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**High school teens feel the heat of the homosexual hot button**

*By Mary Williams and Scott Young*  
 January 31, 2002

It is amazing how society today can be so hateful towards each other. From homophobia to xenophobia, everyone seems to discriminate against some other group of people. One of today's biggest issues is the debate on sexual preference and who has the authority to say whether homosexuality is right or wrong.

Homosexuals today have very few rights, both legally and perceptual. They cannot legally marry though, in some states, homosexuals can get what is called a civil union. It allows couples to live together and share the bills, but it does not give the couple the legal benefits of a marriage. There are many situations where gays and lesbians are fired or have been refused a job because of their sexual preference. The federal government does not protect homosexuals against this type of discrimination as it does protect against religious discrimination.

Going beyond the legal issues of gay rights, there are so many perceptual problems that many people face. For example, when most people meet someone new, they automatically assume that that person is not gay, and many are not accepting when they find out that their child or friend is gay.

Debra Alberts, a loving Nashville mother, looks at the situation a little brighter, "When you are part of a segregation of society that has been discriminated against, you become a little more open-minded." Jim Hough, a New York lawyer, says that many people become less judgmental with age, and today he faces a lot less discrimination than he did as a teen and young adult.

What advice does DeWayne Fulton, the sponsor of "One in Teen," give to gay and lesbian teens? Two things: One, make sure you are familiar with the resources available to you and your parents; and two, realize that it takes time for parents to adjust to the concept that their child is gay, often as much time as it took the child to feel comfortable enough to tell their parents.

It is sad that in a society that has so many differences and was

built on embracing diversity, so many people are closed-minded. Gays and lesbians are just one more type of diversity that makes America strong and unique.



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