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**Column: Why Omar  
Apollo's coming-out  
story matters**



**G**rammy-nominated singer-songwriter Omar Apollo released a tearjerker of a new video for his song “Ice Slippin” on Thursday. Produced by Teo Halm, “Ice Slippin” is the lead single from his upcoming EP, “Live for Me,” due out Oct. 6.

Apollo, who was born in Hobart, Ind., to Mexican immigrants, wrote the sobering piano ballad after coming out to his family ... and getting a frosty reception. Together, the song and video paint an evocative portrait of a young gay man who is pushed to make an impossible choice: to live as his most authentic self or to be part of a family he loves dearly.



“‘Ice Slippin’ is about reliving the thoughts I had passing through my mind the winter I came out to my family, [and] receiving cold judgment, as opposed to the acceptance I felt I deserved,” he explained in a press release. “This song is a reflection and reaction of all the emotions I had to face before and after I decided to leave the icy streets of Indiana.”

Directed by the New York duo [rubberband](#), the music video is a carousel of sentimental clips from Apollo’s family home movies. Scenes of his parents getting married and doting on young Apollo are juxtaposed with shots of him as an adult, filmed naked, alone and encircled by blocks of ice.

“Never thought that I’d leave,” he sings, “but I still believe I can make you proud.”

Apollo’s vulnerable lyrics shine light on a salient issue in the United States, where LGBTQ+ people have been subject to an increasing amount of legislation designed to curb their expression. (Take the “[Don’t Say Gay](#)” law in Florida, or [the recent drag ban](#) in Texas.)

Just this week in California, Atty. Gen. Rob Bonta [sued the Chino Valley Unified School District](#) over a policy requiring school staff to notify parents when students change their gender identity or pronouns. Emblematic of the “outing” laws being advanced by members of Congress across the U.S., such policies could put children at risk of alienation and abuse from family members.

According to a study by the Cyndi Lauper-founded nonprofit [True Colors United](#), an estimated 40% of homeless youth in the United States identify as LGBTQ+; many report family rejection as the primary catalyst. “[Over 4] million youth experience homelessness each year, with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning youth 120% more likely to experience homelessness than their non-LGBTQ peers,” reads their study.

Although it’s unclear when Apollo finally came out to his family, the 26-year-old artist had been hesitant to share the details of his love life. Apollo playfully dodged speculations regarding his sexuality among his fans, including in [a 2020 interview for the L.A. Times](#); when asked whether he identified as a member of the LGBTQ community, he simply responded, “I’m just chilling.”

The year 2022 marked a turning point for Apollo, who teased his Coachella appearance that spring with billboards in the desert reading: “Heterosexuality can be cured. Just watch Omar Apollo on Friday.” And when [a Twitter user asked him](#) whether he was “queer-baiting” — or, pretending to be queer for attention — Apollo fired back, unsparingly, “No I [be] sucking d— [for real].”

Once a choir boy in the Catholic church that his family frequented, Apollo revealed to The Times in December that [religion had put a damper on his expression](#). “I used to have an insane amount of Catholic guilt,” he said. “I was afraid to say certain things when I was first making music because of it.”



Omar Apollo in October 2020. (Kirk McCoy / Los Angeles Times)

In an ideal world, being queer would not preclude someone from being part of a family or a loving community. While some coming out stories may result in Hallmark-movie-caliber embraces with the fam — and genuine, even if clumsy attempts by parents to relate to their newly out children — others can result in profound isolation. It's why many LGBTQ+ people choose to forgo the process entirely, preferring to live and love in total privacy. (Teen Vogue has provided a helpful primer on [how to deal with rejection after coming out](#), if and when you're ready.)

At the end of the day, Apollo's queerness is just one facet of what makes him one of the most enthralling R&B artists of his generation. Where Apollo has brought laughs and levity to discussions of his sexuality, with songs like "Ice Slippin," he has also helped create room for impactful dialogue among his fans, and the LGBTQ+ community at large.