

EyeBite

Social Justice Through Imagery

De Colores Dialog Transcript

Voice Over

Hate is all around us, especially hatred towards lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgenders. In our Spanish language we have many ways of saying it, but not one of them is positive.

We are Latinos. We are a culture defined by our long-standing traditions, our strong faith and beliefs, our machismo, and most of all, the central role that our families play in our lives. Our families are loving and powerful, but how is it possible that a love that seems to transcend everything seems to stop at the discovery that there is a gay or a lesbian in the family?

These are stories of love and strength that will transcend the fears, misconceptions and stereotypes preventing our families from loving all our people. These are stories DE COLORES.

Richard Zaldivar

Latino population, Latino culture is not only about ethnicity. It's about how we view ourselves and how we view the world. And whether it is the machismo role of the father, whether it is a very controlling, sometimes very over loving mother, whether or not it is we remember the ministers and the priests dictating what we can do and can't do, that all plays a big role as of to who we are when we grow up. And so, when we are now grown up, and we grow into our lives and we realize that we may not be just straight, we may not be gay, we may be bisexual, lesbian, transgender. Then now, where do we go within our community of support?

Martin Ornelas-Quintero

I don't believe that Latinos are more homophobic than any other community. I think the manifestations, the way homophobia gets played out in the Latino community is very different, it's very based in our culture.

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Marga Gomez

Latino parents are just uniquely homophobic, uniquely homophobic. And in this situation they draw upon their old traditions, like the Inquisition.

Nila Marrone

In Latin America, as well as in Spain, we do not have a culture of "activism" of forming civic groups to change society. We find things out in our families. And all changes and all our problem are solved within our families.

Esther Bell

When one comes out of the closet and the first thing is complete family rejection when one is raised to believe that their family's support will always be there when one is raised to believe that
(MORE HERE)

Martin Ornelas-Quintero

Where we begin to show what a man is supposed to be, which is really about what we don't wanna be, which is anything like women. That's the message of "machismo".

Martin Madrigal

And that really shaped my way of thinking. Being around... with other gay men who liked the sport, and we were contradicting everything that I remembered hearing since young that gay people could not do. Gay people don't play sports, gay people don't like sports...

Jose Luis Partida

So he deserves to die! I mean what father can actually feel that? He has aids and he deserves to die because he's queer. Yeah we're talking about two different things here. And I... We're talking about HIV and aids and we're talking about homosexuality, and it's like, it's so easy to put two, both of them together... because when you talk to a relative, my relatives about homosexuality they'll want to bring up the subject of aids, you know... I mean we'll need to separate that.

Marga Gomez

There's something out there that's encouraging people to hate gay people. Uhm... and that we don't deserve anything. we don't deserve to... You know to exist.

Ada Conde

Above all we must reclaim our equality because we are not different, we are the same as anyone else and when we touch the hearts of those who appear to be different from us, it is a matter of finding where they are part of ourselves.

Alex Saldariaga

We are professionals, we are the brothers, we are the sons, we are the neighbors. We are the doctors, we are anyone. The best way to explain it is to say: "I am who I am, the one you see any day, anywhere, and I am the same as anyone else."

Our Stories

Alberto Rangel

This is the next step like, you know, I'm transitioning into my adult life and in order to do that correctly I think I should tell them that I'm gay you know so that there's no misunderstandings. And plus we were getting along so well that I thought that...that...that nothing could impede that.

Esther Bell

Dad was afraid I would rape his friend's children. He also would not trust me with my own siblings. They threatened to chain me to my bed. They had to teach me how things should be in Mexico or anywhere.

Alberto Rangel

Mom told me to talk to you, she said that you were going down the wrong path and... and she uh... she just really wishes that... she said that she wishes you would just die so she can get over it, the mourning process. She just assumes that like homosexuality equals AIDS equals death. And she's like "I wish he would just die and get it over with so we can move on you know"

Esther Bell

She said it was a phase that would pass. They were not letting me go back to college. She was going to take me to the priest for an exorcism. She was going to take me to a psychiatrist, to a mad house. They threatened me a lot.

Jesus Guillen

At first, like many parents, they would love me as I was, but not talk about it. I did not want that. If I was going to be open I wanted that to bring us closer.

Esther Bell

My mother's attitude was that in Mexico there were faggots. They were very obvious. But lesbians didn't exist. The only reason I was a lesbian was because I went to the United States and here I was corrupted.

Alberto Rangel

And I didn't talk to her for like two years and uh just recently like in December I went home for Christmas and stayed with my brother and sister and my dad like you know came over and he was... he was just so anxious to see me and I think my dad just figured that... that it was more valid to him to ditch the... the... the hate and to accept me.

Jesus Guillen

For me it was a beautiful moment to see my mother there, and to see her surrounded and talking with everyone. When the party was over, she told me that she had opened her eyes from all those stereotypes of gays -that they're all loud and effeminate that they just run around going "Oh look -- blah blah blah" When the reality is that anyone can be gay or homosexual.

Esther Bell

With my mother, her being Mexican, she has done a lot of work. I sent her a lot of news articles and books. I sat for hours to answer her questions and help her understand. Fortunately for me she was open minded enough to, little by little, accept that I had not changed, and I was the same woman she knew as a little girl. I haven't turned into a monster all of the sudden. I just discovered another part of myself.

Leonor Holmstrom

A couple of years after college, She told us that she was homosexual. When she told us that she was homosexual, I almost had a heart attack, because my daughter who had everything, who had a brilliant future, was not going to have it anymore.

Esther Bell

I was really anxious to talk to my youngest sister who is my favorite sister. I spent almost 2 hours talking to her, covering all the topics, trying to answer all the questions she might ask. My sister then looked at me and asked: "Are you happy?" And I told her yes. And she replied, "The rest doesn't matter." That was the best lesson for me. To know that somebody in my family was truly concerned with my happiness. Even now, we have stayed very close. What she wants for me is the same that I want for her -- to be happy. in any way that happiness comes.

Martin Madrigal

When my father used to get home on... on...uh from work on Fridays which was payday he...most of the time he was drunk and it would be in the late hours of the night and everybody would be asleep and I mean I remember this because Omar was still a baby and I was very young and what happened was... he would like pull me just pulled me from bed and take me to the kitchen and uh... and he would sit me down and he would tell me uh for whatever reason I never knew why and after that I started to realize why he would tell me these things, those things and he would say to me you know "If you're gay, I'll kill you."

Jose Medina

I know many white gays that end up leaving their families behind. They move from one state to another. But latinos stay together because our love for our families, but, how do we love them and be ourselves at the same time?

Ina & Ilanya Strauss

I'm bisexual she's... lesbian. We came out to each other kind of in a weird way just kinda just... when was it? It was like when we were sophomores in high school? Yeah

Ileana & Keith Strauss

We were going back and forth and she was saying, "No it's the father's responsibility to ask" "No no it's the mother's." Finally I had a chance to sit down with Ilanya and ask her. It was a tough tough question for me to ask and she had the guts to say yes she was and we hugged and cried and it was such a relief to both of us.

Leonor Holmstrom

And then little by little, I started going out and I couldn't tell anyone. Because if I talked, I would cry. I couldn't tell anyone, anyone at all. It was so painful. I didn't know anything. Then I started

looking for a support group, to help me deal with this. A group coming from the Catholic Church Because they could understand not only my culture, but also my religion. I looked everywhere for a group, but there was no place to go, where a person who speaks Spanish, who was brought up Catholic, who was told often that homosexuals are sinners, bad people, rapists, etc. Then you wonder, well, if I fulfilled everything I was supposed to as a wife, as a mother, to give support, where did I go wrong? What happened?

Josefina Medina

All of the sudden you feel confused. You don't know what to do or say. Like I said, you feel sad. But then again, you want to know your children's problems In that case, I feel better knowing what is going on. I am happy, and I support him. He knows that we love him very much.

Marga Gomez

It really took me a few years to go through uh this this second stage this “don’t ask don’t tell Latino family phase” where I just wanted to know, I wanted to make sure that they remembered that I was gay. Maybe they forgot. So I said mom you know we never talk about me my personal life I mean you know what do you think after you know all these years now, you know how do you feel about it and she said “well, you know I just want you to be happy and and I guess it was just when you told me you know the hardest thing was to know that people were gonna be mean to you and and I guess more than anything she just didn’t want me to...you know to suffer or to be hurt.

Keith Strauss

Having children that come out, you end up going through a coming out process as well and it’s much like a grieving process. Your children are not quite what you expected and you have to go through a grieving process, sometimes there’s denial and there’s certainly lots of tears. And then you go “they’re great! They’re still the same children; they’re still the wonderful people that I’ve always known.

Leonor Holmstrom

I found this group 45 minutes away, And I went. They were called PFLAG. They were nice and I was very comfortable. I was in shock to know that they were so comfortable with their children's lives. Talking about their kid's boyfriends & girlfriends. "God save me," I thought. What is this? I was dealing with my initial pain and depression. And they were much more advanced than I was.

Illena Strauss

To me the greatest test for a parent of unconditional love is to accept your gay child, is to have a gay child. That will test you, it will test every core value you have. It will test you family your friends and you find out who really cares about you. And you know I was told you know “what about criminals?” and what about... I said you know I said and even if you’re a criminal you have protection. You can get a lawyer; someone can speak up for you. But for being gay you don’t. That was what my... you know what I was trying to get across that you have the additional burden that society doesn’t even protect you. And a criminal does have protection.

Frank

My sister said that she will accept it and give me all the support I need, But please don't let anyone find out. If no one finds out, how are you going to support me? What is your support?

Keith Strauss

I think one of the first adjustments was uh... dating. Okay now what do we do for dating. But it turns out it’s the same, we always ask the same questions like “Where are you going? Who are you going with?” and we have to have you back by 12:30 no matter what. So once we... someone told us dating is the same every other piece seems to have fallen into place. It’s just the same.

Leonor Holmstrom

I talked to my sisters. They came over and I shared the news with them. We cried. Because we Hispanics love to cry and love the drama. We laughed. They supported me and then I noticed a change in them and a change in everyone in their families through information.

Nila Marrone

While the homosexuality issue has made a lot of parents lose their kids, because they cannot support them or they just want them to leave. I, on the other hand, have gained a son.

Frank

Nila came into my life at the time it was meant to be. I wish it had been earlier. I wish she had been my mother. Or that my real mother could have been like her. In the sense that she accepts me the way I am. From the beginning treating me like any other son.

Illeana Strauss

So when you exclude or reject your children you’re not going to be included in all those things that you know the dating and whatever... feelings because they’re not going to be talking to you. And

I'm so glad that they were able to talk to us... at that time instead of waiting till they went away to college. Cause I just don't want... I don't want to miss any part of their lives.

Omar Madrigal

It really gets me mad when I hear about being people... about people being bashed or ridiculed or when I see it on TV that really... It really hurts you know because it's kinda like close to home because knowing that my brother is gay and that... that... It really hurts and I guess knowing that uh... other people out there do it. Uh...It just...it gets ...You get very very angry about that.

Leonor Holmstrom

49% of the abuse against homosexuals is committed by their own family. It is alarming. Really alarming.

Martin Madrigal

My father now knows about me. And...and I found out uh... it was a number of years ago, which it sort of made me really happy. For whatever reason I started that conversation with my aunt I said you know "Can I ask you something?" "How does my...my... my...parents feel about me being gay?" Uhm they know. I know they know but they won't talk about it. And it made me cry and it made me so happy because uh what she told me I have never... uh would have never uh imagine that my father would do and she would tell me that uh uh when he would get drunk that he would go to her house sometimes and the only thing that he would do was just talk about me of how proud he was about me. In that... excuse me In that he was happy that I had met someone and it was a surprise and it was a shock because it was totally different that what he used to tell me. You know from uh when I was a kid uh to some years ago.

Leonor Holmstrom

Then we have to start at home with the parents; to respect your children to love them. Your kids have not done anything wrong. They were born the way God wanted them. And thanks to God for having sent me mine.

Our Hopes & Faith

Esther Bell

My mother couldn't see me going to heaven because I'm a lesbian. She would love to see me in heaven and meet me there. But since I'm a lesbian, I won't be able to go. My mom has since reached another phase in her life in which she now understands that God created all mankind equal, and everyone has the right to go to heaven. Her opinion has changed.

Rev. Lynn Smouse Lopez

If we took other scriptures in the bible in a similar manner and just pulled them out of context and said “oh you have to follow this, or you have to do that” there’s a section in the Old Testament that says “parents you have to stone to death your children if they disrespect you” We would never think of doing that today.

Arturo Orozco

I have a message for parents -- try to understand us, the young homosexuals. They suffer by not accepting us as their children But we suffer from their rejection and from society's rejection and some reach a limit, and take their own life because we are not accepted the way we are. and we search for something - sometimes drugs, sometimes alcohol - to fill out that emptiness inside us. I speak for those who decided to commit suicide and for the young people who are still suffering.

Father Cris Rosales

The American bishops wrote a letter to parents of gay and lesbian children. That was titled uh “You are our children” And the point of the letter was almost in a sense to calm, calm down parents, calm, be at peace. Your first responsibility as parents is to be there for your children and to be supportive of your children.

Rev. Hector Lopez

Love one another as Jesus loved us – that is the foundation of our faith. If we love as Jesus did, there is no room for judgement. It would be impossible to look at a brother or sister and judge them, especially for being a homosexual.

Lynn Smouse Lopez

And God created everyone, male or female in God’s image. So folk who are homosexual or bisexual are also created in God’s image and who are we to judge or to turn away people who God has created and sends to us to... to be ministered with and to.

Eduardo Mercado

It is like in history, in this part of history, the church does not accept gay people. In the past, the churches here in Texas did not accept people who spoke Spanish. What happens in every church if we do not accept someone because of something. We are not going to have all the gifts from that person to grow as a church or as a family.

Richard Zaldivar

A mother's love was very very similar to the Virgin's. Because the Virgin Mary had to see what her son went through. Lots of pain, they called her son names, they stoned him and they crucified him. The mothers of gay sons and lesbians do the same thing. They worry about their sons. They're afraid that the moms are afraid that they'll be killed for who they are.

Lynn Smouse Lopez

Jesus never spoke against homosexuality. Never once made a... any negative comments about it uh and Jesus has called us to love those... and particularly who've been excluded and put down. So... so Jesus' constant message about love your neighbor, love your enemy, love those who are oppressed and put down and marginalized says again to us we have to look at our discipleship. Are we going to be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ and welcome everybody into the church and affirm who they are and the gifts that God has given them to share in ministry or are we going to be exclusive?

Leonor Holmstrom

I don't want to say that I have hopes. I am very certain this will change to improve our kids lifestyle and to accept and respect them as who they are. I have two daughters and I want the same laws for both of them. The same benefits for both of them. The same happiness for both of them.