

Why Do They Hate Us So Much?

By David Kundtz

To all straight people
To all LGBTQ people - and
to all who love us
to all who identify with us
to all who support us and our rights
to all who know our cause is broader than just gay rights:

There are reasons why they hate us so much.
Here are some **answers** and some **actions** you can take.

Introduction

For many of us, on *all* points of the sexual spectrum, the question “Why do they hate us—lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or LGBT people—so much?” used to be a rhetorical question. It was really a statement of bewilderment: we simply could not fathom the hate, especially the extreme degree of hate, that people harbored toward us.

No more. Now we have some answers and are well on our way to responding with those answers in ways that are having positive effect on how the world deals with LGBT people.

This piece is an attempt to summarize what I see as the most important answers to that question, although not the only ones, and to suggest some actions or responses that we—all of us—can take. I believe it is important for us to act *now*, at precisely this moment in history.

Buoyed by the passage of a bevy of anti-gay marriage state amendments and an administration which is pushing for a anti-gay U.S. constitutional amendment, there is a rush, a torrent, of anti-gay measures in state legislatures, church assemblies, federal branches of government, and in organizations of the general public. The last elections have emboldened them.

Who are the “They” in my title? I include here all who fear us, work against us, or support those who do, tacitly or explicitly. Who are the “Us” in my title? Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, and queer people; and all those who do not fit comfortably into the “acceptable” sexual categories.

First, let’s stop acting surprised. Of course the established world is threatened by queer people! All you have to do is stop and think about it. It’s just that we didn’t think they were *that* threatened!

The vast majority of people in our country want to know that men are men and women are women and everybody knows the difference – physically, culturally, socially, theologically, and every other way. They also want to know that there are acceptable roles and behaviors for each and especially that there are *unacceptable* roles and behaviors for each. It’s a neat and tidy belief that’s been around for a long time.

The problem is that it is not accurate. We come along and say, well, no, that’s not what we experience. It seems they were beginning to put up with us for a while, until we got just too threatening: I think the marriage issue did it.

(Maybe you, like me, believe that it was a tactical error for the LGBT community to push for “marriage” specifically, and that acceptance of *all* the same rights and privileges as marriage, but called something else—civil unions?—would have been a better way to go. But now that the battle is joined, we must carry it onward. Perhaps when it’s all over, the marriage proponents will have achieved the better goal.) (*Note 1*)

Before we get to the specific answers, it is useful to state clearly and in general that they hate us for basically an obvious—if unacceptable—reason: we openly challenge beliefs that most people see as sacred traditions: no sex outside of marriage; acceptable sex of any kind is only with the opposite gender; one man, one woman equals marriage. LGBT lives are often blatant contradictions to all that.

From the point of view of the majority of the people in this country, we are turning their world upside-down. So no more acting surprised, with hurt feelings, and feeling sorry for ourselves. We must accept our roles as revolutionaries, activists, protesters, and resisters. This is understandably difficult for some who, like me, feel no natural inclination to those roles.

It’s time to mature into the new expression of life that we are, rather than be content with an identity as a frustrated group of people who are suppressed and won’t shut up. It’s also time for our adversaries to mature: Stop being surprised when we call your attitudes and platitudes hate. Stop playing innocent and offended. Own up to the damage you do.

Our causes—equality, justice, and freedom—are much bigger than any of us are, and thus we must assume our role with all those who work for those causes.

*First they came for the Jews
and I did not speak out -
because I was not a Jew.*

*Then they came for the communists
and I did not speak out -
because I was not a communist.*

*Then they came for the trade unionists
and I did not speak out -
because I was not a trade unionist.*

*Then they came for me and there
was no one left to speak out for me.*

The author of that poem, Martin Niemoller, was prisoner in Dachau when he wrote it. He did not include homosexuals in his poem but we were there in Dachau and all the other death camps with him. Our non-inclusion in his poem is a sign of our invisibility.

Many would argue that to imply a comparison of what is happening for LGBT people in our country today with the horrors of the Nazis is unfair and inaccurate. But make no mistake: although the dominant powers of the country may be still some distance from those atrocities, many are traveling on the same road and headed in the same direction.

This is an opinion piece, an essay, rather than an academic treatise. It is intended to encourage practical steps and dialogue among CLGS site visitors. There are a few notes at the end which refer to works which might be of further interest.

In each of the three parts that follow, I present some answers to the question, followed by some recommended actions to take. I suggest that from all the possible actions mentioned here—there are some twenty—take the one or two that fit your situation best and concentrate on those.

Answers to the question: Why do they hate us so much?

One: They hate us out of ignorance and fear

Two: They hate us because of religion

Three: They hate us because of the shift of power

First Answer to the Question: Why Do They Hate Us So Much?

Ignorance and Fear

This answer, while it might seem obvious, has a couple of aspects that seem important to underscore:

☒ First, fear invariably follows ignorance. It makes human sense: if you don't understand something, it could do you harm. One would be hard put to find an area of human life that suffers from more ignorance than sexuality. Sexual ignorance in general is rampant in our culture; ignorance of gay sexuality in particular.

Most people just don't know much about sex; they don't deal with it openly and often can't talk about it in a serious, personal, and honest way. Most people are embarrassed by it. While sex is repressed in our cultural conversation, it is blatantly and compellingly displayed in our cultural expressions. A set-up for chaos.

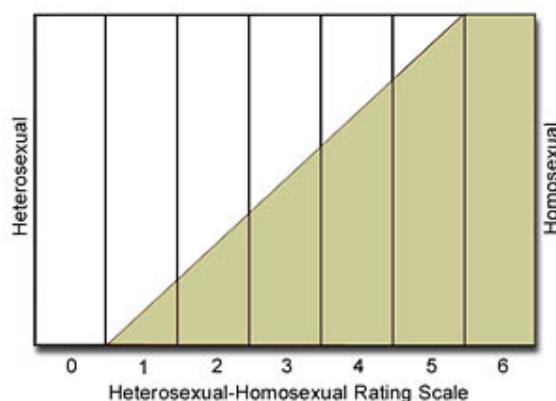
☒ If a subject becomes too threatening, and it touches on the fundamentals of one's world-view, one's philosophy of life, one's basic core values—and sex seems to qualify for all those—the fear that follows from ignorance becomes desperate or violent because it confronts the foundations of one's identity.

☒ The fear that follows from ignorance often takes the form of scapegoating: naming one group to bear the blame for others, and to become the object of irrational hostility. For example: marriage in our culture is generally considered not in a healthy state by most informed commentators, with half ending in divorce. Rather than blaming—assuming you're looking for blame—those who divorce or the forces that converge to create the current reality of marriage, you find someone else to blame, a scapegoat. Blame gay people who want to “destroy the sacred institution”—presumably by imitating it.

Accuracy compels me to note that all ignorance is not equal. Some of course just happens; people in the normal living of their lives don't learn certain things, or are not exposed to ways of being in the world different from their own. They never had the

desire, the need, or the obligation to learn. For others, however—and this applies frequently to people in positions of responsibility—ignorance is culpable or willful. Anyone in a position of power over other people, parents or teachers, office managers or bishops, have a responsibility to educate themselves about issues that affect their people. Not to do so is wrong and irresponsible. Pleading ignorance is not acceptable.

☒ The majority of scholars of human sexuality today accept the basic accuracy of the Kinsey scale of sexuality as a way to describe the way human beings experience themselves. This scale was developed by Dr. Alfred Kinsey and his associates in the late 40s and early 50s and indicates there is a broad diversity, a spectrum of sexual orientations, not just totally heterosexual and totally homosexual. Instead of understanding sexual orientation as an either-or condition, Kinsey developed a continuum based on the degree of sexual responsiveness people have to others of the same and of different sex. The scale goes from 0 to 6: 0 being totally heterosexual, 6 being totally homosexual, and 3 being bisexual. (*Note 2*)



The ignorance of and resistance to this way of understanding human sexuality is very strong. My conviction is that those who are 2s, 3s, and 4s on the scale—in other words those who to some degree are bisexual—and have made an option (or a choice) to act out only heterosexually, are the ones that don't believe 5s and 6s when we say that our sexual orientation is not a choice. Their conviction that LGBT people are lying about their experience leads them to rejection, mistrust and often to hate. This is so simply because it has not been their experience: in a way they did choose. 0s and 1s find it easier to believe us because 0s and 1s, 5s and 6s share the experience of non-choice in regard to their orientation, finding their sexuality to be a gradual discovery of a clear desire.

Actions to take in response to: **Ignorance and Fear**

Come out. This is the first, the last, and the foundational action, and we'll look at in several different ways. Here are some ideas about coming out:

- It's a gift of a powerful metaphor by LGBT people to the world.
- It means what you see is what you get.
- It means there is a congruency between who I am and what I do.
- It applies to all people.
- There are lots of closets in addition to sex: religion, money, identity...
- Coming out of the closet is a step toward total integration of your life

So the first thing for *all* of us to do is come out. For straight people, that means letting people know that you support LGBT people. If you keep your support hidden, even partially hidden, you're in the closet. For many straight people, the first step is recognizing that you're *in* the closet. Often, when a family member or friend comes out to you, you immediately go in.

Many straight people who support and affirm LGBT people do not yet realize their power in affecting the national dialogue on equal rights and acceptance. Your voice is strong because, for one thing, you're not necessarily expected to be supportive.

For LGBT people, coming out means beginning or continuing to reveal your sexual orientation and examining to see if you have other closets to leave behind. This is basic; experience shows that coming out ultimately brings us peace and integrity and knowing us personally and closely is what changes people's minds about us.

Coming out reduces the fear based on ignorance. Now you are known by other people who, by your coming out, are challenged to change in some way.

Come out in your own way and in your own time. Don't let anyone push you. No matter what closet you are coming out of, the way you do it and its timing is personal. For some of us the external pressures and risks are too great to come out. It could well be an unwise choice at any given time. For example, some people might lose their livelihood or become open to violence by coming out. But keep it as a future possibility and when it's safe, go for it!

Coming out takes courage. If it didn't, everyone would be out; there would be no closets. While closets give us some protection and safety, they also give us anxiety, fear of "discovery," stagnancy, and all those things that attend a double life.

Sometimes coming out has a heavy price. We often take many risks in leaving the dark, safe space. If you are a heterosexual person, are you ready to be called a “queer-lover” or have people think that maybe you are gay or lesbian? If you’re LGBT you know the possible risks, so no need to elaborate.

So the first action in response to ignorance and fear: Come out.

☑ Speak out. Educate. This is no time for silence. Don’t let a homophobic joke pass without comment, but let others, especially your friends and family, know of your convictions.

Write letters to the publications you read, correcting errors, encouraging, praising when called for. Call in to radio talk shows. Let TV stations know your opinions.

Especially important is to communicate with politicians. Join movements of on-line organizations who support your views. Letters and emails are counted and count. (Note 3)

Judy Shepard, who became an activist after her gay son Matthew Shepard was beaten to death five years ago in Wyoming, said recently to a predominantly gay audience: “You’re being denied your rights because people don’t know anything about you. You have to let them know who you are.” (365Gay.com) It might be surprising to many that “people don’t know anything about” us. But I believe she is right; for the huge majority, LGBT people are barely a blip on their radar. And what little they do “know” is often just plain wrong. So: We “have to let them know who [we] are!”

☑ Appeal to the experience of broader world communities like Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Germany, The Netherlands, and Norway where LGBT people have the same rights as heterosexual people. In still other countries LGBT people have been incorporated into the social fabric without totally equal rights, and often with beneficial results (Argentina, France, Scotland, Sweden, the UK, and our states of Vermont and Massachusetts). (Note 4)

☑ Ask specific questions of the people and groups you talk with: *Just how much do you know about LGBT sexuality? Exactly how does allowing LGBT people to marry damage heterosexual marriage? Do you believe LGBT people when they tell you of their experience or do you believe they are lying? Explain how you expect an LGBT person to live an integrated, complete, and happy life.*

☑ Understand that some people you deal with are unenlightened 2s, 3s, or 4s on the sexuality spectrum and thus will be operating from an often closeted or unconscious personal conviction that being LGBT is a choice, because it’s what they experienced. (As mentioned above, they have a degree of bisexuality and have designated, that is chosen,

the heterosexual part as the one they act upon. Thus they experience their sexual orientation as a choice.) An explanation of the spectrum of sexuality would be an appropriate and perhaps enlightening intervention. (*See Note 2*)

Second Answer to the Question:
Why Do They Hate Us So Much?

Religion

Of all the reasons why they hate us so much, “religion” is probably the most obvious and identifiable answer. Many religions make no excuses for their opposition to and disapproval of LGBT people who often, in turn, challenge this opposition with equal openness.

I speak in this section specifically of the Christian expression of religion because it is vocal and is the religion which affects most LGBT people in our culture. Other expressions of religion—not all and not at all times in history—fall into this category as well.

☒ Christianity holds that sexual activity outside of marriage is wrong—any kind of sex. Most LGBT people cannot legally marry those they choose to marry and thus cannot express their sexuality in any moral way. There are historical reasons for this opposition by religion, most of which originally had to do with power, heredity, and paternity.

From this opposition comes a dearly held belief: one man, one woman, with or without children, equals family: The basis of society. We come along and question that. We’re certainly not the first to do so, but our voice is one of the strongest. We are disobedient children who don’t follow the parents’ rule.

The Christian church as well as many other religions teach millions of people in this country that any kind of sex outside of marriage is immoral. Gay sex in this view is especially wrong because it is “un-natural” (which I assume in most cases means it cannot produce children and “the parts don’t fit”). “Objectively disordered” and an “intrinsic moral evil” are the Vatican’s expressions of it. (Vatican’s Letter to the Bishops...: 1986)

☒ The Christian church and many other religions, frequently in their history as well as in their current manifestations, are misogynist. When you feel revulsion toward half your membership, violence is inevitable. This has direct bearing on LGBT people

because we are seen as feminine (in the case of males) or independent and aggressive (in the case of females). Neither of these roles is acceptable to many religionists. Homophobia (fear of and opposition to LGBT people) and sexism are born from the same misogynist energy.

☒ Many of the churches' reasons for opposition to LGBT people are based on their interpretations of sacred texts, their scriptures. There are many different interpretations of sacred texts.

☒ From their very beginnings, all faiths have been violent, sometimes incredibly so; from Cain and Abel to the Crusades and Inquisition to airplanes into buildings. It's the same kind of violence mentioned above under fear and ignorance, except now the violence gains an overwhelming validation: It is "sanctioned" by God and becomes "holy violence;" thus not only allowable but in many cases deemed necessary.

☒ When churches speak out against LGBT people, they feed the fear. They give tacit permission to the thugs of the world to bash people who appear to be LGBT for no reason other than the sexual orientation they were given by God. Young males who are in the process of their own sexual development, and are often otherwise troubled, seem the most vulnerable to take up this tacit and dangerous permission. Too frequently they act it out in gay-bashing.

Actions to take in response to **Religion**

☒ Come out at church or synagogue or whatever your community of religious faith. Churches are full of LGBT people in all degrees of being out or in, clergy and laity. Imagine if *all* members of all churches were out!

☒ Speak out to your church. Speak truth to authority. Don't allow your church to speak for you if you disagree. All faith is non-provable by its very nature. This is the bottom-line of church-based power: it can always be called a "question of faith." End of discussion. Speak *your* faith to *your* community.

☒ Insist on contemporary, scholarly interpretations of sacred texts. Of course, this will not move scriptural literalists. There seems nothing you can say to someone who says *This is what the Bible means and nothing else. Period* – even though literalism ignores the evidence of historical and critical exegesis.

☒ Live the reality of the spirituality/sexuality continuum in your own life. It's no accident that many people involved in religion are LGBT. The energies of sex and spirituality can be seen as different facets of the same gem. Their origins and ends are very close. Engage one and you almost invariably engage the other. This would

naturally lead one to become sex-positive. However, especially in church, fear and control have led to the opposite: a separation of spirituality and sex, with one good and the other bad. By uniting sex and spirituality in your life, you are living the reality.

☑ Work for separation of church and state in fact rather than just in theory. Historically, this separation is one of the reasons that religion in this country has thrived. While churches have every right to name as sin what they see as sin, victimless sin must not become victimless civil law.

☑ Challenge your co-religionists to believe not only the church authority but also each other. So many church people seem not to believe us when we speak of our personal experience. They prefer rather to believe a perceived tradition or established doctrine.

Ask, for example, *Do you believe me when I tell you of my personal experience or not? If not, why? Do you think I'm lying? Or do you think I'm self-deceived? How would you feel if you were told to hide or deny your sexual identity, be celibate, or pretend for your whole life that you're "neuter" – all in the name of God and religion?*

☑ Encourage churches to help people—especially young people—to deal with the all-pervasive panoply of undifferentiated sex available free on the internet. I believe this medium is currently in the process of creating the next sexual revolution, the results of which we don't fully know. That would be a helpful ministry. Why waste time condemning some people whose sexual state cannot be changed? It is futile. It's not an intelligent use of energy.

☑ Join or otherwise support, especially by a financial donation, the LGBT group of your religious denomination. Literally all major churches have organized groups that specifically support their LGBT members. Most often, these groups are outside the purview of the official church, and just as often, they have a good deal of influence. (Note 5)

☑ Every time you hear "Love the sinner, hate the sin" fight it with all your might. It just does not work. It always ends up with people hating the sin, shunning and judging the sinner, and giving tacit permission to do violence.

☑ Trade in "liberal tolerance" for "liberal demand for equality." One of the characteristics of "liberal" people is that, generally speaking, they're tolerant of many points of view; they're liberal, that is, generous. Whereas "conservative" people tend to be demanding or intolerant of differing points of view and want to "conserve" what they already have. Each has strengths and weaknesses; both are necessary for balance. Right now, however, it's time for "liberals" to be more "conservative" by not tolerating unfair treatment.

Third Answer to the Question:
Why Do They Hate Us So Much?

Patriarchy is Ending

The last answer to our question of why they hate us so much brings together the first two and wraps everything in the single issue of a shift of power.

☒ Patriarchy is ending. (The word comes from the Latin *pater*, father, and the Greek *archein*, to rule; in other words, father knows best.) The power base of the world's systems is well along its way of shifting from almost exclusively male to now include women. Men are losing power. Women are gaining power. That's the bottom line.

Patriarchy is any system that men control and it's the operating system of most of world's cultures. While it is a very long way from being over and dead, it's days are numbered, at least in the western world, and both men and women—on various levels—know it. The clearest manifestation of fading patriarchy is the energy and success of feminism in the last thirty years.

☒ Men, especially straight, white men, the group that has been—and continues to be—most in control in the west, sense they are losing something: some rejoice with the paradigm change; they are the feminists. Some fight it tooth and nail. Most, I believe, are not engaged yet on an active level and have made no intentional move, but act out negatively in pre-conscious ways.

Now I have no desire nor any interest in burdening “straight white males” any more than they are. In fact, in many ways I identify with them and their issues. (I have written specifically and in a supportive way for this population.) (*Note 6*). Nevertheless, this is a deadly serious paradigm change that brings out very strong objections in those who stand to lose power. Again, we should not be surprised. Of course it does.

☒ LGBT people are squarely in the middle of this gradual and huge change because, as I mentioned above, we are seen, especially by the majority of non-LGBT people, as feminine, as “womanish,” at least as not manly (in the case of gay men, bisexuals, and transgendered) and as women who don't need or even like men (in the case of lesbians). Our coming out, building our own communities, and challenging the *status quo* is one more clear sign that we are gaining power, that the patriarchy, accustomed to solid control, is slowly but surely losing power.

These men, as well as the many women who support and empathize with them, sense that the ground is shaking, something big is moving down there. It feels powerful and threatening.

Actions to take in response to **The Ending of Patriarchy**

☑ Continue your process of coming out of whatever closet(s) you're in.

☑ For both men and women, all of us: Help and support women in their work, their goals, and their interests. Often women are the main targets of this threatened patriarchal energy, this defensive fear to strike out; and the obvious victims are those seen as “uppity women.” Gay and bisexual men, unfortunately, can be as misogynist as anyone else.

And, by extension, help and support LGBT people. As mentioned above, primordially and archetypically, many straight people see gay men as feminine, as passive, as weak; in a word, as women. Homophobia and sexism stem from the same thing: misogyny. Lesbians are seen maybe less severely and violently but nevertheless as anti-male. Oversimplified, gays are seen as traitors and a scandal (*Why would you make yourself like a woman?*); lesbians are a bewilderment and a shock (*Why would you want to get along without a man?*). How can you work to counter those assumptions?

☑ Bisexuality and especially transgenderism are, in a way, the new kids on the block, at least new in our conscious minds. We all need to teach ourselves to be aware of them and accommodate and include them. Both groups suffer from deep and widespread misunderstanding and wrong information.

☑ Be supportive of all men, no matter how they define themselves. Help define and experiment with new ways to be men, to be strong men. In many ways the patriarchy has kept men enslaved as well as women because often they have had to keep pretending, keep on going, and get very little support in return. Men have to play the role set out for them like it or not, well-suited for it or not, good at it or not. Life for men in a world that relegates women to an unequal and lower status becomes one long struggle to stay in charge, whatever the cost. The cost is often severe: they can look forward to heart attacks and alcoholism.

☑ For women: Support and/or join women's organizations which promote the welfare of all women.

☑ For men: Support men's groups and male-positive organizations; join one.

☑ Do some re-thinking. If you are a traditional male, examine your attitudes for homophobia and sexism. For women, realize that a desire to “share” power sounds and feels different from “taking over” power. There's no reason to think a matriarchy would

fare better than does the patriarchy. LGBT people, happily, combine the two energies. It's one of the gifts we have for the world.

Let yourself do (or say, or go to, or try, etc.) something that is typically associated with the opposite gender.

Combining the Power

Especially for site visitors to CLGS who have an interest in influencing churches in forging their attitudes and policies toward their LGBT members, keep in mind the overwhelming power you are dealing with:

Combine the power of religion with the power of the patriarchy.

To that power add general ignorance, and traditional avoidance of understanding the physiology and psychology of human sexuality, and the fear and threat that comes from that ignorance.

Join all this with centuries of tradition for strength and support, and you have the power of the church as it faces LGBT people.

Talk about David and Goliath!

But remember who won.

Join the conversation. Something to add? Something you disagree with? Comments? Email the author at dkundtz@clgs.org. Thank you.

Notes:

Note 1: On this web site (www.clgs.org) follow the link *Programs & Resources to Marriage Project*.

Note 2: The following address will take you to a brief exposition on the Kinsey scale: <http://www.kinseyinstitute.org/resources/ak-hhscale.html> The Klein Sexual Orientation Grid is another sexual scale which is broader in scope and includes more information. See <http://www.bisexual.org/klein/default.asp>

Note 3: On this web site (www.clgs.org) follow the link *Programs & Resources to Allies & Friends*.

Note 4: The following address will take you to an overview of marriage laws around the world: www.usmarriagelaws.com Follow appropriate links.

Note 5: The following address will take you to a list of denominational resources:
www.godmademegay.com/dsg.htm

Note 6: See my book *Nothing's Wrong: A Man's Guide to Managing His Feelings*, Conari Press, Boston; 2004 on www.stopping.com and follow links.