

## READING AND DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR

# *Saving Alex*

by

Alex Cooper

with Joanna Brooks

1. What did you learn from this book about growing up as an LGBTQ person? How did Alex's experiences of growing up and first falling in love compare to your own? How did this book cause you to reflect on your own experience? What new insights did you gain about growing up LGBTQ?
2. As devout Mormons, Alex's parents were very distressed when she came out to them as a lesbian. How do you understand the pressures they felt? Did you ever have to tell your family a truth about yourself that you knew would be difficult for them to hear? How did they react? How have you reacted when your family members have told you difficult truths about themselves?

3. How is homosexuality viewed in your religious tradition, faith community, or culture? Have these views changed over time? Have you accepted traditional teachings about homosexuality in your religion or culture, or have you modified or rejected them? If you are a person of faith, how have your tradition's teachings about homosexuality affected your religious or spiritual life?
4. In the book, Alex shares facts about the ways LGBTQ young people are especially vulnerable. "Thirteen to fifteen percent of the kids in the juvenile justice system identify as LGBT—that's almost twice the rate of LGBT people in the U.S. population at large. Why do so many of us end up in foster care or so-called treatment centers or state-run shelters or group homes or jail? Why are so many homeless kids LGBT? Twenty to forty percent of all homeless youth are gay" (p. 143). Why does being LGBTQ change the likelihood that a young person will end up in difficult circumstances?
5. During Alex's time in "conversion therapy," people in the local community saw her wearing the backpack or even trying to escape, but almost no one responded to her. Why? What do you think made it difficult for them to respond to Alex? What needs or challenges in your community are visible but not really discussed or addressed?
6. Alex credits a student Gay-Straight Alliance club at her high school with helping her find the strength she needed to come out and leave the Siales. Why do you

think the club was so important to her? What resources are available for LGTBQ youth in your school, faith group, or local community? What could be done to make these spaces more welcoming for LGBTQ youth?

7. During Alex's court battle, the state of Utah initially sided with parents who feel they have an obligation to oppose their children's homosexuality. Eventually, though, the courts ruled that her parents could not force her to return to conversion therapy. What role should the courts or government play in telling parents how to parent? What protections should the courts or government offer to children?
8. Conversion therapy is now illegal in four states and the District of Columbia, and legislation to ban it has been introduced in eleven additional states. Are there organized efforts to end conversion therapy in your state? What can you do to help? Visit the National Center for Lesbian Rights #bornperfect campaign website to learn more: <http://www.nclrights.org/our-work/bornperfect/>.