HUFFINGTON POST: “THE EPIDEMIC OF GAY LONELINESS”





In the Huffington Post edition of March 2nd 2017, Michael Hobbes has written an extensive article about the abundant loneliness of the current gay lifestyle. He describes the psychiatric problems to be found in the gay community, and which do not diminish in spite of so-called social progress enforced by pressure groups. A must-read article for all who want to know whether the radical gay-lib movement is on the right path.

Click here for the article. It is quite long, but very worthwhile. Here is an excerpt:

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“This is my friend J. “When you have this meth,” he says, “you have to keep using it. When it’s gone, it’s like, ‘Oh good, I can go back to my life now.’ I would stay up all weekend and go to these sex parties and then feel like shit until Wednesday. About two years ago I switched to cocaine because I could work the next day.”

J. is telling me this from a hospital bed, six stories above Seattle. He won’t tell me the exact circumstances of the overdose, only that a stranger called an ambulance and he woke up here.

J. is not the friend I was expecting to have this conversation with. Until a few weeks ago, I had no idea he used anything heavier than martinis. He is trim, intelligent, gluten-free, the kind of guy who wears a work shirt no matter what day of the week it is. The first time we met, three years ago, he asked me if I knew a good place to do CrossFit. Today, when I ask him how the hospital’s been so far, the first thing he says is that there’s no Wi-Fi, he’s way behind on work emails.

“The drugs were a combination of boredom and loneliness,” he says. “I used to come home from work exhausted on a Friday night and it’s like, ‘Now what?’ So I would dial out to get

some meth delivered and check the Internet to see if there were any parties happening. It was either that or watch a movie by myself."

J. is not my only gay friend who's struggling. There's Malcolm, who barely leaves the house except for work because his anxiety is so bad. There's Jared, whose depression and body dysmorphia have steadily shrunk his social life down to me, the gym and Internet hookups. And there was Christian, the second guy I ever kissed, who killed himself at 32, two weeks after his boyfriend broke up with him. Christian went to a party store, rented a helium tank, started inhaling it, then texted his ex and told him to come over, to make sure he'd find the body.

For years I've noticed the divergence between my straight friends and my gay friends. While one half of my social circle has disappeared into relationships, kids and suburbs, the other has struggled through isolation and anxiety, hard drugs and risky sex.

None of this fits the narrative I have been told, the one I have told myself. Like me, Jeremy did not grow up bullied by his peers or rejected by his family. He can't remember ever being called a faggot.

J. and I are 34. In our lifetime, the gay community has made more progress on legal and social acceptance than any other demographic group in history. As recently as my own adolescence, gay marriage was a distant aspiration, something newspapers still put in scare quotes. Now, it's been enshrined in law by the Supreme Court. Public support for gay marriage has climbed from 27 percent in 1996 to 61 percent in 2016. In pop culture, we've gone from "Cruising" to "Queer Eye" to "Moonlight." Gay characters these days are so commonplace they're even allowed to have flaws.

Still, even as we celebrate the scale and speed of this change, the rates of depression, loneliness and substance abuse in the gay community remain stuck in the same place they've been for decades. Gay people are now, depending on the study, between 2 and 10 times more likely than straight people to take their own lives. We're twice as likely to have a major depressive episode. And just like the last epidemic we lived through, the trauma appears to be concentrated among men. In a survey of gay men who recently arrived in New York City, three-quarters suffered from anxiety or depression, abused drugs or alcohol or were having risky sex—or some combination of the three. Despite all the talk of our "chosen families," gay men have fewer close friends than straight people or gay women. In a survey of care-providers at HIV clinics, one respondent told researchers: "It's not a question of them not knowing how to save their lives. It's a question of them knowing if their lives are worth saving."

I'm not going to pretend to be objective about any of this. I'm a perpetually single gay guy who was raised in a bright blue city by PFLAG parents. I've never known anyone who died of

AIDS, I've never experienced direct discrimination and I came out of the closet into a world where marriage, a picket fence and a golden retriever were not just feasible, but expected. I've also been in and out of therapy more times than I've downloaded and deleted Grindr.

"Marriage equality and the changes in legal status were an improvement for some gay men," says Christopher Stults, a researcher at New York University who studies the differences in mental health between gay and straight men. "But for a lot of other people, it was a letdown. Like, we have this legal status, and yet there's still something unfulfilled."

This feeling of emptiness, it turns out, is not just an American phenomenon. In the Netherlands, where gay marriage has been legal since 2001, gay men remain three times *more likely to suffer from a mood disorder than straight men, and 10 times more likely to engage in "suicidal self-harm." In Sweden, which has had civil unions since 1995 and full marriage since 2009, men married to men have* triple *the suicide rate of men married to women.*

All of these unbearable statistics lead to the same conclusion: It is still dangerously alienating to go through life as a man attracted to other men."

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