

No One Deserves to Live in the Closet Forever

Around the world, the word “acceptance” resonates as a goal to attain; everyone preaches it, yet not all embrace it. People will tell you how they welcome everyone without distinction. However, should a new neighbor from a different faith, ethnicity, or sexual orientation, move in, gossips and scrutiny will start. In the same constant, what is acceptable to a nation, a society, will not be to another. There is a group of people in our country that is still not accepted by all, and still suffers abuse, whether physical, mental or emotional, and rejection in every societal setting: the LGBTQIA+ community. It has been engrained in our lives for so long, in such diverse ways, that homophobic jokes are displayed in movies or on TV without any second thoughts from the writers. “It is ok, they understand it is just a joke”. No one realizes the damage and pain it can create. People are scared to be their true self, to embrace it, because they feel outcast from the start. And this is why my son’s coming out made his father and I, bearers of his biggest secret.

We are brought up to embrace stereotypical images of what our lives should be. When our son was born, we immediately envisioned him going to college, becoming a doctor or an engineer, fall in love with the girl next door, marry her and fill our house with grandbabies. Both families, along with the in-laws, would gather at Thanksgiving. Christmas would be shared, but

I asked: “Yes, baby, what is going on? Why are you crying?” As I was started to feel alarmed.

be rejected by his friends, by family. Will he be bullied at school? At work? How safe would his world be now?

We decided that the best way to answer those questions was to talk, as a family. We called him in to the living-room:

I said: “we want you to know that we don’t care who you love, we care for you to be happy. We want you to live your truth, without shame or doubt.” He stayed silent, just staring at us. I added: “you know you can tell us anything, we will always be there for you. Whether you are worried, sad. But please, never be sorry for who you are. You are amazing, just be proud of who you are. Just be you”. As I was wondering what he was thinking, he gave us the most teen

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confidence. Getting the opportunity to encounter and interact with other members of the LGBTQ+ community really helped him realize his potential and affirm his choices.

We cannot help but worry though, even with all the support we found. The world is changing, the few progresses made with acceptance are slowly fading away. This installs a new fear with each new headline of aggression against LGBTQ individuals. Through educating Elijah and ourselves on the current protections offered, and laws against discrimination, we realized that California is one of the few states that has laws protecting its LGBTQ citizens.

family. We are a safe zone for LGBTQ+ youth, and elders, where they can express their truth. We live our lives by only one rule: Love is love.

But now, our lives have been tried again. Elijah is no more. No more swim meets on the weekends to attend. No more pictures of our little boy on the walls. Memories of times past have been erased. His dad will never teach him how to shave or how to knot a tie. Elijah is now a distant mist in a fog of dreams. But like the Phoenix, from the ashes of our lives, a new love arose, and we welcomed T in his place: our transgender daughter. T is the nickname we affectionately gave her. We cannot express enough how proud, how amazed we are by her strength, as she had known for years who she really was but could not verbalize it until recently. We are taking it one step at a time, still, as we navigate through her transition. We are made so very proud as well by the love and acceptance those close to her showered us with. Friends, family, school officials and classmates uniting to make her feel included. Standing by her side to fight her battles. We were entrusted by the Universe with this admirable soul to nurture and we will do everything in our power to help her grow into the amazing woman we can already see in her. We will be her fierce advocates till the end. For her own sake, and for the sake of all the transgender individuals, children and adults,