

# You're Killing Your Kids.

## A call to action for parents of queer people

By Kate Ripley

### I START FROM A PLACE OF ANGER.

I am angry because the world does not want us to live. Queer kids are not meant to survive. It is not a metaphor, a hyperbole, or exaggeration to say that this country as a whole would rather see kids dead than queer. Parents pray their children aren't gay or trans out of fear their lives will be more difficult – without realizing that very reasoning contributes to the violence against us. You cannot wish (or pray) away our queerness.

I am angry because there is a culture of complacency among parents of queer people.

You don't get to pat yourself on the back for not kicking your kid to the curb. That is the bare minimum. When you chose to have a child, you chose to raise and love us no matter what. You should love that child regardless of how their name, pronouns, relationships, body, and life change.

Do more. Be more. Read a book for fuck's sake. Ask questions! Your silence speaks volumes. It wasn't until my mother clarified that she hesitates asking questions out of fear that she'll offend me that I saw the effort she was really putting in. I still haven't found the words to explain the pain of silence. You should know that your confusion can be read as apathy, that being scared to ask can be seen as not *caring* enough to ask. Do not let your child think that. Don't leave room for that type of misinterpretation. This is not a journey to be taken in silence. I don't expect you to have all the answers or do everything perfectly. I do expect you to be curious and put in work to help me feel seen and safe. I don't know you're doing that until you tell or *show* me.

It's not enough for you to be pro-LGBTQIA2 (especially when most parents saying they support the community don't know what each of those stand for). Besides, this isn't about upholding the identities queer liberalism says are okay. I don't want you to tolerate or accept gayness. I want you to love queerly and fiercely and militantly. I don't need a family who will help me "figure out how to live in this world." I need a family devoted to creating a better one, one where I can be safe as I am. I don't want to be palatable or quiet or just enough. I'm queer as fuck, trans as fuck, and I will always be more than enough. I need you to know that and to love that.

Do you think you're safe because you don't bind your chest or experience homophobia? Darling, we are all queered whether you want to admit that or not. Very few of us are seen as people in this country. So many of us are born DEVIANT. And rather than embracing this, we try to conform to restrictive ideas for scraps. Do you really think respectability politics is your path to liberation? It's certainly not mine.

We are all performing the ideals of gender we think will save us. But that's all it is – a performance. Which isn't to say it's fake or unimportant, rather it's a repetition of what we've been shown. We perform based on the options we think are available to us. I'm asking for you to look outside those options.

Forcing a heterocisnormative lifestyle onto your loved ones will not save them. It just adds insult to injury. Instead of trying to fit me into a system that sees us both as exploitable laborers or objects, work with me to transform our world. Be deviant. Be radical.

### I MOVE TO FRUSTRATION.

Frustration because we can and have forgiven you again and again, mistake after mistake. And yet we have to fight for your simplest acts of decency. I'm frustrated because so many parents are blind to the fact that they have the most brilliant, beautiful, gifted children. Parents not only refuse to acknowledge the queerness of their children, but moreso they can't even see that their queerness is what makes them so fucking brilliant. Your children are CHANGING THE WORLD, change it with them. Or at the very least show some gratitude for the work we're doing. Queer people are fighting for all of us.

Start asking your kids what their pronouns are, what terms they're comfortable with, and how you can help them in their journey. That is literally your job. We did not choose to be this way or even to be here. Parents joke "I brought you into this world I can take you out" as if threatening to murder a child that doesn't live up to your own perverse expectations is funny or benign. How about this: you brought us into this world, so it is your responsibility to love, raise, and care for us no matter the cost.

### I END IN LOVE.

I am so sorry that you have lived with this pain for so long. I can't imagine living for decades thinking your worth rests in something as trivial as upholding an unattainable gender role or loving a certain way. I am sorry that we are making you realize that you might never be *woman enough* or *man enough* or *straight enough* to appease this system.

I understand you're confused. Navigating the poisonous binaries and oppressive ideologies in a heterocispatriarchy is confusing as is. Breaking out of them is even more confusing.

Maybe you're hurting. We are too. The answer isn't to push us away or hurt us further. Help us help you. Help us.

At this point, it's not just about repairing the harm already committed, but also moving forward. Treat your child like the unique and independent person they are. Raising your child according to a cookie-cutter ideal of "boy" or "girl" is, among other things, lazy. Establish expectations based on personhood, not gender. Create a household where children don't feel the need to "come out." Encourage a family filled with all types of love.

Begin fostering the queer space your child needed when they were younger, the queer space YOU needed when you were a child.

Don't turn away when we tell you that, just like us, you will never fit into the mold they created for you. It's not an accusation or suggestion of failure. It's a success! We are on a journey to radical self realization and love. Having a radical, queer child is an invitation. We want you here too. Join the party. Join the revolution!

I love you and I can't wait to see where this journey takes you.

## Bibliography

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