

MAMA BEARS

A FILM BY DARESHA KYI

"We're not going to see changes in our legislative halls until we change what we hear in the pews from the pulpits of our churches."

LAURA BETH BUCHLEITER

DID YOU KNOW...

There are over **35,000 mothers**—many from conservative, Christian backgrounds—who are willing to risk the loss of friends, family, and their faith communities to keep their LGBTQ+ offspring safe?

Connected by private Facebook groups, they help each other overcome the teachings of their churches and call themselves "mama bears" because they fight ferociously for the civil rights of the entire LGBTQ+ community.

The feature documentary
MAMA BEARS celebrates a few
of their stories.

WHAT'S AT STAKE...

For families of conservative Christian faith with LGBTQ+ children, the path to acceptance can be complex. In fact, research from more than 21,000 U.S. college students found participants who identified as LGBTQ+ whose parents rejected them due to conservative religious beliefs were at greatly increased risk of suicidal thoughts and behaviors.

LGBTQ+ youth who come from highly rejecting families are:

- **8.4 times** more likely to have attempted suicide
- **5.9 times** more likely to report high levels of depression
- **3.4 times** more likely to use illegal drugs



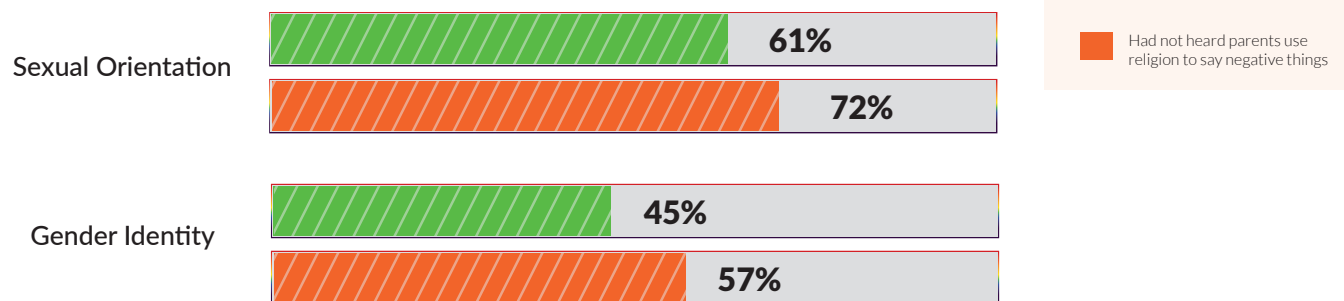
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A LOOK AT THE NUMBERS

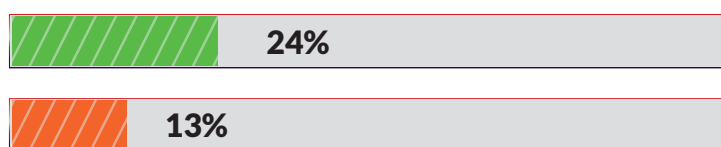
"We told our son that he had to choose between Jesus and his sexuality. We had unintentionally taught Ryan to hate himself. So as he began to use drugs, he did so with a recklessness and a lack of caution for his own safety...Ryan died on July 16, 2009. What we had wished for, prayed for, hoped for—that we would not have a gay son—came true."

LINDA ROBERTSON

SHARING LGBTQ IDENTITY WITH PARENTS



SUICIDE ATTEMPT IN PAST 12 MONTHS




THOUGHT QUESTIONS



- Why do you think LGBTQ+ youth are more at risk than others?
- What kind of support is there in your community for LGBTQ+ youth?
- What kind of support exists for you?

FOSTERING DEEP LISTENING

MAMA BEARS affirms that all children, especially LGBTQ+ youth, need love and acceptance from their parents and other important adults in their lives. The film is meant to jumpstart respectful, deep-listening conversations between Christian and LGBTQ+ communities in a safe, open environment facilitated by leaders trained in nonviolent communication.



"The mama bear tribe is really what turned me into an advocate. They made me brave. They gave me other examples of mamas who were going to do whatever they had to do for their kid and they didn't throw Jesus out of the window to do it. Instead, Jesus is the reason that we can do it."

KIMBERLY SHAPPLEY

"When I first joined the group, there were 250 moms there and a mother said, 'I just heard the words, "Mom, I'm gay" and I don't even know how to pray anymore. I don't even know how to breathe.' All 250 of the moms chimed in and said, 'Then you don't. You let us breathe and you let us pray for you' and that was my first picture of community and knowing that you are not alone and just a wellspring of support and if that can't breathe life into you, I don't know what can."

SARA CUNNINGHAM


THOUGHT QUESTIONS



- What did you learn from the film?
- Why do you think mama bears say "Jesus is the reason" they fight for LGBTQ+ people?
- What does your faith community teach about LGBTQ+ people?

FIERCELY LOVING OUR KIDS

The power and strength of groups like the mama bears are the connections with others who have experienced similar feelings of isolation or loneliness especially within their faith communities as a result of their LGBTQ+ child coming out.



“The truth is that Kai has made me a better Christian. She has made me a better mom. She has made me a better person. And, I’ve learned, through this process, what chosen family means. This is what true ministry is. What true love is. But as we continue to walk out this story and as we continue to do it in as positive and as hopeful a way as we are able to, I can never forget that truly loving someone is asking someone what it is that they need from you so that they feel loved by you.”

KIMBERLY SHAPPLEY



THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- **Why is it important to ask others how they want to be loved?**
- **When have you experienced isolation or loneliness?**
- **What can you do to make the world kinder and safer?**

MOVING FORWARD

So what can you do to make the world a “kinder, safer place” for LGBTQ+ people? You can join your local mama bears group, Free Mom Hugs chapter or other organizations, or host a screening of the film at your church and lead an open conversation. Even if it’s only through baby steps, YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!



“For the longest time, I felt like I was the only gay Christian and so when I found out about the mama bears, finally there was this feeling of there are others in the world that are going through this. For me, it opened up an awareness that there are Christian parents who are affirming of their children.”

TAMMI TERRELL MORRIS

THOUGHT QUESTIONS



- Do LGBTQ+ people deserve the same rights as others?
- What can you do to support LGBTQ+ youth?
- What other marginalized people live in your area?

RESOURCES TO TAKE ACTION

- [LGBTQ+ Crisis Support Hotlines and Resources](#)
- [Books for Families with LGBTQ members & LGBTQ individuals](#)
- [Books for Early Elementary Ages & Younger \(LGBTQ friendly\)](#)
- [Books for Middle Grade Ages \(LGBTQ friendly\)](#)
- [Books for Young Adults \(LGBTQ friendly\)](#)
- [Resources for Homeless LGBTQ Youth](#)
- [LGBTQ+ Affirming Wedding Officiants](#)
- [Fully Inclusive Faith Communities](#)
- [Glossary of LGBTQ Terms](#)
- [Non Binary Terms](#)
- [LGBTQ Apps and Online Services](#)
- [LGBT Organizations offering support & info](#)
- [LGBTQ Youth Camps](#)
- [Sex Ed Sites that are Inclusive of LGBTQ](#)
- [Trans Specific Resources](#)
- [Links to individual blog posts, articles, studies, documents](#)
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