

YOUNG **HUMAN RIGHTS** **REPORTER** **OF THE YEAR**

Being Gay

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Young Human Rights Reporter Runner Up 2013 (Upper Primary Category)

There he was. Over there. Fear erupted inside me as I tried to blink away the tears that were blurring my vision. He had spotted me; a menacing smirk crawled across his face. He hated me. Hated who I am. I can't help feeling the way I do, being who I am - gay. I am a magnet to bullies: I seem to attract them. For me, there is always a thick, black cloud of misery hovering above my head, haunting my thoughts, making me query whether who I am is 'normal.' The only question I have is: why...?

Homophobic bullying. Not a subject many people like to talk about, but it ruins lives, tears people apart and throws them into dark corners of hopelessness and days spent in secrecy. Why should people be forced to live their lives in the shadows, never daring to show their true selves, even to their nearest relatives and friends? Something needs to change. Now.

Many young teenagers live under a shroud of fear, afraid of being 'found out' - this constant stress can cause severe depression and even result in suicide. For example: the LGF (Lesbian and Gay Foundation) says 16% of gay and bisexual boys have attempted suicide and 57% have thought about taking their own life in the UK.

Despite the British Government recently permitting gay marriage in the UK, when the motion was finally passed, 136 conservative MPs were still opposed to the law. What kind of immature example is this setting to children, when

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even 'responsible' adults in positions of high power can deny a basic human right? No wonder a culture of intolerance has developed on our playgrounds. No wonder so many young people see the term 'gay' as an insult and not a fact.

Fortunately, some young homosexuals are able to disregard the hate they encounter at home and school: this is an increasing number of people who are determined not to hide in the closet and are prepared to stand up to homophobic bullying. However, this does not include the majority of innocent gay teenagers who experience this type of bullying during their young adulthood. They feel alone, and confused about their sexuality. As a nation we need to overcome this; let homosexuals be treated as equals and let people not be shy to say the word 'gay.' Gay.