



# Autobiography Of A Gay: Snap Out Of It! Homophobia Is A Mental Illness

**My incredible story of emotional and psychological endurance. The long-term effects of verbal and physical abuse, while being gay in a predominant homophobic community. An education to those who still think homophobia is behind us.**

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**By: Anthony Heywood**

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# Preface

I am proud to share with the world, my long overdue autobiography. I sincerely hope that all gays and lesbians reading my book find inner strength by knowing my story; as well as the knowledge that you're truly not alone when it comes to the never-ending struggles of trying to live our lives authentically, and comfortably as LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, Questioning), and SGL (Same Gender Loving) people. It is also my hope that both pro-gay and anti-gay heterosexuals, can not only gain a clearer understanding of who we are as gay and lesbian people, but understanding the real impact of str8 on gay hate throughout the course of a gay person's life. The purpose of my book is to not only make the reader more aware of what life is truly like for many gays and lesbians, especially living in the poorer communities; but the long-term effects of continued homophobia (that still shamefully exist today at unbelievable levels) which also appear to be heavily concentrated in communities of color. Homophobia have always been significantly higher in the Black and Latino communities, largely because of (what I feel to be) the deep connections to religion and its traditions.

I had struggled quite a bit once I've made the decision to finally write this book; because I realized I would have to re-open many old wounds, bad memories, as well as extremely painful and embarrassing life experiences/lessons. However, I also knew that if heterosexuals are to understand the kinds of cruelty that are committed against LGBT people on a daily basis; and if gays and lesbians ourselves are to understand the importance of truly sticking together & supporting one another (regardless of our personal opinions about another gay person's situation in their life); I must dig deep inside myself where all the pain had been buried for decades and share them with the world. You have absolutely no idea how difficult this is for me to do this. However, I'm doing this with the hope that people can learn and commit to trying harder to understand LGBT people, and our unique circumstances. I suppose the other part is truly being tired of consistently hearing the unwanted opinions of others. My internal silence is over now as the result of writing this book, and the opinions of others will no longer stifle my voice.

As I grow older, I'm encountering more and more people who still just don't get it. It appears to me that a significant amount of pro-gay supporters (and even a lot of gays), consistently overestimate the speed in which

homosexuality is being accepted in this country, and perhaps around the world. Just because gays and lesbians have more of a presence on television; or the fact that we can now marry in the United States (which I do acknowledge is a huge accomplishment); doesn't mean however, that the threat of homophobia has eased off by any means! Extreme homophobia is very much alive! Believe me, even with gay marriage, the fight is still not over. Although we can get married today, it's not because homophobic Christian fundamentalists have started to finally "see the light" and is working hard towards accepting homosexuality (with open arms). We can now marry because of the successful efforts of LGBT lawyers and activists who busted their ass to make law makers acknowledge our constitutional rights. You know, a lot of fearful Christians make the wrongful assumption every day, that gays have "all these rights," and that "gays control the media." If you really do think that LGBT people have that much power, you need to open your eyes a little wider than that. The fact of the matter is, LGBT people have been fighting for many rights for decades. Gay marriage alone took us 50 years! So, we didn't "suddenly get all these rights." And if that was the case, we've earned it because we're human, and deserve the same rights that heterosexuals so enjoy. Again, I just want to

reiterate to my people (LGBT), we cannot forget that marriage equality in no way changes the fundamental views of most hetero Christians concerning homosexuality; at least not in our lifetime! The church and its predominantly heterosexual believers (as a whole) will continue to exercise their religious power within politics to the fullest extent; in order to eliminate what it sees as a threat to “family values” (as though gays are solely responsible for the entire world’s immoralities).

The reality: On PFLAG’s website (**Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays**) for instance, it states that “anywhere from 4 to 10% of the world’s population is either gay, lesbian, or transgender (I’ve always personally believed these numbers are much higher).” In the U.S. public school system, there are well over one million children in NYC alone (and growing); which means New York City has at least 40,000 to 100,000+ are more than likely to be LGBTQ. PFLAG’s website also states that “Studies indicate that between 25% and as high as 50% of homeless youth are LGBT and on the streets because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.” We are more than 8x likely to try and commit suicide, and almost 6x more likely to go through severe depression. You don’t need to search very hard to find all kinds of documentation of how serious homophobia is. If you need

more proof than that, simply open your eyes. You can read more on their website by visiting here [www.pflagnyc.org/safeschools/statistics](http://www.pflagnyc.org/safeschools/statistics).

Let us also not forget about the LGBT communities outside the U.S.A., who suffer many casualties as the result of extreme homophobic belief systems. A couple of good examples would be the gay citizens of Uganda, Jamaica, Russia, and the Arab countries just to name a few. What's worse is that many people who come from countries that are widely known for their extreme homophobic beliefs, are now coming to America to permanently settle down. Unfortunately, this also means that they will most likely bring over their radical anti-gay beliefs to the United States along with them. This kind of baggage America does not need. So now, we have what I call a "double whammy!" Not only do we must deal with homophobia from people in our own country, but also the radical homophobic views brought over from people of other countries living **on American soil**, the land of freedom. This is one of the **many** reasons I think hate for LGBT people never seem to end; and is why it is so difficult to not only manage, but educate as well. Because of this, many may feel the best course of action is to ignore homophobic people. However, from personal experience, ignoring a homophobic environment quite often makes things worse.

Positive thinking doesn't get rid of it either. Remember that old saying that it takes a village? Well, that's true when it comes to homophobia. Why? Because homophobia is not just people who fear what they don't understand. Unfortunately homophobic attitudes have been interweaved within the fabric of many cultures, causing grave oppression to those who are different. Therefore, it takes more than just "ignoring it" to deal with this horrendous problem.

Metaphorically speaking, I think that homophobia is a lot like music in a way. You know how it is said that "music brings us together?" Or "music soothes the savage beast?" Well, it's along those same lines, in that homophobia appears to help bring many people of hate together in the same way music brings music lovers together, for what is perceived is a good "cause." In other words, I find it very interesting (yet disturbing) that despite the unfortunate degree of racism and bigotry that exist all over the globe; the minute the word **gay** is mentioned; suddenly the bigots magically forget about differences temporarily; to stand as one and unite for the worthy cause of helping to "**stop the gays.**" It must be understood that, homophobia goes far beyond just an individual being teased, or someone just "being an asshole," or a person's strong opinions against LGBT/SGL people. For many of us, it is

literally the non-stop emotional & psychological torture; which sometimes includes the constant threat of physical harm by a zealous homophobic individual(s).

Speaking for myself; sometimes it was like watching an old horror movie on VHS that was being played on an endless loop, with no way of stopping it. Imagine a television with no off and on switch; and the power cord welded to the wall, and you're chained to a chair, unable to get away. That VHS tape would only loop back to specific traumatic experiences. You know, many people who have not gone through severe homophobia, have often accused me of living the past. However, the reality is, it is perpetrators who continues to do the same thing over and over, who then teaches the same kind of behavior to someone else of the same mentality. The blasted nightmare starts all over again. So, it's not that people like me "live in the past," or we're allowing ourselves to be ruled by the past. What's actually going on, is that people are slow to change, so they repeat the same offenses over and over again. And in the offender's mind, they somehow make excuses for their unjustly acts.

Some of these horrible experiences are also linked to sounds and smells that often triggers even more bad memories, which also gets replayed over and over. Some

examples would be an abuser's cologne; or a prepared food; the smell of paint; a song; a particular word and even how the word was said. I would often hear people say things like, "why do you let it bother you?" But, these memories are **TRAUMATIC**, and anybody who has gone through depression knows, trauma is like a hammer to the brain, nailing bad experiences in to both the mind and heart. They are often so embedded in our subconscious mind, that it makes it almost impossible to emotionally and mentally break free so that we can heal. Permanently. Not to mention the fact that abusers/communities often repeat their crimes mercilessly; so even if each time we have managed to erase that VHS tape, new footage is recorded, ready for another looped playback. Even after an abuse has stopped, and we've come to peace with our experience, we are still permanently affected by our experiences and memories because of someone else lack of self-control.

In my opinion, this is part of what makes it difficult for people to understand depression as well. A lot of people think that all depression is, is just an "easy pill a way towards utopia," or "Just see a therapist." This is not the sort of thing you can just "grow out of easily," or to just tell someone "get over it" as many ignorant people would say. To just tell someone to "get over it" is an insult to any

person's intelligence. As much as you may think you're helping someone, the reality is to actually utter that phrase is extremely rude and beyond insensitive. I'd rather the so called "friend" say nothing at all. If a "friend" really wants to help someone, or if continuously hearing about the person's homophobic experiences has become too much of a bore for you, then try to at least convince them to see a doctor or a peer counselor. In fact, offer to help them find one (if they have given you their consent). Encourage them to seek help greater than what you can provide, without sounding rude or an insensitive douchebag. It is my opinion that, hate towards LGBT people affect us in ways completely undetected by both sides of the spectrum (be it gay or str8). It is unfortunate that I must include the LGBT community in this statement; because not all gays and lesbians suffer the same challenging experiences. In fact, I've encountered some gay people that were homophobic perpetrators themselves. You know, the one thing I could never understand was, I grew up at a time where gays were literally running for our lives, and now I am so completely dumbfounded of just how disconnected we are today as a gay people. Unfortunately, because our experiences vary from gay person to gay person, many times it impacts our ability to find real support from within our own

communities. You'd be surprised how difficult it is to find real support in the gay community. In addition, I also believe in my heart that this is one of the many reasons why so many gay men find ourselves lonely for very long periods of time, and often turn to sex to try and fill voids in our lives. But, using sex to fill a void(s) also puts us at risk for all kinds of emotional and physical dangers. I also understand the flip side of this; a person being so desperate to fill that void so badly, that all common sense and good judgement flies out the window.

I've seen all kinds of video documentaries and studies ranging from "being gay could be genetic," to "hormones being responsible for homosexuality." And of course, we can't forget about the various "cures," and reversing the "gay gene." However (**to my awareness**), I have not seen an extensive study that talks about the long-term effects of homophobic bullying in schools. Also, the schools that allow this kind of unacceptable behavior to continue; what it ultimately does to some gay boys and girls as we transition from childhood to adulthood; and the risk of the very abused children growing up to become abusers themselves (repeating the same cycle over and over again); and the lack of accurate records of reported non-teacher/staff intervention for crimes against LGBT people.

Well, if there are no such reports/documentaries exist, I hope my book will help start a serious conversation to produce one. So, I realize the best way to help my readers get a sense of what my life was really like, I simply need to start from the very beginning. I will explain my life from the moment I was born up to my adulthood; and how my traumatic experiences dealing with verbal, mental and physical abuse fueled by homophobia, effected the way I now perceive the world. I also should warn you beforehand that you **MUST** keep an open mind! These are **MY** experiences **NOT YOURS**. Please do not try and reinterpret an experience you've never lived. If you are a die-hard fanatical Christian, there will most likely be a lot of things read from my book that you will not agree with. However, do you remember the old saying "there are always two sides to every story?" Well, you'll need to remember that as you read through my book. My book is more than just a story; it's also my life, my own truth, and my own thoughts. You dig? So, in other words, if you're just going to read my book for the specific purpose of cherry picking line per line what you like or don't like; or how many things I've said that you interpret as being "against God;" or if you're one of those people that love to convert your assumptions in to scientific knowledge; or if you're one of those readers that fight to defend their

beliefs till the very end, this book may not be for you. I intend on being as truthful and very straight forward as I possibly can. I don't expect everyone to understand everything I've written; but the fact that you've purchased my book says a lot about your willingness to learn.

I will try and attempt (in my own way, and the best of my ability) to logically explain to my readers why being gay is not only natural, but very much a part of civil rights as well, through my personal story. Being gay is **NOT** a sickness. However, homophobia obviously is. Anybody who **not only** goes out of their way to encourage homophobic behavior on an entire group of people, but to view "stopping the gays" as having the highest level of priority above all other things in their life; there is truly a serious problem and it needs to be addressed. Through a lifetime of experience, I can honestly say yes to homophobia being some sort of mental illness. And deep down inside, I'm sure you feel it too, otherwise you would not be interested in reading my book. Not only is homophobia a sickness, it has become a kind of obsession gone out of control for many. If we do not eradicate the problem of not only homophobia, but all other forms of bigotry; humanity can only get worse as we've observed from watching the violence on the news from other countries outside our own. We have to lift our heads away

from our mobile devices and observe the real world. It is totally **absurd** that we have more of an emotional attachment to our electronics, than to another living, breathing, heart-beating human being! Absolutely **absurd!** Every American understands the right to freedom, and the right to live in peace. Yet bigots that live in America constantly manage to find more innovative ways of trying to take basic human rights away from the LGBT community; and pretty much make our lives miserable the best way they can. I don't want to beat a dead horse, but I can't say it enough, you must understand that homophobia is **NOT** a thing of the past; it is still very real, very active, and dangerous. Let us all aggressively grab a hold of it, and destroy this way of thinking so that we can continue to secure an even better future, for the young gay and lesbian generations of tomorrow.