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Can you fathom how much money the mainstream LGBT rights movement spent on marriage equality? Photograph: Jae C. Hong/AP

Over the past decade, the LGBT rights movement in America has overwhelmingly focused on the fight for marriage, making it seem as if marriage is the key to making us all truly equal in America. And through this ardent effort, incredible strides have been made.

Currently, same-sex marriage is legal in 19 states, the District of Columbia and 10 Native American tribal jurisdictions, meaning 44% of the American population has access to same sex marriage – an amazing feat given that, just 10 years ago, the state of Massachusetts was the first state to make it legal.

But at the same time, [around 40% of all homeless young people identify as LGBT](#). Predominantly these young people are African American or Latino. Transgender youth face disproportionately higher rates than even lesbian, gay or bisexual people.

While the inability for same-sex couples to marry has pushed many to label themselves “second-class citizens”, I find it difficult to completely sympathize with their plight – and the money they’ve spent to end it – when so many LGBT youth are living and dying in the streets everyday with no end in sight.

[In a recent interview with Rolling Stone](#), Carl Siciliano, who founded the Ali Forney Center (the largest organization dedicated to LGBT homelessness in America), put it bluntly: “The summer [of 2011] that marriage equality passed in New York, we saw the number of homeless kids looking for shelter go up 40 percent.”

New York is not alone – the [entire nation is seeing a rise in general homeless youth populations](#), with LGBT youth continually making up a substantial chunk as more and more marriage bells ring across America.

Most young people end up in the streets for a variety of reasons, ranging from familial neglect to economic problems to being discharged from foster care with few other options and no money. However, for LGBT youth, we do know [from key surveys](#) that the two primary reasons are: being forced out of their homes by family members due to their sexual orientation, and running away due to their sexual orientation.

For instance, the story of Daniel Pierce, a 20-year-old gay man who had been living with his family in Georgia, recently went viral after a [YouTube video](#) was posted of his coming out.