



A Mothers Heart (Revised Aug 2009)

By Patti Bowman

My Notes

My name is Patti, I have two wonderful sons and my youngest son is gay.

I come from a Hispanic background, my Mother was born in Mexico City and my Dad was born in Argentina, as an American citizen, later he became a US diplomat and we lived all over the world. I met my husband of 34 years in California, we were both ultra conservative Republicans and raised Catholics.

My eldest son has been married now for 6 years and is a pharmacist, and my youngest Daniel graduated from Azusa Pacific University (a private Christian University) with a degree in theatre.

When Daniel was little, we noticed certain traits and behaviors. We were both so uneducated in any atypical lifestyle that we wanted to make sure he played with only toys that were usually for boys or gender neutral (musical instruments, etc.). My husband and I discussed amongst ourselves the possibility of Daniel being gay, and knew that we had done nothing to encourage him; we even had him take karate lessons where he eventually became a brown belt. The reason I mention this is to make a point in favor of Nature instead of Nurture.

He showed a passion for performing at an early age and we found out about a program called Christian Youth Theatre through his second grade teacher. He auditioned and made it into every show, which inspired us to start him with voice lessons. He was always so happy performing, plus he had a group of friends that did not judge him and he fit in! I will be eternally grateful to this wonderful caring insightful teacher (Mrs. Ferguson), she may have saved him from the fate of other LGBT children that try to commit suicide and sometimes succeed like the two 11 year old boys that hung themselves recently.

When he was in junior high school, we had to take him out of public school, because he was being picked on by a couple of boys and I did not want to run the risk of him getting beaten up. He had a lot of friends (most of them girls), and we put him in eighth grade at the local Catholic school. This unfortunately is not something that everyone can do and we were lucky to be financially able to do it at the time. He loved the small classroom and I was there at lunch watching, and the world seemed fine again.

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My eldest never had all the trouble that Daniel had, but he was small for his age and I thought that maybe the bullies picked on that. In high school he went back to public school and auditioned and made it into the local school choir program he made immediate friends within the group, they traveled and performed in various states and foreign countries. I chaperoned almost all of the performances and truly enjoyed the camaraderie and talent of the students. I felt that we really found a home in this group. Thanks to this group High school was not a problem for him, it was like a large extended family (48 kids from 8-12th. Grade).

In tenth grade, we asked him if he was gay (no girlfriends, naked men pictures on the computer, etc.) but he denied it and ran out of the house with my husband running behind him to catch and calm him down. Prior to this incident, through Christian Youth Theatre we became familiar with "Born again Christians" and all three of us, my husband, Daniel and I, got baptized in the local Christian Non-Denomination church that we do not attend anymore.

He came out officially to us about three years ago at the age of 23. He called my husband on the phone first, I spoke to him after that and it felt like the world had landed on my chest! I couldn't breathe; my world felt like it was ending... you can't imagine how awful I felt. I couldn't stop crying, even though I knew there was a possibility all along that he was gay, I knew that he was not choosing this on purpose! I knew he had fought his feelings for so many years. We told him we loved him and knew all along that he was gay, he told us that coming out made him feel the happiest he had ever felt...a huge weight was lifted off of his shoulders (and straight into mine!).

I didn't want him to know that I felt so badly and I knew that I had to get used to the idea, you see he fought this feeling all his life because the church told him it was bad, and little by little he got used to the fact that he was gay it took him over 20 years to do this and we as parents have the same getting used to feelings in a lesser time frame. My first thought was for his safety (sexually transmitted diseases and anti gay violence) then, I started feeling sorry for myself. I wouldn't have grandchildren, he couldn't get married legally, and who knows how he'd be treated out in the world (so much hatred against gays!).

I went to a therapist for a few sessions where all I did was cry and cry. I would cry at work in the bathroom, at home in the shower (trying to hide this sadness from everyone). The therapist enlightened me when she told me that I had a right to feel like that. It was like a death; like my child had died and it was because MY dreams for this child had died. We need to stop imposing OUR dreams on other people instead of just accepting them at face value and respecting THEIR dreams.

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My dreams were those of a mother in mainstream America, where your child gets married, you get a new daughter or son-in-law, and hopefully children, etc. This changed everything and we were no longer part of the “mainstream American dream” we were part of the citizens that were considered more of a ‘fringe minority’ society; who are singled out or marginalized for hate crimes and ridiculed.

Eventually, little by little talking to anyone and everyone about my gay son (I practiced the word with strangers who must have thought I was crazy!), and joining PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays), I felt that my life was getting back on track. I also craved any information and literature that talked about gays, including two documentary films, “For the Bible tells me so” and “Anyone and Everyone” (I highly recommend both!) and books like Mel White’s “Stranger at the gates”, Mel was ghost writer for Fallwell, Billy Graham and many other famous fundamentalist Christian leaders while fighting his own feelings as a devout Christian gay man.

This truly inspired me and gave me a cause; a reason to fight for equal rights for my son and all the others who don’t have a parent to stand up for them. Not all families embrace their children which is why I now feel like this is my ministry. My former church minister didn’t think it was Biblical for my son to have a relationship, and stated; “He can be gay but should abstain from any same sex relationship.”

But I just couldn’t imagine a life sentence of loneliness for my youngest boy and all the other gay and lesbian children. I know that Jesus preached all about love, forgiveness, and not to judge one another. Some of the rules that a few extreme fundamentalist churches preach are not correct; my heart and pure common sense tell me this. Some of the writings at the time were culturally designed during a period of time that had more gender rules between men and women. Although the Bible is specific on many items, do I really want to serve a God that is so small and limited in the minds and interpretations of some of the more fundamentalist churches? I realized that the God I want to serve includes *everyone!* Not just some....but all of us who have fallen short of perfection....essentially the whole human race!

I know that my son’s values have not changed, he has role models of long-term relationships and I wish that for him too. Part of my therapy in dealing with this is talking as much as I can to groups about PFLAG . The more I spoke and cried, the better things got and if I encountered negativity in friends or family I was prepared to dialogue and show them that they were not looking at this correctly, if they did not agree to dialogue then I was prepared to drop them from my life and move on.

My parents were told about Danny and accept him as he is. My Dad just passed away on February 13, 2008, and I was glad that I got to tell him about Danny so I could experience his acceptance of this. I also have a cousin (on my Father’s side) who is 53 and gay; my Grandfather’s only sister in Mexico (in the 1920’s) was a

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lesbian and served in the army!! She had a life-long partner until she died (not many heterosexual relationships go that long!). Imagine how hard they had it back then.

What I know now is that being LGBT is a permanent human trait as much as heterosexuality is also a permanent human condition. I'm convinced there is a genetic link, which is described in the movies I mentioned, and also there may be hormonal links during pregnancy. There is still so much that we don't understand.

I just want more people to come to the place I have grown to so that their families can heal faster. I do realize that I still have a lot of growing to do myself; however, the first step is accepting who they are.

If we could all realize that this behavior also exists in the animal kingdom (this is a true story about two penguins at a zoo; "And Tango Makes Three", by Justin Richardson & Peter Parnell) and start loving everyone without concern of gender and or sexual orientation, we would have a much more accepting society. Perhaps family's can start teaching their children early and very young that it's okay to be gay, that some families will have two moms or two dads and not marginalize more good people and families. I wish I had all that information when I was younger to be able to expose my children to more information instead of censoring information like some churches want to do.

Not everyone, because they are gay or lesbian, are going to be a good or bad person; not everyone because they are Christian, Atheist or any other religion are either good or bad; that is not what makes the person. Don't look at the gender, religious beliefs, outwardly appearances, etc...just look into their hearts. Besides who are we to judge anyone! Even if they are bad, it's not up to us

I can finally say that I'm thankful that my youngest son is gay (never thought I could say this; I always wished that I could put this event in reverse so I could rewind, erase and move on), but his being gay has shown me that I can really love unconditionally and non-judgmentally. I feel like a veil was lifted from my eyes, I followed religious churches without asking questions, now I know better, I'm still a Christian, I have a better understanding of what that really means and I'm very saddened by the fundamentalist Christian churches, Mormons, Catholics and other denominations that misuse the Bible to exclude, ridicule and reject LGBT Christians. They are using this minority towards a dark goal, like Hitler used this to unite Germany against the Jews and other minorities and gays in 1933. Even after the war when allies liberated all the remaining people from the concentration camps, they did not liberate the gays, they remained imprisoned.

These fundamentalist are dangerous they are misusing the Bible and fear to rob the LGBT community of basic human rights, but the courts are trying to keep these rights like the 14th. Amendment says "no state shall make or enforce a law that shall abridge the privileges of citizens nor deny them equal protection under the law.

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Every human being deserves the right to come out of the dark of the closet and into the light and to be loved and accepted as they are

When Barak Obama was elected as our 44th. President part of Martin Luther King's dream for equality became true, then came Lilly Ledbetter's equal rights bill for women in the work place, yet we are still fighting and working together to complete "my dream", of a time when people will not look down at anyone that is different (LGBT), when same sex marriage is allowed without all these (so-called Christians) churches fighting against these rights, I dream of a time when two men or two women or two transgender people can walk in public holding hands and allowed to behave like my heterosexual son and his wife without hateful, reproachful looks, violent behavior or words shouted at them. I dream of a time when transgender people are able to use a public restrooms without fearing for their safety, when all churches will embrace everyone as "God's Children" and stop pointing fingers from their pulpits making their own rules and interpreting God's words their own way while pushing people further away from what Jesus stood for.

A dream where we can really all love our neighbors, but that time has not arrived yet, I'm hopeful that it is coming and there will be a time when this dream will come true for me and other parents that share my dream.

Patti Boman

PFLAG Mother

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