

June is LGBT PRIDE Month

In June of 2000, Bill Clinton deemed the month of June, "Gay and Lesbian Pride Month." The month was chosen to remember a riot in 1969 at the Stonewall Inn in Manhattan that is thought to be the beginning of the gay liberation movement in the United States.

June is now the month of acceptance and the month to welcome diversity in communities regardless of sexual orientation.

Gay and lesbian groups celebrate this special time with pride parades, picnics, parties, memorials for those lost from HIV and AIDS, and other group gathering events that attract thousands upon thousands of individuals.

For the past 4 years Columbus Education Association has marched in the Columbus Pride parade. Last year was the biggest turn out they've had as CEA members marched alongside students, parents, district administrators, school board members and the superintendent. During the parade, they passed out thousands of beginner level books to the young children sitting alongside the parade route. This year, they plan to march again and welcome any OEA member to join them. Contact Dominique Vacheresse at teacherms.v@gmail.com for more information on getting involved!

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In This Issue

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I think I just heard you say...
“That’s so gay!”
 here are some other things you could say
ludicrous. naïve. frivolous.
irrational. interesting. curious.
eccentric. bogus. weak. foolish.
goofy. insipid. absurd. ridiculous.
annoying. asinine. pathetic.
yesterday. surreal. wack(y).



Here’s Why You Shouldn’t Say “That’s So Gay”

Even in this day and age, with LGBT rights surging forward and popular support for equality growing at a breakneck pace, casual homophobia remains commonplace. One of the best examples of this is the ubiquitous phrase “that’s so gay.” Use of the word “gay” to describe something negative, stupid, uncool, or worthy of mockery is appallingly common, particularly among Millennials (ironically, the generation most strongly supportive of LGBT equality).

It’s also harmful: a [2012 study](#) of LGBT college students published in the *Journal of American College Health* found that those who regularly heard the word “gay” used as pejorative term reported feeling more isolated than their peers and are at an increased risk for a whole host of negative health problems like headaches, poor appetite, and eating disorders. For this reason and so many others, the phrase “that’s so gay” makes my skin crawl.

It’s relatively easy to call out friends and family members who use “gay” in this negative manner, but confronting total strangers -- particularly in public -- can be an entirely different story. Brian Hagar-McKee, a 55-year-old teacher from Framingham, Massachusetts, shows us how it’s done.

Last Sunday morning, Brian and his husband George stopped at a local coffee shop. They ordered their coffee and sat down at a table near the servers’ stand, ready to enjoy a little time together before George went off to work. Out of the blue, Brian overheard a young employee say to a co-worker, “Want to hear something that is so gay?” She tells her colleague her story, then repeats the slur, asking “Isn’t that so gay?!?”

“And then,” Brian writes, “I say, in my sternest teacher voice... ‘EXCUSE ME?’ She saw both of us glaring at her and was intelligent enough to correctly determine why. She was immediately apologetic, but still didn’t quite get it. ‘I wasn’t using it in a negative sense,’” she said.

“Doesn’t matter,” [Brian] told her, making sure he was speaking loudly enough for the whole shop to hear. “That’s too often how it gets used. Who I am is not something you get to use to insult something else.” The manager came over and apologized, but then tried to downplay the incident. “Kids these days,” they said. “There’s no excuse for it,” George replied.

The two finished their coffee and left, but the incident stuck with Brian. He decided to write an open letter to the worker, her managers, and the store chain, in order to turn the whole thing into a teachable moment. Brian’s open letter is after the jump. It’s wonderfully heartfelt, and explains exactly why the phrase “that’s so gay” is so hurtful for so many LGBT people. Check it out below.

To the young woman who made the mistake this morning: Thank you for your apology - I forgive you. Please let me tell you why. Let me introduce myself: my name is Brian, I was having coffee this morning with my husband, George. We’ve been together 28 years; we were legally married as soon as Massachusetts made it possible. Our work schedules don’t always allow us the time together we’d like. This was one of those rare occasions when we were able to enjoy some quiet time in each other’s company (with both of us awake).

I’ve been thinking about you most of the day. I wish that I had been able to calmly invite you and your manager to sit with us for a couple of minutes so I could talk to you about why we reacted the way we did. I want to be someone better than just the cranky old man in your store.

As a teacher, I care deeply about young people. Nothing makes me happier than hearing from children I taught in my elementary school, who come back to visit to tell me about the young adults they’ve become and where their lives have taken them. Nothing makes me happier than watching them find the jobs and hobbies they are passionate about. I love seeing (and helping) them find

their voice.

I want every single one of them to be happy about being who they are, and I will defend them fiercely when someone else tries to tear them down. That includes you, too. Homophobia isn't just the Fred Phelps of the world waving "God Hates Fags" signs. Homophobia can be subtle - and it is *always* personal. I want to help you understand what a gay man hears, what I hear, when someone says the phrase "that's so gay."

I hear my seventh-grade teacher taunting one of my fellow students for being a "fairy" - and being terrified that he would call me out, too.

I hear my church telling me after I came out (at about your age) that I was not worthy to attend worship with them.

I hear "faggot" and "queer" and "gay" as the worst possible insults my high school peers could think of to call each other - and remember my fear that they would discover my truth.

I hear my own parents telling me not to come see them after I told them.

I hear the real estate agent who refused to show us any properties "because people in this town wouldn't understand you."

I hear the total strangers yelling out at us, "look at the faggots!", when all we were doing was walking down the street and minding our own business.

I hear the teen girl in the fast food restaurant in my mother's small town calling everyone she knows "faggot and homo" and remember feeling afraid to speak up because of all the young men around who might be willing to beat me up for it.

I hear the drunk screaming at me in the parking lot: "All you faggots ought to be shot!"

I hear the snort of the admitting nurse in the emergency room when I must tell her, more than once, that George is my next of kin.

I hear the news stories in state after state where my marriage is not recognized and there are no laws to protect me from anti-gay discrimination (and I pray my car never breaks down or one of us requires emergency care in one of those states). I hear the news stories in country after country around the globe where people like me are executed for the crime of *existing*.

I hear all the non-verbal messaging, the whole time I was growing up, that kept me in the dark about who I am; that never allowed me to see, hear, *know* that my life could be happy, healthy, well-adjusted, self-actualized; that never allowed me to believe I was worthy of love or that I would ever find love in my life.

In short, I hear shame, contempt, revulsion, disgust, hate.

I understand that you intended none of the above. Do *you* understand how your words can and do bring all of that up for me?

Can you understand the fear I have the moment I hear "that's so gay," when I think, "how bad is this going to get?"

I'm 55 years old. I came out long before you were born. In the many years since then it has taken me decades - *decades* - to overcome the ocean of negative messaging about being gay. I was in my mid-40s before I could honestly say that I was grateful for the gift (yes, the gift) of being gay.

Let me tell you what gay actually is: gay is how love operates in my life.

That's important, so I'll repeat: *Gay is how love operates in my life.*

Gay is George walking two miles on an unlit highway at midnight so he can help me change a flat tire that I just can't budge.

Gay is George rushing me to the ER for repeated asthma attacks that won't subside.

Gay is George's kindness to my homophobic and mentally disabled sister because he understands her need and continues to be generous and helpful to her despite her rudeness toward him.

Gay is George bringing my lunch to school when I forget.

Gay is the set of little rubber duckies he leaves around the house that mean "I love you" because he's too sentimental to speak the words.

Gay is the joy I have when I wake up in the morning and have another day with him.

Gay is the support of kind-hearted people who helped me survive the abandonment I experienced when my church and my immediate family would have nothing to do with me.

Gay is the love of extended family who made sure to let me know they value me as I am.

Gay is my husband's family who welcomed me with open arms and open hearts when my own family would not.

Gay is when my mother finally realized that it's better to have a gay son than no son at all, and when she says to me - after years of her own journey - "I believe you are as God made you."

Gay is my gratitude for the years of patience George has shown me, for the stability his love gives my life, for the comfort he has been for me always.

Gay is all those things. Gay is the lens through which I see and experience the world. Gay is where my joy lives. Can you understand then, why I would find it so upsetting to have something so sacred to me compared to something you don't like? Please be assured that I don't hold a grudge. The expression on your face when I spoke to you made it clear you understood you had made a mistake. You made it clear that your intentions were not malicious. Careless and thoughtless, yes, but not intentionally harmful.

I hope you understand, too, that had someone been making blonde jokes or derogatory remarks about women I would have been just as loud in my protests. The mindset that grows homophobia is the same one that disrespects women. No one deserves the double insult of having unchangeable aspects of their identity disrespected as a way to denigrate something else.

I hope that you read this letter in the way it's intended: as an act of kindness toward you. The teacher in me hopes that you take it as a lesson in empathy, and that you'll pay it forward - and protest when someone else thoughtlessly indulges in a bit of gay-bashing.

Peace,

Brian Hagar-McKee



5 Facts about the Changing Marriage Equality Landscape

by Maureen McCarty, HRC Deputy Director of Marketing



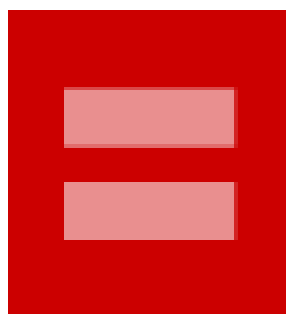
Whether [out in front of the Supreme Court](#) or [going red on social](#), support for the LGBT community is at full-tilt. Now, more than ever, Americans are joining us on the right side of history.

Just two years after marriage equality first hit the Supreme Court, here's where we stand:

- 1.) Prior to the *Windsor* and *Perry* rulings in 2013, same-sex couples could legally marriage in [10 states](#), plus the District of Columbia. Today, same-sex couples can marry in 37 states.
- 2.) And there are 60,000 married same-sex couples in the 13 states still waiting for the right to marry the person they love.
- 3.) Currently, 195 million Americans support marriage equality.
- 4.) According to a 2013 [NBC/WSJ poll](#), 79 percent of Americans say they know someone who is gay or lesbian – that's a 17 point increase in less than 10 years.
- 5.) Despite what the opposition may say, only three percent of marriage equality opponents would protest a Supreme Court decision overturning marriage nationwide, according to according to a June 2014 [HRC poll](#).



There is still time to show the world that you support loving, committed same-sex couples. [Go red now.](#)



HUMAN
RIGHTS
CAMPAIGN.

Harvey Milk's Words Speak True Today

“Gay brothers and sisters...you must come out. Come out...to your parents...I know that it is hard and will hurt them but think about how they will hurt you in the voting booth!”

Milk was adamant that the metaphorical closet severely handicapped the gay rights movement. By hiding, LGBT people could avoid discrimination and harassment, but their invisibility simultaneously prevented the education of others about their lived experiences. He encouraged individuals to come out to their friends and family, believing that just by being open about themselves, they were contributing more to the movement than by staying closeted. Since then, studies and surveys have consistently shown that personally knowing someone who is LGBT — or even just having a conversation with someone who is — increases the likelihood that a person supports LGBT equality.

“I would like to see every gay doctor come out, every gay lawyer, every gay architect come out, stand up, and let that world know. That would do more to end prejudice overnight than anybody would imagine..”

Among Milk's accomplishments was helping pass San Francisco's ordinance banning employment discrimination against gays and lesbians. This law would go on to be a model for cities and states across the country. In 2014, it's illegal to fire or not hire a person for their sexual orientation in 21 states, and transgender people are similarly protected in 18 states. Still, discrimination is legal in the remaining states, and no federal law has ever been passed granting such protections on the national level. Last year, the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) passed in the Senate, but Speaker John Boehner (R-OH) says there's "no way" it'll come up for a vote in the House this year.



Harvey Milk celebrating the signing of San Francisco's gay rights bill in April, 1977.



High School Spotlight Gender-fluid Supervillain

At Fort Hayes Arts and Academic High School students are passionate about the arts. So it's no surprise that students were excited to work with Michael Watson, a graphic artist in Columbus, Ohio who founded Freestyle Komics. Mr. Watson is working with an English class to develop a comic book character. What makes this even more exciting is the fact that the students voted to make a gender-fluid character. Below, a student explains the storyline and the reason the class chose to make a gender-fluid supervillain.

"The reason Mrs. Johnson's class made a supervillain instead of a superhero is because everyone always makes stories about heroes but no one makes villain stories or says why they

Cont. on pg. 8

Maggie Kesling Gay-Straight Alliance Grant Program

The OEA-GLBT Caucus is anxiously awaiting to award its first OEA-GLBT Maggie Kesling Gay-Straight Alliance Grant. Applications are currently available and on our website or in hard copy at the caucus table during the RA's. Make sure you swing by the Caucus table to pick up an application.

Almost three years ago, when the OEA-GLBT Caucus was officially recognized, at the first general membership meeting ever held, the Caucus received a generous donation from an amazing member who wanted nothing more than to donate the funds in memory of her daughter, Maggie Kesling. The following year, Rhonda Kesling made another generous donation to the Caucus in memory of her daughter Maggie. Maggie was an active college junior at Heidelberg University. The college junior passed away in February 2011.

The Caucus executive committee has taken the funds from these generous donations and proceeds from raffles the last few years and have established two grant awards; one grant for GSAs which are already established but are looking for funds to help them with a specific project; the other grant for a student group wishing to develop a GSA. One requirement, aside from the application is that the GSA must have an adult, who is a caucus member, willing to be the GSA advisor.

Applications will be available at the Caucus table during RAs and on the OEA-GLBT Caucus website, <http://oea-qlbt.ohea.us/>. Applications will continually be accepted.





Drag Does A Community Good

by Kevin Jackson

Nina West is a name that is famous in the drag community in Columbus. Every couple months her and many other fabulous entertainers put together incredible productions that run for 2 or 3 weekends at a time. You may think, what does a drag show have to do with anything? Let me tell you.

At the end of each show, Nina brings the entire cast out to do a reprise of one of the most popular group numbers. During this reprise, every dollar collected is donated to a charity. I along with several other CEA and GLBT Caucus members attend her most recent show, Nina West 1978.

When I invited these other members, they had no idea what they were in for. What an incredible show! But then came the reprise. Nina and Virginia West decided at this show to pick Kaleidoscope Youth Center for their charity donation. Kaleidoscope Youth Center is the only organization in Ohio solely dedicated to supporting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth and their allies. As a youth service agency serving the Central Ohio area, Kaleidoscope Youth Center has become a well-respected community-based organization providing direct services to youth, training and education to youth service providers, and important information relating to sexual orientation and gender identity issues to the community at large. The total amount raised during this reprise and encouragement to support such a great organization ended up totaling over \$2,500!

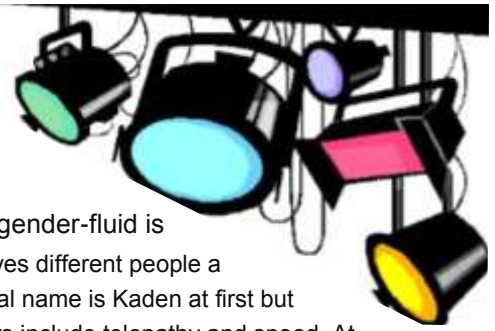
The song performed during this time was ["I Choose You" by Sara Bareilles](#) saying "Tell the world that we finally got it all right, I choose you." With marriage equality nearing a decision at the Federal level soon, the performance was touching. Soon, many people will be able to marry the one they choose.



For more Info about Kaleidoscope Youth Center click the logo to be directed to the website.

High School Spotlight

(cont. from pg. 6)



turned into a villain. Let alone a gender-fluid villain! The reason they are gender-fluid is because there are not enough super-people who are gender-fluid. This gives different people a chance to connect with comics a lot easier! Our villain's name is Fallout. Their real name is Kaden at first but then it changes into Arava; the Indian Transgender god's name. Fallouts' powers include telepathy and speed. At first, the villain was a pair of really smart twins, a boy and a girl, who were really smart and graduated school at a young age. They became bored with everyone's basic slow teaching, so they started to learn how to combine and create genes. When they finally mastered it, they decided to combine themselves and create a super person. The entire time their father, Johnathon, only noticed their older brother, Travis. He was the all American dream boy who plays football. The twins get angry and start planning on how to get back at him. They then find out Travis is a superhero, TD! They [the twins] combine their genes and become Fallout and start their plan to take their brother down." – Cody A., Savanna B. and Jerimiah F.

Gender Fluid:

A person who is Gender Fluid feels like a mix of the two traditional genders, but may feel more boy some days, and more girl other days.

Being Gender Fluid has nothing to do with which set of genitalia one has, nor their sexual orientation.

The students in Mrs. Johnson's classes will continue to build on this character for the remainder of the school year.

NOT JUST PRETENDING NOT FAKING NOT
DOING THIS FOR YOUR ATTENTION NOT
TRYING TO BE SPECIAL NOT UNABLE TO
MAKE UP MY MIND NOT MAKING IT ALL UP
I AM GENDERFLUID AND I AM VALID.

Youngstown State removes posters for 'straight pride' week

YOUNGSTOWN, Ohio -- Posters promoting a "straight pride" week at a northeast Ohio university have been removed after student leaders said the message went beyond free speech.



Youngstown State University student government leaders tell WKBN-TV they decided to remove the posters after consulting with university officials.

The posters were hung around campus earlier this week. They included profanity and promoted the event as a time to not highlight sexual orientation or differences among students. They encouraged students to "go about your day without telling everyone about how 'different' you are."

Campus leaders said that while they believe the posters were meant as satire, the message was inappropriate.

"If you actually read through it, it seemed like it went way further than a free speech issue," said Student Government President Michael Slavens. "There were swear words and took it a little further than the average free speech should go."

The posters counter the school's mission to create a diverse campus, university spokesman Ron Cole told WFMJ-TV. Officials are investigating possible student code violations, and disciplinary action may follow.

A statement from the student government said while it respects free speech of all students, the posters weren't authorized, contained vulgar language and missed the point of activism.

LGBT books for the young

Writer David Levithan last year marked the 10th anniversary of his *Boy Meets Boy*, a romantic teen comedy where the homecoming queen was once a guy and the gay-straight alliance was aimed at helping the straight kids learn how to dance. And there was Paul, who meets Noah. Since then, there's been a burst of books featuring lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning young people.

Levithan, also publisher and editorial director at Scholastic, offered his insights into parenting and books on LGBTQ-related themes for young people in an interview with The Associated Press.

AP: How does a parent who isn't involved in the LGBTQ community but would like to foster an awareness and tolerance in children go about doing that through books, and at what age does that process begin?

Levithan: It's never too early to foster kindness and equal treatment, for whatever group. So much of the pain that LGBT kids go through is because they feel distanced from all of the narratives they've been given. They've been told that everyone grows up a certain way, and now their own way is diverging from that.

The best thing parents can do, whether their kids end up queer or straight, is to acknowledge all of the different options that are out there, and letting their kids know that they support them no matter which options end up being theirs.

Books are a wonderful signifier and a perfect conversation starter. With my novel *Boy Meets Boy*, I've seen it work both ways: I've had kids who've left their copies around for parents to find, as a way of 'coming out' to them. And I've had parents who've left their copies around for kids to find, so the kids would know they were supported and loved.

AP: Your fellow writer John Green said a Hollywood producer once told him: 'The only thing audiences hate more than smart teenagers are gay teenagers.' Does that extend to books for kids and teens today?

Levithan: That producer would be laughed out of one of my editorial meetings, for certain. Readers embrace all kinds of characters, as long as they are written with emotional truth.

Ten years ago, there may have been some hesitation on some people's part. But it's a different world now, and the best-seller list is full of novels with well-developed gay characters - not just in gay-themed novels like *Will Grayson*, *Will Grayson* (co-written by Green and Levithan) but in works by best-selling authors like Cassandra Claire, Maggie Stiefvater and Ellen Hopkins, where the queer characters are part of the multifaceted worlds they are creating or reflecting.

AP: Are LGBTQ kids and teens fairly represented in books for those age groups? Are there enough stories where LGBTQ themes are taken on but also books that just happen to include such characters but are not about that experience?

Levithan: There is constantly a need for diversity within the representations. It's just as limiting to say there's only one kind of gay story, just as it's limiting to say there's only one kind of straight one. As for how much being gay is central to the character's identity or story - as in life that totally depends on who the character is and what he or she is going through.

The important thing is for the characters to feel real, and to be given the humanity they are due. That granting of humanity is what separates a full portrait from a stereotype.

I think it's dangerous to talk about 'Oh, that character just happens to be gay' as some kind of goal for us and our literature. The important thing is to show as much of the spectrum as possible, and to continue to investigate it.



YOU Make a Difference

Individuals who get involved make all the difference. Whether you join a group, attend an event, speak out against discrimination, intervene to help someone, or lend emotional support to others, you are making the world a better place for everyone.

Renew your caucus membership today!

Send your completed membership form to:

Ed Eblin
OEA-GLBT Treasurer
Eastland Career Center
4465 S. Hamilton Road
Groveport, OH 43215

Contact Us

Online:

<http://oea-glbtohea.us/>

Email:

oeaglbtc.membership@gmail.com

Facebook:

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/OEA-GLBT-Caucus/108551075881139>

Or go to Facebook and search:

OEA GLBT CAUCUS



GLBT Caucus of the Ohio Education Association

Save a stamp and write in **“OEA GLBT \$10”** on your local’s continuous membership roster. Ask others in your building to join as well! By joining in this fashion, your membership will automatically renew from year to year along with your OEA/NEA dues. Or join online at <http://oea-glbtohea.us/> and pay using PayPal

