

# LGBT advocates laud Bruce Jenner for sharing his story

[Steph Solis](#), @stephmsolis 11:16 a.m. EDT April 27, 2015



(Photo: Clint Brewer / Splash News)

For nearly eight years, viewers have followed the personal, at times chaotic, lives of the Kardashian-Jenner family through their reality TV show, but they never uncovered the real story.

That's what Bruce Jenner told ABC News' Diane Sawyer in the two-hour interview that aired Friday night, sharing details about his journey to embracing womanhood.

"We had done 425 episodes I think, over almost eight years, and the entire run I kept thinking to myself, 'oh my god, this whole thing,'" he said. "The one real true story in the family was the one I was hiding and nobody knew about it."

The 65-year-old reality TV star's interview gave millions a glimpse into

the struggles of a transgender woman, particularly an older one who at times conformed to the perceptions others had about him as an all-American male hero. Jenner also explained that he plans to undergo gender reassignment surgery, he still prefers to be referred to as "Bruce" and "he" for the time being.

"I was not genetically born that way and as of now I have all the male parts... But I still identify as female. It's very hard for Bruce Jenner to say that. Why? Because I don't want to disappoint people," he said.

LGBT advocates lauded Jenner for having the courage to come out. Sarah Kate Ellis, president of the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (or GLAAD), said Jenner's interview helped educate the public about what it means to be transgender and come to grips with that in the public eye.

"Though Jenner's journey is one that is deeply personal, it is also one that will impact and inspire countless people around the world," Ellis said in a statement.

### **Struggling with identity**

Local advocates said they were happy for Jenner and saw him as a growing number of people in his generation finally feeling safe and secure enough to embrace their identity.

"I think he talked about how his whole life he was bothered and kept pushing it down and trying to find a way to get around it," said Seth Rainess, a transgender life coach in Monmouth County. "That is the life of many people...I myself can certainly commiserate with that."

"I'm happy for him because it's a sense of freedom that I understand, and I'm right there with him."

Jenner recalled the first time he wore a dress. He was about 8 or 9 years old and he snuck over to a family member's closet, putting on the dress and carefully putting it back in the exact spot so he wouldn't get caught.

"At the time," he told Sawyer, "I didn't know why I was doing it besides it just made me feel good."

Abby Maisonave, president of the Jersey Shore chapter of PFLAG, said that while every transgender person's journey is different, Jenner's story highlighted the burden that comes with hiding one's true identity for many years.

"I felt that he did a really good portrayal of the struggle that hes had since he was very young and how he had to adapt to societal pressures, to not be who he felt he was," said Maisonave, who also serves as a regional director for PFLAG national.

### **Lending support**

One of the biggest lessons the public can take away from the interview was that support from family and friends is key, advocates said.

Sawyer asked Jenner whether he was afraid to tell his children, to which he replied "yes, every one of them." He told her he didn't want to hurt them or make them feel like the father who raised them was gone.

Stepdaughter Kim Kardashian spoke up for Jenner at an awards luncheon in New York hours before the interview.

"We always support each other," she said. "Our family is super supportive of everything that we do and you know we're gonna watch the special tonight and support Bruce and watch it with him tonight."

Rainess, a facilitator for PFLAG, said support from family and friends is key for any transgender person looking to come out or transition, especially for children.

"I'm happy that (Jenner's) family's on board with him," he said. "We don't see that a lot every day in our groups in PFLAG, and there's more people that aren't on board with their child transitioning or even mentioning that they are."

Barbra Casbar Siperstein, director of the Gender Rights Advocacy Association of New Jersey, said she is happy for Jenner, but she wants to see whether and how he delivers on his promise to make a difference. Siperstein said she hopes Jenner educates himself about the history of transgender activism if he wants to be a role model.

"As you come out, there's a certain responsibility, especially being a high-profile person, that you are now part of a community (that is) extremely misunderstood and for the most part gets terrible press," Siperstein said.

"I think he's definitely going to help people in the community," said Rainess. "Whether that's the younger generation, the older one, I don't know. It's not really clear where he's putting his help. I think he's got to figure that out for himself."