Gay vs God?

Campaign, Inclusion and Equality, Faith, Intersectionality

Breaking down myths about religion and identities of LGBTI people

#GayVsGod

“It’s a matter of Gay vs God.” How many times have you heard statements like this during discussions on religion and LGBTI issues? Or seen similar comments on your social media feed?

From 4 – 8 April, ILGA-Europe will be taking a look at why so many myths have been built up around this discussion. We want to break down the stereotypes around religion, belief, sexual orientation and gender identity.

Through a series of videos, personal testimonies and real life examples, our ***Gay vs God?*** campaign wants to affirm that it is not, and should never be, about ‘choosing a side’. Advocating for LGBTI equality is never about advocating against a religion or a belief.

On the contrary, we want to celebrate the fact that identifying as LGBTI and being part of a faith community are not mutually exclusive. Both are deeply personal and important parts of your identity.

We also want to open up the conversation by examining the common equality goals that both communities of activists share. We all have a lot in common – whether it’s personal incidents such as coming out to family and friends, facing harassment or discrimination at work or even having practical difficulties organising public events as an activist. We all have a lot of experience we can share with each other.

For five days, we will look at some of the most common myths and deconstruct them, hearing the voices of LGBTI activists, religious communities and LGBTI people of faith.

Many of our ***Gay vs God?*** video contributions were recorded in Brussels at the 2015 Equality for All conference, a two-day event organised jointly by ILGA-Europe and our friends at ENORB. You can read more about the event here.

We don’t want this to be a taboo subject. We want to hear your stories, your suggestions for more cooperation, your tips on how to advance equality for all. Whatever social media platform you use, we want you to get involved. Join us on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and Vimeo – or send us an email!

Myth:

People are LGBTI or religious, but they cannot be both...

"It's hard to be Muslim, Albanian and adopted child and to live in small city...It gets harder when you speak loud about LGBT rights... But what keeps me going is to work with a diverse community where Albanians, Macedonians, Turks, Romas live together. I also believe in all-inclusive Islam because it's faith of peace. "

Bekim Asani, *FYR of Macedonia*

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Myth:

If we support equality, we must be campaigning either for the rights of LGBTI people or for freedom of religion. The rights can't co-exist...

"Like so many people who are committed to LGBTI rights and to freedom of religion, it is painful to experience the opposition or hostility which can sometimes be expressed between groups that advocate exclusively for one or the other freedom. Inclusive societies must include all our diversities, and human rights for one group cannot be at the expense of another group. It is only within this all-encompassing paradigm that we will ever achieve true equality for all."

Robin Sclafani *Director of CEJI-A Jewish Contribution to an Inclusive Europe and Vice Chair of the European Network on Religion and Belief (ENORB)*

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Shared Principles for Dialogue and Cooperation

Recognising our common humanity, ILGA-Europe and ENORB come together to affirm our shared commitment to the fundamental belief that all human beings are created equal in dignity and rights.

Our organisations agree that who we are, who we love, and what we believe in can never justify denying anyone their human rights.
In particular, we share the belief in:

- The right to equality and non –discrimination, that everyone is entitled to enjoy all human rights without discrimination on any ground
- The right to freedom of expression and association
- The right to an inclusive education and safe school environment

Our struggles are connected and we therefore need to stand up together and in solidarity against any form of intolerance.

We recognise that there is an inherent diversity in humankind, that there are different opinions and beliefs, different ways of living and expressing one's self, different ways of loving and expressing love. Mutual respect and our shared commitment to human rights are our guiding principles in building bridges between our two organisations and our communities.

Our two organisations are committed to working together in accordance with a human rights based approach, in particular in ensuring active participation, dialogue and empowerment of all.

Practical steps

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Think about your event logistics, for example providing a silent room for reflection and suitable food options

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Practical steps

Include stories of LGBTI people of faith in your work

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Practical steps

Increase communication and conversations, build alliances between LGBTI and faith-based organisations

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