

Standing in the Light

By jen

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Abstract

“Oh,” was my mother’s response when I explained why we aren’t coming to Thanksgiving dinner at her house. “No one else will be here. Everyone else is going to another house,” she compromised. In her mind I’m sure she thought she was making it better, but to me it made the conversation a hundred times [...]

Article

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“No one else will be here. Everyone else is going to another house,” she compromised. In her mind I’m sure she thought she was making it better, but to me it made the conversation a hundred times worse. She remained silent when I invited her to our house for the holiday.

Translated everyone else means family that isn’t affirming, or accepting, of us. The last I heard my sister stormed out of a room after one of them made a Brokeback Mountain joke about my then 6-year-old child and all of them laughed. When I heard what happened I got their message loud and clear. Immediately I knew that there wasn’t a snowballs chance that I would let my children go near them. It’s not worth it. It’s not even an opportunity to educate. It’s just toxic.

I’d rather spend Thanksgiving alone instead of watching the door terrified they would pop in unannounced at my mother’s house while my kids played blissfully unaware. I’m not in the space right now to have another discussion with my kids about another group of family members that have different beliefs and value systems and therefore, do not understand or accept Hope’s gender diversity. We’re all still licking our wounds from the last talk like us, especially Will who comes to me every so often with tears in his eyes to remind me that he misses his cousins and his aunt and uncle. I feel it. Abandonment hurts.

This situation with everyone else is somewhat harder to explain because they haven’t confronted me, they’ve just made fun of us behind our back. I’m sure if we ran into them we’d get initial smiles, fake hugs and then a barrage of jokes and inappropriate comments at our expense. I see this clearly based on knowing them for the past 25 years and somehow my mother doesn’t. She clings to the sunny notion that everyone can “get along”, while I see the potential damage to my children as being more important than a Norman Rockwell inspired holiday photograph. Let’s face it, it’s not what it looks like on the outside that counts.

When I step in my mother’s shoes I feel the loss, like you threw a big party and no one showed up. She wishes everyone was back together, just like Will, but that doesn’t change people’s beliefs, and more

importantly their actions. At least she knows she is welcome with us. Whether she shows up or not is up to her.

These moments are about gratitude. I'm happier cherishing the love and truth surrounding me, no matter what that looks like. I don't need to go backward, allowing the past to repeat itself. Rather than dwell in the darkness this holiday season, I'm ready to stand in the light.

affirming family, challenges, discussions, gratitude, happiness, harmony, holidays, light, Thanksgiving, when families don't understand

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