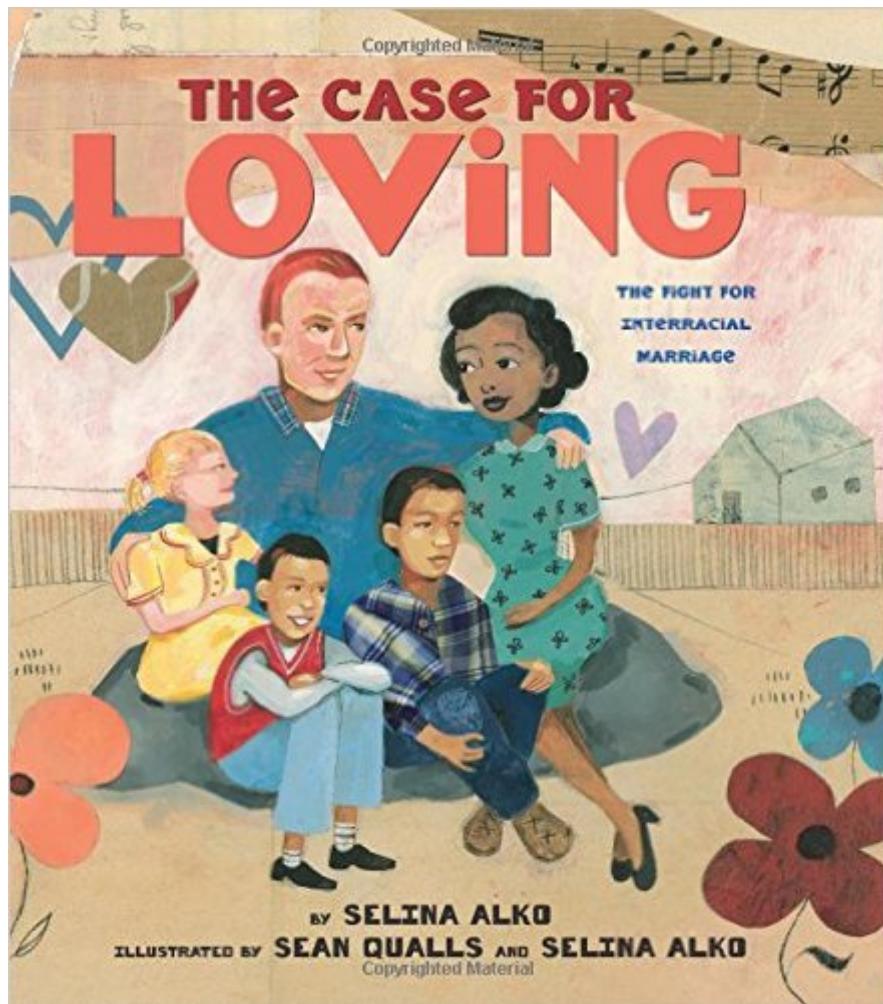


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# The Case For Loving: The Fight For Interracial Marriage



## **Synopsis**

"I support the freedom to marry for all. That's what Loving, and loving, are all about." -- Mildred Loving, June 12, 2007

For most children these days it would come as a great shock to know that before 1967, they could not marry a person of a race different from their own. That was the year that the Supreme Court issued its decision in *Loving v. Virginia*. This is the story of one brave family: Mildred Loving, Richard Perry Loving, and their three children. It is the story of how Mildred and Richard fell in love, and got married in Washington, D.C. But when they moved back to their hometown in Virginia, they were arrested (in dramatic fashion) for violating that state's laws against interracial marriage. The Lovings refused to allow their children to get the message that their parents' love was wrong and so they fought the unfair law, taking their case all the way to the Supreme Court - and won!

## **Book Information**

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Product Dimensions: 8.7 x 0.4 x 10.1 inches

Shipping Weight: 13.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars See all reviews (20 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #68,252 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #38 in Books > Children's Books > Biographies > Social Activists #49 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Family Life > Marriage & Divorce #121 in Books > Children's Books > Biographies > Multicultural

Age Range: 4 - 8 years

Grade Level: Preschool - 3

## **Customer Reviews**

When the Supreme Court ruled on June 26, 2015 that same-sex couples could marry in all fifty states, I found myself, like many parents of young children, in the position of trying to explain the ramifications to my offspring. Newly turned four, my daughter needed a bit of context. After all, as far as she was concerned gay people had always had the right to marry so what exactly was the big deal here? In times of change, my back up tends to be children's books that discuss similar,

but not identical, situations. And what book do I own that covers a court case involving the legality of people marrying? Why, none other than *The Case for Loving: The Fight for Interracial Marriage* by creative couple Selina Alko and Sean Qualls. It's almost too perfect that the book has come out the same year as this momentous court decision. Discussing the legal process, as well as the prejudices of the time, the book offers to parents like myself not just a window to the past, but a way of discussing present and future court cases that involve the personal lives of everyday people. Really, when you take all that into consideration, the fact that the book is also an amazing testament to the power of love itself . . . well, that's just the icing on the cake.

In 1958 Richard Loving, a white man, fell in love with Mildred Jeter, a black/Native American woman. Residents of Virginia, they could not marry in their home state so they did so in Washington D.C. instead. Then they turned right around and went home to Virginia. Not long after they were interrupted in the night by a police invasion. They were charged with *unlawful cohabitation* and were told in no uncertain terms that if they were going to continue living together then they needed to leave Virginia. They did, but they also hired lawyers to plead their case. By 1967 the Lovings made it all the way to The Supreme Court where their lawyers read a prepared statement from Richard. It said, *Tell the court I love my wife, and it is just unfair that I can't live with her in Virginia.* In a unanimous ruling, the laws restricting such marriages were struck down. The couple returned to Virginia, found a new house, and lived happily (and legally) ever after.

An Author's Note about her marriage to Sean Qualls (she is white and he is black) as well as a note about the art, Sources, and Suggestions for Further Reading appear at the end of the book.

*How do you sue someone?* Here's a challenge. Explain the concept of suing the government to a four-year-old brain. To do so, you may have to explain a lot of connected concepts along the way. What is a lawyer? And a court? And, for that matter, why are the laws (and cops) sometimes wrong? So when I pick up a book like *The Case for Loving* as a parent, I'm desperately hoping on some level that the authors have figured out how to break down these complex questions into something small children can understand and possibly even accept. In the case of this book, the legal process is explained as simply as possible. *They wanted to return to Virginia for good, so they hired lawyers to help fight for what was right.* And then later, *it was time to take the Loving case all the way to The Supreme Court.* Now the book doesn't explain what The Supreme Court was necessarily, and that's where the art comes in. Much of the heavy lifting is done by the illustrations, which show the judges sitting in a row, allowing parents like myself the chance to explain their role. Here you will not find a deep

explanation of the legal process, but at least it shows a process and allows you to fill in the gaps for the young and curious. It was very interesting to me to see how Alko and Qualls handled the art in this book. I've often noticed that editors like to choose Sean as an artist when they want an illustrator that can offset some of the darker aspects of a work. For example, take Margarita Engle's magnificently sordid Pura Belpre Medal winner "The Poet Slave of Cuba". A tale of torture, gore, and hope, Qualls' art managed to represent the darkness with a lighter touch, while never taking away from the important story at hand. In "The Case for Loving" he has scaled the story down a bit and given it a simpler edge. His characters are a bit broader and more cartoonlike than those in, say, "Dizzy". This is due in part to Alko's contributions. As they say in their "About the Art" section at the back of the book, Alko's art is all about bold colors and Sean's is about subtle layers of color and texture. Together, they alleviate the tension in different scenes. Moments that could be particularly frightening, as when the police burst into the Lovings' bedroom to arrest them, are cast instead as simply dramatic. I noticed too that characters were much smaller in this book than they tend to be in Sean's others. It was interesting to note the moments when that illustrators made the faces of Richard and Virginia large. The page early in the book where Richard and Mildred look at one another over the book's gutter pairs well with the page later in the book where their faces appear on posters behind bars against the words "Unlawful Cohabitation". But aside from those two double spreads the family is small, often seen just outside their different respective homes. It seemed to be important to Qualls and Alko to show them as a family unit as often as possible. Few books are perfect, and "Loving" has its off-kilter moments from time to time. For example, it describes darker skin tones in terms of food. That's not a crime, of course, but you rarely hear white skin described as "white as aged cheese" or "the color of creamy mayonnaise" so why is dark colored skin always edible? In this book Mildred is "a creamy caramel" and she lives where people ranged from "the color of chamomile tea" to darker shades. A side issue has arisen concerning Mildred's identification as Native American and whether or not the original case made more of her African-American roots because it would build a stronger case in court. This is a far bigger issue than a picture book could hope to encompass, though I would be interested in a middle grade or young adult nonfiction book on the topic that went into the subject in a little more depth. Recently I read my kid another nonfiction picture book chronicling injustice called "Drum Dream Girl" by the aforementioned Margarita Engle. In that book a young girl isn't allowed to drum because of her gender. My

daughter was absolutely flabbergasted by the notion. When I read her "The Case for Loving" she was similarly baffled. And when, someday, someone writes a book about the landmark decision made by The Supreme Court to allow gay couples to wed, so too will some future child be just as floored by what seems completely normal to them. Until then, this is certainly a book written and published at just the right time. Informative and heartfelt all at once, it works beyond the immediate need. Context is not an easy thing to come by when we discuss complex subjects with our kids. It takes a book like this to give us the words we so desperately need. Many thanks then for that. For ages 4-7.

A friend once sagely remarked to me that it's important to have meaningful literature for younger kids, because it helps make a big difference in how they begin to view the world. They learn to be more open and more accepting, and eventually help pass that openness and acceptance on to future generations. I've read many picture books that have fit that criteria over the years, but none which have struck a chord with me as much as *The Case for Loving: The Fight for Interracial Marriage*. Author Selina Alko shares the real-life story of the Loving family, an African-American woman and a Caucasian man who fall in love and get married in 1958. However, because of state laws in Virginia at the time, their relationship is considered a felony. Facing potential prison time, the couple is forced to leave Virginia, and make their home in Washington D.C. However, the couple decides to show that their love isn't wrong, and takes their case all the way to the Supreme Court - winning in a landmark decision. Alko takes what is actually a very complex real-life story, and beautifully streamlines it for younger readers. She warmly shows the love that brings Richard and Mildred together, while also being careful to touch upon the tensions and the unfortunate historical precedent which dictated the laws designed to keep them apart. The court case itself is also beautifully explained, with Alko quickly getting to the heart of the issue: that love is love, and these are just two people who want to prove to their family that their relationship is one to be proud of. Alko also collaborated with husband Sean Qualls for the first time on the illustrations, jointly using paint and collage to tell Mildred and Richard's story. The illustrations are both bold and warm, showing both the genuine love between the couple, and the changing political landscape. The illustrations will definitely younger readers feel safe and comfortable, in what will likely be a thought-provoking topic. Bottom line: *The Case for Loving* is just what we need in an environment that is seeking more diverse books. This is a book that helps readers of all ages understand just how far we have come in terms of diversity, and how it's often ordinary people with ordinary hopes, which change the landscape forever.

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