

Call me what you want, but this is disgusting.



by Lev Tsitrin

My kitchen radio is always on (I don't hear it unless I'm actually in the kitchen) – and as I popped in to get a snack the other day, I heard a little child's sweet voice calling in with a question for a show's guest, apparently a children's book author.

“Are you planning to add to your books an LGBT+ community character?” the sweet child's voice asked.

I felt sick in the stomach.

At that moment, the revulsion was purely instinctive. But a few hours later, I decided to understand why I felt that way.

Did my reaction mean that I was a homophobic bigot? Well, I am pretty sure that if the voice in the radio was grownup's, I would have simply ignored it as background noise – one constantly hears that stuff on public airwaves nowadays, and the mind automatically screens it off. But coming out of a mouth of a 9-year old, it rasped on my ear, filling me with disgust and making me want to throw up, rather than get a snack.

To anatomize my feelings, I located [that segment](#) – it turned out that I caught it at the very end – it was at 29:04 when “the 9-year olds Sofie and Zara” called in and were being introduced by the host. Having listened again, I still think that it was the sharp contrast between the child's sound of the voice and what that voice said, that revolted me.

Isn't it true that there is something sick about 9-year olds talking on the radio of sexual matters? It is not even clear to me that the girls understood the meaning of the question they were asking, but it is crystal-clear that the fact that they talked about it was the fault of the grown-ups. Were the girls at home alone, listening to the radio, and decided to call in? Or did a parent dialed the number, urging them to ask this question? Were they at school at the time, the teacher suggesting they call? How much did they understand, other than that “LGBT+” is something noble and worth defending – something they could only hear from the grown-ups, given their very use of grown-up terminology?

I of course have no answers but can only guess. But one thing is crystal clear – the adults are at fault here. Adults taught those 9-year olds this stuff. It was likely an adult who egged those kids on to call and ask. And the host, Alison Stewart of WNYC who is most certainly an adult, got them on air, giggling with delight at the cleverness of their question, and having the guest, Jeff Kinney, sweat it out – which he did with considerable grace and inventiveness, having complimented the girls on their “great question” and explaining that his

characters were already LGBT+ if the reader decided so, because his characters were designed to be blanks onto which child-readers, be they “in China, Turkey, Pakistan or Australia” could project their true selves.

Perhaps it is just me, but I still find the whole thing sick. This call could have easily been kept off the air (when I try to call into the station wanting to ask a show’s guest about judicial fraud, my call is invariably pushed to the end of the segment, and then the screener politely tells me that there is no time left for me. WNYC, like all mainstream media, does not want to investigate judges). Clearly, the 9-year olds’ “LGBT+” question was found to be perfectly legit.

Feel free to write it down to my bigotry if you want to, but I think some adults, at homes and at schools – and at public radio, for that matter – have abdicated their responsibility to properly guide kids and shield them from evil influences. Call me what you want, but this accidentally-overheard snippet of a public radio show still leaves me disgusted.