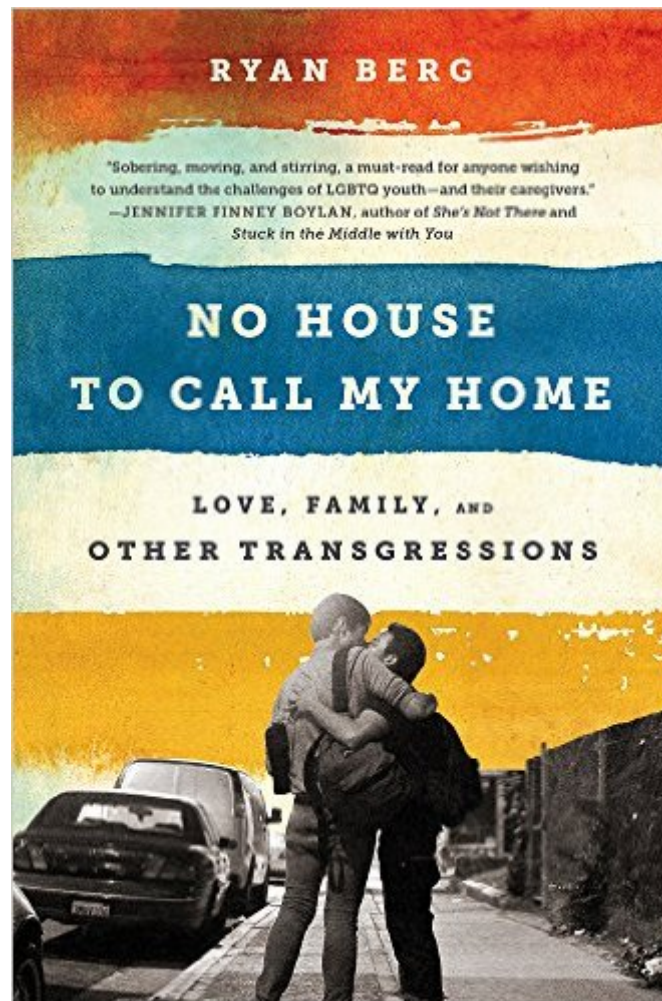


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# No House To Call My Home: Love, Family, And Other Transgressions



## Synopsis

In this lyrical debut, Ryan Berg immerses readers in the gritty, dangerous, and shockingly underreported world of homeless LGBTQ teens in New York. As a caseworker in a group home for disowned LGBTQ teenagers, Berg witnessed the struggles, fears, and ambitions of these disconnected youth as they resisted the pull of the street, tottering between destruction and survival. Focusing on the lives and loves of eight unforgettable youth, *No House to Call My Home* traces their efforts to break away from dangerous sex work and cycles of drug and alcohol abuse, and, in the process, to heal from years of trauma. From Bella's fervent desire for stability to Christina's irrepressible dreams of stardom to Benny's continuing efforts to find someone to love him, Berg uncovers the real lives behind the harrowing statistics: over 4,000 youth are homeless in New York City; 43 percent of them identify as LGBTQ. Through these stories, Berg compels us to rethink the way we define privilege, identity, love, and family. Beyond the tears, bluster, and bravado, he reveals the force that allows them to carry on; the irrepressible hope of youth.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

*No House to Call My Home* is a book that illustrates the struggles of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning (LGBTQ) youth of colour in America's foster system. While the challenges for youth in foster care are numerous, the problems LGBTQ youth face are often compounded by their struggle with gender, sexual, racial and cultural identity. Berg states that 70% of LGBTQ youth in group homes reported experiencing violence based on their LGBTQ status,

100% reported verbal harassment, and 78% of youth were removed or ran away from placement because of hostility towards their LGBTQ status. The stories in this book offer readers a glimpse into the lives of the LGBTQ youth of colour Berg worked with in two residential units serving the LGBTQ foster youth in New York City. Focusing on a handful of characters, Berg shares their uniformly harrowing stories, often involving histories of childhood physical and sexual abuse, neglect, poverty and victimisation. Now aged between 14 and 21 (21 being the age at which foster children are released from the system) Berg and his colleagues battle to help these youths manage a myriad of issues, including addictions to drugs and high risk behaviours, to improve their chances at living healthy and fulfilling lives. The stories are affecting, the children's mixture of bravado, naivete, hurt and hope are difficult to read, but I think as a result I am better informed and more understanding of their circumstances. Sadly, most of the young people that we are introduced to in *No House To Call Home* will age out without the means, skills or opportunity to find stable housing or get a job with a livable wage. *No House to Call My Home* is an accessible read for an audience curious about the issue of LGBTQ youth in foster care. I imagine it also would have value for social workers, school counselors, foster carers and LGBTQ youth advocates.

Berg has a gift. Not only does he tell important stories, he tells them well. He is also a writer who obviously cares very deeply for his subject. This book was one that needed to be written, and he has given voices to some of the voiceless. I appreciate his honesty, vulnerability, and sensitivity. He is not overly sentimental nor exploitive, but we are able to get very vivid, intense and agonizingly real images of these youth and their lives...lives that are rife with seemingly insurmountable challenges. As an LGBTQ activist and a teacher, I'm grateful to Berg for his in-depth preface, the resource guide at the end, and for the fact that he offers some ideas for solving the problems he illustrates in his book. This is not a misery-loving memoir, but an opportunity for us to learn of the dire situation facing homeless queer youth and to do something about it.

This is one of the most powerful books I have read this year. It is an account of his work with homeless, abused, and drug dependent LGBTQ kids. It is heartbreaking, eye-opening, and painful. I consider it a must read for ANYONE who comes in contact with LGBTQ youth.

Great book! Easy read, complex subject matter...It made me cry, laugh and get angry...compelling story and characters... I kept thinking about the people in the story and how important, and challenging this work is...and how the system is failing our young vulnerable people. This book

should be required reading in social work, sociology, and human service courses in colleges and universities.

Ryan Berg's account of the LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Transgender, Bisexual, and those struggling with their gender identity) youth on the streets of New York City is a frightening look at what could have happened to any of us had we been born gay. Forty percent of teens who are homeless identify themselves as LGBTQ, and only a tiny fraction of these enter the foster care system. Those that do are so traumatized by being abandoned by their families that they have missed many of the stages of childhood development that leads to maturity. Author Berg, a gay white man who was raised in a loving, accepting family was horrified at the plight of the children with whom he interacted in a group home for LGBTQ youth, one of the few in New York, and even in the nation. One by one he tells the story of the kids that he met and worked with and cared about while being their supervisor, friend and counselor. This is an eye-opening account of how this nation treats one segment of our country's youth. This must change, and Berg shows us some of the ways in which this might be accomplished.

This book provides a straightforward, honest, and clear depiction of the lives of LGBTQ youth in the group home system in New York City. It's short on preachiness or sweeping generalizations, and long on the detail that allows you to get an idea of the very difficult life these young people live. There are so many things that have gone wrong for the individuals in this book -- families who turn on them, peers who are vicious, a system that is overwhelmed and expects failure, sexual predators who exploit their emotional and financial needs. When they contribute to their own difficulty with bad decisions, Berg doesn't excuse them, but lets you understand why. I'd prefer a little more reflection from the author on how he thinks the system could be improved, but the book's strength is that you see the problem in all its heartbreaking reality, and it's clear he wants to start there before trying to unravel this mess into a debate about specific solutions. A strong, simple work of non-fiction.

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