Gay After Graduation

Laura J. Koenig
Gettysburg College

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Gay After Graduation

Abstract
I first went public with my sexual orientation over Surge last spring—my last semester at Gettysburg before graduation. I was scared, but ultimately lucky to be met with support from my friends and family. People generally accepted my sexuality and then moved on. Actually, life went on so quickly that it took me some time to catch up. [excerpt]

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Disciplines
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Comments
Surge is a student blog at Gettysburg College where systemic issues of justice matter. Posts are originally published at surgegettysburg.wordpress.com Through stories and reflection, these blog entries relate personal experiences to larger issues of equity, demonstrating that –isms are structural problems, not actions defined by individual prejudice. We intend to popularize justice, helping each other to recognize our biases and unlearn the untruths.

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GAY AFTER GRADUATION

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I first went public with my sexual orientation over Surge last spring—my last semester at Gettysburg before graduation. I was scared, but ultimately lucky to be met with support from my friends and family. People generally accepted my sexuality and then moved on. Actually, life went on so quickly that it took me some time to catch up.

I struggled much more with my new identity than my friends and family. Even though I had accepted my identity as a lesbian, it was still challenging to define what exactly that meant for me and my future. While it was refreshing to be able to look at my past relationships with new clarity now that I could be honest about my feelings about women, I felt like suddenly the future got slightly fuzzier. I didn’t know how to be gay with my friends who had always known me as straight. They saw me no differently than before, and that’s probably a good thing. But I felt different, and I didn’t know how to show that difference in my daily life. Sure, I stopped dating men, but women weren’t just flocking to me, either. So I was stuck.

There are some incredible initiatives, like the It Gets Better Campaign, that focus on the idea that life for LGBT youth gets better after high school because college is a time to experiment, find your true self, and meet all kinds of people that will accept you for who you are.

While this is true for many students at Gettysburg, I waited until my last semester to come out, so the “It Gets Better” message was less than inspirational. College was the chance to explore my sexuality, and here I was, coming to terms with being a lesbian just as my college days were about to end. I was a little bit terrified that life after college would be devoid of opportunities for acceptance and experimentation. I feared that I was going to arrive in Omaha, Nebraska and find nothing there for me and my gayness.

Don’t worry. I was wrong. I’m here to tell you that it gets better in the real world, too.

I live with ten people, all of whom who met me as a lesbian (as well as many other things, I hope). Of those ten, three of them are also queer. When I’m at my job, I have no problem discussing my sexuality with my co-workers. I’ve even found myself at a few gay bars in the area, and I laugh with my roommates about the men that I used to date. Over the summer I had the opportunity to attend the gay pride parade in New York City. I joined a dating
site…and have actually gone on some dates with women. My roommates want to throw me a gayiversary to celebrate my one year anniversary of coming out. I’m living my life as a gay woman while still remaining the same person that I was last year.

Life after graduation gave me the chance to start fresh with people that I never had to come out to in a new city where opportunities for LGBT young people are not hard to find. This has allowed me to intertwine my sexuality with the other aspects of my personality and life. I’m getting the opportunity to define my identity and really learn what it means for me to be this whole new, honest version of me.

So, it does get better after college, too. The number of opportunities for gay people to find solidarity and support will amaze you. So, try not to get discouraged or frustrated. Just like you’ll figure out how to introduce yourself without stating your class year and major, you’ll also find life after graduation. In fact, the rainbows will amaze you.

Laura Koenig ’13
Founding Surge Writer

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