



ANYONE AND EVERYONE

A film by Susan Polis Schutz

In *Anyone and Everyone*, parents across the United States discuss their reactions to having a son or daughter reveal they are gay. Despite the diversity of the families' ethnic, racial, socioeconomic, geographic and religious backgrounds, there is a thread connecting these stories. The bond between parent and child provides the strength and inspiration to work through the challenges – and the challenges are significant.

The heartfelt accounts of responses to children's revelations personalize issues that are often de-personalized in political rhetoric. Beyond questions of gay rights, parents wrestle with their faiths, rejection by other relatives, the pain of their own lost dreams, and the fears born of their own and their community's prejudices or ignorance.

The love between parents and children is a powerful springboard for discussions about family, community and the hard work of pluralism and accepting differences.

BACKGROUND

An estimated 3 to 10 percent of all people are gay.

There are an estimated 2.5 million gay students under the age of 18 in the United States.

Twenty-six percent of gay teens who come out to their parents or guardians are told they must leave home.

Of the approximately 1.6 million homeless American youth, 20 to 40 percent identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender.

In 2005, approximately 14 percent of all hate crimes were directed at gay people or those perceived to be gay.

Nearly 40 percent of LGBT students report being physically harassed. Additionally, more than 90 percent of LGBT students regularly hear anti-LGBT comments at school. Nearly 85 percent of LGBT students report that faculty or staff never intervened or intervened only some of the time when present and homophobic remarks were made.

In a 2001 Department of Health study of youth in Massachusetts, about 40 percent of gay and bisexual students attempted suicide, compared to about 10 percent of their heterosexual peers.

Seventy-five percent of Asian and Pacific Islander respondents to a national survey reported experiencing harassment or discrimination based on their sexual orientation.

Since 1993, more than 9,000 soldiers have been discharged based on their sexual orientation at an estimated cost to U.S. taxpayers of a quarter billion dollars.

In 31 states, it is legal to fire someone because they are gay.

Nearly one of three LGBT youth skipped school in the past month because they were too afraid to go.

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(Sources: Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network; gaylibrary.com; Gay Straight Alliance; National Gay and Lesbian Task Force; Federal Bureau of Investigation; Human Rights Campaign; Servicemembers Legal Defense Network.)

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Describe anything in this film that surprised you. How about something that “spoke truth” to you?
- Lanette tells about an epiphany she had at the funeral of a young man who had committed suicide, presumably because his loved ones could not accept that he was gay. “I looked around at the distraught people sitting in the church, people who have loved him so well, and it occurred to me these people have unknowingly contributed to his despair. They did not even know that the ignorance that comes over the pulpits are destroying our people, our young people.” How does silence contribute to oppression or discrimination?
- What insights did this film offer you? What did you learn about its topic and/or about yourself?
- What is similar and different about coming out for an LGBT person and for their parents? What might LGBT children do to assist their parents in the coming out process?
- From what you see and hear in the film, what is the affect of remaining closeted on an LGBT person? What is the affect of coming out on both the individual and on their parents?
- Trevor says, “They’re your children, you should love them for who they are.” What does loving a child “for who they are” look like?
- Lanette says, “We all realize life is short, life is precious. We need to not let doctrine or dogma divide us.” What role does religion play in parents’ abilities to establish close, healthy relationships with their LGBT children?