

New Documentary "My Child" Shows Turkish Families Loving Their LGBT Kids

[Movies](#) post by Oktay Ege Kozak on April 12, 2013 - 12:22pm; tagged documentary, LGBT, queer, transgender, Turkey.



It's a given that the Middle East has a long way to go as far as LGBT acceptance is concerned. Remember that sound bite of Ahmadinejad claiming that Iran doesn't have any homosexuals? Turkey is supposed to be the most secular and liberal Muslim country in the Middle East, yet its religious, right wing government still considers homosexuality to be a disease.

The emotional [new Turkish documentary *My Child*](#) successfully defends the idea that acceptance in any society begins with acceptance at home. Director Can Candan focuses on the parents of LGBT children, handing them a microphone to tell their stories. With minor differences, their journeys are all almost identical. First comes the self-blame ("What did we do wrong?"), then comes the desperation ("What can be done?") and then, for the families featuring in the film, comes acceptance.

But each family's story has its own unique power. After maxing out four credit cards on psychiatrists, the mother of a transgender child expresses the confusion she felt while teaching her biologically male child how to put on women's underwear. Later, the mom says she proudly held her daughter's hand to lead her through the part of security at school reserved for female students.

Another man reminisces on a conversation he had with his religious mother, who asked him if her transgender grandson's gender identity "came from God, and not through a bad experience during childhood?" When he told her that it did indeed come from God, the grandmother simply said, "If it's God's will, we can only accept it."

If an 82-year-old religious grandma from rural Turkey can accept her grandchild the way he is, what excuse do the rest of us have?

Candan's film is cleverly split into two parts. The first half consists of the parents telling their stories. It follows



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that might come upon their family, or simply because they're not informed. People are afraid of what they don't know. Giving them that information is very important and we wanted to show that in the film.

The Supreme Court in USA is about to rule on the legalization of gay marriage. What do you think Turkey can learn from USA as far as the fight for LGBT rights are concerned or vice versa?

Of course we're focused on changing the laws here. But as far as learning from the struggle in other countries, we like to show examples from them and be inspired. It gives us hope to see the change taking place. As far as what other countries can learn from Turkey, a film like this can break through some stereotypes. I lived in the States for 13 years and I know that there are some prejudices about Turkey. People don't usually know what's going on here. I think it's important that a film like this shows Turkey in a different light. It shows that there are different kinds of families who are working on changing things. Something interesting that I've seen is reversing some of the preconceived ideas that religious people are automatically conservative and anti-LGBT. I think it shows acceptance doesn't always go parallel with education level and religious faith. For example, religious grandparents in the film accept their transsexual grandchild according to their religious beliefs. At the same time, some upper class, more educated people who don't have any religious beliefs might have more trouble accepting their LGBT children as they are. That's interesting to me, and that can be a lesson that could come from the Turkish approach.

Unfortunately, My Child is not yet available in the US market, though it will be playing at the Montreal Film Festival. Director Candan urges those who wish to see the film to request it from their local film festivals and to check out the [film's web site](#).

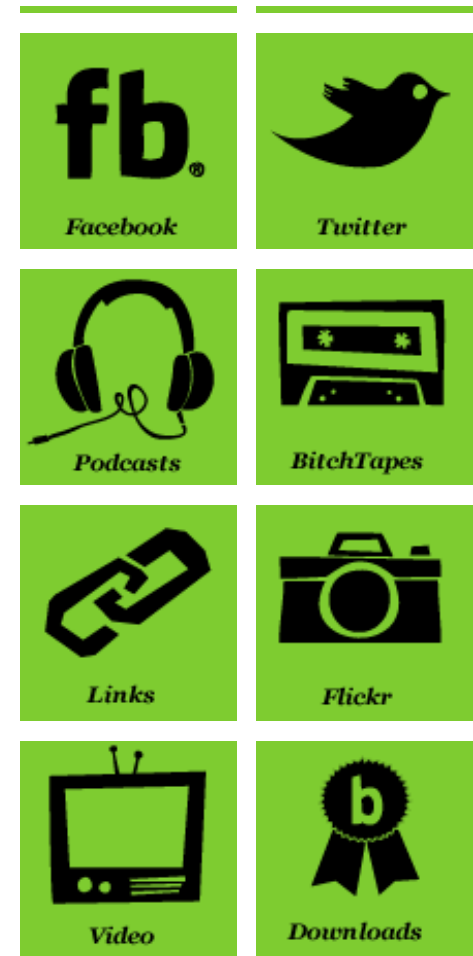
Photo: A still from the film shows a large pro-LGBT march in Turkey.



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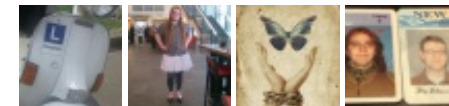


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