June 2019

Does It Get Better? Providing Spiritual Care for Survivors of Domestic, Sexual, and Intimate Partner Violence Who Are LGBTQIA+

By Jeremy M. Schulz, M.Div. Candidate, Boston University School of Theology

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall Uprising, a series of events that many people look to as the beginning of the gay liberation movement, fighting for LGBTQ+ rights in America. Since that momentous occasion some things have changed for LGBTQIA+ people in America. The fact that I as a queer person have had the opportunity to study at a seminary and a theological school is but one testament to such changes.

Over the past two semesters I have had the privilege of working alongside Safe Havens Interfaith Partners Against Domestic Violence and Elder Abuse as a Boston University Contextual Education Fellow, I have been following in the spirit of those courageous and inspiring individuals who tirelessly struggled in order to bring about change for the LGBTQ+ community in the hopes of continuing to make things better for my family.

As a theologian I am called to speak to my experiences and my truth, both the uplifting and the painful. This means that much of my focus has been on the interweaving of sexuality, spirituality, and violence, an academic precipice that has yet to be adequately considered. Surviving sexual and/or intimate partner violence is not a minor feat. Being queer and/or trans is not an easy life. Religion has played an important role in the continuing oppression of LGBTQ+ people. As a queer survivor myself I’ve been on the receiving end of hate due to my sexual identity, my survivor status, and my unorthodox approach to theology; however, I know firsthand how powerful faith and spirituality can be in the healing process, if only one has access to appropriate spiritual care.

Safe Havens allowed me to connect with LGBTQ+ survivors of sexual and intimate partner violence, faith leaders, and community advocates to begin to discuss what spiritual care for queer and trans survivors looks like, the importance of a survivor’s ability to access spiritual care, and how faith leaders can better support survivors in their communities. It is from this communal labor that this resource, “Does it Get Better?” was born. It is with my heartfelt appreciation and unending gratitude that I’ve had the opportunity to work towards the betterment of queer and trans survivors of sexual and intimate partner violence.

As we enter into Pride season, we are reminded of the victories that we have to celebrate along with the losses we have to grieve. There is still much work that needs doing in order to achieve true equity and equality among LGBTQ+ individuals, but together we can work to create a world where love is at the core of how we treat one another. It is in this hope that I proudly introduce this resource, which seeks to provide another source of care for those LGBTQ+ people impacted by sexual and intimate partner violence.

With sincere gratitude,

Jeremy