The United States Supreme Court in the current session will address whether to uphold the part of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) that prohibits same-sex, legally-married-under-state-law couples from obtaining federal benefits. Personally, I can’t see how that law, which, to me, seems to unconstitutional, can remain standing!

How can partners be so discriminated against just because they were born a certain way, and want to legalize their unions? Why should they be denied the rights that other partners assume are theirs? Why shouldn’t they be able to visit their loved ones in hospitals and other situations as members of the family? And why shouldn’t they get the same benefits that are due to other couples?

Times have so changed since homosexuals were put in prison for being who they are, actions often justified by interpretations of scriptures and certainty that those who were punished had sinned. Still, I can understand the struggle it must be for scripture followers, Christian, Muslim and others, in trying to reconcile their faith with what is changing in our world today. It must be much more difficult for “believers” than non-believers to change with the times. For those who understand scriptures as being literally true (often being unaware of their own scriptural selectivity) change must threaten their very belief systems.

People must learn to separate their emotions from their understanding of the underpinnings of American philosophy and law. Our constitution calls for “equal rights for all.” It is appalling that women, people of color and homosexuals must fight for years for those rights that our founders declared to be “FOR ALL.” Rights (local and federal) for gay people is a legal question, not one of religion, faith or philosophy. You can live your faith without condemning those whose conduct does not agree with your faith.

I admit to my own discomfort in watching two men kiss. (This is harder for me than watching two women do so, because we have been more accustomed to kissing each other as mere friends). But this doesn’t give me the right to deny equality to such pairings due to my own discomfort. When I lived In Japan, I observed it was not at all unusual to see men holding hands while walking down the street. Ironically, in Japan, a man and woman doing the same was definitely improper as late as the mid-1970s when I last lived there. Yet here in our own country, to see men holding hands seems strange and discomfiting. But is that justification for denying the same rights that other citizens have?

Aren’t we strange human beings when it comes to any kind of affection, sexuality or relationships? A pat on the bottom is okay on the football field, but not in other public situations. A big hug in baseball with your teammates is okay in the game, but not on the streets. A fat man with huge breasts can walk down the street without a shirt, but a thin woman without breasts would be thrown in jail as indecent if she removed her blouse. A kiss is
okay when greeting a friend. It might make others feel uncomfortable, but it doesn’t cause the same reactions as two men doing the same simple, human thing. We are, indeed, strange creatures.

And strangest of all, to me, is that of making all of this a “religious” issue. People try to force their beliefs on the rest of the world. I sometimes wonder if these same people secretly long for the separation of the races and for women to stay in their places. How many of those who oppose gay rights fought for the civil rights of women or people of color? (Let’s see, what color am I really – ivory-beige-pink-tan in the summer?) Once again, we are dealing with civil rights – it’s just a case of a different group of people who have had to struggle with bigotry.

In the case presented to the Supreme Court, we also have this confused concern for States’ rights. Some seek to deny “States’ rights” by upholding DOMA, a federal law. Others seek to resolve the present controversy by leaving to the States who can be married. Though a good outcome for same-sex couples in nine states, those who want those rights and benefits in the other 41 would be denied equal rights FOR ALL. I doubt we would have succeeded with basic civil rights for African-Americans and others of color, if we had just allowed the States to have their own rights to do what they wanted to keep doing. At that time in our history, I don’t recall any of the States voting to change the discriminatory laws that were challenged.

As to the issue of homosexuality and same-sex marriage, human beings have certain basics across the globe, and one of them is biology! I know this is a difficult matter for many. We all have various issues that trigger wild swings in our hearts and minds. I feel that on this issue, but now I’m ready to move on. I hope you will join me, and I pray for a decision by the Supreme Court that overturns DOMA based on equal rights FOR ALL!