

Diane Horsley Engaging with LGBT on the street

I will relate some of my recent encounters with strangers on the street

1. Whilst out and about in town I noticed a little boy aged 3yrs with his hands in his pockets. I commented to one of the two women with him. "oh he must have been copying his daddy" (As lots of small children do) one of the women explained that this child had two mummies. This had been my first encounter with lesbian parenting. As I reflected later a few thoughts came to mind - little boys need a father figure/male role model in their family. A family with two females is depriving this small child of learning what it is to be a little boy,(a fall or bruised knee may be handled differently by a mum than by a dad) a maturing teenage boy. (Who will be there to help him understand when his voice deepens and unexpected hair growth and enlarging genitals?) As a young man dealing with conflict in relationships, choosing the right life partner, developing a successful relationship and long lasting marriage, his role as a father within a stable secure family. Mother and father have complimentary, yet distinct roles. These seeming "old fashioned" yet valuable traditional roles are biologically confirmed - mother one who cares and protects, father provides offers fun, competitive adventure and risk taking.
2. A doorstep engagement with a woman when speaking of family values I was asked "What is your definition of a traditional family?" As I explained the benefits of a child being brought up in a family with their biological parents, I was shouted down and silenced. However I collected my thoughts, regained my ground and reminded my "opponent" "We were living in a democratic society with the freedom to express our own opinions." I suggested that although we had differing viewpoints we must LISTEN and RESPECT each other. The door was shut firmly and I left.
3. A breakfast table encounter - a father of 4 explained "Our 38yr old eldest son has just disclosed he wants to be called Chloe and I can just not accept this." John went on to give a detailed account of family life - "Chloe" is very bright and gained a PhD. He had spent a number of unfulfilled years as a house husband, caring for his two daughters whilst his wife worked. It seemed his wife was accepting of this need for a name change. However it is important to consider the impact of this gender confusion on the two teenage daughters. It is not necessary to offer suggestions or answers in such situations but just to listen attentively.

In conclusion so many of us are meeting strangers on the street - all with a tale to tell. In these changing times we are all likely meet people who carrying huge burdens. No answers, solutions or miracle cures are needed. All that is needed is a caring, compassionate, non judgemental listener.