

## A group of America's teenagers are being emotionally and mentally scarred for life...and no one is talking about it--until now.

With a unique blend of up-close and personal stories from very public individuals as well as Middle America teens, philanthropist and longtime human rights advocate Mitchell Gold exposes this silent epidemic in *CRISIS: 40 Stories Revealing the Personal, Social, and Religious Pain and Trauma of Growing Up Gay In America*.

With a foreword by Martina Navratilova, the book features life stories by well-known Americans such as Oprah Designer Nate Berkus, Actor Richard Chamberlain, Congressman Barney Frank, Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin, and Bishop Gene Robinson.

*Gold has built a reputation of putting it all on the line when it comes to doing the right thing, from building a hugely successful furniture company to his unique non-profit organization that addresses the No. 1 reason people think it is still OK to malign and mistreat gays and lesbians.*

*By including the personal stories from well-known people to middle America teenagers, the book brilliantly reveals the lasting effects of the pain and traumatization yet at the same time serves as a beacon of hope for gay youth whose role models are older, healthy and normal adults.*

*Gold's commentary is bold and plain-spoken and he puts us all on notice by revealing a society that has become complicit in maiming the lives and souls of millions of young Americans. And now he's asking us to do the right thing and end it.*

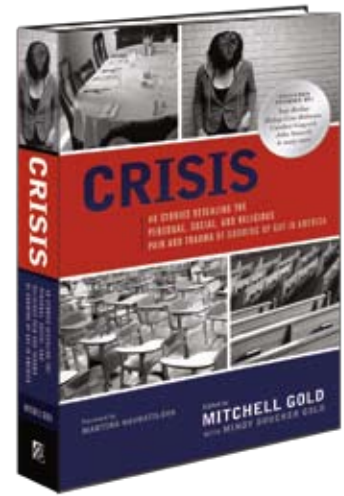
Washington, D.C. – Gay youth are up to four times more likely to attempt suicide than their peers. Twenty-eight percent of gay students will drop out of school, more than three times the national average of heterosexual students. Anti-lesbian, gay and bisexual hate crimes in 2006 were up 18% from 2005. Thirty-three percent of gay youth will attempt suicide. The odds of illegal substance use among gay youth are, on average, 190% higher than for heterosexual youth. Gays are more prone to being picked on by bullies, as well.

There are over 1.6 million gay teens in America. They are at significant risk for suicide, addiction, depression, and violence, and yet those who should be helping them may very well be contributing, if not causing, their heartache and confusion. “There are teenagers all over the world today in crisis mode because they fear what will happen if others discover their sexual orientation,” says Mitchell. “They suffer debilitating depression, isolation, addiction, and possibly suicidal thoughts. I hope and pray that not one more teenager will have to live this way, the way I grew up.”

Families, churches, schools, and communities often do not recognize or understand what is going on inside the minds and hearts of our gay teenagers and many times end up making the problems worse. And perhaps the greatest indictment comes against political factions that condemn, malign, and inflict pain from a public podium.

It doesn't have to be that way. *CRISIS*, edited by Mitchell Gold, a philanthropist and leading figure in the furniture industry, examines the overwhelming effects of prejudice and discrimination on the lives of a diversity of gay people. The book is also a celebration of those who have faced rejection and found success and happiness on their own terms. Contributors include notables such as Oprah designer Nate Berkus, actor Richard Chamberlain, and advocate Candice Gingrich, sister of Newt Gingrich. The book is also filled with the equally powerful stories of those whose names are less familiar. And although *CRISIS* has despairing tales to share, it is also a book that radiates hope for a more inclusive future.

Gold felt compelled to assemble this book because of his own experiences and his observations from his philanthropic work. He is founder of Faith In America, a nonprofit dedicated to stopping religion-based prejudice against the gay community. He believes this: America isn't homophobic — it has just been told it is supposed to be. And he adds, “So much homophobia stems from misguided religious teaching and from politicians capitalizing on those teachings for electoral gain. To help teens, this must end immediately. Anytime we see that kind of bigotry, we must stand up against it and stand for common values like love and acceptance. This book is part of that effort.”



According to Gold, “This is one of the greatest silent epidemics facing America today. I don’t want one more gay teenager to suffer from depression, isolation, or suicidal thoughts because they fear what will happen if others become aware of their sexual orientation. This is what I went through when I was young, and I’m hoping gay teens today will be able to live honestly and in a better, more accepting world....this is my life-long goal and my reason for creating this book.” Gold hopes that gay teens will find comfort and learn from the stories of those who have faced similar experiences. The book is also a missive to others in the community to extend their understanding and embrace to this suffering population.

To help insure the book gets into the hands of those who need it most, Gold plans to have Faith in America give copies of Crisis to more than 5,000 high schools and 1,000 churches in 2009.

According to Tipper Gore, “I am a lifelong advocate on behalf of mental health issues. I can tell you that Mitchell Gold hits the nail on the head with his book. This crisis must be addressed before harm comes to one more gay teen.”

Over 1,200 people attended launch parties for Crisis in Washington, D.C.; New York City; and Los Angeles in September. Gore was a special guest at the DC book launch, held at the Mitchell Gold + Bob Williams Signature Store there and attended by Crisis contributors Congressman Barney Frank and Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin. Acclaimed actress and civil rights advocate Judith Light was guest of honor at the NY launch, held at the MG+ BW SoHo store. In their introductory remarks, both Gore and Light called Crisis “transformative” and noted its ability to change people’s minds. Guest at the L.A. launch were moved by readings from two of the young adult contributors to Crisis. Mitchell has received thanks from people from all walks of life, in person, via emails and letters, and online, for creating the book.

The book covers a range of topics within its overall theme. The first four sections include stories of discrimination and rejection within families, religious institutions, schools, and the workplace. The book then moves to two cautionary tales of parents who lost their children because of the hatred aimed at gay teens. Gold also includes chapters challenging the claim that homosexuality is a sin, as well as information about the dangerous practice of so-called “reparative therapy.” Lastly, the book provides a rich chapter cataloging additional resources for gay teens and their families and friends.

In the Religious Discrimination section are chapters by religious leaders and people of many faiths, including Rev. Irene Monroe, an ordained minister and student of religious ethics at Harvard, who was raised in the black church; Rev. Dr. Mel White, a former ghostwriter to Rev. Jerry Falwell and other Evangelicals; and Bruce Bastian, co-creator of WordPerfect, who grew up in the Mormon faith. The Family and Community Rejection section contains stories by renowned actor Richard Chamberlain, Oprah Winfrey Show design expert Nate Berkus, and first openly gay U.S. Ambassador, Jim Hormel.

The School and Social Discrimination section has stories by comedian and actor Alec Mapa, MTV-VH1-LOGO President Brian Graden, and gay civil rights leader Joe Solmonese. The Workplace section contains chapters by former NBA star John Amaechi, ultimate Washington insider and MSNBC analyst Hilary Rosen, and the first openly lesbian candidate elected to Congress, Tammy Baldwin.

The stories of young people featured in the first three sections are particularly moving. Dispelling the myth that many “big city” people may have, that it is easier to come out today, they give a face to the current conditions confronting gay teens all over the country. And they give us reason to confront the mental health crisis that becomes apparent through these stories sooner rather than later.

### **Purchasing the book makes a difference. Proceeds go to the following non-profits:**

- Ali Forney Center (Housing for homeless LGBT youth in NYC). [www.aliforneycenter.org](http://www.aliforneycenter.org)
- GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network). [www.glsen.org](http://www.glsen.org)
- L.A. Gay and Lesbian Center Homeless Shelter. [www.lagaycenter.org](http://www.lagaycenter.org)
- MCCNY Homeless Youth Services & Sylvia’s Place Homeless Youth Shelter. [www.homelessyouthservices.org](http://www.homelessyouthservices.org)
- PFLAG (Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays). [www.pflag.org](http://www.pflag.org)
- Point Foundation (scholarship fund for LGBT students). [www.pointfoundadtion.org](http://www.pointfoundadtion.org)
- The Trevor Project (24-hour LGBT crisis and suicide helpline). [www.thetrevorproject.org](http://www.thetrevorproject.org)

The 400-page hardcover collection, published by Greenleaf Book Group Press in September 2008, has a popular cover price of \$23.95. Excerpts from the book, along with a podcast with Gold, links to charities benefiting from book sales and more helpful information are on the book’s official website—[www.CrisisBook.org](http://www.CrisisBook.org).

## ABOUT MITCHELL GOLD



In 1989, Mitchell Gold and his business partner, Bob Williams, created a furniture company in Taylorsville, North Carolina ([www.mgbwhome.com](http://www.mgbwhome.com)). Today, Gold and Williams head a nationally recognized company with over 750 employees and a 700,000-sq.-ft. factory with a family friendly-work environment that includes an on-site not-for-profit daycare center (the first of its kind in the residential furniture industry). There is also a growing chain of freestanding **Mitchell Gold + Bob Williams stores** across the country and internationally in cities including New York; Washington, DC; Greenwich; Boston; Atlanta; Miami; Houston; Nashville; Ann Arbor; Portland, OR; Los Angeles; San Juan; and Mexico City.

Mitchell started the company while living openly with Bob Williams in their rural North Carolina community. (They were originally life partners and now live separately as best friends and business partners.) So, like the other contributors to this book, Mitchell has lived its subject matter.

Mitchell's management style represents the power of entrepreneurial skills working in the service of social change. His dedication to maintaining fair practices in the workplace extends to a commitment to making the world a more comfortable place. In addition to running a \$100M company, he has provided comfort to people in need and serves as an example of an individual firmly committed to his ideals. He plays a major role in the national dialogue on gay rights. In December 2005, he established **Faith in America**, a nonprofit organization dedicated to educating people about how religion-based bigotry is used to justify discrimination against gay people. (See [www.faithinamerica.com](http://www.faithinamerica.com).)

Mitchell has been recognized as a major force in helping Americans better understand the harm caused when misguided religious beliefs are used to justify and promote hostility and prejudice toward gay and lesbian citizens. He served on the **Human Rights Campaign's Board of Directors** for seven years and has received numerous awards for his service, including the **Human Rights Campaign's Nov. 2007 Equality Honoree**, Palm Springs; **National Black Justice Coalition, April 2008 Leadership Award**; **Out magazine, April 2007, "Top 50 Most Powerful Gay People in America" list**; **Gay Men's Health Crisis, March 2007 25th Anniversary Dinner Honoree**; **Advocate magazine, 2006 "People of the Year Award" for Faith in America**; and **Vox Vodka + Out: 2004 Vox/Out Voices of Style + Design Award**.

Mitchell's work for gay rights has forged friendships with prominent members of the gay community — and led to a number of them wanting to join him in creating this book. Funny and smacking of "smart," he has always been passionate about comfort, and his definition of "comfort" goes far beyond the "sit" of a sofa. It is his passionate belief that true comfort cannot be achieved without true equality for all — something he is committed to making happen.

Mitchell has had extensive media experience, including two appearances on *The Today Show* and a satellite media tour for his first book, *Let's Get Comfortable: How to Furnish and Decorate a Welcoming Home* (Meredith Books, 2007), and a recent appearance on *The Charley Rose Show for Crisis*.

Born in Trenton, New Jersey, Mitchell lived in New York City for many years and now resides in North Carolina with his partner, Tim Scofield.

# STATISTICS ON THE MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS FACING GAY TEENAGERS

- There are over 1.6 million gay teenagers in America today. We believe a significant number of them are experiencing some form of depression.
- Gay youth are up to four times more likely to attempt suicide than their peers.
- Suicide is the third leading cause of death for young people ages fifteen to twenty-four, and for every kid who takes his or her own life, there are twenty more who try.
  - The odds of illegal substance use among gay youth are, on average, 190% higher than for heterosexual youth.
- Over one-third of students have experienced physical harassment at school on the basis of their sexual orientation, and more than one-quarter on the basis of their gender expression.
- Gay students were five times more likely to report skipping school because of safety concerns than their peers.
- 45 percent of gay men and 20 percent of lesbians surveyed had been victims of verbal and physical assaults in secondary school specifically because of their sexual orientation.
- 28 percent of gay students will drop out of school, more than three times the national average of heterosexual students.
- More than three quarters of students hear derogatory remarks such as “faggot” or “dyke” frequently at school. Nearly nine out of ten reported hearing the phrase “that’s so gay” –meaning “stupid” or “worthless” –frequently as well.
- Students in schools with a Gay-Straight Alliance club were less likely to feel unsafe and less likely to miss school. Having a comprehensive anti-bullying policy that specifically addressed sexual orientation and gender identity was related to lower rates of harassment and higher rates of intervention by school staff when incidents occurred.



# CRISIS CONTRIBUTORS: IN THEIR OWN WORDS

## **Martina Navratilova, former tennis champion**

“It is astounding to see the negativity that comes out of the supposedly loving environment of the church. Religion plays such a divisive role –which is so sad, because it is supposed to bring people together. Lately, it is being used to separate people more and more, as if we didn’t have enough problems in our world today.”

## **Richard Chamberlain, star actor of Dr. Kildare, The Thorn Birds, and Shogun**

“It has taken me many years –decades in fact– of psychological and spiritual exploration to begin to understand the power and tenacity of our social conditioning. The imprint upon a child’s mind and heart of family and cultural fears, prejudices, and hatreds, can be deep and almost indelible.”

## **Candace Gingrich, sister of former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich (R)**

“I’ve since learned that one of the most difficult things for many gay people is giving their parents time to accept them. We expect unconditional love, and when our parents pull back, it hurts. But how long did it take us to get used to being gay? It can take parents a while, too, especially considering generational differences. Something my mom said underscored that: ‘When I was growing up, we didn’t have gay people.’ Right, mom.”

## **Barney Frank, U.S. Congressman, House Financial Services Committee Chairman**

“I could not live half slave and half free, privately free to be a gay man, but publicly a slave to the prejudice that would not allow me to acknowledge it or act appropriately. I remember the terror of fearing that people would find out about my sexuality and the mistreatment that I knew would result. Being protected against that mistreatment now, must not mean that I forget what I faced then – what millions of Americans still face.”

## **Billy Bean, the only living former or current openly gay Major League Baseball player**

“We have all seen how the sports community and the media go crazy over a rumor of homosexuality. I was afraid of anyone finding out while I was an active player. I had so much to lose –something I had spent years working for, something I loved, something that brought public recognition and financial reward. It’s a lot to give up – especially when you feel in your heart you shouldn’t have to, there are no circumstances in which people should have to choose between their sexual orientation and their career – whether they’re playing pro-ball or running the concession stand.”

## **Jacob Breslow, University of California student, 21**

“The first time I attempted suicide, I tried to jump off an overpass near my house, my friends found out and told my dad, who came and grabbed me and locked me in my room for the night. The second time, I was trying to hang myself in my backyard and my friends called the police. They took me to the youth mental ward at the hospital. It wasn’t until I hit rock bottom that I started thinking, ‘Why am I doing this to myself?’ What I needed was to stop accepting the bullying, and stand up to it. It had to stop.”

## **Brian Graden, president of Entertainment, MTV, VH1, CMT; president of Logo**

“A good Methodist boy trusts God to change any circumstance, and so I prayed –hard. ‘Please God, let me find the imaginary switch that can flip me from gay to straight.’ I kept up my end of the bargain, going to church and leading the youth group, even attending Oral Roberts University. But God let me down; my crush on Burt Reynolds continued unabated. It’s a fine line between faith and delusion.”

## **Alec Mapa, TV actor appearing on Seinfeld, Ellen, Friends, & Desperate Housewives**

“The only way I have survived as a gay man, is by embracing everything I was taught to hate about myself. It takes enormous strength to be vulnerable and open in a world that rewards toughness and cruelty. I never deserved to be punished or humiliated for being gentle and kind. No one does. It took years of therapy to interpret events differently.”

## **Hilary Rosen, MSNBC political analyst; Former Chair & CEO of the Recording Industry Association of America**

“I was living with my girlfriend, while dating boys, to try and get the ‘gay’ out of me.”

## **Jared Horsford, Texas Tech University student, 26**

“I don’t know how the idea came into my head to start cutting myself. I remember reading about some cutters on the ex-gay

support website. I found an ex-gay ministry with an online support group and joined eagerly. But, over the next few years, I continued to struggle. Feeling exhausted by my attempts to hide my secret and keep up my reputation as a 'good Christian,' I began to spiral into depression. I was lonely and hurting. The church leaders I talked to – at this point, I had spoken to a couple more, along with a few of my closest church friends – encouraged me to keep fighting it. They said Jesus would heal my sin and that He would fix me if only I stayed faithful.”

### **Mary Lou Wallner, Fundamentalist Christian who lost lesbian daughter, 29, to suicide**

“What made Anna’s death even more difficult, was that in August 1996 – eight years after she had first come out to us and just six months before she died – I received an angry letter from her, cutting off all contact with me. She told me that I was her mother only in a biological way, that I had done colossal damage to her soul with my shaming words, and that she did not want to, and did not have to, forgive me. I was at a loss. I sought counsel from family and friends, and they all told me to respect Anna’s wish and give her the space she was asking for. So I did. What do I wish I’d done? What would I do now? Grab my toothbrush, credit card, and car keys, jump into the car, drive to where she lives, and tell her I love her no matter what. I did not do that, and now I never can...The Bible says nothing about innate homosexuality as we know it today, or about people of the same gender living in loving, committed, monogamous relationships. We discovered that homosexuality is not a choice, and therefore, cannot be a sin. Are you wondering how to prevent what happened to my family from happening to other? The answer is simple. Get to know gay men and lesbians. Do your homework, as we did. If you don’t, vital and valuable members of our world will continue to be at risk – of religious bigotry, hate crimes, and suicide.”

### **Jim Hormel, First openly gay U.S. Ambassador**

“Every time a gay person comes out, he, or she, help break down myths and misconceptions. There’s a totally counterproductive idea that gay men come from families comprised of a strong mother and a distant father – that parents make their children gay. This myth must be dispelled. So must the notion that God somehow created a universe intended exclusively for heterosexual beings, and that it’s not natural to be gay in spite of all the evidence in nature to the contrary.”

### **Bruce Bastian, Forbes 400 List of America’s wealthiest and coinventor of WordPerfect**

“But I couldn’t decide which would be the bigger sin: being homosexual or taking my own life.”

### **Elke Kennedy, Teenage Son Was Killed In a Hate Crime**

“After Sean’s death, we were no longer welcome at our church. Church friends stopped calling – they didn’t want to take sides. The God I know and love tells us to love one another and not judge. I am glad I have my faith and my personal relationship with God. That is what has helped me through the last year. Everyone had a right to his or her religious beliefs. But, we all have an equal duty to work for the dignity of human beings. Equal rights are guaranteed to us by our Constitution. No one had the right to force his or her beliefs on others – especially when those beliefs support violence against others...Please don’t blindly follow what people tell you. Research for yourself, and no matter what, be true to your children. Love them every day while you have them. We all have to stand together to stop the harm. No mother should ever have to bury her child. No mother should ever have to lose her child to hate and violence. No mother should have to fight for justice for her child.”

### **Julia Brindist, 19, lesbian student at Massachusetts College of Art**

“In the future, I hope that middle school kids and high school kids will become more open-minded, and speak out when some people refuse other people their rights, based on sexual orientation, gender identity, sex, or race. Protest against laws you believe are unfair, or try to pass a bill in your state – or even a new policy in your school. The worst thing anyone can do is to do nothing.”

### **Mitchell Gold, founder of Faith in America and chair of MG+BW; Editor of Crisis**

“I can’t remember when I fully realized I was gay, but I do remember throughout my teen years being incredibly depressed. For me, being a gay teenager meant being two people all the time...I thought about suicide often. I made a pact with myself: If I could not change and want to be with a woman by the time I was 21, I would commit suicide...It was like living through a nervous breakdown – my own little world of pain...”

“The number one reason I work toward equal rights for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people, is because I do not want kids to go through what I did. Today I live and work in an area of North Carolina that falls squarely within the Bible Belt. Too many families here tortured their children spiritually and emotionally if they happen to have been born attracted to others of the same sex, because they believe “their Bible” compels and obligates them to do so...I would have liked to have grown up feeling whole and equal –not marginalized and less than others.”

## KEY MESSAGE POINTS

### Crisis Editor Mitchell Gold

1. A mental health crisis faces American teens right now. Will we raise another generation of haters and victims, causing needless pain for millions of people? Or can clergy, parents and politicians find a way to tone down anti-gay rhetoric and instead treat gay people like any other individual with guaranteed rights under our Constitution? The price society pays for intolerance is high – violent hate crimes, suicides, depression, addiction, fractured relationships. It’s a crisis we have the power to end now!
2. There’s a crucial question that some religious communities need to resolve to overcome the harmful division that has become associated with it: Is having or expressing affection toward a member of the same sex a sin?
3. America isn’t homophobic – it has just been told it is supposed to be homophobic. So much of that stems from misguided religious teaching and from politicians capitalizing on that for electoral gain. To help teens, this must end immediately. Anytime we see that kind of bigotry, we must stand up against it and stand for common values like love and acceptance.
4. Parents should accept their gay children and not alienate them, which can otherwise lead to runaways, suicides, depression, and anxiety. Some parents have kicked their kids out of the home. There are still children coming of age, all across the country, who cannot tell their parents the truth. They can’t live free of lies. They are ridiculed by their classmates, who feel like outcasts by their church, who fall prey to violence. When will we accept our differences?
5. How can we best protect gay teens? Is it a matter of changing the law or changing attitudes? Mitchell suggests more open communication at home, anti-bullying, education in schools, and religious tolerance will help a lot.
6. Being gay is no more a choice than being straight is. So if it’s in your DNA and not up to the individual, how can you hold them accountable and blame them for something out of their control? We must reevaluate how we see gay people. It’s not a mental illness or a disease, as noted by American Medical Association, American Psychiatry Association, and other leading health organizations.
7. Since sexual orientation cannot be changed nor treated, “reparative therapy” should be seen as harmful and not promoted by clergy or therapists. Being gay is not a disease or reversible condition. But we do damage to have others think they should or can be changed.
8. One day Christians will see their anti-gay stand of today as just as outdated as those who used to support witch-burning, Nazism or apartheid. We now agree Jews are not Christ-killers, deserving extermination, and women are not inferior to men. The Bible doesn’t support the enslavement of African-Americans – and being gay is not a sin.
9. Could you imagine risking your career to be yourself? How good would you be at pretending, so as to avoid school and social discrimination? Could you live with being condemned as an abomination by people who normally encourage peace and love? Would you be willing to lose the love of your family or be rejected by your community? Being a gay American is not easy, whether one is out or not.
10. Society has come far, especially with racism and sexism, but with gays and lesbians there’s still a major stigma and wealth of discrimination, violence, and isolation.
11. Gay teens are vulnerable but they need to feel safe and accepted and comfortable coming out. The unbearable burden to live a secret life of lies and unauthenticity not only takes a tremendous toll on the individual, but it impacts those nearest and dearest to them, as well as the community at large. The price of being different can be great, and when one can be hated for whom they love, we need to reevaluate our priorities.
12. Think of the kids. Society, families and the church are harming so many young teens who struggle with their sexuality and to come to grips with who they really are under such a negative atmosphere of violence, hatred, and ignorance. Whether you are deeply religious or fiercely heterosexual, turn down the anti-gay rhetoric if you don’t want to encourage hate crimes against gay teens or you don’t want to see our youth seek to end their lives out of desperation and victimization.
13. To be gay in America means to experience prejudice, discrimination in the workplace, to be outcast by your church, to be shunned by your family and friends, disowned by your parents, to be ridiculed and demonized by society. This mistreatment creates an early unlivable situation for millions of people, especially for vulnerable gay teens who are often living in a state of fear and confusion.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## 1. Why this book and why now?

There are so many young people who are living a life of fear. They fear how their family, their friends, and their church will treat them if they ever knew their secret, that they are gay. It is critical that America understand the harm that is being done. By hearing the diverse stories in this book, people can gain understanding and insight into the effects their words and actions may have on gay teens. We must not wait one more day to make this happen. Not one more teen should suffer the depression and suicidal thoughts that I and many others were and are being plagued by.

## 2. What was your inspiration for this book?

A year ago, a reporter said to me, “You’re successful, you’re well adjusted, and none of these issues really affect you. Why are you so dedicated to this?” My response surprised me. I said, “Because I don’t want another gay teen to go through what I went through.” That made me realize that some people just don’t know. Politicians, media, clergy, parents...they just don’t get how horrible they are treating these precious kids either directly or indirectly. Gay teens have some of the most alarming statistics of all of our young people. Something must be done to call attention to it.

## 3. Isn’t it easier for young gay people today than it was 20 or 30 years ago?

It’s not easier. It’s just different. Twenty or thirty years ago, the anti-gay religious groups did not exist as we know them today. Their rhetoric has entirely changed the level of discussion about gays in a very hateful and negative way. That rhetoric has contributed greatly to the attitudes that are harmful to our gay teens. And in areas of the country where some kids do come out younger and successfully to their family and friends, they then find the bullying in schools and communities very difficult.

## 4. What do you hope to accomplish with this book?

I want the pain to stop for these kids. This is a transforming book; we already know from focus groups and the many postings and letters we’ve received that reading it changes people. My goal is to open a window onto the torment and depression that gay teens experience. I believe when people hear about it and really understand it, their better nature will call them to action to open their hearts and minds and accept their gay children, friends, and coworkers as they are.

## 5. What are the solutions for this mental health crisis among gay teens, which you call a silent epidemic? What resources are available?

The solution is simple. To paraphrase my friend and contributor to the book, Congressman Barney Frank, America isn’t homophobic — it has just been told that it’s supposed to be homophobic. So much of that stems from misguided religious teaching and from politicians capitalizing on that for electoral gain. All of that must end immediately. Anytime we see this kind of bigotry, we must stand up against it and stand for common values like love and acceptance. To find resources from amazing organizations that help teens, parents, and all supportive people who want to understand, you can see the extensive Resources section in the book or visit the book’s website, [www.CrisisBook.org](http://www.CrisisBook.org).

## 6. A section of your book makes the argument that homosexuality is not a sin. Why did you include it?

Because so much of the prejudice against gays stems from misguided religious teachings, it is important to correct that. Homosexuality is not a sin, and many people don’t believe the Bible says it is. The book features two religious leaders who address this in two very different yet very compelling ways. Once this misguided belief has been corrected, the path to fair, equal, and respectful treatment will be much easier to travel. But regardless, even if a person thinks it is a sin, they need to start to understand how interpreting the Bible to say someone is a sinner has been wrong in the past and is wrong today, as well. Gay people must not be compared to thieves, murderers, etc.

## 7. How do you feel gay teens’ experiences at school, church, or home can impact their suicide rate?

Like all teens, gay teens live most of their young lives in those environments. Each plays an important role for them. Even if a teen finds a supportive and affirming environment in one of those areas, the pressures and hostility in the other areas can still devastate a young person, who has little choice about where he spends his time — you have to go to school; you need people to love you and a safe place to live; and, at that age, the amount of time you spend in church is usually governed by your family’s beliefs. Those places must exist in harmony, all being accepting in order for a gay teenager to live openly, freely, and happily. A lack of harmony adds to the already stressful life of a teenager, thereby increasing the odds of depression and even suicide.

## 8. Aren’t the teenage years difficult for all teenagers?

Of course they are. Being a teenager isn’t easy. You mature physically, emotionally, socially, educationally all at the same time.

With everything going on, it's very easy to be stressed. Just imagine if you threw in confusion over sexual orientation, something you couldn't talk to anybody about; something you'd heard your whole life was a sin, an abomination, a perversion, and just wrong. Without a doubt, that makes being a teenager more difficult. All the statistics bear that out.

### **9. If you were talking to a suicidal gay teen right now, what would you say?**

I would tell that teen that I've been there and there is hope. God made that teen into a wonderful human being and his or her sexuality is a gift from Him. If I made it through those suicidal thoughts, and all the contributors to this book did, then you can do it. There are places to turn to for help when you feel like there is nobody to talk to. The book provides that information, and I hope it helps many gay teens.

### **10. How can people of faith help end the harm being done to gay teens in houses of worship?**

People of faith can challenge their leadership to be affirming and accepting of gays and lesbians in their church, mosque, or synagogue. They can also challenge any anti-gay rhetoric they hear coming from the pulpit. So many people of faith are tired of being known as anti-gay. It's time people become righteous and have the courage to speak their truth to their leaders — both religious and political.

# CONTRIBUTORS TO CRISIS *(in alphabetical order)*

## FOREWORD

**Martina Navratilova:** World-renowned tennis champion.

- Born in: Czechoslovakia. Became U.S. citizen at 25, in 1981.
- Website: [www.martinanavratilova.com](http://www.martinanavratilova.com)
- Lives in: Aspen, CO, and Nokomis, FL

## INCLUDED IN PREFACE (p. xvi)

**Jeff Austin:** Friend of Mitchell Gold's — a North Carolinian whose dad was a Southern Baptist preacher and who only came out to his family at age 44.

- Grew up in: Alexander County, North Carolina (where MG+BW factory is located)
- Lives in: Hickory, NC

## RELIGION

**Bruce Bastian:** Co-inventor of WordPerfect and philanthropist. Raised in Mormon faith.

- Website: [www.bastianfoundation.org](http://www.bastianfoundation.org).
- Grew up in: Twin Falls, ID. College: Brigham Young University
- Lives in: Orem, UT

**Brent Childers:** Straight ally, Evangelical Christian + Executive Director of Faith in America.

- Website: [www.faithinamerica.info](http://www.faithinamerica.info)
- Grew up in: North Carolina
- Lives in: Cahah Mountain, North Carolina

**Ari Gold:** Singer/songwriter/producer. Raised in Orthodox Jewish family in New York.

- Website: [www.arigold.com](http://www.arigold.com).
- Grew up in: The Bronx, NY. College: New York University
- Lives in: New York

**Jody Huckaby:** Executive Director of Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG). Raised in Catholic faith. From a family of eight siblings — four gay and four straight — and none of them knew their siblings were gay growing up.

- Website: [www.pflag.org](http://www.pflag.org).
- Grew up in: Eunice, LA
- Lives in: Washington, DC area

**Dan Karslake** (wrote Crisis Religion section intro): Writer/director/producer of award-winning documentary For the Bible Tells Me So. Previously a producer for Emmy-nominated PBS newsmagazine In the Life, focusing on homosexuality and religion.

- Website: [www.forthebibletellsmeso.org](http://www.forthebibletellsmeso.org).
- Grew up in: Harrisburg, PA. College: Duke University, 1987; USC
- Lives in: New York

**Reverend Irene Monroe:** Minister and public theologian; syndicated religion columnist. Abandoned by her mother at six months; raised in foster care with the strong influence of the black Christian church community.

- Website: [www.irenemonroe.com](http://www.irenemonroe.com).
- Grew up in: Brooklyn, NY
- Colleges: Wellesley, Union Theological Seminary at Columbia, Harvard Divinity School
- Lives in: Boston

**Rodney Powell:** Retired physician and civil rights leader who marched with Dr. Martin Luther King. Raised in the black Christian church community.

- Website: [www.soulforce.org/article/rodney-powell-video](http://www.soulforce.org/article/rodney-powell-video) for an interview with Rodney
- Grew up in: Philadelphia
- Lives in: Honolulu, Hawaii

**Bishop Gene Robinson:** First openly gay Episcopal bishop (Diocese of New Hampshire). Published In the Eye of the Storm: Swept to the Center by God in April 2008. Entered into civil union with his partner of twenty years in June 2008. Controversy continues

to surround his consecration; he was not invited to the 2008 Lambeth Conference by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

- Website: [www.nhepiscopal.org/bishop/bishop.html](http://www.nhepiscopal.org/bishop/bishop.html) for biography
- Grew up in: Fayette County, KY
- Lives in: Weare, NH

**H. Alexander Robinson:** Executive director and CEO, National Black Justice Coalition, a civil rights organization dedicated to ending racism and homophobia against the black gay community. Raised in black Conservative Christian faith.

- Website: [www.nbjcoalition.org](http://www.nbjcoalition.org).
- Grew up in: Richmond, VA, area
- Lives in: Washington, DC area

**Reverend Dr. Mel White:** Author, filmmaker and former ghostwriter for Jerry Falwell, Billy Graham, Pat Robertson, and other nationally known Evangelicals. Co-founder of Soulforce, dedicated to “stopping homophobia at its source, religious bigotry.”

- Biography: *Stranger at the Gate*. Most recent book: *Religion Gone Bad: The Hidden Dangers of the Christian Right*. Raised in Evangelical Christian faith.
- Website: [www.soulforce.org](http://www.soulforce.org).
- Grew up in: Santa Cruz, CA
- Lives in: Dallas, TX, and Lynchburg, VA

## FAMILY

**Nate Berkus:** Regularly featured designer on *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, who shares smart and stylish decorating ideas with her audiences. Author of *Home Rules*.

- Website: [www.nateberkus.com](http://www.nateberkus.com)
- Grew up in: Minnetonka, MN + Orange County, CA; boarding school in Massachusetts
- Lives in: Chicago and New York

**Howard Bragman:** L.A.-based public relations consultant whose firm, *Fifteen Minutes*, has a large entertainment-industry-based clientele; he has also helped several gay sports figures come out publicly, including John Amaechi, who tells his story in the book.

- Website: [www.fifteenminutes.com](http://www.fifteenminutes.com)
- Grew up in: Flint, MI
- Lives in: Los Angeles

**Richard Chamberlain:** Actor — *Dr. Kildare*, *The Thorn Birds*, *Shogun*. Came out at age 69, in 2003, in his autobiography, *Shattered Love*.

- Grew up in: Beverly Hills, CA
- Lives in: Hawaii

**Candace Gingrich:** Senior Youth Outreach Manager, Human Rights Campaign (HRC) and sister of Newt Gingrich.

- Grew up in: Harrisburg, PA
- Lives in: Washington, DC area

**Mitchell Gold:** Co-founder and Chair-man of Mitchell Gold + Bob Williams, and founder of Faith in America.

- Websites: [www.mgbwhome.com](http://www.mgbwhome.com); [www.faithinamerica.info](http://www.faithinamerica.info)
- Grew up in: Trenton, NJ
- Lives in: Conover, NC, and New York City

**Jim Hormel:** Philanthropist and first openly gay U.S. Ambassador; appointed Ambassador to Luxembourg by President Clinton. Jim's grandfather started Hormel Foods. A founder of the Human Rights Campaign. Donation to San Francisco Public Library led to the creation of the James C. Hormel Gay and Lesbian Center, which houses the world's largest collection of gay literature.

- Grew up in: Austin, MN, and attended an East Coast boarding school in the 1950s
- College: Swarthmore and University of Chicago Law School
- Lives in: San Francisco

**James McGreevey:** Seminary student at General Theological Seminary and former governor of New Jersey. Raised in the Catholic faith.

- Grew up in: Carteret, NJ
- Colleges: Columbia, Harvard (M.A.), and Georgetown University Law Center
- Lives in: Plainfield, NJ, and attends seminary school in New York City

**Donna Red Wing:** Senior Advisor, The Interfaith Alliance, Washington, DC. Previously with the Gill Foundation, HRC, and GLAAD, and served as liaison to the gay community for the Howard Dean presidential campaign.

- Grew up in: Worcester, MA
- Colleges: Assumption College and Clark University (M.A.)
- Lives in: Evergreen, CO

**Charles Robbins** (wrote Crisis Family section intro): Executive Director of The Trevor Project, a national 24/7 suicide and crisis prevention helpline for gay youth. Previously with the National Gay & Lesbian Task Force and GLAAD; founder of Denver-based Project Angel Heart, which delivers meals to those living with HIV/AIDS.

- Grew up in: Colorado
- Lives in: Los Angeles

**Jorge Valencia:** Executive Director, Point Foundation (LGBT scholarship organization), and former Executive Director, The Trevor Project. Mexican-American, raised in Mormon faith. Thanks to Jorge (pronounced “George”), the stories of several Point Foundation Scholars appear in the book.

- Grew up in: Texas
- College: Brigham Young University
- Lives in: Los Angeles

**Bob Witeck:** Co-founder + CEO, Witeck-Combs Communications, a DC-based PR + marketing firm. Coauthor, *Business Inside Out: Capturing Millions of Brand-Loyal Gay Consumers*.

- Grew up in: suburb of Arlington, VA
- College: University of Virginia
- Lives in: Washington, DC

## SCHOOLS

**Neil Giuliano:** Former four-term mayor of Tempe, AZ (1994-2004), and president of the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD).

- Grew up in: Bloomfield, NJ
- College: Arizona State University
- Lives in: New York City

**Brian Graden:** President of cable television networks Entertainment, MTV, VH1 + CMT, and President of Logo.

- Grew up in: Hillsboro, IL
- College: Oral Roberts University, Harvard Business School
- Lives in: Los Angeles (and New York City)

**Kevin Jennings** (wrote Crisis School section intro) — Founder of the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN). Became faculty advisor to the nation’s first GSA in 1988 at Concord Academy, in Massachusetts. Author of six books, including *Mama’s Boy*, *Preacher’s Son*, published in August 2008.

- Website: [www.glsen.org](http://www.glsen.org)
- Grew up in: Winston-Salem, North Carolina
- College: Harvard (1985); NYU (MBA)
- Lives in: New York City

**Alec Mapa** — Filipino-American actor and comedian who has appeared on Broadway and in TV shows including *Roseanne*, *Seinfeld*, *Friends*, *Desperate Housewives*, and *Ugly Betty*, and as host of Logo TV series *Transamerican Love Story* with Calpernia Addams. Movie credits include *Bright Lights*, *Big City* and Adam Sandler’s 2008 movie, *You Don’t Mess with Zohan*.

- Grew up in: San Francisco
- Lives in: Los Angeles

**Joe Solmonese** — President, Human Rights Campaign (HRC).

- Website: [www.hrc.org](http://www.hrc.org)
- Grew up in: Attleboro, MA
- College: Boston University (1987)
- Lives in: Washington, DC

**Bob Williams:** Co-founder and President of Design, Mitchell Gold + Bob Williams.

- Website: [www.mgandbw.com](http://www.mgandbw.com)
- Grew up in: Conroe, Texas
- College: Southwestern, North Texas State, Parson's School of Design
- Lives in: Hickory, NC

## WORKPLACE

**John Amaechi:** Former NBA basketball player, philanthropist, and business consultant. Autobiography: Man in the Middle

- Website: [www.johnamaechi.com](http://www.johnamaechi.com)
- Grew up in: Manchester, England; came to U.S. for sr. year of high school in Toledo, OH
- College: Vanderbilt and Penn State (1995)
- Lives in: Los Angeles and England

**Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin (D-Wisconsin):** House of Representatives member for 10 years.

- Website: [www.tammybaldwin.house.gov](http://www.tammybaldwin.house.gov)
- Grew up in: Madison, WI
- College: Smith College (1984) and University of Wisconsin Law School
- Lives in: Madison, WI, and Washington, DC

**Billy Bean:** Former Major League Baseball player with the Tigers, Dodgers, and Padres.

- Autobiography: Going the Other Way: Lessons from a Life In and Out of Major League Baseball
- Website: [www.billybean.com](http://www.billybean.com)
- Grew up in: Santa Ana, CA
- College: Loyola Marymount University (1986)
- Lives in: Miami Beach, FL

**Congressman Barney Frank (D-Massachusetts):** 27 years in Congress and openly gay for 21 of those years; Chairman of the House Financial Services Committee.

- Website: [www.house.gov/frank](http://www.house.gov/frank)
- Grew up in: Bayonne, NJ
- College: Harvard (1962) and Harvard Law School
- Lives in: Massachusetts and Washington, DC

**Lane Hudson:** Wrote Crisis Workplace section intro and former Communications Director, Faith in America.

- Grew up in: South Carolina
- Lives in: Washington, DC

**Hilary Rosen:** A political analyst on MSNBC and political director for The Huffington Post . The former chairman and CEO of the Recording Industry Association of America, she is also a media and technology consultant. She is a co-founder of OurChart.com, a social networking site for lesbians based on the Showtime TV drama The L Word.

- Grew up in: New Jersey
- Lives in: Washington, DC

## ON LOSING A CHILD

**Elke Kennedy:** mother of the late Sean Kennedy, killed at 19, in 2007. Founder of Sean's Last Wish, which raises awareness of South Carolina's lack of hate-crime laws.

- Website: [www.seanslastwish.com](http://www.seanslastwish.com)
- Sean grew up in: Greenville, South Carolina
- Elke lives in: Greenville, South Carolina

**Mary Lou Wallner:** mother of the late Anna, who committed suicide at age 29. Founder of TEACH Ministries, dedicated to educating about the consequences of homophobia.

- Website: [www.teach-ministries.org](http://www.teach-ministries.org)
- Mary Lou lives in: North Little Rock, AR

## THE QUESTION OF SIN

**Jimmy Creech:** Minister in The United Methodist Church for 29 years who was defrocked for performing a same-gender marriage ceremony; former executive director of Faith In America

- Lives in: Raleigh, NC

**Reverend Stephen Shoemaker:** His sermon is in “The Sin Question” section — fair-minded heterosexual Southern Baptist minister

- Lives in: Charlotte, NC

## Young Adult Contributors

### RELIGION

**Matt Comer:** Editor of Q-Notes, LGBT newspaper of the Carolinas. Age 22. Raised in Southern Baptist faith.

- Website: [www.Matthillcomer.com](http://www.Matthillcomer.com).
- Grew up in: Winston-Salem, North Carolina area • Lives in: Charlotte, NC

**Jared Horsford:** Student, Texas Tech. Age 26. Raised in Southern Baptist faith.

- Grew up in: Texas • Lives in: Lubbock, TX area

**Jarrod Parker:** Communications Specialist for Emergency, Fire, and Aeromedical Services in Greenville, SC. Age 22. Stepbrother of late Sean Kennedy. His stepmother, Elke Kennedy, wrote chapter for book. Raised Southern Baptist.

- Grew up in: Greenville, South Carolina • Lives in: Greenville, South Carolina

### FAMILY

**Brandon Rolph Kneefel:** student, Penn State (currently completing online while in L.A. pursuing acting career). Raised in a conservative Christian family. Thrown out of the house by his parents while in high school. Point Scholar. Age 21.

- Grew up in: Detroit • Lives in: Los Angeles

**Robert Wrasse:** student, graduated May 2008 from University of Michigan. Age 21. Raised in the Catholic faith in a Chaldean-American community outside Detroit.

- Grew up in: suburb of Detroit, MI • Lives in: Washington, DC

### SCHOOL

**Katie Batza:** PhD Candidate, University of Illinois at Chicago. Point Scholar. Age 28

- Grew up in: Marietta, GA • Lives in: Chicago

**Jacob Breslow:** Student, University of California — Santa Cruz. Point Scholar. Age 21.

- Grew up in: Walnut Creek, a suburb of San Francisco • Lives in: Walnut Creek, CA

**Julia Brindisi:** Student, Massachusetts College of Art; Age 19

- Grew up in: Harvard, MA • Lives in: Boston (in school)

**Tony Meyer:** student, Harvard University. Point Scholar. Age 19

- Grew up in: Mission Viejo, CA • Lives in: Boston (at school)

# **MEDIA COVERAGE THAT HAS HELPED GET THE CRISIS MESSAGE OUT**

Here are some highlights. To read complete articles, please visit the book's website: [www.Crisis.Book.org](http://www.Crisis.Book.org). Links to videos are provided below.

## **TELEVISION & RADIO**

### **The Charlie Rose Show: PBS TV. 11.06.08**

A conversation with Mitchell Gold about "Crisis: 40 Stories Revealing the Personal, Social, and Religious Pain and Trauma of Growing Up Gay in America." Link: <http://www.crisisbook.org/video-charlieRose.php>.

### **ABC/WHAM-TV Rochester, NY 10.10.08**

National Coming Out Day interview with Mitchell on 13 WHAM News This Morning. Link: <http://www.crisisbook.org/video-WHAMmorningnews.php>.

### **WTBQ Radio, Warwick, NY. 09.17.08**

"Shannon's Corner," Mitchell discusses gay teens and parenting issues with Shannon Deveraux Sanford in an hour-long program about Crisis.. Link to blog post: <http://shannonscorner.com/index.php?s=mitchell+gold&Submit=Search>.

## **NEWSPAPERS**

### **Miami Herald: "Averting Crisis: Growing Up Gay in America" by Steve Rothaus. 10.10.08**

Decades before Mitchell Gold became a famous furniture mogul, he considered ways to kill himself. "I debated how to do it. An overdose of sleeping pills seemed somewhat painless," Gold writes in his new book, *Crisis*. "I considered other tactics--driving a car off a cliff, running in front of a train, jumping off a building--but I knew I didn't have the guts." Gold, 57, and chairman of furniture company Mitchell Gold + Bob Williams, began to get back his self-esteem during college, with the help of a psychiatrist and support from his parents. "We really didn't know much until he started growing up," said Gold's father, Jack, 87, of Pompano Beach. "He kept it all to himself."

### **Charlotte Observer: "Executive Shares Stories About Growing Up Gay" by Pam Kelley. 09.15.08**

As a teenager, Mitchell Gold lived a dual life. One minute, he'd be talking and laughing with family or friends. The next, he'd feel a black cloud descend, reminding him of his enormous, unsolvable problem: He was attracted to men. He vowed to himself that if he couldn't change by the time he turned 21, he'd commit suicide. He never changed, but his outlook eventually did.

### **New York Times Magazine: "The Color of Love: Mildred Loving" by Susan Dominus. 12.28.08**

Civil rights historians had pretty much accepted that they wouldn't hear again from Mildred Loving. But last year, the 40th anniversary of the ruling, three colleagues working on behalf of Faith in America, a gay rights group, visited Loving at the small ranch house that Richard built after they moved back to Virginia. The organization was hoping to persuade her to make a statement in favor of gay marriage at a celebration of her own court ruling that the group planned to hold in Washington. "I just don't know," Loving told them. She hadn't given it much thought. She listened sympathetically, a worn Bible on her end table, as the group's founder, the furniture entrepreneur Mitchell Gold, told her of his own struggles as a teenager to accept that society would never let him marry someone he loved. She was undecided when the group left a few hours later, but told Ashley Etienne, a young woman who consulted for the group, that they could continue to chat about the subject over the phone.... Loving told her that she didn't understand why two people who loved each other could not be married and express their love publicly.... And in the end, Loving told Etienne, yes, she would allow the group to read a statement in her name supporting gay marriage at the commemoration....

## **ONLINE**

### **Huffington Post: "Gold, Light, 'Crisis' and Compassion." by Steve Rails. 09.18.08**

Openly gay furniture designer Mitchell Gold is most well-known for lush home decor, but what some in the LGBT community may not be as aware of is his longtime advocacy on important issues--his generous philanthropy to the community and his work as founder of Faith in America, a nonprofit organization dedicated to countering religious-based intolerance and clearing up the record about what it really means to be a person of faith and compassion. ...his latest project, a book compilation entitled *Crisis*, is also a gift to the broader community... a soaring and moving testament to the struggles of LGBT people--and an often wrenching account of the obstacles and hate so many people overcome to live authentically. And on Monday night in New York, some of the community's brightest stars and brightest minds came out to toast Mitchell, his book and his advocacy on behalf of equality and civil rights.

## WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT CRISIS

“The stories are very compelling. The book itself is extremely significant and can be transformative in our society, and I know that is the hope—that we can give voice to people here and around the world who feel their voice hasn’t been heard and who have felt the sting of discrimination and being unwelcome in their places of worship and many other places in our society. I think that Mitchell, in his inimitable way, which is always compassionate and loving, points out that people don’t really mean to do harm, but he lets them know that harm has been done to gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender teens and that it is still happening. This book, I think, is going to change people’s minds.”

-- Tipper Gore, at the Washington, D.C. launch of Crisis

“The reality is that Crisis needs to be read by absolutely everyone, not only to recognize what gay people go through in this culture, but to break through the denial of how cruel and insensitive people can be when they are controlled by a belief system that they allow to substitute for the loving human response they would otherwise find automatic.”

-- Dr. Herb Hamsher

“We need to talk to people about what their religion is really telling them and ask them in fact if they do believe it and is that the kind of person they want to be...where they are vilifying the gay community and where they are prejudicial and bigoted. I think this book is so important in putting a face and a name on the pain and to begin a conversation about why it is still happening in this country.” -- Acclaimed actress Judith Light, at the New York launch of Crisis

“Dear Mr. Gold: At age 80, my eyes and my heart have been opened beyond words. Thanks to my friend for lending me her copy of your book, and many thanks to you for your huge contribution to educating me. I never gave the gay/lesbian community much thought other than passing judgment. Shame on me! Thanks to you, and all the documentaries, I now have a better understanding and much compassion for these, our brothers and sisters. It is my prayer that your book will find its way into our middle schools, high schools, and churches. God bless you for all the time and effort you have put into this very important, life-saving issue. Sincerely, Dee”

“As a Director of Human Resources in the not-for-profit sector, I recommend CRISIS for every parent, educator, employer and worker in the human services profession. It is our responsibility to learn and do more to teach one another and educate our next generation about the vocabulary of diversity, respect and inclusion. Our goal is to eliminate future shameful examples of discrimination, harassment and bias. A well-informed commitment to change the barriers (or differences) that exist for our LGBT citizens is needed to end this prejudice worldwide. This change is woefully overdue. Put down the notion that you cannot influence significant change, and pick up a few copies of CRISIS to share.”

--Lisa Witkowski, SPHR, Dir. of Human Resources, Jewish Family Service of Atlantic & Cape May Counties, Washington, DC

When my son was very young, I sensed that he was most likely gay and did my own research to find understanding and acceptance. However, this book helped me to understand that having a supportive parent and siblings is not enough. Hopefully, other family members and friends who read this book will gain insight into the hurtfulness and self loathing that results from bigotry outside the home. If I had read a book such as this twenty years ago, I would have had deeper understanding of his “world at school” and been more proactive. “ -- Gloria Pyper

“Along with the book’s many firsthand accounts of the difficulty of growing up gay are two powerful stories by moms. One of them, a fundamentalist Christian who rejected her daughter’s lesbianism before the young woman killed herself, recalls being told, ‘Perhaps your daughter’s death is an indictment of the homosexual lifestyle.’ The devastated mother, Mary Lou Wallner, says she and her husband have learned ‘what it was like to be the object of the church’s hatred for gay people.’ Of course, most religious Americans would be appalled by the mean comment made to the mom. But too few stop to ponder whether leaning on religion to justify anti-gay discrimination is any different from how religion once was used to harm women and racial minorities. Good-hearted people who come to realize that there is no difference are well on their way to being supportive of gay teens. And that’s what keeps Mitchell Gold motivated. -- Deb Price, Detroit News

# **BENEFICIARIES OF PROCEEDS FROM THE SALE OF CRISIS**

## **Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN)**

When the group started in 1990, there were only two Gay-Straight Alliance clubs (GSAs) in schools, one state with a policy protecting lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) students, and a lack of awareness of the needs of LGBT students. Today, GLSEN has registered more than 3,500 GSAs. It also sponsors a National Day of Silence in which about a million students, teachers, and staff across the country participate. GLSEN's newest project is National No Name Calling Week. In coalition with leading education groups including the National Education Assn. and National Middle School Assn., it is part of an event geared toward educating middle school students on the negative impact of bullying and harassment. [www.glsen.org](http://www.glsen.org)

## **Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG)**

PFLAG is a national support, education, and advocacy group for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people, their families, friends, and allies. With 200,000 members and supporters and local chapters in more than 500 communities across the U.S. and abroad, it is the largest grassroots-based family organization of its kind. PFLAG promotes the health and well-being of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons, their families and friends through: support, to cope with an adverse society; education, to enlighten an ill-informed public; and advocacy, to end discrimination and to secure equal civil rights. [www.pflag.org](http://www.pflag.org).

## **Point Foundation**

Point Foundation provides scholarships, mentoring, leadership training, and hope for students of merit who have been marginalized due to sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. Applicants turn to Point Foundation because their families are unable or unwilling to support their goals for higher education. Student have compelling and inspiring stories of overcoming obstacles and hardships; some were rejected by their families, forced to leave home, and cut off from financial support. Point Scholars are excelling at our nation's most prestigious universities and leading a variety of community service activities there, as well. [www.pointfoundation.org](http://www.pointfoundation.org)

## **The Trevor Project**

The Trevor Helpline is the only nationwide around-the-clock crisis and suicide prevention helpline for gay and questioning youth. It is a free and confidential service offering hope and someone to talk to, 24/7. Trained counselors listen and understand without judgment. [www.thetrevorproject.org](http://www.thetrevorproject.org)

## **Ali Forney Center (AFC)**

The Ali Forney Center was started in June of 2002 in response to the lack of safe shelter for LGBT youth in New York City. It is committed to providing these young people with safe, dignified, nurturing environments where their needs can be met, and where they can begin to put their lives back together. AFC is dedicated to promoting awareness of the plight of homeless LGBT youth in the United States with the goal of generating responses on local and national levels from government funders, foundations, and the LGBT community. [www.aliforneycenter.org](http://www.aliforneycenter.org)

## **Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Center for Homeless Youth**

The Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Center for Homeless Youth serves the thousands of homeless gay youth in the Los Angeles area. It offers everything gay teens need to get off the streets and make a better life for themselves, from food, clothing and housing to counseling and job placement services. They serve young people ages 18 to 23 who are without a place to live but ready to commit to getting off the streets. They also work with the young people to develop the skills and resources to successfully make it on their own. [www.lagaycenter.org](http://www.lagaycenter.org)

## **MCCNY Homeless Youth Services & Sylvia's Place Homeless Youth Shelter**

Since 2002, the Homeless Youth Services of Metropolitan Community Church of New York (MCCNY) has worked tirelessly to meet the needs of the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender runaway and homeless youth of New York City. Starting with a six-bed emergency shelter called Sylvia's Place, housed in the church itself, MCCNY's services have expanded to include another shelter, Sylvia's East, plus a range of social services for both shelter residents and other runaway and homeless youth. [www.homelessyouthservices.org](http://www.homelessyouthservices.org)