trying for a third—falling again. Getting back up.

How do we reconcile our love for friends and family with our anger at them, our disgust with who they are or have become? Are we reprehensible if we ignore our moral principles to keep those we love in our lives? Can our activism—the protests we take part in, the articles we read and write, the plays we produce and attend—actually create meaningful dialogue? Do we ignore the feelings of others so that we can feel like we've won an argument? What is it like to split yourself between two opposing worlds? Maybe if we can begin to answer these questions, together, we can get a little closer to sharing a slice of cake.

