

Youth Voices

In Our Own Words

Youth who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender,
or questioning



Bobby Griffith

“I can’t let anyone find out that I’m not straight. It would be so humiliating. My friends would hate me, I just know it. They might even want to beat me up...I guess I’m no good to anyone...not even God. Life is so cruel, and unfair. Sometimes I feel like disappearing from the face of this earth.”



a student

“I hated school my entire life. Even before I knew I was gay, I knew I was different and others picked up on that.”



a bisexual girl in the juvenile justice system

“The staff don’t know we are here. They think we are all straight.”



a lesbian or bisexual girl in the juvenile justice system

“It ain’t being recognized. Like they can sit up there and talk about a male and a female but gay and lesbian people ain’t being recognized.”



a lesbian girl in the juvenile justice system

[I answered staff] ““No, I am straight. No, I am straight. No, no. It is not a problem.’ I was hella mad. After that I was like ‘I really can’t come out.’”



a homeless gay youth in a shelter

“Right now I’m in a shelter. I don’t like it because most people there are very homophobic. I got into a fight just because I’m gay and people don’t accept that fact. I’ve been there for three months. I’m trying to get the heck out.”



a homeless youth

“The child welfare system needs a better understanding of what LGBTQ homeless youth experience on the streets and why they are there in the first place – like fleeing abusive homes and not feeling safe in their placements.”



a female college student

“It’s funny how some people treat you differently, even if you’ve been friends with them [since] like the first day freshman year. I actually have people who don’t really talk to me anymore...There’s always that fear factor and it’s hard because, a lot of my friends, I want to talk to them but then like a lot of my heterosexual friends are like ‘okay, you came out and we don’t really want to discuss it.’”



a gay male youth

“As gay youth, the coming out process, that’s not something that’s just going to happen, because you’re going to be gay tomorrow and the next day and all of a sudden you’re afraid how that’s going to affect your life...you gotta look forward to what might happen...everyday for the rest of your life and that can be pretty scary...”



a male youth

“Then [my mother] hit me with this clincher that always gets a lot of kids...‘I thought I’d raise someone who would grow up to be someone I could count on, someone who I could be proud of’ ...That is one thing that can really lead you to hopelessness, like ‘what good am I, I did not meet the standards?’”



a gay male youth

“I mean my family stands behind me 100 percent...I’m actually letting out who I am and I’ve become more responsible and respectful of people around me because I’m gay.”



a male in Kansas

“There’s nothing inherently wrong with you. It often takes time to figure out who you are and what you want. The important thing is to have a place or a person you can talk about it with, so it doesn’t spin incessantly in your head.”



a gay student

“...basically, our government is saying ‘it’s okay to discriminate against gays and lesbians’ and I think it’s definitely having an effect elsewhere. I mean I just had to defend a bill for our Valentine’s Ball last week and two members of college council abstained from voting on it...because they’re conservative and I’m gay...Why do they think that’s okay? Because our government is doing the same thing.”



a female youth

“I know people at school, you know, if they get taunted and stuff and harassed they just really feel even more overwhelmed that you know, ‘hey, I have no one to turn to and nowhere to go and people are treating me bad, what’s the point of even being here anymore?’”



a female college student

“My mom does five rosaries a day for me because gays go to hell. She still loves me but I’m going to go to hell unless I change my ways.”



a female in Nebraska

“It was very hard to live in a ‘hick’ town, surrounded by small-town, small-minded individuals and know that something as big as what I was feeling inside was just waiting to burst out.”



a male youth

“I felt less in the eyes of God like I was going to be judged, and it’s kind of hard when you feel like you have an impending axe above your head.”



a female college student

“It’s not even really just the group itself, I knew there was a GSA at my middle school...It’s just the fact that it’s comforting to know that there even WAS an organization, that there WERE other people, that people I knew were in it and that I could talk to them.”



John

What if one of them knows?

What if they found out?

I sit and watch, as everyone mills around,
All going about their business.

No one gives me a second look...



a female in iowa

“Get out. Find a peer group in the next town over until you’re more comfortable with yourself, find teachers/adults you can trust and talk to.”



a gay 16-year-old student

“I told some people, just to test it out I guess. I thought I could trust them. I thought the keeping it inside...I thought nothing could be worse.”



a female in North Carolina

“Don’t try to tell yourself you are someone you’re not because that’s what other people want you to be. It’ll get better, you’ll make friends that will accept and love you for who you are.”



a lesbian dropout

[I felt] “separate from everyone...alone. It was that I couldn’t be me .”



a female in Vermont

“Do your best and know that you’re not the only one...don’t let others drag you down.”



20-year-old Chaya

“The loneliness of the closet was sucking all the life out of my body...I needed to come out...but was terrified of losing my family and friends and of facing up to my own homophobia. Then one day, when I was feeling feisty, I gathered all of the courage I could find (even from my eyelids I think) and began to tell my long-kept secret. I felt so relieved I no longer had to spend my life in hiding...”



19-year-old Adam

“I got way too close to suicide when I was in the closet. I hated my life. I was tired of lying, and of being afraid...One night, I found myself with a knife in my hand, and I thought, ‘Nothing can hurt more than this.’...I realized that I could die anytime, but I could only live once. So I chose to come out. It was difficult, but I did it. And the pain stopped. It was like breathing for the first time.”



a male in Texas

“I’d really like my community to be more aware of homosexuality because it’s a lot more common around here than most realize. I wish that my teachers would have used gender-neutral language and made GLBT-friendly literature available to students.”