

Dear Straight America - an open letter

Contributed by Rabbi Joshua Lesser

Dear Straight America,

I am a rabbi who is deeply moved by my tradition. The most moving part is my ability and obligation to work with the future generation to ensure that this world continues to be a better place. One of my synagogue's teenagers was in a high school production of the Laramie Project, and so I took the rest of my teens to see this powerful play about the death of Matthew Shepherd. When I asked them what surprised them, they said something very contradictory. On one hand, the depth of hatred in this world surprised them; yet they also expressed surprise of the vast number of people who came out in support of Matthew Shepherd and his family and grieved with them.

And so I ask you, Straight America, you, our mothers and fathers, you, our brothers and sisters, you, our doctors and patients, you, our rabbis, priests, ministers, and congregants, you, our children and our grandparents. I ask you, "Why are you willing to grieve and mourn with us over losses like Matthew Shepherd, and yet cannot find it in your hearts to celebrate with us? Why will you decry the violence that happens in our communities, and yet remain silent when we are fighting for the right to have our committed unions legalized? How does it hurt you? Explain to us, Straight America how does it take away from your relationships when we are saying that all we want, all we deserve are the same rights afforded to you? Why are you willing to cry with us, and yet unable to make the connection that the rights denied us and keep us separate are used to justify the very violence you declare is wrong?"

I invite you to take the next step and celebrate with us. And those that can and do celebrate us, fight for our rights with us. Know that our lives do not have to end, in order for you to recognize us; that our lives do not have to be brutalized in order for you to join us. I invite you to do the fair thing, the moral thing and work to extend the same rights to our committed relationships. Folks, this is love we are talking about. How can you not celebrate love? How can you not honor it? As much as we value your support in those moments of sadness and crisis, we say to you, "join us in our laughter, dance with us, pray with us, love with us and recognize that none of us need to be created in anyone else's image other than the Divine image."

Sincerely,

Rabbi Joshua Lesser