



JASMYN

JASMYN and the Latest Expression of LGBTQ+ Hate

(Warning: some language could be triggering)

We are living in a time when good people and safe organizations are being labeled as “groomers”. The problem with this dogma is that it promotes the age-old stereotypes that LGBTQ+ people are preying on young people, somehow recruiting them or possibly exploiting them sexually. These attitudes were prominent during the 1990’s when JASMYN first started and kept a lot of good people in the community, including LGBTQ+ adults, from stepping up to offer support when young LGBTQ+ folx were being rejected, harassed, and tormented by their peers, schools, faith communities and families.

Concerned about these social portraits of our community and the rate of local LGBTQ+ young people experiencing suicide, homelessness, and risky situations, the founders of JASMYN stepped up to offer **non-exploitative safe space** that would make a difference. We have always promised and offered safe spaces where young people were free from sexual harassment, exploitation, and the undue influence of adults and others. We have met young people where they are, at the apex of their developmental stage, to provide safe programs that address their lives at this point. At every JASMYN program we routinely segment activity for different age groups, including sex education programs. While our social media posts may indicate that the overall services address the age range of 13 – 24 and sometimes up to age 29, we only engage in programs or educational activities with teens that are age appropriate, and recent allegations that we conduct sex education programming using explicit card games with minors is simply not true.

This misdirected and charged “groomer” labeling today intentionally results in fewer safe places for LGBTQ+ young people by calling into question the safety measures and identity-affirming spaces that our young people need and can sometimes find in their schools, community organizations, and for some, their families.

At JASMYN we commit ourselves to centering our work on the young people – on providing programs, services, and space that allows them to be who they are, expand their social circles and find affirmation for who they are *now*, and who they are *becoming*. We support the self-determination of young people, who have a right to define



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and determine their own sense of self, by providing a safe atmosphere with resources and support. We advocate for young people, including transgender, non-binary, lesbian, gay, bisexual, same gender loving and two spirited young people, to help create a world in which they can find places where they are accepted as themselves, appreciated and cared for, and where they are able to grow, thrive and be all they can be as they emerge into adulthood.

Labeling these efforts as “grooming” attempts to negate the ability for young people to define themselves and find safe places, and instead threatens them with social, emotional and physical violence and harm.

This “groomer” label creates real harm, by striking panic and fear in the community and sabotaging some of the very programs, organizations and schools where LGBTQ+ young people can still find safety. The fear creates a world where LGBTQ+ young people, and the adults and organizations who safely support them, are exposed to increased threats of violence and harm, the evidence of which is in headlines weekly.

JASMYN’s Anti-Hate Statement maintains:

As an LGBTQ+ youth organization grounded in social justice and youth empowerment and liberation, JASMYN stands with every community targeted through violence, oppression, aggression or systemic bias. We believe in equal rights for all people and the ability to live free of persecution by the State or other citizens.

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