

q coming out: with ANTHONY T EATON

COME (OUT) AS YOU ARE: CONNECTING THROUGH OUR STORIES?

Our stories connect, unite, and let us know we are not alone in our journey, whatever that may be; this is especially true for those who are considering coming out, are in the process of coming out, or have come out.

According to a 2013 pew research, the median age across all LGB adults is 12, although some differences exist across groups. Gay men report, on average, thinking around age ten that they might not be straight. For both lesbians and bisexuals, the median age is 13.

Today, we can instantly connect with others in our community around the world share our stories and journey of coming out, but it was not always that way. And although there is greater acceptance and representation than ever before, coming out can still have risks and be one of the most challenging life experiences. Leveraging that ability to connect instantly, Katlyn and Robyn have created an online place for members of the LGBTQ+ community worldwide to share coming out stories, understand the experience, and what it means on an individual level being LGBTQ+ with through Come (Out) as You Are.



I had the privilege of asking them some questions, and Katlyn shared that the idea for Come (Out) as You Are came to her as she completed her college career at University in fall 2020. Wanting to apply the skills she had acquired and use them for something she was passionate about – person-of-interest journalism, storytelling, and reporting she launched Come (Out) as You Are.

With more than two thousand followers since its launch in less than a year, Katlyn and Robyn said that the community response has been great from the beginning, and they have made connections they would never have. When I asked about what the goal is for Come (Out) as You Are, Kaitlyn said: *"It's part of my goal to instill confidence and strength in those who may not have been ready to come out."* and Robyn added that *"No matter the interaction, positive or negative, I strive to interact with love and compassion."*

Not only does Come (Out) as You Are provide a place for individuals to share their story, but it also provides essential information related to understanding pronouns, things not to say to those who are trans, amongst other topics. Robyn shared that they decided to write pieces on different genders and sexualities to educate ourselves and our community to be more inclusive and knowledgeable.

Robyn goes on to share that not every story is easy or full of acceptance from parents or peers, so some have to or choose to stay in the closet for a little longer than they'd like to for safety reasons. The objective is that reading someone's coming-out story will help those who can't come out or are too scared to gain the courage to do so without sacrificing safety or security.

The decision to come out or not, when and how, is a very personal one, and I asked them both if there is any advice they would offer to someone considering it? Katlyn shared what some others have said, amongst them the first person who shared their story.

"I think the most important thing is making sure that you live for yourself first. And if that means you have to distance yourself from your family, then do it. If that means you need to make new friends, then do it." – Cory, January 5, 2021

Robyn added to make sure you're in a safe environment to do so. Make sure you have a great support network, and never look back. Get yourself to a place where you can be you without issue and be your best self and if you need support, reach out and get that support. There is no shame in getting the help you need.

Regardless of where we are in the world, as members of the LGBTQ+ community, we share the unique experience of "coming out," whatever that means to us. Knowing that we are not the only ones, having the greater support of our community and sharing our stories can make that journey easier. If you want to share your coming out story, read others, or are looking for information, visit the website, and you can also connect via social media:

<https://comeoutasyouare.com>

<https://twitter.com/comeoutasyouare>

<https://www.instagram.com/comeoutasyouare>

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/comeoutasyouare>

<https://www.facebook.com/comeoutasyouare/posts>