

Not Just a Phase



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Hi, I'm Dahlia. I'm a 51-year old African-American, divorced mother of six, born and bred in Brooklyn. I work at a homeless shelter.

I was only 17 when I had Rose, so we grew up together. I was just getting this motherhood thing down when Rose hit the teen years. I was completely unprepared when I found this letter my 14-year old had written to another girl. In the letter, Rose said “the kiss was wonderful” and that she loved her. My feelings were all over the place; I always had this open door policy with my kids, but I was scared. We were living in Flatbush at the time — I didn't want her to get chased or beat up.

I had to find out what was going on, so I sat her down and spoke to her — she told me she'd known she liked girls her whole life. I was trying to act calm, but I think she could tell that inside I was shaking. The way I saw it, my daughter had enough strikes against her already, being Black and female — and now she was gay? I didn't want any more pressure on her, so I convinced myself that this was just a phase and to leave it alone.

The next couple of years, Rose ran away twice and I didn't understand what was happening with my little girl. At one point I read something in the paper about a

runaway girl who was found murdered in Brooklyn. The police weren't releasing her name and I was desperate, thinking this could be my baby. I'd do anything just to get my daughter back safe and sound. The worries I had before seemed so trivial now —who cares if she's gay? I just want her to be safe and to know that I accept her for who she is. When I finally found out that the murdered girl was not Rose, I broke down with relief — then I did everything in my power to find her. Turns out she was living with a girl named Keisha — her girlfriend — and I gave them my blessing.

From that point on, our relationship got a whole lot better. She told me she'd been running away because she didn't want to let me down or hurt me. After that, she and Keisha started coming over all the time and I could see they were happy together. And that's what I wanted for my daughter — it didn't matter whether she was in a relationship with a man or a woman.

Now Rose is 34, and in a happy, loving relationship with a woman named Sandra. She has a good life, she's happy, and she's safe — what more can a mother want for her child?