

Noted LGBT Persons

Barney Frank, Tammy Baldwin, David Cicilline, Jared Polis (Congress)

Ellen DeGeneres, Wanda Sykes, Rosie O'Donnell (comediennes) Isis, Lea T (models)

Bishop Gene Robinson, Rev. Peter Gomes, Rabbi Steve Greenberg (religious leaders)

John Amaechi, Greg Louganis, Johnny Weir, Sheryl Swoopes, Steven Davies, Gareth Thomas (athletes)

Amanda Simpson (first openly transgender presidential appointee)

Victoria Kolakowski, Phyllis Randolph Frye (judges) Manvendra Singh Gohil (royalty)

Drew Barrymore, Lady Gaga, Fergie, Evan Rachel Wood (celebrities)

Tonex, Adam Lambert, Ricky Martin, Joan Jett, Elton John, Jordan Knight (singers)

David Hyde Pierce, Neil Patrick Harris, Chris Colfer, Meredith Baxter (actors)

Lee Daniels, Kimberly Peirce, Pedro Almodovar, Roland Emmerich (directors)

Calvin Klein, Dolce & Gabbana, Valentino, Yves Saint Laurent (designers)

David Geffen, Mary Cheney (executives) Don Lemon, Rachel Maddow, Thomas Roberts (news anchors)

Keith Boykin, Kim Stolz, Diane Shroer, Lt. Dan Choi (activists)

B.D. Wong, Jane Lynch, Ian McKellen, Cheyenne Jackson, Kate Moenning (actors)



Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack II - Sexual Orientation*:

Daily effects of straight privilege

This is an opportunity to consider the automatic and often invisible tools, resources, conditions, experiences, and preference you enjoy based on identifying as straight or heterosexual. While reading, consider what it might be like if your journey did *not* include this invisible knapsack of necessities.

On a daily basis as a straight person...

- I can be pretty sure that my roommate, hallmates and classmates will be comfortable with my sexual orientation.
- If I pick up a magazine, watch TV, or play music, I can be certain my sexual orientation will be represented.
- When I talk about my heterosexuality (such as in a joke or talking about my relationships), I will not be accused of pushing my sexual orientation onto others.
- I do not have to fear that if my family or friends find out about my sexual orientation there will be economic, emotional, physical or psychological consequences.
- I am not accused of being abused, warped or psychologically confused because of my sexual orientation.
- I can go home from most meetings, classes, and conversations without feeling excluded, fearful, attacked, isolated, outnumbered, unheard, stereotyped or feared because of my sexual orientation.
- I am never asked to speak for everyone who is heterosexual.
- My sexual orientation is not considered a choice and I do not have to defend my heterosexuality.
- I can easily find a religious community that will not exclude me for being heterosexual.
- I can count on finding a therapist or doctor willing and able to talk about my sexuality.
- Because of my sexual orientation, I do not need to worry that people will harass me.
- My masculinity/femininity is not challenged because of my sexual orientation.
- I am not identified by my sexual orientation.
- I can be sure that if I need legal or medical help my sexual orientation will not work against me.
- If I watch a movie or television, I can be sure I will find my sexual orientation represented.
- I am guaranteed to find people of my sexual orientation represented at my job, church, school and home.
- I can walk in public with my significant other and not have people double-take or stare.
- My sexual orientation and political agenda are not lumped together.
- I do not have to worry about telling my roommate about my sexuality. It is assumed I am a heterosexual.
- I can go for months without being called straight.
- I'm not grouped because of my sexual orientation.
- My individual behavior does not reflect on people who identify as heterosexual.
- In everyday conversation, the language my friends and I use generally assumes my sexual orientation. For example, sex inappropriately referring to only heterosexual sex or family meaning heterosexual relationships with kids.
- People do not assume I am experienced in sex (or that I even have it!) merely because of my sexual orientation.
- I can kiss a person of the opposite gender without being watched and stared at.
- Nobody calls me straight with maliciousness.
- People can use terms that describe my sexual orientation and mean positive things (IE "straight as an arrow", "standing up straight" or "straightened out") instead of demeaning terms (IE "ewww, that's gay" or being "queer").
- I can be open about my sexual orientation without worrying about my job.

*This article is based on Peggy McIntosh's article on white privilege and was written by a number of straight-identified students at Earlham College who got together to look at some examples of straight privilege. These dynamics are but a few examples of the privilege which straight people have. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer-identified folk have a range of different experiences, but cannot count on most of these conditions in their lives.

Inclusive Language

Commonly Used	Most Inclusive	Benefits
<i>Sexual Preference/Choice/Lifestyle</i>	Sexual orientation/Identity	Recognizes the feelings and identity of the individual and that all persons have sexual orientation and gender identity; choice implies failure/wrongness if it is not the “right” choice.
<i>Do you have a girlfriend/boyfriend?</i>	Are you seeing anyone special? Do you have a partner?	Communicates to young person you are open to many responses. Respects that not all people are heterosexual.
<i>Homosexual</i>	Gay, lesbian or bisexual	Homosexuality is a pathologized term that is often used divisively. GLB respects that though similar, the experiences are not the same.
<i>Are you gay/lesbian?</i>	Do you have feelings for anyone? How do you identify?	Recognizes that youth don’t always have our words/language. Creates the space for open/accepting conversation. Avoids labels.
<i>He’s gay/She’s a lesbian</i>	He identifies as gay She identifies as a lesbian	Reduces stigmatization sometimes attached to gay/lesbian labels. Recognizes that orientation is an <i>aspect</i> of the individual, not the whole of the individual.
<i>Gay Marriage</i>	Marriage Equality	Appreciates that the goal is not creation of something new, but right to share <i>existing</i> privileges equal to heterosexual peers.
<i>Flamboyant/Out there</i>	Gender non-conforming/ Gender variant	Appreciates that an individual’s expression of his or her gender may vary from expected based on being male or female.
<i>“He-She” “It”</i>	He <u>or</u> She (ask which is preferred); transgender	Honors that not all individuals identify with the biological sex assigned at birth; opens the space for conversation and building relationship



INTRODUCTION

The Opening Doors Project started with the idea that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) youth in foster care are disadvantaged for many reasons and judges and lawyers can help them. We knew that a number of child welfare agencies and national organizations that work with agencies were improving the situation for LGBTQ youth in foster care, but little was being done to help judges and attorneys do their jobs better. We've created this book, and the trainings that go with it, to help judges and lawyers.

As we started our research, we learned some statistics like:

- 70% of LGBTQ youth in group homes reported violence based on LGBTQ status.
- 100% of LGBTQ youth in group homes reported verbal harassment.
- 78% of youth were removed or ran away from placement because of hostility to LGBTQ status.
- More than 4-10% of youth in state care identified as LGBTQ.
- 30% of LGBTQ youth reported physical violence by their family after coming out.
- 80% of LGBTQ students reported verbal harassment at school (70% feel unsafe; 28% dropped out).

LGBTQ youth are:

- Punished for expressing LGBTQ status
- Not allowed to participate in programming
- Told "you are going to hell"
- Not allowed to dress or groom as they prefer

We were moved by those numbers and convinced our project was going to make a difference for real kids. It was not until we met some of those "real kids" that we truly understood what happens for LGBTQ youth. One of the first steps we took in this project was to travel to five cities (Denver, Colorado; Jacksonville, Florida; Nashville, Tennessee; New York, New York; and Seattle, Washington) to conduct listening forums with LGBTQ youth who were in or recently out of foster care, and judges and lawyers from those cities. We talked with the participants for a couple of hours and heard some upsetting and inspirational things:

- We met a transgender young woman who felt safer at school than in her "temporary" shelter that she had been in for months.
- We talked to a young man who had been in 37 homes and was told he was gay before he even knew what the word meant.
- We met young people who felt disrespected by the judges who heard their cases, and youth who questioned why professionals in the child welfare system did not treat kids well.