

## **Straight Daughter of a Lesbian: Why I Defend the Marriage Amendment by Dolores Oliveira**

Defending marriage is not something I am doing to discriminate against anyone. I want to make the case against gay and lesbian marriage based on my own very personal and painful experiences.

I do not believe that marriage will alter the way family members ie parents, sisters, brothers, cousins -- view or react to their homosexual relatives and their offspring. A document, a marriage license, cannot force any family member to accept gays and lesbians. This is important because when a parent rejects a gay or lesbian adult child, and that child has children, the relationship with Grandma and Grandpa will be strained and perhaps non-existent, as was the case in my own childhood, teen years, and up to today at age 57.

My own mother, deceased, was a lesbian. I miss her terribly; she was my best friend and confidant. She was the only person I knew who could do a dead-on imitation of stars from the 1940's like Bette Davis, "What a dump!", or remembers that her friends nickname for actor Victor Mature was Victor Manure. Mom and I spent our time mostly laughing or "cracking up". People, even strangers, remarked that they could tell we had a close relationship, remarking with fondness, "You're close with your mom, aren't you?" We even looked alike, more like sisters. That was the good stuff of our mother-daughter bond. The remaining stuff of our relationship was mostly harmful to my mental well-being.

I'm not writing this for payback; I'm writing this to Americans who do not have an opinion of where they stand on this issue. Indifference is dangerous when it involves the welfare of our nation's children.

Grandma raised me until I was five; my mom worked and was unwed. I have no shame with that. I was in a loving and nourishing home with my mom and grandparents and a young aunt who was like a sister to me. I learned more about the goodness and love for family from my grandma than from my own mother. My grandparents are my role model for a marriage that lived "through thick and thin" because they died in their 80's still married, in the same home. I want that. My husband and I are in our 26th year of marriage.

At some point, they disconnected, probably due to my mom's indiscretion, discovering she was homosexual -- and they became estranged. Due to my Mom, we

lived apart my entire life, me with my parents in one city, never closer than 400 miles. Grandma and I exchanged letters from 1958, when my parents and I moved to New York, up until Grandma's death in 1989. We lived apart from her parents and siblings, my grandparents and uncle and aunts and my cousins - out of shame or embarrassment, it was never spoken of. I had to get away from them, Mom would explain, but never with details. She was tight-lipped about what happened to cause their estrangement.

My step-father died when I was 15 (they met when I was five). It was then that my mom became a full-fledged lesbian, with no husband to be responsible to. I spent most weekend nights alone (I'm an only child) watching TV and lonely out of my mind.

During annual visits to Grandmas, Mom never stayed for very long by her side, she was bed-ridden -- dragging me on long car rides throughout the California Bay Area, shopping in Chinatown, or going into San Francisco to nightclubs with her younger sister. I now know from my aunt that Grandma felt very hurt by this. I still grieve over the loss of time I could have spent with my Grandma, my cousins. I'm alone now, no siblings either. I've tried to connect but it never works out.

Mom disliked straight people, which was particularly mean when it came to going to school functions, meeting parents of my friends, and so on. I felt on the outside of normal most of the time growing up. She would whine to me, "I don't like those kind of people." I found out in my independence at age 23 that I liked squares, her name for Straights. I amazed and delighted myself at how great straight people were! I felt safe because I didn't sense they were hiding a dark secret from me. My husbands parents were living simple lives and, God help me, I loved that! (One Christmas, Mom met us there and she was so uncomfortable she was practically squirming. Again, she had to "get away" and I took her on a long drive into town so we could shop.)

I missed out on a healthy and stable family life. I wasn't aware of how deeply sad my life with my mom was until I had my own child. My goal is to provide a stable and healthy home life, no lying, no secrets, and we live as far away from the lesbian community as we could get within the city boundaries. My mom died alone, friendless, still coping with her choices. Her last live-in lover, a woman my age, went straight and left my mom. Mom made several attempts to contact her from by phone but this woman just dropped off the planet. Her mother was a strict, no-nonsense southern Christian and I was wishing my mom could have those kind of principles. This was a recurring event after I moved out at age 19 at the advise of my then-boyfriend. At the age of 42, my mom attempted suicide, overdosing on tranquilizers, because her lover, a woman my age, 21 -- had gone straight and left her for a man.

Until recently, the painful memories were not interrupting my daily thoughts and couldn't hurt me anymore. I was wrong because of the gay activists who keep shoving their views of life in our face.

I know marriage between a man and a man, a woman and a woman, will harm children. Recently, watching a live coverage of a press conference on C-SPAN, I was sickened at the sight of a lesbian couple, their little nine-year-old daughter all dressed up in a smart outfit, standing up at a podium to announce their support for homosexual marriage. Each time I see these women I want to scream, "You are narcissistic, lying, sex addicts!" But that doesn't do my health any good.

Had Mom been married; a status which she never discussed or wanted -- I am convinced she would not have changed her careless parenting. Marriage between two people, one of whom is a likely seducer / predator, is highly likely to harm forever any child they are in charge of. She lied, in front of me, telling her lovers I was only 18 when in fact I was 26 (this made her younger). My therapists (and I've been in psychoanalysis for many years) have remarked that I took better care of her than she did of me. I never left her when she needed me most as she struggled to face cancer of the vulva and breast. I was there through weeks and weeks of her cancer treatments, her disabling intestinal infections, and arranged three hospitalizations. My husband and I brought her home to care for her while she lost control of her bowels. Through all this suffering by my mom, up to her deathbed, I forgave her for abandoning and neglecting me, for insulting my dignity (she pretended I wasn't her daughter in front of her lesbian lovers), and distorting my view of marriage and motherhood.

Being in her presence made me feel invisible and I had to be hospitalized at age 17 for what we now know is "disassociation disorder" I sensed I was "not really here". The lead psychiatrist on the ward advised me to get away from her as soon as I turned 18: we were locked in a sickening life of lies and more lies.

Mom never encouraged me to start a family, to get married and have children, not even once! I blame this on her lesbian lifestyle. She hated getting old, wanting to remain youthful in the eyes of her lesbian lovers.

I discovered my passion for marriage and raising children through intensive therapy at age 35. By that time I'd gotten a serious illness, endometriosis, and was unable to conceive. Young, confused women are seduced into the lesbian life by an older woman, a predator. It was this which brought my own mother down into a life without hope, an attempted suicide, and a malignant narcissism which almost destroyed me.

After Mom died, I was sorting out the contents of her personal effects. What I found among her address books hit me like a punch in stomach. A little black book, worn and well used, filled with women's first names and phone number, perhaps 100. She preyed on women my age so I assumed most of the names were of young women.

As a teen and young adult I pleaded with her to get married again after my step-dad died. She didn't want to get married, she said. She was moody and took me for long drives throughout Southern California looking for new stores to shop at. Looking back, I think Mom was always running away from a part of herself she couldn't cope with.

Among her personal things I found a documents given to her by a therapist in a lesbian community. One in particular I found to be so painful to read because all her life she refused to get medical treatment, including a mammogram in time to prevent the second cancer she had. Painful too because I had suffered so much in my life. It was a document describing the reasons why lesbians have such difficulty seeking out medical care. Many "if only" phrases swirled around in my mind. "If only" she had told me, a health educator, about the connection between her sexual activities and her fear of doctors. "If only" she were more assertive. "If only" she hadn't been a lesbian.

I've had a very hard life because of my mother's choices. I now know she was seduced by an older woman when she was a teenager and that left an imprint on her for her entire life. She said she was bi-sexual while my step-dad was alive. She was never comfortable with the word lesbian because it was final. I think she was hoping to change one day.

At my urging, after our child was born and she moved in with us for a time, she began psychotherapy for the first time in her life. Before this she wanted to retire in sin city, Las Vegas, rather than be close to her only grandchild. I begged her to "be there for me this time." She never regretted moving here to get to know her granddaughter. I wanted our daughter to know her grandma and she will always remember baking cookies and watching Disney movies together. Several times, Mom remarked, "You were right to have me move up here so you could take care of me when I became ill."

I suppose I could say I was a role model for my own mother.

In closing, attitudes of homosexual parents toward straight people, and visa versa, cannot be remedied by legalizing marriage.