

# Views: I Was In the Closet The Other Day...

**P**ainting is messy work, and I have never enjoyed it, especially inside where spills require quick and thorough clean-up. My spouse was a painter for many years, and as we have tackled renovating our home, she has patiently passed on some trade secrets. Now I don't wear so much paint nor do I have to shower with a Brillo pad afterwards. I even enjoy the work. Except when I paint closets. I hate painting closets.

As I applied the third coat of paint to yet another closet, I was reminded of how very sloppy I still am sometimes. Why such a mess? It is confined in there. There is not enough room or light. I keep



cellar" or "he did not come out of the attic until after he divorced?" I know now why we don't each have our own personal account of com-

with and it never has been. That is the voice of intolerance trying to turn our lives into tawdry soap operas, as if it is all and only about sex. It is about who we are, not with whom we sleep. And being in the closet is like being in a tomb. No light, no air, no life.

I have friends who claim it's easier on their families if they don't tell the truth. They have that fake second bedroom (I had one for years) and a "roommate." And the families and coworkers fall for that? No. No one is fooled. No one. It's a foolish way to spend one's life, pretending a bunch of people don't know something that they actually do know. Whose life is it anyway?

If you are reading this, you are most likely not in the closet, and you are not at this moment painting your house. I'll pass along my conclusions anyway because we all know people who still insist on being in the closet. Each of us needs to find a place where we can work and live and love and be comfortable. I spent many years in committed same-sex relationships with just about one leg out of the closet. In my mind, the closet doors were wide open because lots of people in my life knew I was gay but it was a mutually unspoken detail. Now that is like me standing with both feet in the closet and trying to paint the rest of the room with a long pole. It's just not good enough and it never will be. Happiness, pride, and enlightenment are never available from within the confines of the closet.

I'm so out of the closet that I've given up even painting them. I'm all for keeping that space clean and uncluttered but I'll do it with my feet firmly and proudly planted out of the closet. ▼

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bumping into a painted shelf, or a wall. Covering the back wall is easy but as I reach to the ceiling and the far corners over the shelf, it is a disaster. The harder I try to get the details right, to do a job I will be happy about, the messier it gets. I hit wet walls with my elbows, drip paint on my hair, and leave smudges on what had been finished work. I can't even turn around without making a mess.

It occurred to me what a great metaphor it is, that term *in the closet*. Being in a closet is confined, dark, and secretive, as is a life of not being honest and forthright about your full identity. But couldn't we say "she's still in the

ing out of the tool shed or some other dark, hidden place. It's got to be the closet.

As we live out our days *in the closet*, we can't help but bump into many messy things ... like half-truths, those silly pronoun changes, and outright lies. It is too crowded in there where the daylight does not shine on the truth. In the closet, we have a life that we are never proud of, and can never show off in the bright light. It is hard work just being in there.

I know some folks who insist that life in the closet isn't so bad ... it is really no one's business who they sleep with anyway. Right? Wrong. It's not about who we sleep

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