

# One in Thirteen

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One in thirteen. That's the number of people in the world that are called "LGBT". You've probably heard this term before, but let's review. L means lesbian, or a woman who loves another woman. G means gay, and stands for a man who loves a man. B is for bisexual, a person who may be in love with a man or a woman; and T refers to transgender people, or people who have a difference between their body, and their heart and mind.

I'm not L, G, B, or T, but the reason I am talking about this issue is because I have a friend whose parents are both women, and that made me interested in talking about it here today.

As I said, one out of thirteen people belong to the LGBT community. Their symbol is a rainbow of colors signifying the diversity within their community. Did you know that you can choose from 50 types of sexuality for your Facebook profile?

One in thirteen. That means there may be at least one, or two or three, LGBT students in my class—in your class. Even here today. Do we know who they are? Many won't tell us because they fear what we will say or do.

At school, words such as "homo" and "gay" fly through every classroom. Whether they are meant to do harm or not doesn't really matter. They are part of an overall atmosphere. Statistics show that nearly 70-percent of LGBT students in Japanese schools are bullied. As a result of fear, stress, and an unnecessary crisis of identity, many stop going to school. Even worse, nearly one-third consider suicide.

The teenage years are awkward enough to begin with, but imagine a child who realizes he or she is LGBT. Now imagine that child struggling with men's and women's toilets, or boys' or girls' school uniforms. And what about our health education classes? We learn how men and women start a family with children, but there are no lifestyles offered for the LGBT. These children are not taught how to live or deal with their coming out. As a result, many LGBT kids are facing psychological issues, not because of their sexuality, but because there are few places for them in society. Some LGBT never come out, even to their own parents. And those who do, may be shunned by the whole family—and the family by a

gossip-filled neighborhood.

But I'm happy for my friend and her two mothers because progress is being made in Japan. In Tokyo, Shibuya Ward now offers "Partnership Certificates" to same-sex couples. These couples now have the blessing of the Japanese government. In addition, there is now an LGBT Representative League in Tokyo which has been active since July of this year.

And in 2020, Tokyo will become the third city in the world to adhere to the International Olympic Commission's Prohibition of Sexual Discrimination. It states that governments which allow LGBT discrimination will not be allowed to host the Olympics. It also requires Olympic hosts to serve the needs of LGBT athletes and LGBT fans. As a result, since the 2012 London Olympics, each Olympic village has openly included the LGBT community. It is time for the global village to do so as well.

When we think about human rights issues such as racial discrimination, hate-speech, bullying or poverty, we must also include LGBT rights. My friend's two mothers taught me that. I have realized that there are various types of people in our communities, and the government and our schools must make sure they are included. Why don't we learn more about this in school? For many of us, today may be a rare chance to even think about it.

One in thirteen. Who are the one in thirteen who may be hidden from us? I hope I can meet them soon. And I hope they can proudly introduce themselves to us as the people they really are.