

TROUBLING IRELAND

Love is Love Simple...

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What is it that is troubling me about Ireland? As a lesbian woman in Irish society what troubles me is the lack of visibility and equality for LGBT people in every day life in Irish culture. While it should be noted that Ireland in 2013 celebrated the 20th anniversary of decriminalization of homosexuality, and introduced an expected referendum to introduce same sex marriage. Over 2000 Irish LGBT people had the joy of committing to their partner through civil partnership since its introduction. Yes this is progress and there is no denying that, Ireland has made great changes to acknowledge the rights of LGBT individuals in a short space of time in comparison to it's other EU counter parts. But things are not equal, Civil Partnership acknowledges the existence of same sex couples and allows them to celebrate ones love for their partner and enjoy a certain amount of security and protection, yet it also reinforces an opinion that same sex relationships are different from opposite sex relationships. It excludes the rights of children within these families and does not protect those children and their parents very existence.

In May 2013, 1,625 Irish LGBT people took part in a survey completed across Europe to examine the every day challenges faced by many LGBT people. It highlighted the daily difficulties for this minority group. Of these respondents 47% reported to be discriminated against in the past 12 months due to sexual orientation. Nearly 1 in 5 surveyed experienced this discrimination in the workplace and 22% experienced discrimination within a cafe or bar or public place. Of those surveyed 8% had been physically assaulted or threatened in comparison to an EU average of 6%. Of those surveyed 62% felt that they could not be open about their sexuality to families and 30% were not open in the workplace.

While the Irish government has made efforts to enhance the equality of LGBT people this is only the tip of the iceberg and falls short, this minority group are at a greater risk of mental health difficulties, addiction, suicide, self harm and homelessness due to the every day stresses of living in Irish society. No child is born homophobic, it is passed on through our belief systems and values that we teach them and the way in which we behave around them. It is the responsibility of the Irish government to address these issues through schools community groups, media campaigns and policy change.

No matter what gender, race, colour, ethnicity or sexual orientation love is love simple.