



YOUTH CREATING CHANGE

Directing Change
Program & Film Contest



Selection of Directing Change and Hope & Justice Entries with a Focus on the LGBTQ+ Community

(short films, visual art, and written works; updated June 2026)

Tag us when sharing films!

Instagram: [@YouthCreatingChangeOrg](#)

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Films

Different

Los Alamitos High School, Orange County
“Different” focuses on the challenges some LGBTQ+ young men face, especially in Latino culture, reminding viewers of the negative impact of rigid expectations around gender, sexuality, and expression. ([view/download](#))



The Victor(y)

El Dorado High School, Orange County
This film shows an LGBTQ+ youth struggling with their sense of identity and the perception of others, leading to isolation. Their outlook improves when a LGBTQ+ peer reaches out. ([view/download](#))

Oversaturated

San Diego Met High School, San Diego County
Created by a queer youth, this film creatively visualizes his experience with suicidal thoughts and other mental health difficulties while also reminding youth to ask directly about suicide and emphasizing the importance of connecting with those who seem to be struggling. ([view/download](#))



Community Heals

Rainbow Pride Youth Alliance, San Bernardino County
This film reminds struggling youth that they can find hope through community, encouraging them to seek spaces where they can be themselves and connect with others. ([view/download](#))

For Who You Are

Harbor High, Santa Cruz County
Featuring both members of the LGBTQ+ community and their allies, “For Who You Are” provides reassurance by reminding viewers that dark times don’t last forever. ([view/download](#))

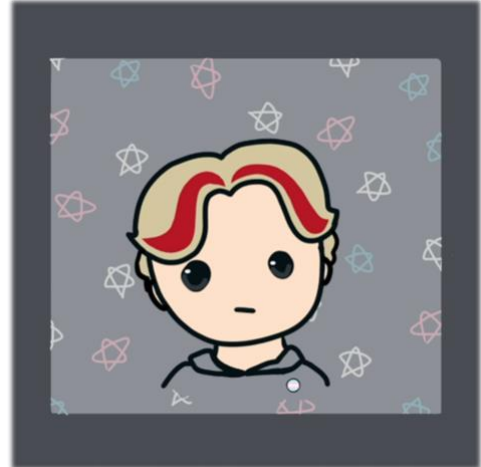


Binded

Jurupa Hills High School, San Bernardino County
“Binded” examines the impact of transphobia and dysphoria on mental health, encouraging both self-acceptance and compassion for others. ([view/download](#))

Dark Forest/ I'm a Man

Sage Creek High School, San Diego County
In this spoken word piece, two youth recite personal poems about how their gender identity makes them feel. ([view/download](#))



Acceptance

Sage Creek High School, San Diego County
In this spoken word piece, two youth recite personal poems about how their gender identity makes them feel. ([view/download](#))

Real People

CTEC, Kern County
“Real People” encourages queer teenagers by reminding them that their identity is nothing to be ashamed of. Thus, the film seeks to combat internalized homophobia while empowering young members of the LGBTQ+ community. ([view/download](#))



That Didn't Come Out Right

Fremont Academy of Engineering and Design, Los Angeles County
This film tells the story of a youth who is outed to their parents by a school principal. ([view/download](#))

Directing Change Documentary: A Look in the Mental Health of the LGBTQ+ Community

Pleasant Grove High School, Sacramento County

This documentary-style film includes interviews from numerous students in order to provide an authentic glimpse into the mental health challenges faced by the LGBTQ+ community.

[\(view/download\)](#)

real members of the
LGBTQ+ community,
not just a statistic.

How does expressing or not expressing your gender affect your mental health?

A Genderqueer Perspective

Sage Creek High School, San Diego County Youth describe the way gender expression impacts their mental health, reminding viewers of the importance of allowing people to express their authentic selves without judgment. [\(view/download\)](#)

My Safe Space

Sage Creek High School, San Diego County This film highlights the difficulties of being a neurodivergent and/or queer high school student and how concealing part of yourself is ultimately detrimental to mental health and self-worth. Fortunately, many communities provide safe spaces (including clubs, classes, and after school activities) where students are able to take off the mask and be themselves.

[\(view/download\)](#)



Dear Lee

Sanger West High School, Fresno County This film “looks at the challenges of Mental Health from an LGBTQ+ perspective. [The character] Lee faces struggles and is advised by a friend to attend a GSA meeting where he can make new friends and find comfort.”

[\(view/download\)](#)

We All Fall

Pleasant Valley High School, Butte County
“This video includes real testimonials from people within the LGBTQ+ community and some of the struggles that they have encountered, their individual mental health struggles, and issues they have had when accessing mental health care services.”
([view/download](#))



Silenced

Riverside Ramona High School, Riverside County
“Our film is specifically about being part of the LGBTQ+ community and the struggles within it. We want people to know that although not everyone will accept you, there are other people who will – you are not a problem.”
([view/download](#))

Transposed

Ramona High School, Riverside County
“Transposed is about the struggles of fitting into a society where you aren't accepted for being transgender. These struggles have a great impact on a person's mental health.”
([view/download](#))

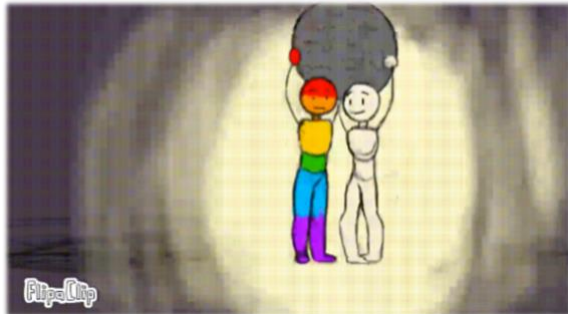


Love Wins

Clovis East High School, Fresno County
LGBTQ+ students communicate the importance of reaching out, seeking help, and knowing that you are not alone.
([view/download](#))

Within Our Communities

Windsor High School GSA, Sonoma County
“Within Our Communities” is a documentary film in which youth discuss being part of the LGBTQ+ and Hispanic/Latinx communities.
([view/download](#))



Hope Through Friends

Options for Youth Acton – Hesperia GSA, San Bernardino County
“The animation our group created shows what helps us get through the tough times, specifically when the world is weighing on us. The one thing we all had in common was a person that could help lift the weight off our shoulders.”([view/download](#))

Discovering May

Portola High School, Orange County
In “Discovering May,” a transgender woman shares her story of discovering her identity.
([view/download](#))



Proud to Be Me

Canyon High School, Orange County
This is an inspiring film from the perspective of an LGBTQ+ high school student who shares his story of overcoming depression and being proud of who he is.
([view/download](#))

Sundays

Canyon High School, Orange County
“Sundays” tells an LGBTQ+ story of acceptance and how friends support a young person during a difficult time.

[\(view/download\)](#)



Celebrate

HCTAYC, Humboldt County

This film is about the power of reaching out to support LGBTQ+ youth. [\(view/download\)](#)

Binary Blues

Humboldt County Transition Age Youth Collaboration, Humboldt County

This film is about the beauty of diversity transgender and gender non-conforming youth and how they can look to their community for support. [\(view/download\)](#)



Boxed Up

Canyon High School, Orange County

“Boxed Up” encourages LGBTQ+ youth to connect with the Trevor Project to help others feel safe and supported. [\(view/download\)](#)

After Storm Message

Clovis East High School, Fresno County
In “After Storm Message,” a youth shares their story and a message of hope for LGBTQ youth. ([view/download](#))



Visual Art



Support is Love

Claremont High School, Tri-City (Los Angeles County)
“This piece is about my mom loving me before and after I transitioned to male. Me growing up as a girl will always be a part of me and my family. I have never regretted being raised female because it made me understand the world through a special perspective. While I’m both similar and different to my younger self, my mom loves and accepts me anyway.” ([view/download](#))

A Body of My Own

Claremont High School, Tri-City (Los Angeles County)
“Since my transition, I’ve experienced gender dysphoria because my body doesn’t look like I think it should. However, I’ve come to be comfortable in my own body while also knowing there is hope of gaining muscles and getting top surgery.” ([view/download](#))





Don't Erase Me

Claremont High School, Tri-City (Los Angeles County)

“So much progress has been made for the LGBTQ+ community over the past decade, but recently America has been experiencing a setback in acceptance. For example, the public display of the pride flag has been banned in Utah, Idaho, and Montana, and homophobia is on the rise as political leaders and many others try to push the queer community out of the US.” ([view/download](#))

Opening Myself Up

Claremont High School, Tri-City
(Los Angeles County)

“This artwork is inspired by hope, because it is about acceptance and peeling away layers to share my real self is as male. It is about me opening myself up to the world, being myself so that I can be accepted and encourage others to feel brave enough to do the same.”

([view/download](#))



We Will Not Be Erased

Claremont High School, Tri-City
(Los Angeles County)

“My piece is about LGBTQ+ pride in the face of an increasingly homophobic and transphobic administration and society. The current political climate has made it harder to be queer or trans, and while it is really scary, I believe that resilience is our best option. We have to keep fighting, keep resisting, and keep living as LGBTQ + people.” ([view/download](#))

A Weathered History

Claremont High School, Tri-City (Los Angeles County)
“This statue shows that although many political and public figures may try to erase or belittle the history of trans people, we have always been here – represented in art, culture, and media. Trans people deserve to see their bodies represented and their issues spoken through art.” ([view/download](#))



The Feeling of Hope

Claremont High School, Tri-City (Los Angeles County)
“My artwork depicts one of my favorite memories and feelings since I’ve come out as transgender. Being able to feel the air and water on my skin instead of feeling a swim shirt or a tight binder felt so amazing and gave me hope that I can be more comfortable with my body.” ([view/download](#))

Making Our Marks

Claremont High School, Tri-City (Los Angeles County)
“My entry represents different civil rights issues that impact me, my family, and my friends. [...] The road has been rough, and these issues aren’t going away, but that doesn’t mean we should ever stop fighting for what’s right.” ([view/download](#))





We the People

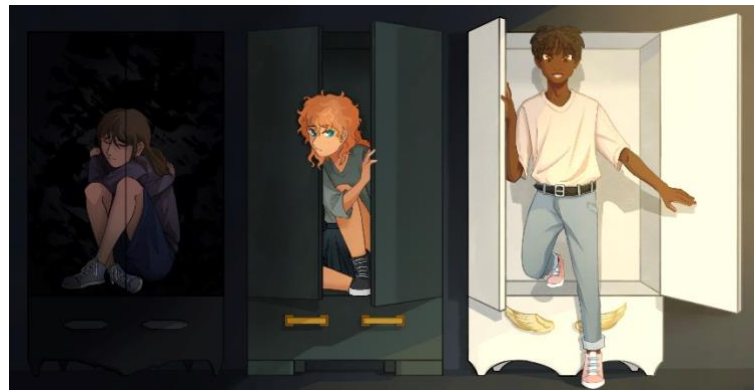
Claremont High School,
Tri-City (Los Angeles County)

This piece highlights the importance of peaceful protest. [...] Collaboration and solidarity between people is powerful, and can uplift others. ([view/download](#))

From Caged to Unafraid

Claremont High School,
Tri-City (Los Angeles County)

“My art symbolizes coming out for queer people. [...] As more and more people and forms of media become more accepting of the LGBTQIA+ community, there is more hope.” ([view/download](#))



Blossoming Identity

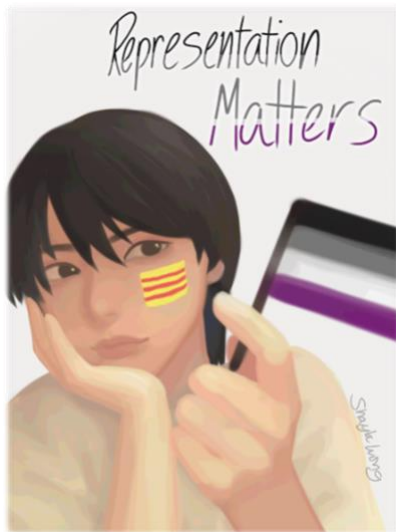
Angelo Rodriguez High School,
Solano County

“As a young closeted queer person, I often felt alone. However, once I finally got to high school, I saw all of these wonderful openly LGBTQ+ people who were happy to reach out their hand to me. They supported me as I came into my own identity and helped me gain the confidence to be out myself. Seeing them out and proud gave me such hope for the future.” ([view/download](#))

Breakout

Claremont High School, Tri-City (Los Angeles County)

“The chrysalis represents the proverbial and literal closets that so many LGBTQ people are forced to hide in. Butterflies represent hope, so this project represents my hope that LGBTQ people will be able to come out of the closet and be accepted in the future.” ([view/download](#))



Representation Matters

Valley View High School, Riverside County

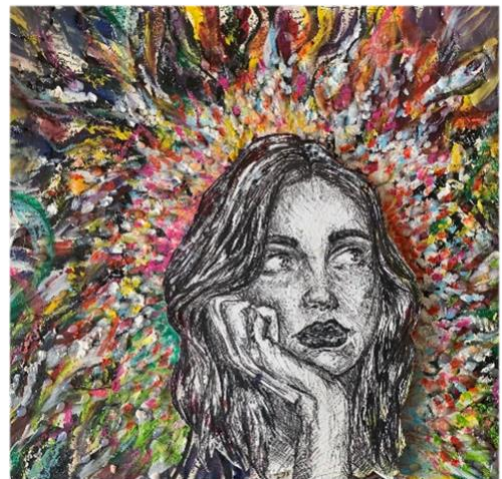
“My entry depicts an Asian-American person holding the Asexual (Ace) flag in their hand. They have the South Vietnam (Republic of Vietnam) flag on their cheek [...] I am not only a Vietnamese American. I am not only Asexual. I am all of those things. The idea of representation is a big deal to me, and I want my drawing to empower and inspire other people who relate to my background.”

([view/download](#))

Who I Am

Benicia High School, Solano County

“I have drawn a representation of me and who others perceive me to be in black and white. [...] The color represents me and who I am – with the fluidness of the color showing my gender and sexuality being fluid.” ([view/download](#))





New Year, New Me

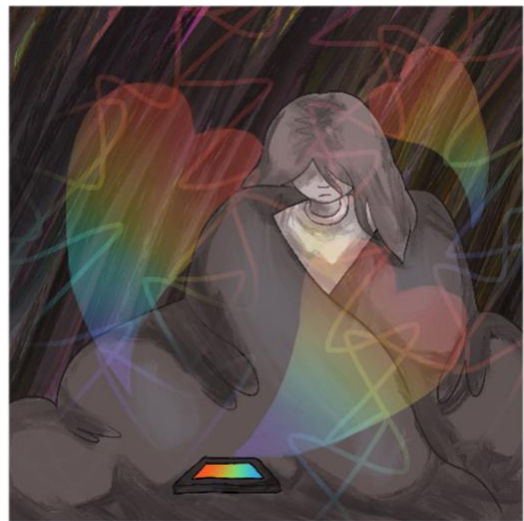
Claremont High School, Tri-City
(Los Angeles County)

“For the new year, I wanted to be a newer, better version of myself. As someone who feels like they don’t fit the binary, I’ve struggled with my gender identity a lot. [...] The cutting of the hair represents them taking a step towards the change they want—the step I want to take to reaffirm my identity.”([view/download](#))

Internet Connection

Rodriguez High School, Solano County

I wanted to show how online communities can support each other when they don't receive support from the people around them due to how they identify. [...] I see and hear so many negative comments about people in the LGBTQ community and it makes me upset because those people leaving the comments genuinely hate a group of people because they want to be themselves. Being in an online community where everyone is supportive definitely helps me when I lose hope.” ([view/download](#))



Cracks of Boundary

Claremont High School, Tri-City
(Los Angeles County)

“I hope that those who do not struggle with such issues feel a call to action – to emotionally support those struggling and help reform gender and gender norms within our society.” ([view/download](#))

Community

Claremont High School, Tri-City
(Los Angeles County)

“There is an old Chinese belief called the ‘Red Thread of Fate,’ which [refers to] an invisible red string wrapped around the fingers of a pair of soulmates. It connects two soulmates regardless of place, time, or circumstance [...] The queer/LGBT community faces countless obstacles that prevent us from freely loving our partners and ourselves, yet we always find our community and each other through the challenges.”
([view/download](#))



Help is Achievable

Yuba County

“I chose this category because I am a part of the LGBTQ+ community. I have had friends and classmates who have had hardships and I know that help is difficult to achieve, but once you have it, the outcome is rewarding.” ([view/download](#))

Love in All Colors

Rodriguez High School, Solano County

“I wanted to focus on LGBT acceptance, especially for people in families of color. I found that it's more unlikely for people of color to accept the LGBTQ [community] and family members who might happen to be in it. In a perfect world, children would be accepted by their parents no matter their orientation or identity. Supportive families are the first step to acceptance [...] It's shown that when a family accepts their child for who they are, their suicide rate drops to less than half.”
([view/download](#))





Together

Claremont High School, Tri-City (Los Angeles County)

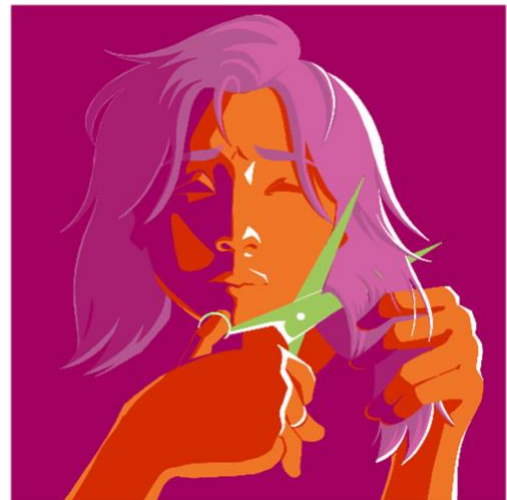
“I really wanted to emphasize the importance of togetherness and acceptance.”

[\(view/download\)](#)

Paper Cut-Out

Santa Clarita Valley International, Los Angeles County

“For the past 4 years, I’ve been wanting to cut my hair. Only this past year was a finally able to cut it, and seeing myself with short hair brought me a feeling that I can’t even begin to describe. A year after I initially wanted to cut my hair, I realized that I was queer [...] Once I cut my hair, it felt like I could breathe.” [\(view/download\)](#)



Disphoris

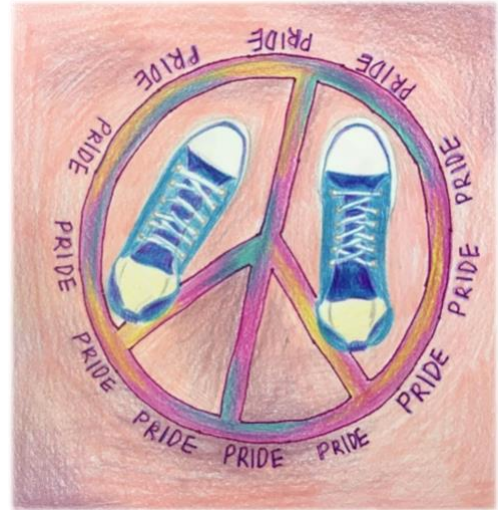
Hawking STEAM Charter School, San Diego County

The artist shared, “Having gender dysphoria takes a toll in my life sometimes, and I like to express my feelings through painting or drawing.” [\(view/download\)](#)

Rainbow Path

Claremont High School, Tri-City
(Los Angeles County)

“My drawing is intended to bring hope for LGBTQ people.”([view/download](#))



Written Works

Colors of Love

John Sutter Middle School, Fresno County

“People shouldn’t be judged by the colors of their flags. Those flags represent their home, their loves, and themselves.” ([view/download](#))

Red.
Orange.
Yellow.
Green.
Blue.
Purple.

Intertwined in a flag are the colors of love,
my love.
I embrace their warmth with open hands,
Happiness in every color.

To those who told me I was wrong,
Wrong for me to wear the colors of my pride.
The colors of my comfort.
To wear the colors of yours instead.

You’re wrong.
It’s more than a flag,
More than a series of colors,
It’s home.
Home for my families of hundreds.
It’s me.

The flag was there when I was born,
It warmly swaddled me and kept me warm from this cold, dark world.
It’ll be there when I go, wrapping my casket in the colors of my pride and joy.

It doesn’t matter where I was born,
where I was raised,
what I eat,
or what I do.
It matters what I want for us all.
Together and united.
A flag that represents my love, my home, my ethnicity should never stand in the way, and it won’t to the right candidate.

My vote will go to the one who wants what I want.
Not the one who cares more about the colors of my flag, more than the one we are all united under.
My vote will make a difference, and so will yours.
Not today, but maybe tomorrow we will all stand together under those *colors of love*.

Fortunate Queer

Dorothy Kirby/ LACOE, Los Angeles County

“This art piece is basically talking about dreams and reality. I want fortune. As a genderqueer individual, I demand it.” ([view/download](#))

Fortunate Queer

*I constantly wake up when I am
in bed.
I sleep.
I dream.
But,
They don't have love.
Or they aren't dreams I deserve,
Or belong in.
But,
Dreams don't lie.*

*Maybe I should keep dreams and
reality,
Separate.
They match too perfectly.
But,
My dreams inquire more.
Something outright unescapable.
Unsophisticated.
Unruly.
But,
I want one thing that isn't an un-*

*Fortune.
Something unique.
Strange.
Eccentric.
Like me.
Something queer.
A fortunate queer.
That's a desirable community.
But,
A universal one.
We are jolly.*

*With much glee.
But,
Now inside and out.
My fortunately unique self.
And my community.
As a journey to the faults of well-
being.
The fatal attraction.
On our own women.
Especially faithless women.
I am praiseworthy.*

*Of your dense denials.
Euphuistic.
In make believe worlds.
Dreams They Fit.
Phenomenal actors,
In majestic forest.
Dreams They Fit.
Allow my permission,
To perquisite my oppressions.
Don't pester.
But ponder remarkable dreams.
For your dreams,*

*Are a remedy,
To your reality.
Dream on...
Fortunate Queer.*

A. J. Bunting

A Mirror Worth Your Life

Novato High School, Marin County

“My piece is about some of the struggles that me and countless other trans people experience on a daily basis. [...] The poem is my way of bringing up some of the emotions that come up when I hear people misgender or disrespect me (or anyone else who doesn't identify as cisgender).” ([view/download](#))

I've spent hours standing in front of this mirror wishing the reflection would change
Yet it never does
When does staring become dissociating
Because I've been gazing with glazed eyes at these shapes and colors for so long they don't
even feel like mine anymore

Your words leave me wondering why the pitch of my voice determines how many letters you use
to define me
Three or five
Man or Woman
I tell myself next time I'll finally correct you
Finally work up the courage to tell you that you can't even begin to comprehend
How my identity fits in the most colorful gray area you've ever seen

But no matter what
I'm always brought back to that same timid figure looking back at me
I try to tell him that no matter what you say I'll never be him
He just looks back at me and laughs
Because he knows no matter how strong I seem
Bit by bit
Your consonants and vowels still break me

You've taken a hammer and chisel to my brittle bones
Watching while the hairline fractures move up and down my entire body
Every single syllable that spills out
Causes the clink of metal on metal I've grown so used to
Now I'm a blaze of orange and red
Every nerve ending firing at the same moment

You say that for every time I've been knocked down
I'll always stand up one more
But how can that be true when I've collapsed so many times
That I'm not even sure who I am anymore
How will I ever be sure the next time my knees buckle
It won't be the last

I'm standing in front of my mirror again
Something's changed
There didn't used to be red streaming down my arms
My eyes couldn't be likened to a shroud of darkness
And my skin wasn't void of pigmentation

LGBTQ+ Community: You Are Not Alone

Twin Lakes School, Los Angeles County

“I was hoping to tell other LGBTQ+ people that they are never alone; they have a community that will always support you no matter what.” ([view/download](#))

LGBTQ+ Community *You Are Not Alone*

Hi my name is Frida, and I will be telling a personal story about not being alone as a young LGBTQ+ person. I'll begin by telling you that I am bisexual. When I initially revealed this to a few select friends, some abandoned me. It was a normal day as my family and I were returning from a camping trip. I was helping them unpack. Then I got a text from a friend. Right then and there, to my surprise, my dad took my phone. He went through my text messages and saw that I was telling my friend that I am bisexual. Then he told my mom. My parents told me that it wasn't right, that I didn't know anything, and they were disappointed in me. I felt so alone. My parents didn't know how much I had gone through mentally as I struggled to locate my self identity. They could not find the right words to love and support me. After a few days, my mom took me to a church and she told me, "You will pray for yourself to stop having these thoughts." I was devastated that my own mom had said this. I played it out, pretending I was acceptably "normal" again. So, I ended up getting my phone back. Afterwards, my cousin told me that he was also part of the LGBTQ+ community. He taught me to be honest, to act like myself. At that moment I no longer felt alone anymore. I was wondering if there were more people like me and my supportive cousin? I started to look up stories and found out that people get kicked out of their own family homes. In the end it got better. My mother is trying to understand. I think she might know that I am still bisexual; however, my dad still hates it, yet he still thinks I am normal. Overall, to those who are like me you might think you're alone. Let me tell you that you are not alone, trust me.

Need to talk to someone? Call 1-866-488-7386