



POPULATION CONTROL

What if we are part of the greater whole of humanity with a vital role to fulfill? Could we be responsible for the future of the planet?

I spent the majority of my childhood at a local theatre company working on stage, behind stage and in the lighting and sound booth. The Company Theatre, in addition to being a training ground for the performing arts, was and is an oasis of acceptance and love for queer youth where I grew up. The directors of the company were my surrogate parents and the community they created was my second family.

At 14-years-old, I had only come out to a few friends at the theatre when they convinced me I had to tell Jordie, who was a founding director of the theatre and a lesbian. During a rehearsal for a production of *A Christmas Carol* I asked her if I could meet with her privately. I nervously stalled and stuttered, but eventually said the words out loud, "I think I'm gay." I later learned that I was the latest in a long line of gay and lesbian youth who came out to her over the years. She responded, of course, with a matter of fact love and warmth that I would have expected if I weren't so scared about telling an adult for the first time. Jordie laughed and told me she thought that my older sister would be the first one from my family to come out. Then she told me her theory that being gay was a natural and important response to prevent overpopulation of the planet.

Her theory has rolled around in my head for nearly twenty years. It always seemed plausible to me, but I had never taken the time to research the idea. A quick Google search tells me that this theory is in fact well considered by many. In 2010, G. Roger Denson wrote for *The Huffington Post* about homosexuality being a natural adjustment to control population and an essential element to for keeping the balance of nature. Imagine that.

He recounted a discussion with his priest in which they debated the merits of heterosexuality versus homosexuality. Denson made his point, "We preserve the species. We are conservation realized. We provide nature's ... restraint ... on procreative extravagance. We keep human production from becoming ... overproduction ... pollution ... destruction unbridled." Denson went on to relate the work of genetic researchers in Korea who claim to have identified a gene in rats that can be turned on or off to influence the rat's preference for other male or female rats. The tentative conjecture is that humans may also have this genetic light switch that gets turned on when the rate of procreation needs to be curbed to maintain an overall balance in nature.

The research behind these assertions remains inconclusive and I am sure

there are holes in the theory, but the possibility leaves me envisioning the positive impact on the mental health of LGBT individuals and communities. What if we lived as if we have a profound mission? Denson writes, "of course population control also provides gays and lesbians, and in particular gay and lesbian youth, the purpose in life we seek." In other words, we are an integral part of the greater whole of humanity and we have a vital role to fulfill. Is it possible for queer people to go from being considered mentally ill to essential to the balance of nature in the span of a century? Why not?

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We know that LGBT individuals experience higher rates of depression and anxiety as well as suicide and substance abuse all related, in part, to religious and societal marginalization. Just imagine if queer youth could be raised with the belief that they are essential to the health and well-being of the earth. Rather than fearing damnation and perpetration by haters, youth could be truly free to blossom just as they are and contribute their talents to the betterment of society. It seems to me it is a possibility worth considering.

It turns out that Jordie was wise to many things, including my sister; she did come out, fifteen years later. §

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