

case study two

I guess somehow I was always different. Even before I knew I was gay, other kids would pick on me. It's like I had some invisible defining characteristic that marked me as different. I was always big for my age, though, so I learned to fight back. I could hold my own. When other kids picked on me I punched them until they shut up. That worked for a while. When I hit high school, suddenly I wasn't bigger than the other kids anymore. Physical violence no longer worked to my advantage. And I was starting to realize why I was different. I was starting to see that I needed to be myself and come to terms with who I was. I felt so guilty dating girls. I didn't want to be lying to them. I didn't want to be lying to everybody.

When I was in Grade 11, I was on this panel in a public access television program about the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students at high school. I needed to do something that was consistent with who I really was. I wanted to help explain to other people what this experience is like. I really thought that if people got to know me as a person, they would see that my sexual orientation doesn't mean any more than my hair colour. Anyway, somebody at school saw the program and word suddenly spread that I was gay.

From then on it was constant harassment. I was taunted continuously. You have no idea how creative people can be at making up derogatory names. I have heard them all. The verbal harassment escalated almost immediately into

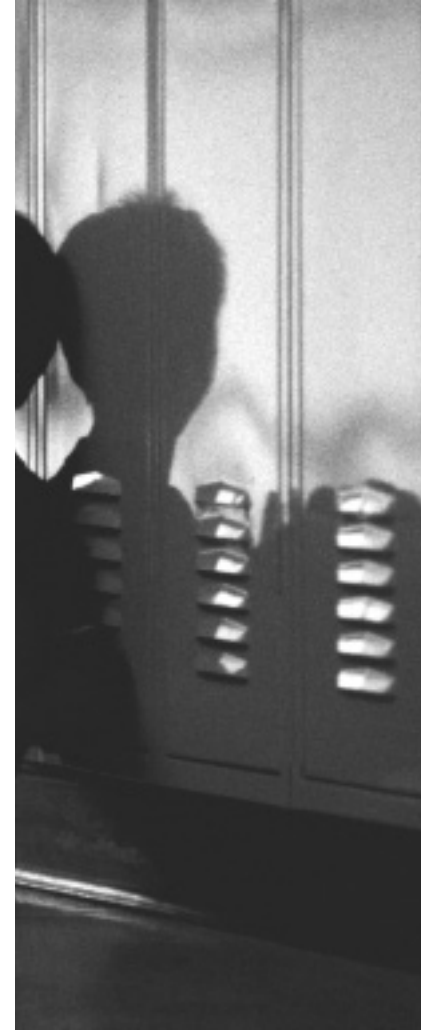
physical violence. I have been spit on. Students have thrown food at me. I have been tripped, pushed down the stairs and even had death threats.

It got so I didn't go to the locker room or the bathroom. I stopped using my locker. You don't want to know what they did to that. One day in the parking lot outside my school, six students surrounded me and threw a lasso around my neck, saying, "Let's tie the faggot to the back of the truck." I just ran. I don't know what would have happened. Maybe they were just trying to scare me. Like they already haven't done that.

I still can't understand what it is that they get out of doing this stuff to me. Does it make them feel powerful? Better than me? Do they really believe that I am evil just because I was born with a sexual orientation different than theirs? You know what's funny? There is another kid

in our school, Steven, who gets bullied almost as much as I do. In fact, a lot of the graffiti around here involves Steven and me in some form of interaction. He's not even gay. He's just kind of effeminate and quiet and they just won't leave him alone because he's different. In high school I guess being different is a crime.

The thing that I couldn't take was that some students set up a "Jason Smith is a Faggot" website. It had a bio supposedly written by me



outlining what I like to do with my father and to my little brother. It was incredibly graphic. My mother saw it. Most of the students in the school saw it. I don't know who else

Jason Smith talks about hatred in the hallways

saw it. Any employer who did a search on my name would see it. The school tried to have it shut down, and one of the kids involved was suspended, but no one can ever take back what they have done to me.

I've thought of dropping out of school. I've thought of suicide. I'm just so tired of fighting with this. It kills me when people say that I have "chosen" to be gay. Why would I choose this? Who in their right mind would choose this? ❖