

## The Fab Five Visit Gay, Georgia

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There's a small town in Georgia, about 60 miles from Atlanta. Its name is Gay. Gay, Georgia, has a population of 89. I learned about Gay from an episode of the TV show Queer Eye.

I love this show. It's over the top, but in a cheerful way. For those of you who haven't seen the show, here's the concept. Five gay men, known as the Fab Five, visit one client each week. The client is seriously in need of a makeover, and usually a friend or family member refers them. The Five specialize in style--hair style, clothing--- as well as cooking, home decor, and, get this, social skills.

Is there such a thing as a social makeover? Well, viewers of the show know there is, and it's the best part.

Back to Gay. The Fab Five visit Tammiye, their first female client. Let me give a synopsis of this episode, and then relate what I found absorbing about it. Tammiye's a devout Christian woman, she's a cancer survivor, and she's a mom with an adult son named Myles. To Tammiye, her Church is her bedrock, and vice versa — she's a mainstay of the Church.

Tammiye wants the Fab Five to make over her Church's meeting hall into a community center that will welcome everyone, all in time for their homecoming service. But really, there's much more than the meeting hall that needs attention.

Tammiye is a good person — we sense that as soon as we first see her. She's loving, generous and wants the Five to call her Mama. She welcomes the Fab Five to her home with mouthwatering treats, including fried green tomatoes, and family-recipe biscuits. The Five tour the house, cameras rolling, and here's what we see.

Tammiye's son Myles is a slob. Clothes, underwear, his room is a disaster. He's clearly not expecting any visitors to, ahem, his bedroom.

I could tell you about the makeover that ensues. Tammiye gets a new outfit, a lively hairdo, and Myles gets a regrooming and stylish clothes. Those are fun bits, but what I really appreciated was the social part. That part comes from my favorite member of the Fab Five, Karamo Brown. Karamo is not only the first African American gay actor to appear on TV. He's also a real-life social worker, with 10 years of experience.

So what's going on with Myles? Why is he a slob? Karamo and Myles sit down on the front porch to chat. It's a great discussion to witness — both men are gay,

African American, both have grown up in small towns. Karamo skillfully gets Myles to open up. First, Myles responds with nervous laughter, then he works his way up to a conversation, and finally starts to speak his deeper truths. He left the small town in his late teens because he had been bullied. He found acceptance as a gay man in Atlanta, but after two years, realized it was overwhelming. He moved back to Gay.

Karamo finds out that Myles loves to sing, and arranges for Myles to try out for the Atlanta-based rainbow chorus. Myles sings well at the audition, and the director makes him a member of the chorus on the spot. We can see Myles's outlook changing. That makeover is starting.

The best part is still to come. Myles and his mother, Tammiye, sit down at the kitchen table to have a heart to heart. It turns out that when Myles came out, at age 14, Tammiye was not receptive. But now, during their chat, she says that all those years ago, she wishes she had listened and learned, rather than judging. She tells him she wants Myles to come to homecoming at her church. He's not sure—he has felt the rejection of this community for a long time. But at least he and his mother know now that their love is unconditional.

The show ends with the homecoming, in this Fab-Five revamped meeting hall with great new decor. So does

Myles show up? I won't spoil it. But here's what I love most about this episode—here's what touches me so deeply. I loved the acceptance that Tammiye gives to Myles. Love is love is love. I loved that Myles found a kind of big brother in Karamo, someone he can open up to. I also loved that Tammiye and Myles got makeovers. Not so much what they looked like at the end, though they look good, but that people fussed over them, that they cared enough about them to bring out their features. Sometimes we might feel overlooked, like maybe we are even not worth a makeover. Maybe we feel we don't have the right cheekbones, the right body shape, the right hair. The message from this show is, we are all worth a makeover. As one of my favorite hymns goes, "don't let anyone ever tell you you are anything less than beautiful".

Queer Eye is a TV show. My wife doesn't like it, but my daughter and I do. We love the jokes, the clothes, the cooking, and the style. There are, for many of us, those moments when we need a makeover. We may not see it, but I'm sure our friends and family do! Hey, I wouldn't mind a makeover -- so go ahead and nominate me to the Fab Five!