



ALEXIS NIESZCZUR

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Hate. Indefinable, intangible, unexplained. It may be a subconscious act or a reactive response. Regardless of how we view it, hate is ever-present. My generation sees this as an issue that only we can solve. Where do we say our first words, take our first steps, and learn from first examples? Such important "firsts" all start within our home environments, the inner core of our families. We are not born with hate in us; however, we may choose to let it enter. As children we learn our family's values—respect your elders, be a leader, treat others the way you would like to be treated. But we also began to agree with things we didn't understand—don't be friends with them because they look different, don't talk to them because they're not like us, don't trust those people. All these false truths were instilled in us and we came to believe them without understanding their roots.

One instance this falls under is the issue of gay rights. Noted Arkansas school board member Clint McCance wrote a comment on his Facebook page mocking activists and their wearing of purple to gain awareness. He is quoted for saying, "Seriously they want me to wear purple because five queers killed themselves? The only way I'm wearin' it for them is if they all commit suicide." He also later said that he would "disown his children" if they were gay. Remarks like these come as a shock to me. It is impossible for me to comprehend how one could discriminate against a person's lifestyle when we all are unique and choose our own ways of living. What is acceptable or right to one person may not be to another; consequently, our culture would like to see some increase in respect for others. The differentiation, discrimination, and hatred must be stopped before it reaches the next generation in a rippling effect. Only we can set the example for those younger than us to follow in our footsteps. The fate of millions is resting on our shoulders at a supposed standstill, and we have the responsibility to ignite the spark and start a movement.

In order to initiate a turnaround, I have considered a few examples to gain awareness. First, I must be an example of what I believe in through carefully watching the things I say and do. Secondly, I can talk to my principal about starting a club relating to speaking out against hatred and instigating change in people. I can encourage fellow peers to join me in creating this group and spreading the importance of promoting anti-discrimination. My friends and I can consult our high school's newsletter to incorporate segments relating to anti-bullying awareness, including stories and statistics. If possible, my school could also hold a rally to kick off the new club and further promote understanding. In conclusion, making a change can start with me. As Winston Churchill said, "There is nothing wrong with change, if it is in the right direction."