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## Trending @ RWU Law: Christopher Gerlica's Post: Beyond Same-Sex Marriage

Christopher Gerlica

*Roger Williams University School of Law*

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# Christopher Gerlica's Post

## Beyond Same-Sex Marriage ...

Posted by Christopher Gerlica on 10/27/2015 at 10:00 AM



On June 26 of this year the Supreme Court of the United States made history by legalizing marriage equality nationwide. Prior to the Court's decision in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, same-sex marriage had been governed by a patchwork of state laws.

Unfortunately for members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) community, many vital issues beyond marriage – involving family law, domestic violence, transgender rights and federal protections – are still obscured by a confusing mishmash of local laws.

The Beyond Marriage Equality Symposium on October 30<sup>th</sup> is meant to address these continuing concerns for Rhode Island and the nation's LGBT community. For the past year a committee of hard-working folks have been working to create an environment in which these new challenges can be discussed among legal practitioners, law students and academics. This week will finally see all that hard work pay off.

Many of the unsettled issues for same-sex couples, post-*Obergefell*, fall in the area of family law. **Charles Greenwood, Esq.** will be discussing many of these still troubling areas of law, which include such topics as surrogacy contracts, second-parent adoptions and other issues involving raising children together.

Domestic violence between same-sex partners is rarely spoken about within the LGBT community. There are many reasons for this, including distrust of authorities, lack of knowledge about helpful services, and – in particular for gay male couples – issues surrounding masculinity. Unfortunately, this silence can be deadly, as our state discovered only two months ago when a domestic violence related homicide happened on Aquidneck Island. Thankfully, we have an expert in this area of law, RWU Law's own

**Professor Emily Sack**, who will be on our first panel about the continuing issues in the wake of *Obergefell*.

Within the past year, transgender issues have come to the forefront of the collective American consciousness. With a variety of reality television series chronicling the daily life of both famous and non-famous transgender people, as well as scripted series that includes transgender characters or actors, America is growing more familiar with the issues facing our transgender brothers and sisters.

Despite this enlightenment, however, there are many legal growing pains still to be worked out. The symposium is pleased to welcome **Jennifer Levi, Esq.** coming to do double duty. Attorney Levi works for Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders (GLAD) as their Transgender Rights Project Director. Her first session will give participants an overview of where the various state laws – particularly in New England – are on these issues. Her second session involves the nuts and bolts of what to do when you have a transgender client who needs your help with specific issues such as name changes, changes to a birth certificate or other state issued document, or allegations of discrimination.

To wrap up the day, **Congressman David Cicilline (D-RI)** will deliver the keynote address, discussing in particular the Equality Act, which he introduced in Congress this year, and which would add sexual orientation and gender identity to the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Congressman Cicilline will also talk about the state of affairs for LGBT issues at the federal level: as of right now, fewer than half the states offer full employment, housing and public accommodation protections to the entire LGBT community.

This important symposium will offer a great opportunity for both those who are well versed in LGBT issues and those who are not. These are important issues to be aware of when a member of the LGBT community drops into your office seeking help. Thankfully, the planning committee has rounded up an amazing line-up of panelists to help you work through these new issues.