

# The BLACK C o m m e n t a t o r

An independent weekly internet magazine  
dedicated to the movement for economic justice,  
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analysis and investigations on issues affecting  
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**What If Your Child Is Gay?  
Black Married Momma  
The Anti-Statistic  
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This week, *The New York Times Magazine* is running a story titled "[Coming Out in Middle School.](#)" It's about exactly what it sounds like – kids in their pre-teens and early teens "coming out," or declaring their non-heterosexual sexual orientation, to parents, friends, relatives, teachers and others. It's about removing the ambiguity that may surround their sexual identity. It's about not pretending to be straight for the sake of saving face and remaining in favor with others.

Typically, coming out has been something that happens later in life, say, when the children are no longer minors and leave the roost. They may acknowledge their gayness or bisexuality to their parents when they're in college – or at some other point in the nascence of their independence as autonomous, self-sustaining adults.

Of course, some people never admit they're gay to their loved ones. They may lead a life that is closeted at church, family reunions, cousins' birthday parties and other events of the hearth and home. They may put on a front as a "lifelong bachelor" or as a hyper-driven career woman with no time for romantic distractions in the workplace to deflect suspicion and avoid detection. These very same people may be frequenting gay bars or clubs in their "off" hours – or they may only do so via the perceived anonymity of the Internet or save it for special – though frequent – trips out of town to more welcoming and receptive cities.

In the *New York Times* story, parents of children who have come out as gay or bisexual exhibit a range of coping mechanisms. Some openly accept it without question or

pause. Others believe it must be a phase that their child will outgrow. And many think that the age of 12, 13 or 14 is way too young to have any clue about one's sexual identity – at least if it's a non-heterosexual one.

Gayness is more of a common denominator than we think. It's just that no one likes to talk about it. For many people, it's akin to having a drug addict, alcoholic or criminal in your family – most of us have at least one, if not all three, but we don't talk about it. We don't discuss it. We whisper about them, shake our heads and claim that we'll pray them to redemption and restoration.

I have gay relatives. In fact, one of my brothers is gay. I distinctly remember when he came out to my parents. He was 16 years old, in his junior year of high school. He first claimed to be bisexual, but I knew otherwise. And soon after he admitted he was straight-up gay. In fact, I had suspected or even known that my brother was gay for a long, long time. I never even remember "finding out" or not knowing – it was just one of those things.

My parents dealt with it well, as best as I can recall. They never loved him conditionally as a result. They didn't keep their parental love in check because he was gay. If anything, they cocooned him just as much – if not more – than they would otherwise. They still held on to their dreams for their child, even if they knew his future would not include a wife and kids. That's love. It doesn't deny, dismiss, discount, deride or denigrate.

Some of my fondest life memories are imprinted with gayness. In fact, during my teens and early 20s, I hung out with gay folks, went to gay bars and attended gay-friendly events. My best friend of more than 20 years was gay. Some would have even called him "flaming" and flamboyant.

He came out at some point in high school, and I know that it was not well-received. However, he continued to live his life unapologetically and on the best terms he could find. Still, like many gay men – especially black ones – he struggled to find his place in this world and within our community. Most black folks are more willing to readily accept an adulterer or domestic abuser than a homosexual. In fact, if you ask, some would say the only thing worse is being an atheist. As a collective, we tend to tolerate them as our beauticians and consult them when we need their advice on an outfit – heck, we'll even let them play the piano at church – but we will ridicule them and remove them from our own families.

My best friend died of AIDS two years ago. Neither of us could have ever known how, much of a premonition our exploits were of things to come (Back when I performed spoken word on a regular basis, he and I performed a piece we wrote together about the dangers of unprotected sex titled "[I Got The AIDS.](#)"). His decline occurred over the course of eight years.

Even today – almost each day – as I think of him, I have to wonder if he would have been consumed by the modern plague if the social supports had been place to affirm and accept him. It's hard enough raising black boys to be responsible, productive men, but how much more difficult is it to do so when they're black AND gay? Well, damn, that's hard.

I don't think any parent wants to sign up for that. But I have to ask myself, what if my children are gay? How would I react? Does my back story provide me with the emotional armaments to love them regardless without the taint of disappointment or

disgruntlement? Does my comfort around gay people mean that, if they aren't straight, they will pull the covers off and not perpetrate a fraud about who – and what – they are?

As my husband and I envision our lives in 20 or 30 years, we think of the men our Little Ladies will marry. We consider how many grandchildren we will have and what we'll do with them in the wonder years of our hopeful retirements. We look forward to being involved and active in their lives – the lives of our children as fully fashioned adults and those of the next generation during their most formative years.

Our ideals and visions are coated with heterosexuality. They are cast in a straight context. But what happens if, in a few years, like the parents in the *Times* article, we are confronted with a reality that forever fractures our current future-focused thinking?

*BLACK MARRIED MOMMA* are musings from **BlackCommentator.com** Columnist *K. Danielle Edwards* - a Black full-time working mother and wife, with a penchant for prose, a heart for poetry, a love of books and culture, a liking of fashion and style, a knack for news and an obsession with facts - beating the odds, defying the statistics. *Sister Edwards* is a Nashville-based writer, poet and communications professional, seeking to make the world a better place, one decision and one action at a time. To her, parenting is a protest against the odds, and marriage is a living mantra for forward movement. Her work has appeared in [BLACK MARRIED MOMMA](#), *MotherVerse Literary Journal*, *ParentingExpress*, *Mamazine*, *The Black World Today*, [Africana.com](#), *The Tennessean* and other publications. She is the author of [Stacey Jones: Memoirs of Girl & Woman, Body & Spirit, Life & Death](#) (2005) and is the founder and creative director of [The Pen: An Exercise in the Cathartic Potential of the Creative Act](#), a nonprofit creative writing project designed for incarcerated and disadvantaged populations. [Click here](#) to contact Ms. Edwards.



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