

Speaking OUT

Queer Youth in Focus

Rachelle Lee Smith

Foreword by Candace Gingrich

Afterword by Graeme Taylor

Speaking OUT: Queer Youth in Focus is a photographic essay that explores a wide spectrum of experiences told from the perspective of a diverse group of young people, ages fourteen to twenty-four, identifying as queer (i.e., lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning). Portraits are presented without judgment or stereotype by eliminating environmental influence with a stark white backdrop. This backdrop acts as a blank canvas, where each subject's personal thoughts are handwritten onto the final photographic print. With more than sixty-five portraits photographed over a period of ten years, *Speaking OUT* provides rare insight into the passions, confusions, prejudices, joys, and sorrows felt by queer youth.

Speaking OUT gives a voice to an underserved group of people that are seldom heard and often silenced. The collaboration of image and first-person narrative serves to provide an outlet, show support, create dialogue, and help those who struggle. It not only shows unity within the LGBTQ community, but also commonalities regardless of age, race, gender, and sexual orientation.

With recent media attention and the success of initiatives such as the It Gets Better Project, resources for queer youth have grown. Still, a void exists which *Speaking OUT* directly addresses: this book is for youth, by youth.

Speaking OUT is an award-winning, nationally and internationally shown and published body of work. These images have been published in magazines such as the *Advocate*, *School Library Journal*, *Curve*, *Girlfriends*, and *Out*, and showcased by the Human Rights Campaign, National Public Radio, Public Television, and the U.S. Department of Education. The work continues to show in galleries, universities, youth centers, and churches around the world.

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

Rachelle Lee Smith is an award-winning photographer based in Philadelphia. Rachelle's work in *Speaking OUT: Queer Youth in Focus* combines her passions for activism and photography.

Candace Gingrich is an LGBT rights activist at the Human Rights Campaign. Her involvement in the movement for queer equality began when her brother, Rep. Newt Gingrich, R-GA., was elected House speaker.

At age 14, **Graeme Taylor** skyrocketed to international attention when he confronted a school board for not defending gay rights in its schools. In the process, Graeme became one of the youngest and most widely known openly gay teens in America. He was interviewed on MSNBC's *Jansing & Co.* and the *Ellen Degeneres Show* and is now the subject of a short film, *Shrug*.

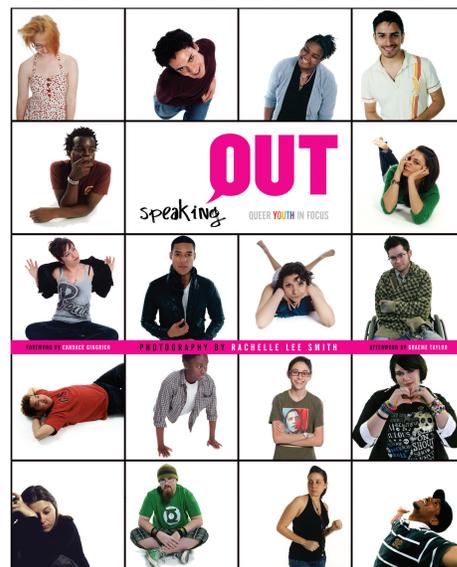
ACCOLADES

"Rachelle Lee Smith has created a book that is not only visually stunning but also gripping with powerful words and even more inspiring young people! This is an important work of art! I highly recommend buying it and sharing it!"

—Perez Hilton, blogger and television personality

"It's often said that our youth are our future. In the LGBT community, before they become the future we must help them survive today. This book showcases the diversity of creative imagination it takes to get us to tomorrow."

—Mark Segal, award-winning LGBT journalist



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