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Don't ask, don't tell lives on in our churches

by Kate Childs Graham

It's hard to believe that a month has passed since the U.S. military's Don't ask, don't tell policy (DADT) was finally repealed.

On the day of the vote, I was out Christmas shopping with my partner -- excessively checking Facebook and Twitter to see when and what the final vote was. I was beaming with pride when I saw that our legislators had dismantled the blatantly discriminatory policy, allowing gay and lesbian people to serve openly in the military.

The lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community was similarly rejoicing. On some level, though, DADT still exists. Our work isn't over yet.

Many LGBT people are living our own versions of DADT. We live it in our churches. We live it in our churches. We live it in our schools. We live it in our workplaces. We live it in our communities. We live it in our families.

In each of these places, unofficial DADT policies have been in place. As a result, LGBT folks aren't always able to serve or live openly in our churches, communities and beyond.

We just don't talk about it, and we are certainly never asked about it. We introduce our partners as friends or roommates. We avoid talking about anything related to LGBT rights. We quietly try to figure out how things like *The Theology of the Body* fit in the context of our lives. We don't talk about who we may have a crush on. We never challenge any ignorant remarks or slurs about LGBT people.

And yet, we are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. Because of the unofficial DADT policies that are in our lives, however, we put that part of us aside.

We know that if we were to "tell," we'd be ostracized from the community. So we shove our sexuality under a rug. We live our own DADT and therefore aren't able to fully be ourselves wherever these policies exist.

Luckily, some of us have been able to repeal DADT in most parts of our lives. We've done this through hours of long, hard conversations. We've done this through overcoming our own fears, apprehensions about our sexuality. We've done this through surrounding ourselves with people who support us and letting go of those who aren't capable of this support. We've done this by finding churches and communities that love us.

And, yes, we've even done this through passing legislation that affords us equal rights.

So many others haven't been as lucky. There are so many people who are living in the shadows, afraid to live and serve openly.

These fears are real. There are churches and communities that are openly hostile LGBT people.

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We need to change that. We need to take a cue from Congress.

We need to work together to find a way to repeal Don't Ask, Don't Tell in every part of our church and society.

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