

YMCA of the USA
GLBT Lunch and Learn
June 30, 2009
"Making It Real" Montage

Narrator 1	<p>In the July 1995 issue of <i>Perspective</i>, Margaret Tantillo wrote:</p> <p>"Some may think recognizing gays and lesbians in the YMCA does not fit in the YMCA mission statement of promoting Christian principles. This was likely the same concern when the YMCA included Catholics, and later, when the association decided to include Jews and non-whites. However, by not recognizing gays and lesbians, the YMCA is promoting fear and hatred by allowing people to discriminate."</p>
Narrator 2	<p>We put out a call for YMCA professionals to tell us their anonymous stories related to GLBT realities. The following excerpts are drawn from their submissions.</p>
Employee 1	<p>You cannot underestimate the enormity of simply being included.</p> <p>When a queer couple walks into a YMCA to purchase a membership, it is much more inclusive for them to have an option other than purchasing two single adult memberships.</p> <p>Before the more inclusive definition used in "household" memberships, I watched the surprise and dismay on the faces of GLBT couples as they realized the YMCA was not affirming of their status as a couple. And I remember being ashamed that I worked somewhere that didn't affirm them - and in effect, didn't affirm me.</p>
Employee 2	<p>My ongoing story is this...</p> <p><u>I'm PROUD</u> to have spearheaded the effort to pass domestic partnership benefits at my local YMCA association.</p> <p><u>I'm TROUBLED</u> by the reality that I am the only "out" staff member in an association of nearly 800 employees.</p>
Employee 3	<p>In May 2009 an appeals court ruled that Florida must recognize adoptions that have been granted in other states. A lower court had earlier ruled that gay adoptions in other states had no legal standing in Florida. As a gay man living in a world in which we are only recently becoming able to establish legal bonds of commitment, our adoption journey has been one which has contributed more to my happiness and sense of life's fulfillment than words can allow me to express. I am a proud and loving parent. We are all truly one family and are supportive of one another.</p>
Employee 2	<p>My ongoing story is this...</p> <p><u>I'm PROUD</u> that the YMCA is seeking to be more proactive and accountable to the queer communities it serves.</p> <p><u>I'm SADDENED</u> that it has taken the YMCA so long to make what feels like little progress in this area.</p>
Employee 4	<p>My daughter came out the summer before college.</p> <p>I decided to be open with my co-workers about her life and her blossoming relationship with her girlfriend (now fiancée of 8 years).</p> <p>If someone said, "Oh, I'm so sorry." I could say -- well, I'm not, and here's why.</p>
Employee 2	<p>My ongoing story is this...</p> <p><u>I'm PROUD</u> to be an "out" lesbian woman in the YMCA.</p> <p><u>I'm ANGERED</u> that there are many YMCA positions in communities that appear "off limits" to me because of my sexual orientation.</p>

Employee 5	<p>I have a sexual orientation probably no more than five percent of the population even recognizes as an orientation: Asexuality. Asexuality is the absence of any desire to have sex. It's not abstinence. Asexuality isn't a choice, it's an orientation determined by biology.</p> <p>Imagine walking through the woods and seeing deer eating grass. You're fine with the fact that they're eating grass, you're glad that they have all the grass they want, and you hope they enjoy it. You understand that it's what deer do, and technically, there's no physical or emotional barrier to your eating grass, too. But you have absolutely no urge to eat the grass whatsoever.</p> <p>That's what asexuality is like.</p>
Employee 2	<p>My ongoing story is this...</p> <p><u>I'm PROUD</u> that the diversity opportunity team encourages us to bring our whole person to work and celebrates individuality</p> <p><u>I'm FRUSTRATED</u> that not everyone feels comfortable doing so</p>
Employee 6	<p>Late afternoon I heard two employees gossiping about a male celebrity who they had just discovered was gay. The conversation was about how they're not surprised because they always thought that person was a little "off" and that God would punish him for being gay.</p> <p>At the time I was a relatively new employee, so I was shocked to hear such an openly homophobic conversation. All of the Y-USA messaging I had heard prior to that point (including in my recent new-hire orientation) was about the importance of diversity and inclusion to the movement.</p>
Employee 2	<p>My ongoing story is this...</p> <p><u>I'm PROUD</u> to be serving on the first YMCA GLBT Steering Committee.</p> <p><u>I'm DISTRAUGHT</u> that so many of my queer brothers and sisters within the YMCA do not feel safe and are not "out" in their lives.</p>
Daughter of Employee 4	<p>I am bisexual, but I wasn't entirely out when, as a young woman, I worked as a lifeguard at a YMCA.</p> <p>I still remember what my supervisor said - that one of the YMCA values is respect, and that all the employees should be respected regardless of their sexual orientations. My other coworkers gave their support, and the guards who had been saying homophobic things expressed regret and, in one case, apologized to me. Today I am out and in a committed relationship with a female partner. I would not have the courage to do that today without people like Jamie and my other coworkers.</p>
Employee 2	<p>My ongoing story is this...</p> <p><u>I'm PROUD</u> of the person and professional the YMCA helped shaped me to become.</p> <p><u>I'm ASHAMED</u> of the anti-gay messaging and practices that still exist in the majority of YMCAs and communities today.</p>
Employee 7	<p>Overall, I have seen the YMCA come a long way in nearly 2 decades in regards to GLBT issues. And It is no surprise to me that the YMCA is still struggling with this aspect of inclusiveness--our whole country is struggling with it.</p> <p>We know there is still a long way to go. And we need to challenge ourselves to be open, affirming, and inclusive—every day and in every way of everyone.</p>