

PREFACE

Friend of Dorothy *adj.* [origin unknown] referring to or directly related to Dorothy Gale (aka Judy Garland) from the film 'The Wizard of Oz'; used primarily as a term of endearment when referring to the male homosexual...

Although there are many theories and schools of thought in regard to homosexuality, the one thing that all great scientific minds agree upon is this: The male homosexual has a genetic predisposition in believing that, Judy Garland is absolutely *FABULOUS!* Along with show tunes, Barbra Streisand, Liza Minnelli, anything with sequins and of course, tiaras. The male of the species is also likely to be quick witted, sarcastic and perfectly suited to be cast as the movie heroine's best friend. He is the quintessential hairstylist and excels at interior design, wedding planning and floral arranging. *Oh... Did I happen to mention sarcasm?*

The female of the species, aka Lesbian, is a skilled craftsperson. She loves home repair (they all own tool belts), logging, truck driving and of course wearing flannel. She is also quite the sports enthusiast and excels at softball, tennis, golf and field hockey. They are normally a docile group of individuals but when provoked can be far more dangerous than their male counterparts. Never, ever, ever poke them with a penis!

By now you may be asking yourself how I know so much about these fascinating and often misunderstood creatures. You may also be asking "How could someone be so intuitive and have his finger so on the pulse of this community to be able to paint such a vivid and concise *stereotype?*" Well, hold on to those tiaras and tool belts (or whatever else may be within grabbing distance). I myself happen to be gay. I like men. In fact, I love them. I have loved them since the day I was born and I will love them until the day I die. Neither therapy nor attempting to '*pray the gay away*' could possibly change that. *God or Whomever or Whatever* you believe in that is responsible for our existence made me

this way, which means I, and everyone else born into this life, is perfect. Homosexuality **IS NOT** a choice. It **IS NOT** a preference. It **IS NOT** a lifestyle. Choice, preference and lifestyle refer to where one chooses to live. Or shop. Or whether one should wear white after Labor Day (I say no, but that is just my personal preference. See how that works?). Or where one chooses to pray or not to pray. Or a million other things that one can change his or her mind about throughout the course of their lifetime.

Being gay is as much who I am as the color of my eyes or my flat feet. My sexuality has never been a source of pain or confusion for me but society's treatment of both members of my community and myself has been. And I say that because no one but us will ever know what it feels like to be ridiculed and ostracized for simply being who we are on the level that we do. And in no way am I playing the '*our pain is greater than their pain*' card here because it is not – It's just different.

- *Different* because we are unlike any other minority in so much as a person of color or of a particular ethnic background will never have to fear being disowned by his or her family because they themselves are a member of one of the afore mentioned groups. They were accepted for who and what they were the day they were born.
- *Different* because of the overwhelming sense of isolation we experience during our adolescence. For the vast majority of us, home is not a safe environment and hiding who we are is our way of life.
- *Different* because other minorities will never have to fear losing a job if they are 'outed'. You see, chances are if a person of color was hired to do a job, that one day the boss isn't going to show up to the office and shriek "Oh, my God! He/she is African American! Fire him/her". And if that were to happen, Federal Law would force said employer to pay dearly for that decision. We as Tax-paying citizens of 'The United States Of America' are not afforded that luxury. In fact, there are still 29 states in this country where it is perfectly legal to fire someone

simply because they are a member of the *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning* community.

And there you have it... Just some of the differences between those of us in the LGBTQ (Can we stop adding letters now?) community and those in other minority communities... No better, no worse, just a slightly more challenging way of living. Of navigating the waters of our lives to eventually land on the shores of complete and total self-acceptance. A difference that I believe can and eventually will be the source of our true strength.

We are a work in progress as a community and I believe finding our voice is a crucial part of that journey. A voice that tells us, with absolute certainty, that we are equals. A voice that will ring out loud and clear for future generations of boys and girls and men and women in the LGBTQ community that says ***“you are perfect as you were created”***. We can no longer choose to stay chained to a belief system perpetuated by the narrow-minded that tells us that we are somehow flawed because of our sexual orientation... That tells us we should live in secrecy and not “flaunt” who we are... That tells us our lives should be led with a sense of shame... No one should be forced hide in the shadows and accept scraps of compassion, or tolerance, or basic civil rights tossed their way by people who believe they are somehow superior. No one. We do now and always have deserved better. We just need to believe it at our core. And until the day all of us do, none of us can.

Our community has been here since the dawn of man and will continue to be here long after the voices of those who *choose* to hate have faded. We have made great strides over the last few decades in regard to civil rights and how we are perceived by the outside world but I believe there is also an inner journey we must trek. If we begin to listen to our hearts, instead of the voices of the intolerant, we can once and for all own our birthright... Write our own stories... And finally live our lives in peace, knowing that ***who we are*** is exactly ***who we were intended to be***.