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As many older generations do not discuss nor address the involvement of the LGBTQ community, this could be the possibility of fearing their children being one themselves. Being seen as “queer” is deemed abnormal or something to be ashamed of in society’s eyes. Many false assumptions and stereotypes are used in our community that can damage the eyes of those who don't know about us. As some people might see the issues, many might not be aware of what the community deals with. I found it absurd that we are discriminated against for showing our true love and who we are.

Imagine yourself having a mask on wherever you go. Having this heavy fear, fear of what others may perceive you as. Well, this is something that our community goes through every day as we do not feel safe where we are, and fear being cast off and rejected. A safe home is something to be grateful for as some might not be the case for everyone especially for us, knowing that one wrong move can change our lives forever. Many of us have been kicked or disowned by our loved ones, fearing one day it might happen to us. The feeling of being discarded as we are nothing after finding and opening up about our truths can break us the most. These experiences can lead to bottled-up emotions to cause insecurity, depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts. As we might not know up to cope with these bottled feelings, they try to find easier ways to lessen the pain by using drugs and alcohol. This might not just hurt us but affect those around us. Those who are disowned are left homeless, seeking employment and shelter to survive for themselves.

This not only happens at home, but at school, as there might be a higher chance for a queer kid to be bullied and harassed. As we all know that bullying can lead to depression and anxiety, but it can also lead to low self-esteem and low self-confidence. As young teenagers might need help, it is hard for them to reach out to others, especially school counselors and teachers. Fearing not knowing who to trust, they rely on themselves only which leads to their downfall and pushed them to use harmful substances like alcohol and drugs. As they find it their only way to block off the pain of past haunting experiences, these behaviors become addictive leading young adults to fall into a rabbit hole. This would later carry on throughout their adulthood, affecting those who are close to them.

During a recent incident involving the LGBTQ community, there was a mass shooting that occurred in Colorado Springs LGBTQ+ club on November 20, 2022. Many members like myself were devastated by the fact that someone would intentionally target a safe space and left a traumatic experience for those who were there during that night. Hearing the gunshots ring on top of the ear of the innocents in that club, or people whimpering in silence praying that they weren't going to be next is what I imagined they have faced. As many had survived, many were left scarred, not being able to feel to live the same way, remembering this unforgettable nightmare. As there were many disgusting comments from people praising the killer for his acts like "This is horrific! Do it again! It's good to see some people are actually cleansing the earth." as well as "guy who shot it up has my respect." I was displeased and rather infuriated by the fact that people would find this to be some type of sick joke that many lives are put in danger due to someone being different.

Would you want your child to feel afraid and know that the love you give is unconditional? Knowing that the real person inside that body is trapped from expressing their true selves just to protect themselves from those who are their “blood”. Knowing that a straight person can be able to walk in and out of their house comfortably without having to put a fake display on makes me feel outrageous. The fact that we are different from others, does not mean that we should be treated differently. This topic isn’t something that is new and has repetitively been going on for years, knowing that we have been here since the beginning, hoping that one day we too will find the normality of being seen as everyone else. Words like discrimination and prejudice are things that are well known; in fact, they can be seen in racism and sexism as well. These topics all relate to each other and the amount of abuse and nerve of people to target the majority of the LGBTQ+ community with homophobic slurs and negative comments about their sexuality and gender identity. As sometimes it might escalate to physical violence, these are things that we fear the most.

Hearing comments questioning one’s sexuality, “Are you gay”, are things that we fear the most. Not knowing how to reply to the message and fearing the judgment of what comes out of their mouths. This stigma of being LGBTQ are those who struggle to understand and are too traditional to open up that we have been here all along. This can lead to stereotypes and spread false rumors about us leading to a flawed image of who we actually are. As I know many of you know who we are, it is important for you to educate those who do not know much about us and open and educate people about something new. Reducing and normalizing someone being their true self allows everyone to be open and proud of their sexuality and identity.

As the recognition of the LGBTQ+ community is something that we have fought for decades, it has progressed slowly and those who are not open to speaking up about these topics are the reason for no evolution within our environment. For many heterosexuals that are reading this speech, I hope this educates you to respect and want to be more open about these ideas as these are one of many civil issues that still need to fix and address today.

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