



Love and Acceptance

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Hi, I'm Lynette and my friends tell me I look pretty good for 49. I was born in Barbados, but moved to Flatbush when I was 12, so I'm practically a Brooklyn native. I was raised in the Pentacostal church but I'm now active in an apostolic church. My pride and joy is my 17-year-old nephew, Darnell.

I always suspected that Darnell was gay from the time he was little. He didn't seem to want to do the things that other boys did. Instead of playing baseball and football with the boys, he preferred playing dress-up with the girls. Our family didn't know for sure he was gay until he was 13, when we found him at home with another boy. My sister threw him out of the house, and she rejects him to this day. I took him in.

Even though I accepted Darnell into my home, accepting that he was gay was a more difficult process. My culture and religious upbringing said being gay was wrong. I had always expected he would grow up to find a nice girl and get married — I felt that was all shattered now. But most of all, I was

scared for him. This world is a cruel place and I had heard stories of men getting hurt, even killed, for being gay. On top of all that, I was scared he could become infected with a sexually transmitted disease, especially if he felt he had to hide what he was doing.

I didn't know where to turn first, so I started reading up. I learned that being gay is not something you choose and it's not something that rubs off on you. I went back to my Bible and I prayed. I asked for help and all I kept hearing from God was, "I accepted you as you are. How can you not accept this child?" That was more than enough to turn me around.

I have now started to accept that Darnell can have a happy life, even if it's not what I pictured for him. I'm proud to say that Darnell just graduated from high school and has a job he loves. He's saving up for college and I'll support him as much as possible. I still worry for Darnell; what parent doesn't? But as long as he knows he has my full love and acceptance, I believe things are going to be all right.