

YouthAware Educational Theatre

The Other Side of the Closet

By Ed Roy

Study Materials

The Other Side of the Closet by Ed Roy has been touring to Northern California middle and high schools since 2000 to educate young people about homophobia, diversity, acceptance, and the California Student Safety and Violence Prevention Act of 2000 (AB 537).

Pre-Show Discussion Points

- Over 200,000 students each year in California alone are the victims of harassment based on their actual or perceived sexual orientation. 91% of California students reported hearing students make negative comments based on sexual orientation in school and 44% reported hearing teachers and staff make the same negative comments. (Source: [CA Safe Schools Coalition – Safe Place to Learn Report 2004](#))
- The California Student Safety and Violence Prevention Act of 2000 (AB 537) is a law that protects students, faculty, and staff at public schools from harassment and discrimination on the basis of actual or perceived sexual orientation. (Source: [CA Department of Education -- CA Student Safety and Violence Prevention](#))
- Nine out of ten LGBT middle and high school students reported harassment at school last year (Source: [2007 National School Climate Survey, Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network](#)):
 - 86.2% of LGBT students reported being verbally harassed, 44.1% reported being physically harassed, and 22.1% reported being physically assaulted at school in the past year because of their sexual orientation.
 - 73.6% heard derogatory remarks such as “faggot” or “dyke” frequently or often at school.
 - More than half (60.8%) of students reported that they felt unsafe in school because of their sexual orientation, and more than a third (38.4%) felt unsafe because of their gender expression.
 - 31.7% of LGBT students missed a class and 32.7% missed a day of school in the past month because of feeling unsafe, compared to only 5.5% and 4.5%, respectively, of a national sample of secondary school students.
 - The reported grade point average of students who were more frequently harassed because of their sexual orientation or gender expression was almost half a grade lower than for students who were less often harassed (2.8 versus 2.4).
 - Students in schools with a Gay-Straight Alliance reported hearing fewer homophobic remarks, experienced less harassment and assault because of their sexual orientation

and gender expression, were more likely to report incidents of harassment and assault to school staff, were less likely to feel unsafe because of their sexual orientation or gender expression, were less likely to miss school because of safety concerns and reported a greater sense of belonging to their school community.

- The presence of supportive staff contributed to a range of positive indicators including fewer reports of missing school, greater academic achievement, higher educational aspirations and a greater sense of belonging to their school community.
 - Despite the positive benefits of these interventions, only about a third of students (36.3%) reported having a Gay-Straight Alliance at school. The same number of students (36.3%) could identify six or more supportive educators and only a fifth (18.7%) attended a school that had a comprehensive safe school policy.
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- Think about a time when you were excluded, physically hurt, verbally harassed or made fun of because of who you are or even just because of how others perceived you. How did this make you feel and how did you react?
 - Do you or your peers ever use words at school that could be considered derogatory and hurtful to individuals or to groups? Why is hurtful language used so frequently in schools?
 - What other individuals or groups of people throughout history have been discriminated against or have been victims of verbal or physical abuse because of who they are? What has history taught us?

Post-Show Discussion Points

- Think about a time when you or someone you know was harassed simply for being who they are. How did it make you feel and how did you react?
- Why do young people label each other or use derogatory words against each other?
- What is a stereotype? Were there any stereotypes that appear in this play?
- Where could someone in Carl's situation have gone for help in your school or community?
- How would someone like Antony be treated in your school or community?
- At one point Tara says, "Maybe it's better if we don't hang out with Carl anymore. Maybe now everything will go back to normal." What is normal? Who should decide what "normal" is in our society?
- What role did violence play in this story? Why did Carl participate in the hate crime at the top of the play? What was another choice for Carl besides resorting to violence against Rick at the end? How did Antony deal with Rick's aggression compared to Carl?
- What other groups of people throughout our history have been discriminated against based on who they are or for what they believe?

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- [GSA Network](#): connecting school-based Gay Straight Alliances to each other and to community resources
 - [California Safe Schools Coalition](#): protecting students from discrimination and harassment based on actual and perceived sexual orientation and gender identity
 - [Text of the California Student Safety and Violence Prevention Act of 2000 \(AB 537\)](#): courtesy of [GSANetwork.org](#)
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If you or someone you know is the victim of harassment, report it to a teacher or principal. Under AB 537, schools are required to prevent harassment on campus.