



## MORE VOICES

### Charles

I came out as 'gay' in high school. Some of the other students made fun of me and called me names. Although it made them feel better, I felt awful. But I made new friends by getting involved in gay activities and events at school. Later on I found out about the ex-gay community. I started to think that maybe there was a place for me there. I began to wonder if I had made the right decision about my sexual orientation so early in life. I wanted to do it for me and no one else because it's my life, after all. At the end of high school, I came out again, only this time as ex-gay. Once again I was subjected to taunts by some of the other students, both gay and straight. I learned that what's important is to respect other students' decisions for their own life. Because of what I went through, I'm more tolerant of sexual orientation differences. Everyone should be treated with respect regardless of their sexual orientation.

### Darrell

As a boy, I began to feel same-sex attractions at age 13. I made friends with the gay students at my school. Later on I started dating older homosexuals and bisexual men. When I moved away from home, I encountered a man who I thought was a woman. He introduced me to other "men" like him. We spent lots of time together. I realized that I too wanted to be a woman. A doctor gave me my first shot of estrogen so I could start looking feminine. I also had silicone gel injected into my chest so that I now had breasts. I was on my way to becoming a woman just like my transgender friends. I was happy and it felt right. I enjoyed being known as a woman. But as the years went by, I became depressed. It took me a long time to put on my make-up and keep up with the beauty regiment, especially since I was not a woman. So although I looked better than most of the women out there, it was all a charade because I was not even a woman to begin with and it took so long for me to look like one. Going to a party as a woman was hard work. The performance was an everyday lie. Acceptance from my circle of friends required a good body and good looks. So I was obsessed with my body and personal appearance. I took more steroid pills to look more physically female, even though the increased dosage made me ill. I became more depressed. Then I decided to change my life. I stopped taking hormones. Slowly I began to look like the gender of my birth. I began to like myself and associate with people who loved me unconditionally. I didn't have to always look "beautiful" to be with them. An ex-gay organization raised funds to remove my breasts. I saw a therapist. I discovered that transgenderism is a gender identity disorder and counseling is available. I wish I had known about that option in high school. It would have given me more options for my life.

### Then and Now



**Henry**

I'm a former homosexual. I was gay for 35 years. I've been HIV positive for 15 years now. I take a variety of pills everyday that help keep me alive. During my transition out of homosexuality, I received lots of support from ex-gay organizations that help people like me with unwanted same-sex attractions. I wish I had known about alternatives to homosexuality when I was in high school. Things might have turned out differently.

**Brendan**

When I was in high school, the teasing of other boys who called me derogatory homosexual names contributed to my behavior. I began to believe what that they were telling me. When I told my mom that I thought I was gay, she didn't believe it. I joined the gay club at school because they didn't call me names there. The gay club encouraged me to come out as gay to everyone at school and my family, so I did. But my mom got mad. She was embarrassed and ashamed at my new identity. We had a lot of fights. Finally, she told me that she would never approve of my homosexual behavior, but she loved me no matter what because I'm her son. That's all I ever wanted.

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