

My Son Is Gay

Tina Sena

BEFORE YOU READ: Why might a parent be upset that their child is gay? How would you react if your child were gay?

He Kept His Sexuality a Secret

My son came to the U.S. in 1992. He was 13 years old. He went to middle school and then high school in Rhode Island. Then he went to college at Wentworth Institute in Boston. Since he came into this world, he kept secret about his private life and his sexuality. Well, that was his own life.

But I Found Out

When he was 19 years old, I found out that my son was gay. One day, I called him and he didn't answer. I was worried about him. I decided to check the phone bill. The number that had the most calls was the person that my son spent the most time with. When I called that number, he was there.



Homophobia

Homophobia comes from the Latin words *homo* (which means *same*) and *phobia* (which means *fear*). Fear of gay people is often expressed as a hatred of gay people.



Then he came to my house and spoke with my other son. They went to Roger Williams Park, and he told him that he was gay. They cried together and read the Bible. His brother asked him if he could change for me, his mother. He said he could not. He was gay.

At First, My Heart Was Broken

When I knew that my son was gay, I was sad and scared. My heart was broken. I kept it a secret too. I was afraid of what people would think. At night, I could not sleep. If I did sleep, I woke up crying. I never told anyone about my son. I didn't want someone to hit him or bully him or discriminate against him. I didn't want people to judge him. My mind was worried. I suffered in silence.

One day, I said to myself, “These people who might judge my son are not more important than my son.” I love my son. I decided: I will take care of my son. I will help my son in everything he needs.

A Message for Ignorant People

My son is very important in my life. But I know that many ignorant people hate gays and lesbians. To them, I say:

The world is for all.
 The path is for all.
 The sunlight is for all.
 The sky is for all.
 The moon is for all.
 The air is for all.
 Nobody alone owns the world.

I love my son. He is smart, intelligent, and honest, and he works hard. He is an architect. I am proud of my son. He came into the world in his own way. He walks on his own path. This is true for all gays and lesbians. They must be treated with dignity and respect. They are equal to everyone else.

AFTER YOU READ:

1. Retell Tina’s story in your own words.
2. Where do you encounter hate and/or fear in your community? Try writing your own poem as a response to it.



Tina Sena is from the Dominican Republic. She is a student at the Genesis Center in Providence, RI. She says, “Thank you, teacher David. Without you, I could not write my story. Thank you for teaching English to me. I am happy in your class.”

Resources for Parents of Gay Children



PFLAG was founded in 1973 by a mother and her gay son. It now has hundreds of chapters. Go to their website to find a chapter near you and to learn more about what they do to create a caring, just, and affirming world for LGBTQ people.

Read “What Would You Do if I Was Gay?” written by an adult learner in [Issue #44](#), p. 20 of *The Change Agent*.

“WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF I WAS GAY?” MY BROTHER SAID HE WOULD DISOWN ME.

ANONYMOUS

My brother has always been my best friend, so when he said that, it was like being stabbed in the heart.

I remember the first time I started liking girls. When I was in the second grade there was a girl whom I found attractive. I didn't think anything of it, considering how young I was. When I was in fifth grade, however, my best friend kissed me at a sleepover, and it was like those feelings from second grade came back to me all at once. I was confused about what I was feeling, especially since my family and church always talked about how same sex attractions were wrong. I thought a lot about what I should do. I decided that I would change myself and tell no one.

I dropped all my friends who were girls and got into the group of all guys. It started out as us just being friends, and that's all I wanted. But I noticed that I was still thinking about girls, and I wanted to stop myself, so I decided to flirt with guys. I would go to parties, and I would kiss any guy that wanted me. I never went further than kissing; it just didn't feel right. I also started going online, and if I saw anyone post anything about gay pride, I would bash them and tell them they were gross and wrong for supporting that.

I remember this one time I had a dream about being with a girl, and I woke up so angry at myself. I told myself I was gross and wrong for thinking about girls in that way. I had no one to turn to, and I fell into deep depression. I almost went to my brother; I started out by asking him, “What would you do if I was gay?” Then I added a laugh as if it was just some random thought. He told me he would disown me and never talk to me again. That broke me. My brother has always been my best friend, so when he said that, it was like being stabbed in the heart.

I decided I needed at least one friend that was a girl. I called up my friend Maria and cried and told her everything. She told me she loved me for who I was and nothing would change that. It was weird; I respected her to talk out and tell me I was gross and unlovable, but she didn't. She was my first step to loving myself. I still didn't love myself when I was at home or at church, and I still felt like peaking whenever I thought about my family finding out. That same summer that I told my friend, I went to my aunt's house in

A year came and went. I was still fighting myself. I went back to visit my cousin, and kind of told her by accident. We were driving down the road with my aunt, and she said, “This road is so straight and boring, and I just kind of blurted out, “Smile me!” My aunt and cousin looked at me and laughed. My cousin later told me she had known for a while, but she never said anything because she wanted me to tell her when I was ready. My cousin's and aunt's acceptance made it possible for me to take a step toward loving myself. Having family love me for who I am was a huge help.

I went back online and looked up the messages I wrote bashing gays. I apologized to as many people as I could. I stopped telling myself I was gross and unlovable. I don't think I will ever tell my family, but that's okay with me now. I'm slowly learning to accept myself. It helps that I am still attracted to guys. Even if I am never with a girl, I can still be with someone I love. I don't think I have won this fight, yet considering I still struggle with it, but I also don't think I lost this fight. I am now able to look at that side of myself and smile and not hate myself.

Anonymous is a student at the Adult Basic Education for College and Career (ABECC) program at Pima Community College in Tucson, AZ.

DIG DEEPER

How do the author's feelings change over the course of the article? PULL OUT examples.

There are two points in the article where the author decides to do something to take care of herself. What strategies did she try first/second? What happened each