

Harley Hall

A Push in the Right Direction

An atheist identifying as a democrat and a bisexual, in my experience living in a small Bible-Belt town this probably isn't the best way to introduce myself. Unfortunately, I don't feel comfortable pretending to be something that I'm not. In a town of less than 4,000 people, everybody knows everybody's business, so everyone knew when I came out.

A year of eating lunch and spending every weekend alone later, I finally felt comfortable with myself. Granted I was out, when people expressed their disgust I started to...water down certain facets of myself. But that was all behind me, out and proud I took it upon myself to set an example. The year of hell I went through was unacceptable and unfortunately millions of people around the world have very similar experiences. I didn't want intolerance to win, and the best way to rise above those who promoted it was to be happy living with my lifestyle. Not long after that a few classmates had come out to me, needing to tell someone but afraid of being ostracized as I was.

Everyone has the right to love. Having hatred blindly thrown in my direction was one thing: I had convinced myself that I deserved it. But, when one of the classmates who had confessed his sexuality to me was told to kill himself by another student, my heart completely broke. No inciting incident existed, only the fact that a few students had their suspicions and thought it grotesque for a boy to be attracted to other boys. While I may have tried to anger some of my more homophobic classmates on purpose in the past, this was the day that I stopped it all completely. No matter what side it is coming from, whether it be myself taunting the homophobes or the homophobes taunting us, intolerance is unacceptable.

With this being my senior year, I know I am leaving behind a few fellow LGBTQ classmates. Of course, they are my friends and we will keep in touch, but there needs to be a support network for students like us in this part of the world. I'm afraid to leave them behind, because I once thought I was completely alone and I had attempted suicide, what will happen if they feel the same way? People might not like who we are, but if they were less venomous or if more people were willing to stand up life would be that much easier. Love is love.

When I move on to college, I'll be studying Radio-Television-Film. My goal is to be a filmmaker that focuses on making people think. And, being from a "compassionate" state like Texas, I want people to question whether loving someone of the same gender is really wrong? Is it worth hating when there are kids committing suicide all over the country? Is this intolerance worth losing some of the brightest minds and loving hearts? Society needs to continue moving forward, but in some parts of the world society needs a push in the right direction.