

Love Me for Who I Am

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Up to *forty percent* of the homeless adolescents in America are part of the LGBTQ+ community. These teens and young adults, who have done nothing wrong, have either been driven away by their family or have chosen to run away. Yet when they are evicted, they have nowhere else to go and are left to fend for themselves on the streets. Being homeless exposes one to danger and the elements, such as bitter cold, rain, or assault. These are definitely *not* conditions you would want your child to live in. So why do families drive their loved ones away?

A primary factor of why families would forcefully evict their children is that their new gender or sexuality does not line up with the families' religious beliefs. Yet the church is not to blame for parents' refusal to accept their children's choices: the thing to blame is *ignorance*. Religious parents who are ignorant about the LGBTQ+ community may evict their children for being sinners, thinking their child's time on the streets will be their 'repentance' and they may re-think their actions. However, being LGBTQ+ is not a choice, and their child will not return home and tell them they are not LGBTQ+ anymore. The problem here is the *parents* and not their child.

The LGBTQ+ community also has many myths and misconceptions about them. An example of such misconceptions would be that all homosexuals will turn into pedophiles, or that having two same-sex parents is worse for the child than two parents of a different sex. As can be seen, these common myths are painting the LGBTQ+ community negatively, and ignorant parents will simply accept these myths as fact. In this light, it is understandable for parents and family to react in a harsh, negative manner toward their child who has trusted them enough to

come out to them. Unable to understand the changes in their child, these parents will simply throw them out, leaving them with nowhere else to go but the streets.

Another reason LGBTQ+ adolescents end up homeless is because they ran away. When they came out to their families, the response was so intensely negative that they could not endure it anymore. Parents who hear about their child's change and cannot accept it may try to cope with it by calling other family members. Then the chain continues, and at the next family gathering, they are publicly shamed simply for being who they are. This could be the straw that breaks the camel's back, leading them to run away from home and become prey to the weather and ill-intentioned people.

To protect our youth, parents should educate themselves about the LGBTQ+ community. They should not be ignorant to the truth that being LGBTQ+ is not a choice, and to accept their child for who they are. They should remember that their child is the same child they have raised for all these years; their child is the same child they have *loved* for all these years. When they accept their child, their child will feel the love and support they need to go through their changes. This will keep families together and innocent children from being homeless.

References

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