

LGBTIQ and Homeless: One Young Person's Story

[Blog](#), [Homelessness](#), [Youth](#)

Young LGBTIQ people are being made homeless every day in Europe. To tie in with our survey for LGBTIQ organisations about their experience of youth homelessness, a young person from Slovenia tells their story of self-discovery, and how bullying in their family forced them to run away.

became homeless at the age of 18. At the time, I was living in Ljubljana, the capital city of Slovenia, with my parents and two older brothers. I was going to tourism and culinary school, but it was not my passion. For as long as I can remember, my passion has been art and music, but my family didn't accept that.

My mother is a hard-working woman who took care of all four of us, especially the men in the family. She worked as a waitress and after work she immediately came home to cook and clean. I always felt sorry for her; I still do. She was never complimented by my father, who beat her up often, and put her down.

My father is an alcoholic in denial. He eats pork and never goes to the Mosque, but always proudly calls himself a man of faith. He had a hard life as a child. His own father was a cold-blooded dictator of a family that left when war started in Yugoslavia. My father ended up in the military. He was just 18 when he had his first child. I'm not trying to make excuses for his actions, but I guess I comfort myself with these facts; the reasons why he turned into an alcoholic bully.

"I didn't really fight back. I just tried to get away."

One day, I came home from the city to find my father was brutally drunk. He started yelling at me, shaming my appearance and shouting things like: "Look, you slut, even if you are 18 now, while you are living under my roof, you can't go out anytime you like. You should stay at home, cook and clean for me!"

I tried to leave the room, but he wouldn't let me. In his mind, leaving a room in the middle of the fight is a disrespectful thing to do. So, for the first time he got physically aggressive towards me. I didn't really fight back; I just tried to get away.

I opened the window and yelled at the top of my lungs for help. Of course, the neighbors didn't react. I guess over the years they got used to the screaming from when my mom was being beaten up. My father pushed me away from the window and closed it. He started laughing at me, as if to say, 'no one is coming to help you'.

At that moment I got really scared. I grabbed the first thing I saw. It was this heavy glass candy bowl on the dining table. I aimed it towards his head, but I couldn't throw it at him. The next thing I remember, I was lying on the floor covered in blood.

All the time he had been letting out his anger on me, I was still holding the glass bowl. It eventually broke and cut my arm badly.

For the record, my mother was present during all this time. She was cleaning the dishes and just being quiet. When

she saw my cut, she said to my father, “You can stop now. Her arm is bleeding too much.”



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I immediately picked myself up and ran towards the door. Before I stepped outside I told my mom how disappointed I was and asked her how could she let this happen? I ran barefoot out of the apartment, seeking help. A stranger passing by noticed me. She took me to the nearest hospital where I got the blood cleaned off my face and body, and a few stitches in my arm. The nurses wanted to know how I got my injuries. I was afraid to tell them, because at that time I saw my father as somebody who was stronger than the law. I eventually explained everything to them under the condition that they wouldn't call the police, although in Slovenia there's a law that states that if a medical operative receives a patient who was abused by a family member, they are obliged to report it.

“When I arrived at the LGBT+ camp, I was still feeling very vulnerable.”

Later that night I went to sleep at one of my friends' houses. Her parents understood the situation but still encouraged me to go back home. I didn't feel that was a safe thing to do, so I called another friend and asked if I could stay at their place for a while. They explained that they were leaving for an LGBT+ camp that day, and said that I should come with them because I could sleep and eat there for free. I only needed 20 euro for the bus ticket.

At first I hesitated a bit because I wasn't anywhere on the LGBT+ spectrum and I felt like I don't belong there. I didn't want to invade people's space. But my friend convinced me to go. I called my mother and asked her for the bus fare, explaining that I would be gone for a couple of days because I needed some space from my father.

When I arrived at the LGBT+ camp, I was still feeling very vulnerable, crying a lot and trying to forget about everything that happened at home. The people there were all very welcoming. They asked me all sorts of questions, things I had never asked myself before and it made me feel important.

We all sat in a circle and the first workshop started, an introduction to the camp, explaining the rules, schedule and introducing ourselves. It sounds crazy, but I felt safer sitting in this circle than I had in my entire life. I remember looking around the room and admiring all these people. I was wondering about their pasts. How did they get here? Where were they going after camp? Could we be friends? Would they judge me because I wasn't like them?



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After the workshop, I went to get some tea. One guy from my room joined me and we were making small talk. "Oh, I see that you have a bandage on your palm," he said. "What happened?" I lied about being clumsy. I was ashamed of what had really happened.. I couldn't go ahead and say: "I'm actually at this camp because I don't feel safe at home".

We kept on talking and at one point my new roommate asked: "What's your sexual orientation?"

"Something in my soul clicked."

I felt really stupid not knowing what that actually meant. He politely explained, asking, "Well, who do you prefer, in a romantic or sexual way. Do you prefer guys, girls, maybe both?"

I remember thinking: "Shit. Now is the moment when people start realising I am the only straight one here, but I still gave an honest answer.

"Well, I had two boyfriends. And I kissed a few of my female friends. But we were just messing around."

"So you are bisexual?"

Again, I wasn't sure what that meant.

“You know, you like boys *and* girls,” he explained.

“Oh, no,” I protested. “You misunderstood me. I like boys. Yes, I kissed some girls, but I didn’t feel anything romantic towards them.”

Later on that night I got the chance to be alone with my thoughts. Something in my soul clicked and explained the parts of me that I never really understood: I realised that I was somewhere on the queer spectrum and that I always had been. The only thing that was stopping me from understanding this before now was that I never had a safe space before. My family was homophobic and I was so scared of that, I had never let myself even think about the possibility of being queer.

I will not tell you about all the details of my life after that. Not because I don’t want to share it, or because it’s not important. It’s just too much to explain. But coming out to myself was both the best and worst thing that ever happened to me. It was like a long-missing piece of a puzzle had been finally put in place and soon my self-confidence began to grow. At the same time I knew that being queer, a lot of my privileges were going to disappear. And the worst part was losing a lot of friends and family members because of it.

“I was forced to run away from home.”

Two weeks after the LGBT+ camp, I was forced to run away from my home. The bullying in my family didn’t stop, so it was only logical that I couldn’t live with them anymore. I was queer, and they would kick me out sooner or later. After that, I was living illegally in student dorms with my friends. Then I went to a homeless crisis center and then a safe house. I was basically moving a lot, until I found a job and settled in a new home with a gay couple.

When I think back on my emotional effect of being queer and homeless, I can say that I’m grateful for all the bad days because it got me to the point where I am now. Of course, my mental health suffered. I always felt like a burden to people because I had nowhere else to go and sleep. At the same time I was fighting with my internalised homophobia. On the other hand, I never felt more free. I was always surrounded by kind and accepting people. The LGBT+ community helped me a lot with everything, with mental support, finding a job and finally, finding a safe home.

For all the love and support I’ve received, I am forever grateful.