

## A Statement on Outing and Violence in LGBT Relationships (4.22.17)

Last week on the show, 'Survivor,' a contestant, Zeke, was outed as transgender by one of his rivals in a last minute attempt to prevent being voted off the island. Zeke's shock and surprise were evident, as was the other contestants' shock and anger as they accused Zeke of deception and deliberate misinformation. Viewers no doubt felt a similar range of emotions as they watched the public broadcast of this violent act on national television, weeks after it had taken place.

Outing a member of the LGBTQ community is always a deplorable act. The decision to come out when, to whom, and how is personal and private. Making that decision for another person robs them of their individual agency.

Outing a member of the LGBTQ community is also a violent and abusive act. Even when a person controls the decision to come out, they face judgment, isolation, and condemnation. When they are 'outed' and lose control over the process, the fear is amplified. They no longer have the ability to convey their message in the way they choose, and have no time to mentally prepare for the reactions of others.

Historically, domestic and sexual violence have been cast as women's issues. Men perpetrate violence against women. In reality, people of all genders, gender identities, and sexual orientations are victims (and perpetrators) of domestic and sexual violence. Indeed, the prevalence of domestic and sexual violence within the LGBTQ community is equal to or greater than within broader population. One in four women and one in 33 men will be a DV victim. Within the LGBTQ community, one in five men and one in three women experience DV. An alarming 50-60% of transgender individuals will experience sexual assault at some point in their lives.

Sadly, outing and the fear of outing are common tactics abusers use to control their victims in intimate partner relationships. The isolation that many people in the LGBT community face due to homophobia can be used by a batterer to keep control over their partner. Using small communities, since there are limited numbers of open and affirming community spaces for the LGBT community, is another powerful tactic. This, in addition to more traditional battering tactics physical, emotional, financial serve to prevent victims from exiting an abusive relationship.

Deciding how and when to come out is a deeply personal decision for every LGBT person. It is something that only they have the right to decide. At Safe Alliance, we believe in supporting these individuals, and respecting their right to 'out' themselves when they feel the time is right. We are dedicated to providing the same quality services to members of the LGBT community. No one, including Zeke, should have the decision to come out made for them by someone else.