



Altria's LGBTQ Network
Presents

Coming Out Stories

From Altria
LGBTQ Employees and Allies



“I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples.”

- *Mother Teresa*

This book is an effort to create some ripples of our own and celebrate National Coming Out Day on October 11, 2017. We asked Members of Mosaic, Altria’s LGBTQ Network, which includes LGBTQ employees and Allies, to share their personal coming out stories – whether they are emotional, inspiring, or funny – to highlight that we *all* have a story to tell. Each of the stories contained in this book has power – the power to create many ripples that will move people and bridge divides. Our hope with this book is that these stories will change our organization and bring us together.



Interested in joining Mosaic?



Email us at

mosaic@altria.com

Or learn more on the intranet under:

[Getting Involved](#) > [Employee Groups](#) > [Mosaic](#)

PROUD

m o s a i c

At Mosaic, we get this question a lot: “Why do we need to talk about things like sexual orientation at work?” The short answer is that we already do. It comes up on a regular basis without us even realizing it. For example a female coworker might come to work wearing a dress and say, “My husband and I had a date-night without the kids.” No one thinks twice about what she is wearing and what she said because it matches assumptions we have typically already made. But, in essence, she’s just broadcast her sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.

For a member of the LGBTQ community the choice of what to wear or how to say that sentence can be very different. Here are a few stories from your Proud LGBTQ colleagues about how they came out to their families, friends, and coworkers.



I am a daughter, a sister, an aunt, a wife... and I am a lesbian. There, I finally said it... the dreaded “L” word. My partner (now wife) and I have been together 29 years (legally married for almost 3 years) and I can count on one hand the number of times I have uttered that word (and even fewer times at work).

I started as a production supervisor in a time when there weren’t very many women in production. I was too afraid to let anyone know about my personal life. What if “they” didn’t accept me? What if “they” didn’t like me anymore? What if “they” won’t want to work with me? I found it easier to not talk about my personal life. So much so, that I just kept not talking about it for the last 21 years.

It wasn’t until several years ago, when my partner’s father became very ill and I needed to take a few days off to support her, that I even considered telling my then boss. So, I mustered up the courage to ask for a few days off to be with my partner and her dad. As I fumbled for the right words and finally said “my partner,” my boss looked at me with a very comforting expression and said, “You do realize you are the only one who doesn’t know you are a lesbian?” Well, I was shocked and amazed at the same time. How could everyone know? I had never said anything at work. I had always been very careful not to say “she” or “her” and, God forbid, call her by name.

What I have come to realize is “they” didn’t have the problem... I did. I have spent so much time and effort making sure I used the right pronoun or just said “we” and glazed over any specifics that I have not been my authentic self. I have also done a disservice to the most important person in my life. I was

so afraid people at work wouldn't accept me, that I negated her very existence. I can't and won't do that anymore.

So, I guess... THIS is my coming out story. I am a daughter, a sister, an aunt, a wife and a lesbian. And I don't care who knows it. Or, better yet, I do care, because it does not change anything about me and now I can put all of my effort on my work instead of hiding who I am. So, ask me about what "we" did last weekend or where "we're" going on "our" vacation or how my wife is doing. I am ready to share... ALL of me.

Mary Norford

PROUD
m o s a i c

7

have come out hundreds of times in dozens of ways over the past 40 years. I was eight when I first tried. I had heard about “homosexuals” for the first time, and I knew instantly that I was one. In many ways, it was that simple. I tried to share the good news with my mom. But despite ample evidence (*see Exhibit A*), and my insistence, she wasn’t buying it.

Exhibit A

So while my first coming out attempt was not a smashing success, it was the beginning of my coming out journey. Through conversations (many, many conversations), and in letters, and with bullhorns, and at kiss-ins and protests, I’ve come out to thousands of friends and strangers. One of my biggest coming out events was at the 1993 March on Washington. It was a gay civil rights march, organized to build momentum for LGBTQ equality. It was the “Gay ‘90s,” and as a community, we were just beginning to recover from the AIDS epidemic and renewing our broader fight for equality. So, hundreds of thousands of people came from around the country to march in Washington, DC, and I was one of them.



I had a boyfriend at the time who was a naval flight officer. His name was Tracy. The prior year, he had gone on ABC News Nightline and outed himself to challenge the military’s ban on gays. Back then, you could not serve in the military and be LGBTQ. I was one of 13 million Americans who watched Tracy talk about his love of country and the Navy and the need for him to be honest about who he is. The next day I called 411 and got Tracy’s

phone number. I left him a message thanking him for what he did. Six months later we started dating.

This is important context because not only was I at the March on Washington, but I was there with a bit of a celebrity. Tracy's Nightline appearance had helped start a national debate about the rights of gays to serve in the military. As we marched down Constitution Avenue, toward the Capitol, various photographers were taking pictures of us. One approached us and asked for my name. I watched him write it down. He said, "Thank you" and disappeared.

The next day this picture appeared on the front page of my hometown newspaper:



It occupied the entire section above the fold. The caption named both Tracy and me. This was basically my "catch-all" coming out. Every teacher, neighbor, acquaintance or childhood friend that didn't know that I was gay, now did. With a single picture, I was "OUT."

I love the picture for many reasons and on many levels. It captured a turning point in my coming out journey. Sure, it reached all the outliers in my life and marked a bit of a “no-going-back moment.” But that’s not why. And it’s not because society or its institutions were changing. It would be years before we began to see big changes. No, it was a turning point because I had someone to share this journey with.

I would go on to marry Tracy. He and I would build a life together including a white picket fence in front of our house in the suburbs. We’d have two beautiful children. And years later, we would take them to the Smithsonian American History Museum where this picture is part of the permanent exhibition to “Old Glory,” the subject of our national anthem. We stood with tears in our eyes as we watched a slide show of Americans through history, who, like Tracy, have employed the flag to remind us of who we are as a nation and the work that lies ahead. For many of us who are LGBTQ or Allies, that work can be as simple and important as coming out.

Michael Thorne-Begland





eing open and honest about things like sexual orientation and gender identity can be challenging and, in certain situations, potentially dangerous. Coming out was one of the most difficult and emotionally draining things I have experienced.

I remember the day back in 1998 that I realized I was gay. While sitting in my social studies class, I thought to myself, “Mr. P. is really cute. He’s a good looking guy.” I also remember thinking to myself, “That’s normal, right?” I struggled with these feelings. None of my classmates expressed similar feelings towards the same sex. Nearly 20 years later, the memory of that moment is still with me.

Despite being terrified and conflicted, I told my parents not long after I experienced those feelings. Both of my parents were confused and upset, but not condemning.

After years of battling depression and suicide attempts, I accepted my sexuality. I came out again at 19. My second coming out was easier, but still difficult. The support I received from my parents, sister, cousin, and those around me helped me fully accept myself.

After recently speaking to my mother, she expressed the importance of educating parents, because education is key to understanding and acceptance.



7

he first time I came out at Altria was in the late '90s. I had just joined the company, and at that time all new employees went through diversity training. This included an activity to learn about stereotypes. The facilitators put up two flipcharts and wrote male on one, female on the other. Then we went and stood next to our chart and wrote stereotypes about that group. They put up male and female, black and white, over 50 and under 50, and so on. Eventually they got to gay and straight.

It took a bit, but eventually I went over to stand next to my sign. I have to tell you, I almost cried. Although they did not realize it, they were asking me to come out. They told me afterwards that no one else had ever stood next to that sign.

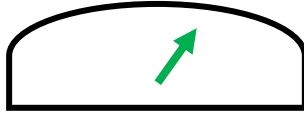
Flash forward to this year and sales training. One of the things they do for new FSF employees is bring them into Richmond for a week of training. During that week they have a networking dinner. The ERG leaders all attend the dinner and act as networkees.

So there we were a few weeks ago, standing up in front of the room introducing ourselves. Unify to my right, East to my left, and me, a garden variety lesbian living in the suburbs with my wife and three children. We were all openly talking about difference. In that one session alone, a new employee walked up to me and said, "Hey, I'm so-and-so. I am so excited to join Altria and I'm gay. How can I get involved?"

Wow. I love the culture we are building today.



“The Elevator Speech”



"**G**ot any plans for the weekend?" asks the stranger in the elevator.

"My wife and I are taking our kids to the zoo," she replies, holding her breath. *Curiosity or condemnation*, she wonders.

"Sounds like fun. My kids loved the giraffes. Do they still let you feed them?" he asks.

"I think so." Relieved, she exhales and smiles.



ALLY

m o s a i c

Family members and friends of LGBTQ folks also move through awareness and acceptance that their loved ones are LGBTQ. Many of them become Allies – people who are not LGBTQ but support those who are. Just like with LGBTQ people, they find themselves in essence “coming out” in the normal course of their life. It could be walking into McDonald’s as a family, going on a family vacation, writing a story in school, etc. Here are a few of their stories and pictures.





rowing up in church as the nephew of a preacher and the son of a school principal's kid has its own challenges. I was taught right from wrong through the eyes of everyone around me. It was tough because I never wanted to let anyone down. I felt as though I was missing out on what most of the "normal" kids were experiencing all around me, but I accepted it because it would only make my life more difficult if I didn't. I lived my life that way until I was 16 years old, when my mom and dad came into my room to let me know they were getting divorced. I was shocked and confused because I was taught that Christians don't get divorced, right? To add to that confusion, my mom began to tell me that my father was gay. I denied it because there is no way the man who made me sit in the front row at church every Wednesday and Sunday was gay, no way! I thought it was just my mother adding fuel to the fire in an attempt for me to take her side.

Finally, I built up the courage to call my dad and ask him for myself. Upon answering the phone, I wasted no time: "Dad, are you gay?" His hesitation said it all, and I broke down! I hung up the phone and sat for hours, speechless. How am I going to tell my friends? How am I supposed to be proud of a homosexual? How do I navigate what I learned in church? Would a girl want me knowing I have a gay dad? I was embarrassed! I didn't speak to my dad for a few months.

One day, out of the blue, my mom calls telling me my dad will be coming to the house to speak with me. You would have thought I just saw a ghost because I was scared out of my mind. The doorbell rings and I didn't know what to do, so I did the only thing I thought logical and hid in my mother's massive walk-in

closet. So here I am, waiting for my dad to come out of the closet while I'm hiding in mine. My dad patiently waited two hours in the living room for me to come out. I finally wiped my tears (as a 16 year old "man") and sat down to hear what he had to say. I have never seen him cry before but he held nothing back: "Bobby, I am gay." Surprisingly, I held myself together while listening to him pour out his heart. He began by telling me how he had always known he was gay but always had to hide it; he had spent his entire life trying to hide from himself. His father was a World War II POW who escaped a German prison, so you can only imagine how he would have handled one of his sons being homosexual. He continued about how he really loves my mother but just couldn't hide from who he was any longer. My father even shared how he tried committing suicide.

Imagine sitting in front of a man who is uncontrollably weeping talking about how he would rather be dead than face the cruel world that hasn't accepted homosexuality; it was both hard and necessary. A few hours earlier I was hiding from my father out of embarrassment and now I find myself feeling incredibly selfish! Sitting there aggressively listening rocked my world. It was that exact moment my entire world view was flipped upside down. I immediately pulled my father in, and while hugging his neck I said, "I don't know how we will get through this, but I know we will!" It wasn't right away, but my dad became my best friend.

In 2006, I Joined the United States Air Force. Although I was extremely excited, I was also upset because I knew I had to leave my dad. Knowing what he went through gave me all the motivation in the world to be who I know I can be. I am proud of my dad! Although he was my best friend, I still was very cautious about sharing with others that he is gay, and I knew I had to conquer that fear! One day I was talking with my friend and I just

came out and told him. My father was gay and I love him for it because he is being true to himself. That sparked my fire to really be who I am. My father is gay and if I hide from that then I am in turn not being true to myself. To answer the questions from earlier:

- ***How am I going to tell my friends?*** I just tell them and if they don't like it, they have no place in my life.
- ***How am I supposed to be proud of a homosexual?*** I am proud of anybody who is true to themselves and stand tall and proud of who they are.
- ***How do I navigate what I learned in church?*** *In the Bible it teaches us that God loves ALL of his children unconditionally; no matter your race, your sexuality, or your beliefs—we are ALL God's children.*
- ***Would a girl want me knowing I have a gay dad?*** The right girl will!

In 2009, I received an exciting phone call from my dad about how he has met someone named Brian. I was filled with joy because I have never heard my dad that excited about anything! I flew home from Colorado (where I was stationed) and had the amazing opportunity to meet Brian. Yes, my dad loved my mother, but this was different; it was my dad experiencing the same fire heterosexuals feel. The way they looked at one another was truly awesome! Brian instantly became a new best friend of mine and loved when I called him “gay dad 2.” Since the first day I met him, he always went above and beyond ensuring I was okay. And with deployments, that was often. My father and Brian officially got married in 2014.

On August 17, 2017, I flew home from Afghanistan and reunited with my dad and Brian. Brian looked ill. I had a gut feeling that he wouldn't be with us much longer. On September 6, 2017, my dad walked in on Brian sleeping on the couch; however, Brian wasn't sleeping, he was gone. My phone rang at 7:30am while I was driving to my unit meeting in Orlando and to my surprise, I heard the exact same weeping I heard when I was 16. The love of his life is gone. Upon arriving at their house, I knew there was nothing I could say or do other than just be there.

Today is September 24th, and we are preparing for Brian's Life Celebration Party. While preparing and organizing his final party, I took time to look over thousands of pictures. Seeing the two of them in all these photos brought tears to my eyes because of the struggle they went through to make it. The struggle is real! The frustration is real! And most importantly, THE LOVE IS REAL!

My name is Bobby Evans and I am proud supporter and ally to the LGBTQ community. Although the LGBTQ community is making positive progress, it will never be where it needs to be without the acceptance and support from groups like Mosaic.

Bobby Evans





have a sister named Melanie who is 13 years younger than me. About 4 years ago, she told me and our other two sisters that she was a lesbian and that she was in a relationship with a girl. We all accepted it right away and supported her. I wanted to meet her girlfriend, so we scheduled a dinner together.

I was a little nervous to meet her, not because she was a girl, but because I had never known my sister to date anyone at all. This would be my first time meeting anyone my little sister was dating. I loved her and they are still together to this day, happily living together.

But while my other two sisters and I were an easy sell, we all knew that my parents would not be. Melanie struggled over the next couple of years with whether she should tell our parents or not. She wanted to be able to bring her girlfriend to family events and for our family to accept and welcome her. My mom came from a very religious background and was not very open-minded towards people in the LGBTQ community. We were scared that she might disown my sister or that it might cause her to have a stroke. We knew that my dad would be a little easier to tell.

More time passed and finally Melanie decided that it was time to tell our parents. She texted me and said that she was just going to text my mom and tell her. I highly recommended telling her in person. I told her that I would go with her. She said, “No, I just can’t tell her face to face. I am going to text her.”

She did just that. She texted my mom and told her that she was a lesbian and was in a happy relationship. My mom reacted completely differently from how we expected. She let

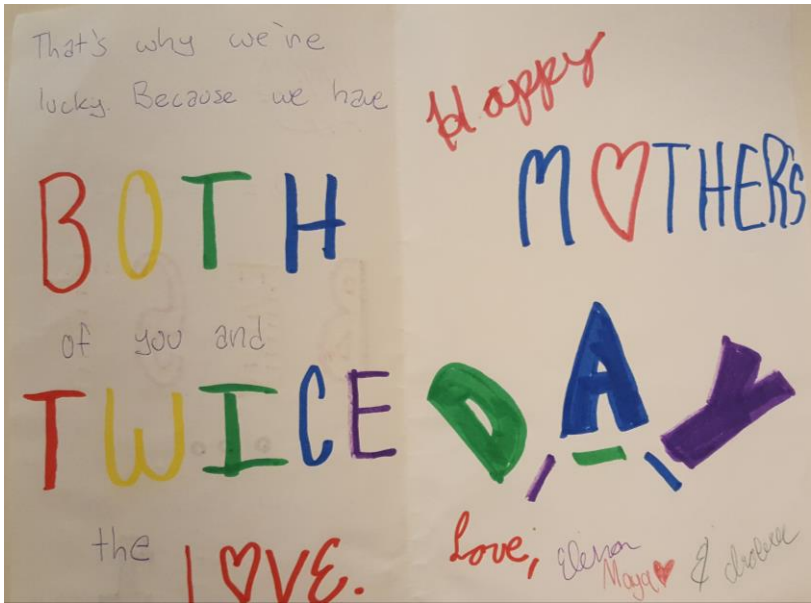
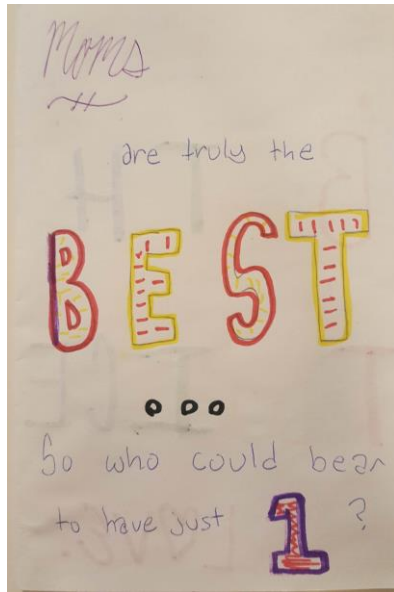
Melanie know that she still loved her and supported her no matter what. It was a beautiful moment. My sister felt like a weight had been lifted off of her.

Now Melanie’s girlfriend Devon is part of the family and everyone loves her! My strict religious mom is now a supporter of gay rights and defends gay people very passionately. I never in a million years would have thought that she would be so accepting. It was a beautiful coming out that brought my entire family closer together and opened my mom’s mind!

Kimberly Rogers



"Twice as Nice"



Elena Marshel, age 12

Daughter of Julia Marshel



As a child growing up, “gay” was a term I heard in two contexts: 1) whenever my mother would talk about her “gay cousin Brian,” and 2) when children would tease each other by calling one another “gay” or “lezzie.” I didn’t actually understand what they meant at the time. From my mother, gay was always said with acceptance, perhaps in an attempt to educate hoping we would ask what it meant. From the kids, it was disparaging. By my late teens and early 20s I knew what gay and lesbian meant and I believed they were no longer terms to be used as weapons. I still had never met anyone who was openly LGBTQ and didn’t have any experience to pull from when I began to think my brother might be gay.

In high school my brother, Erik, was a jerk. He was sarcastic and mean to his family and he ridiculed and verbally tormented our younger sister. Because our relationship had deteriorated so much, we didn’t speak much during our college years. I learned only after he came out how hard his journey had been. He had been struggling internally with who he was and who he didn’t want to be, and that’s why he became such a bully.

I was about 24 when my brother came out. He told our mom first. A year later he told our sister and me. Lastly, he told our dad. I don’t know if I said the right things in that moment. I remember telling him “okay” and asking if he believed he was born this way (because I did). He responded with two questions of his own: “Do you really think I would choose this? Do you know how hard my life is going to be now?” I told him I would always support and love him and that I would never stand for someone calling him names or degrading him. Once the ice was broken, it was like my brother returned. He was funny and witty

and his anger melted away and we could talk about regular sibling-type things. I even asked him who his “type” was – Will or Jack? “Will,” he said. We had a relationship again, one that has grown over the years since.

I didn’t know how to have a conversation with my brother back in high school and college, but I’ve since learned that in order for someone to trust you, you must first create that environment of trust. If I share my ally status and share my story, perhaps I will be the one trusted and perhaps there will be one less person to struggle with feeling unsupported the way my brother did.

This year Erik married Bryan in Hawaii, and I was so proud to be able to share that beautiful experience with my husband and two young children. Erik, I will always stand by you and stand up for you. That’s what big sisters do.

Janine Fountain



Erik is the tall, handsome one on the left!



One day about ten years ago, I found myself in upstate New York on Altria business working with a colleague from another department who I will call George, and who I had known casually through work for a number of years. After our meetings were finished, I learned my flight back to Richmond was cancelled. George kindly offered to drive me to New York City, where he lived, so I could catch a flight home from La Guardia. On the drive down, we had a wide ranging conversation about our experience at the company, the work we were doing at the time, and, then, ultimately, about our respective families. He spoke glowingly of his children, including a newborn. I asked George how his wife was doing with the new baby. He paused, then said, “Well, I don’t have a wife. I’m gay. My partner and I have been together for fifteen years.” Of course I apologized for what I felt was a blunder. George was so gracious about it – “Oh, no problem,” he said, “that happens more than you can imagine.”

We then went on to have an amazing conversation about his experience growing up as a gay Latino man in New York City, what it was like to come out to his very socially conservative family as well as the broader community where he lived, and what it was like for him and his partner to raise children in this circumstance.

Now, this was at a time before public opinion supported the notion of marriage equality. Looking back on that time, I can say my own opinion on marriage equality was not fully developed. It was conversations like the one I had with George – and a number of other LGBTQ friends and colleagues – that helped me better understand the LGBTQ experience, and why

marriage equality was so essential not just for the LGBTQ community, but for everyone.

George left the company a few years ago, but I will always remember that conversation and how generous he was with sharing his personal experience, and how much he helped me on my own journey of inclusion. Thank you, George!

David Fernandez



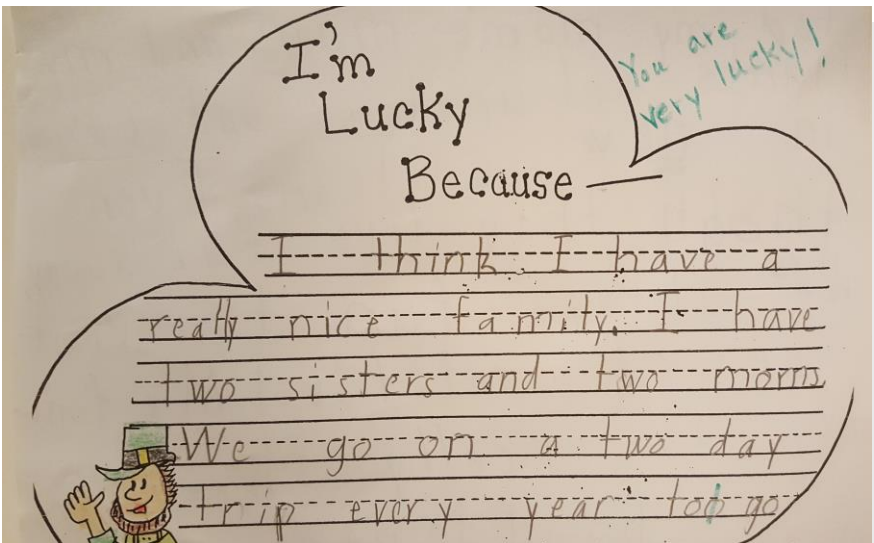
"Family Portrait"



Isabelle Marshel, age 6

Daughter of Julia Marshel

"Lucky Girl"



Elena Marshel, age 7

Daughter of Julia Marshel

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y father's brother (my uncle) is gay. I don't remember not knowing this or him coming out. For me it has always been. I have always considered myself an ally, though it wasn't until I was much older that I had a word for it. While I can't say I was born this way, I was definitely raised that way. That said, being an ally is a continuing journey for me. I remember in grad school referring to my good friend as gay in a restaurant. He became really uncomfortable that someone at another table might have heard me. I didn't understand this, and had to learn from his story about marginalization and bias.

He is now out and proud and is my son's godfather. Another stage in this story was understanding and learning empathy for the complexity of the LGBTQ+ community, which involves birth sex, gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation. Plural pronouns are still hard for me – not to accept but to remember. I have spent decades using singular pronouns. To use "they/them," I have to speak slowly and really concentrate to use the preferred pronoun. And I am embarrassed when I mess it up (which I have!). So, like coming out as LGBTQ+, being an ally didn't happen for me in a moment, but over time.

I am still on this journey and believe that all of us are forever works in progress. I am appreciative for all that Mosaic has done to help both me personally and Altria on this journey.

Melissa Burroughs



7

he day I found out my childhood friend was a lesbian was the day my mother received her wedding invitation. My mother called and told me that Sarah was getting married. “How exciting! What’s his name?” I replied. My mother hesitated momentarily before saying, “Uh, her name is Holly.” I was a little surprised to say the least, as I hadn’t seen Sarah in years since we each went off to colleges in separate states (and Facebook wasn’t invented yet), but my response was, “Okay, well, when’s the wedding?”

I was excited as the wedding day approached, but I wondered if seeing Sarah for the first time after this announcement would feel different or awkward. I was also curious about how this wedding might be different from the others I’d attended.

Well, seeing Sarah again felt so ordinary and we fell right back into the same comfortable friendship we always had. And the wedding itself? Well this was my first Lesbian-Jewish-Vegan wedding, and with that combination quite possibly my last as well! Just like every other wedding I’d ever been to there was love, family and friends, food, cake and bad dancing. There was also a Chupah, the breaking of the glass and two brides. It was, in a word, “perfect!”

Janine Fountain



9

decided to come out as an Ally at Altria on September 3, 2016 at the corner of Greenwich Street and Broadway in Lower Manhattan. I was on a trip with my best friend Adnan Barqawi and we were figuring out our plans for the night.

We knew that our first stop would be the IFC Center in Greenwich Village to catch a movie I wanted to see. Adnan, who had been eager to explore New York's famous gay-scene for months, recommended that we stop by a gay bar after the movie and figure out our night from there.

I hesitated at this recommendation. I'd never been to a gay bar and Adnan's casual comment that "they might even have a drag show" caught me off guard. My reluctance led to an uncomfortable (and inevitable) line of questioning from my best friend that ended in a comment I'll never forget: "Jay, I think you understand homosexuality on an intellectual level but not on an emotional one."

This comment stung. Adnan is my closest friend.

We met while studying abroad in Japan and South Korea as students at Virginia Tech. We bonded by debating our different worldviews. I grew up as a Lutheran, high school tennis player in Hickory, North Carolina. Adnan grew up as a Palestinian refugee in Kuwait City, Kuwait. Since that trip, Adnan has spent the majority of major holidays at my home in Hickory and I have visited his family in Kuwait on two different occasions. He is my best friend and it is not easy to hear that you do not emotionally understand your best friend.



Adnan Barqawi, Laurie Williams, and Jay Williams - 2007

That night, I decided to explore New York City's gay-scene with Adnan. I went to my first gay bar (*Pieces* – it's at the corner of Christopher and Gay Street – I highly recommend it), attended my first Drag Show (Drag Queens can be intimidating!) and even witnessed the remarkable effectiveness of Grindr.

That same night, I committed myself to understanding gay culture on an emotional level. I came out as an Ally at Altria and an active member of MOSAIC to demonstrate my commitment to Adnan and all my LGBTQ co-workers that share his story.

Jay Williams



What Can I Do?



Thank you for taking the time to look through this book and read what your LGBTQ and Ally colleagues have been bold enough to share – this is a great first step, but it is also only the beginning. If you really want to make a difference, we hope that you read on to learn a little bit more about the LGBTQ community and the things you can do at work and at home to make an impact both at Altria and in your local community.

Membership in Mosaic is open to anyone who supports the vision of fostering greater diversity, creativity, and innovation, as well as a company-wide culture of inclusion and opportunity. This includes members of the LGBTQ community and anyone who is interested in becoming an Ally. Our hope is that this book has sparked an interest in becoming a member and that we will see you at one of our upcoming Mosaic sponsored events.

Become an Ally



An Ally supports a group of which they are not a member.

To be an Ally of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community:

BE INFORMED

Educate yourself about the issues affecting the lives of the LGBT community.

ASK

When you aren't sure about the words to use when talking about LGBT issues, ask. Sometimes, silence says a lot, so just ask.

SPEAK OUT

When you hear derogatory slurs or jokes like, "that's so gay," say something. Challenge disparaging behavior and language.

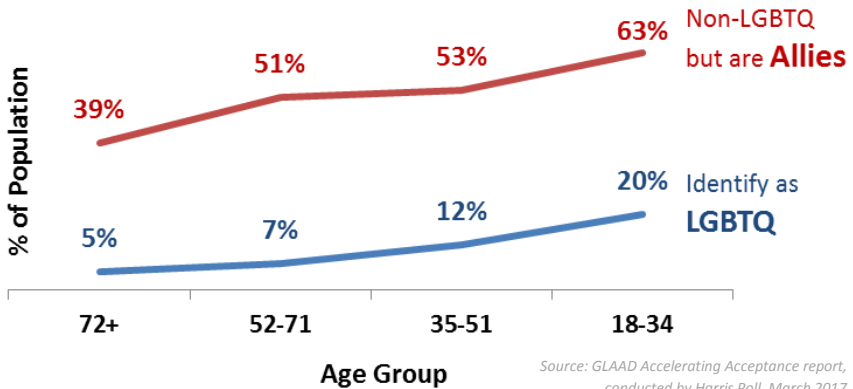
ENGAGE

Make it personal. Share your own experiences about your LGBT family and friends and engage others in your own personal stories. This shows LGBT colleagues and friends that you are a supporter, which opens the door for them to come to you as an ally.

BE VISIBLE

Display your Ally decal in your office or wear your Ally pin. Be seen for who you are.

The Importance of Allies



When I see charts like this it makes me think of my father’s cousin Mike. Mike was born and raised in a small town in North Carolina. He taught, volunteered, paid taxes, and lived with his partner Charlie for 50 years. Every time he saw his mother she would ask, “Have you met any nice girls? And how is that Charlie guy?” It wasn’t that he didn’t exist. It was that he wasn’t fully seen.

Flash forward to my life. We had begun to realize that LGBTQ was just a part of the fabric of life. We had developed the concept of Ally. My mother was able to tell me in advance that she would be supportive. That allowed me the safe space to come out. When the time came, she helped me plan my wedding to Claudia.

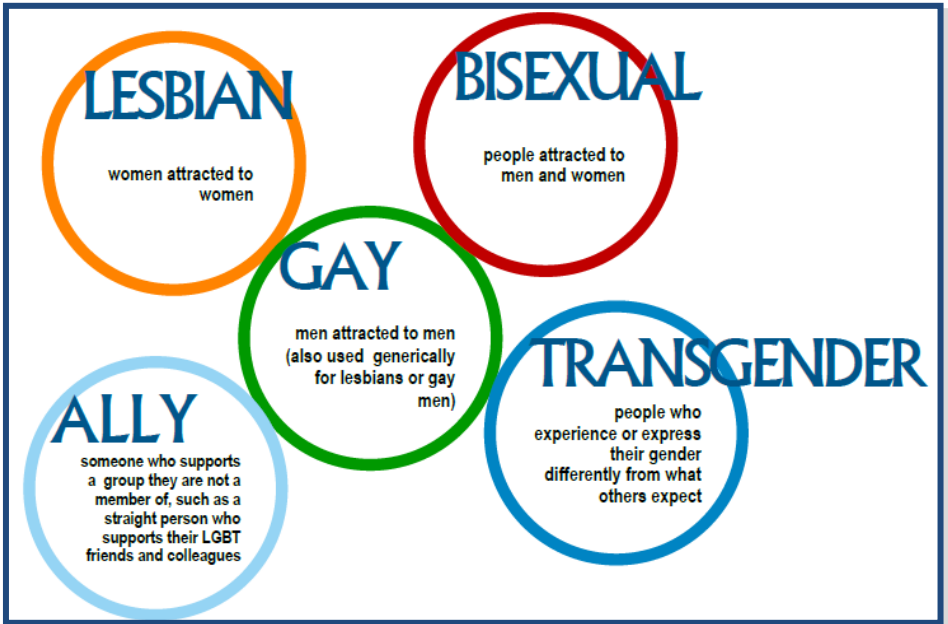
This chart is a testament to the importance of active Allies. If you aren’t already, I encourage you to become informed, ask, speak out, engage and be visible. It matters!

Julia Marshel, Mosaic Chair



You aren't on your own - Mosaic can help you on your journey.

*Let us begin with the basics so you can **BE INFORMED.***

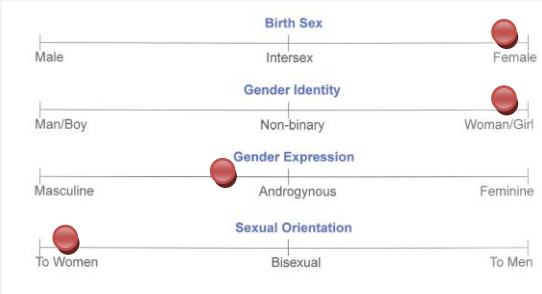


LGBTQ Diversity at Altria Pride

2014



Ash Beckham



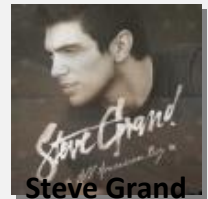
2015



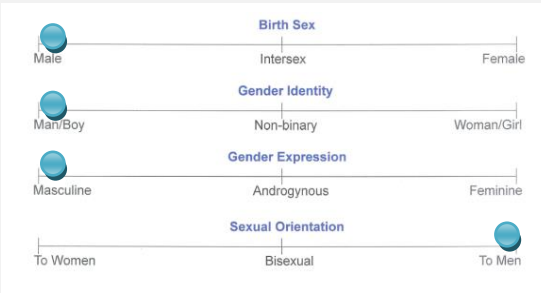
Geena Rocero



2016



Steve Grand



2017



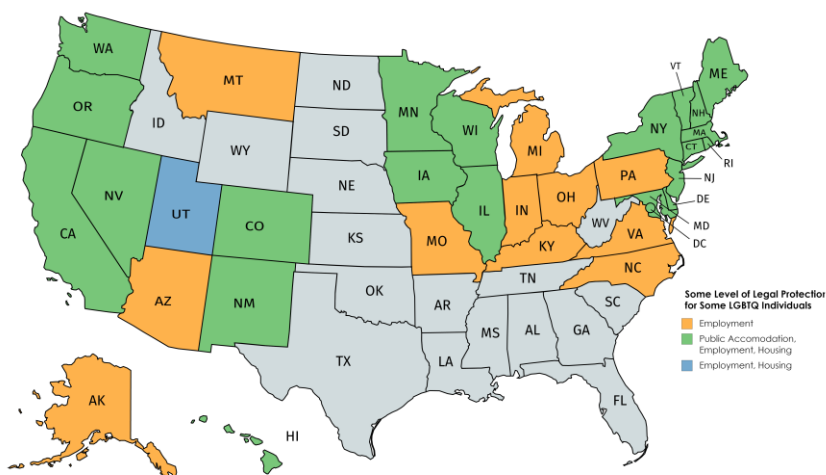
Wade Davis



Everything you always wanted to know about Trans labels, but were afraid to ask...

<p>People who identify as Trans include:</p>	<p>Trans/ Transgender: Someone who does not identify with their sex assigned at birth.</p>	<p>Trans Woman: Someone who was male at birth but identifies as female.</p>	<p>Trans Man: Someone who was female at birth but identifies as male.</p>
	<p>Transfeminine/ Transmasculine: Someone who identifies more female than male or more male than female.</p>	<p>Agender: Someone who does not identify with a gender.</p>	<p>Two-spirit: Someone who fills one of the mixed-gender roles in Native American communities.</p>
	<p>Multigender: Someone who identifies with more than one gender.</p>	<p>Gender Fluid: Someone whose gender changes.</p>	<p>Genderqueer: Someone who does not identify within the gender binary.</p>
<p>Not Trans:</p>	<p>Cisgender: Someone not Trans</p> <p>Crossdresser: Someone who wears clothes associated with the opposite gender (can be trans, but isn't necessarily)</p> <p>Drag Performer: Someone who wears flamboyant clothes for entertainment value (can be trans, but isn't necessarily)</p> <p>Intersex: The presence of a less common combination of features that generally distinguishes male and female (can be trans, but isn't necessarily)</p>		

The State of the Union



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Source: www.HRC.org, 2017

One reality of life for your LGBTQ colleagues is that the level of legal protections they are granted is different from those granted to non-LGBTQ individuals.

The right to marry was granted in 2014! This conveyed other everyday rights and benefits. For example, both LGBTQ parents can now be legal parents to their children. They have the legal right to visit a spouse or child in the hospital, give directives for their medical care, or attend their child's parent-teacher conference. Their family can benefit from the social security taxes they paid should they predecease. We've come a long way.

However, there is still work to do. In many states it is legal to deny public accommodation (ex: refuse service in a restaurant), expel from housing, or fire an individual for being LGBTQ. Legal protections for transgender individuals lag even further behind those of lesbian or gay individuals. We are headed in the right direction but there is still work to do. Let's get it done!

Acknowledgement

*To Todd Reazor, who inspired us to do this.
His love for life and pride in who he is inspires us all.*

*To all those, gay or straight, who contributed to this collection.
Thank you for your bravery and caring.*

*To all of our readers.
May it bring you awareness, connection, bravery and inspiration.*

Be Yourself.

Be Counted.

Be Included.



Altria's LGBTQ Network