

## The Geography of Home

By Jan Steckel

When I was thirty, while divorcing my first husband, I found a girlfriend at a Pride march in Washington, D.C. I was wearing a Lesbian Avengers muscle shirt. She twirled in a rainbow skirt. We rode the train back up the coast together, singing Ferron and Phranc songs in harmony all the way. That summer we went to four different Pride parades together: D.C., Boston, Hartford and New York. On the isle of Manhattan, I fell on my knees before a goddess named RuPaul, who blew me a kiss from her float.

A couple years and a few girlfriends later in New England, I started an abortive romance with a gay-identified guy. He had a husband, but he liked to have sex with women sometimes for fun and was looking for someone to give birth to a baby for him and the husband to raise. He told me that bisexual people didn't exist: no one was fifty-fifty. Everyone had a preference. Then he kissed me on the lips.

That summer the Lesbian Avengers made a float of a rolling bed with two women making out on it. All the uptight lesbians I socialized with complained about how it embarrassed them, how that kind of flagrant display just made it harder for everyone. I thought it was fantastic, and I knew I had to get out of that parochial, provincial city and find some other bi people.



Photo: Marjorie Lynne Wagner

I took a job at Natividad, a county hospital in Salinas, California, between the middle of nowhere and the end of the line, taking care of the children of migrant fieldworkers. I only knew one queer person there, a gay guy who managed the clinic

Jan, continues on page 10

## And Then I Moved to Boston

By Linda Blair

Location, location, location. They say that it's a deciding factor in whether a restaurant will fail or succeed, that it's the most important factor in what you can charge to sell your home, or in determining the value of any piece of real estate.

I think location is also the biggest factor in any coming out story, or one of the top three, anyway.

I lived in Northampton, Massachusetts, when I was in the throes of coming to terms with my bisexuality, and I felt like it was an impossible location in which to come out as bi. For those of you who are local, you know its claim to fame is having been dubbed "Lesbianville, USA" in a magazine cover story, a reputation, by the way, that it most certainly deserves and lives up to. Moving there shortly after finishing college at UMass Amherst, just a short bus ride away, was like the experience of an alcoholic moving from a dry town to one where there was a bar on every corner, with a neon sign lit up outside saying, "Happy Hour, All Day, Every Day!"

Northampton held an abundance of female energy. Women were everywhere. And they were not shy with each other! They were holding hands, kissing, flirting and generally sending my hormones into overdrive as I went from a state of having my still closeted feelings of attraction for women under control, to a state of having them control me.

So, then, *what's* the problem, you might ask? It was that I was involved for seven years by then—with a man, a man I wasn't ready to leave and didn't want to hurt. We lived together in this lesbian paradise. I was not out to him or anyone else. The land of feminine milk and honey felt so close I could taste it, but at the same time, it was protected by the widest moat and tallest fortress walls imaginable.

In that location, a lesbian oasis but a bisexual desert, I had no tools at my disposal to ford that moat or scale those walls. I was virtually alone with my thoughts and feelings: confused, conflicted and closeted. Without allies, a support system or anyone to guide the way forward, the gap between these women's lives and mine appeared unbridgeable.

Linda, continues on page 11

## HONOR ROLL

Amanda Bernés; Benae Bergeron-Beamon; Beth I.; Ellyn Ruthstrom; Gail Zacharias; Jamie Bergeron-Beamon; Joanne T.; Justin Adkins; Kara Amman; Kate Estrop; Keja Valens; Nasim Menon; Robyn Ochs; Samantha Em

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## From Your Editor

This is the second issue on intersectionality. Kimberlé Krenshaw, who coined this term in 1989, used the metaphor of a traffic intersection to explain this concept: "Intersectionality is what occurs when a woman from a minority group tries to navigate the main crossing in the city. The main highway is 'racism road.' One cross street can be Colonialism, then Patriarchy Street . . . She has to deal not only with one form of oppression but with all forms, which link together to make a double, a triple, multiple, a many layered blanket of oppression." Each of us has multiple categories of identity, and each of our identities affects our experience of each of our other identities. Some of our identities give or deny us privilege, some simply shape our experience. For example, the experience of growing up in Los Angeles is not the same as growing up in rural Idaho.

The theme of this issue is "Intersection: Geography." Readers were given the following prompt: "How has your geographic location (where you are from, where you have lived and/or where you live now) affected your experience of your sexual orientation?"

This issue includes prose and poetry by Jane Barnes, Gwendolyn, Harrie Farrow, the Rev. Francesca Bongiorno Fortunato, Linda Blair, Nikki Smith, Jan Steckel and Simone Wise.

The *Bi Women Around the World* feature returns with an interview with Maria Santiaguera in Cuba. There's also *Ask Tiggy*, *News Briefs* and a calendar of events.

Here's a challenge to you, our readers: if you don't see *your* experience represented, please consider submitting your writing or artwork. And finally, please spread the word about this publication far and wide.

*Robyn*

**Sarah reads *Bi Women*. Send us a picture of YOU reading *Bi Women*. Be creative!**



## Next in

### *Bi Women Quarterly*

The theme for the next issue:

## Intersection: Spirituality/Religion

Tell us: How has your religious upbringing and or current spiritual understanding/practice affected your experience/expression of your sexual orientation? If you practice within a religious tradition, what is that tradition's perspective on sexual orientation and how do you interact with this? We want to hear from you.

**Submissions for the next issue must be received by November 1st. Submission guidelines are at:**

[biwomenboston.org/newsletter/submission-guidelines/](http://biwomenboston.org/newsletter/submission-guidelines/)

Send your submissions and suggestions for future topics to [biwomeneditor@gmail.com](mailto:biwomeneditor@gmail.com)

If you do not want your full name published, or wish to use a pseudonym, just let us know.

***Bi Women Quarterly* is online at [biwomenboston.org](http://biwomenboston.org).**

BBWN is an all-volunteer organization. Want to host one of our monthly brunches, be the woman who coordinates the brunches, help out with our website (we use WordPress)? Or, if you're a student, consider an internship. If you are interested in helping out, please contact Robyn ([biwomeneditor@gmail.com](mailto:biwomeneditor@gmail.com)).

The Boston Bisexual Women's Network is a feminist, not-for-profit collective organization whose purpose is to bring women together for support and validation. It is meant to be a safe environment in which women of all sexual self-identities, class backgrounds, racial, ethnic and religious groups, ages, abilities and disabilities are welcome. Through the vehicles of discussion, support, education, outreach, political action and social groups related to bisexuality, we are committed to the goals of full acceptance as bisexuals within the gay and lesbian community, and to full acceptance of bisexuality and the liberation of all gay and transgender people within the larger society.

# BI WOMEN AROUND THE WORLD:

## Maria Santiaguera, Santiago, Cuba

By Robyn Ochs (transcribed by Amanda Bernés and translated by Keja Valens)

*In May 2014, I had the privilege of visiting Cuba as part of an LGBT-focused delegation. We visited several cities and over the course of 12 days participated in events related to the Jornada Contra la Homofobia (Day Against Homophobia) in Havana, Santa Clara and Bayamo. We participated in pride marches, conferences, panels and had the opportunity to spend time in conversation with LGBT activists. I asked some youth activists if they could put me in touch with a bi-identified woman who might be open to being interviewed, and they introduced me to Maria.*

**Robyn:** For how long have you identified as bisexual?

**Maria:** It's been about two years. It was in part a discovery process. Previously, I'd had only heterosexual relationships. I came to Havana to take a course for young Christians from all over Latin America and when I arrived, there were two girls who I thought looked at me strangely. I thought they didn't like me. And, well, basically we went out dancing one night and one of them approached me and asked me to dance, and then the other one asked me to dance. I said no! Apparently, in other countries, people dance like that, women dance with women. That is very liberal. It's almost never seen here. And, well, I started to spend time with one of them, and she captivated me, she drove me crazy. She was from El Salvador, and we started to talk and she told me she was a lesbian; she laughed with me and told me things. I was very taken, but also...? Sometimes it is difficult to take those steps, no?

**Robyn:** I hear you!

**Maria:** All changes take time and a great deal of transformation.

**Robyn:** Yes, there can be a huge gap between knowing and doing.

**Maria:** So finally I discovered, in part, what my feelings were for the girl. We had a relationship. I came back to Santiago, and I started to feel somewhat lonely, you know, because my group of friends is almost all heterosexual. Sometimes we need someone to talk to about what's going on or to look at someone and be able to say, "I like that girl." I live in a very macho and relatively homophobic province, and I was feeling a little locked in, no? In the closet. And then I went to another event where we were building group cohesion, and we had to choose a word that identifies us. There were various papers on the ground that said: *Christian, Cuban, Gay, Lesbian, Revolutionary, Communist*, and a variety of words like that. And I stood there looking at all of the words and I said: "Oh My God! There isn't even a word for my identity." I stayed staring ahead. There was a group of gay guys at the event. Two who were in a couple stood on the word *Gay*. The rest of the gay guys stood by



the word *Cuban* and said to the couple, "How can you guys stay there on *Gay*? Can't you see that everyone is looking at you? You have to change!" And one stayed and the other moved to the word *Cuban*. The one standing alone on *gay* started to cry. And it hit me...it broke my heart, and the guy started to cry and I started to cry behind him. And we looked each other and we cried and cried and cried, and people came over to me and asked, "But Maria, why are you crying?" And I said, "Because I'm bisexual and the word isn't even here, and I feel excluded." It was quite something! It was my coming out of the closet, as we say here. Since then, well, I've tried to find a relationship. I don't just go out looking for partners, not that. The people who come into my life, God puts there. He finds them. They are this way. And, well, I have tried to be comfortable with myself, but I haven't told my mother.

**Robyn:** You haven't spoken with your mother?

**Maria:** No, but we have a relationship with a lot of trust and good communication. There are some things that don't need to be said. She, by my actions, sees that I'm taking a position that is not totally... but not that I spend time with lesbians and am very involved in those movements.

*Maria, continues on next page*



*Maria, continued from previous page*

**Robyn:** So she sees who you are?

**Maria:** Exactly! It's the same for the Re-communication with Cuba, which is for the Church, and for the Martin Luther King Center, where we are supporting the fight against homophobia. We have had courses like "Sane Sex." At the moment, I am in the process of filming a documentary with the group, "Las Isabellas." That's how I came to the group. I had heard about it. When I got close to Isel Calzadilla, the coordinator, a friend said to me, "A documentary has to be made about these women. People have to know the story of the women of Santiago de Cuba, how they got together, how they formed a group. It's the first group—a support group."

**Robyn:** Yes, because they are making history right now!

**Maria:** Exactly. So I started working on the project, and my mother at first said, "What is this? You're going to have to join." Oh, yes, mom, don't make a stink. And then, I don't know. I think that parents, at least my mother, is very flexible, and she has a lot of respect for my life and my private life. I'm set with her. She is a human being, a person of integrity, a person of dignity, a person who respects the rights of others, and sexual orientation isn't a determinant factor for her. So she respects me and she understands me. I've been this way for two years now.

**Robyn:** And how old are you?

**Maria:** 24.

**Robyn:** 24. And do you know other bi men or women?

**Maria:** Yes, I know one guy who works here in Santiago with men who have sex with other men. He works in health and in the program working to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS. And he has come out as bi. He says it, but there is still a lot of prejudice toward bisexuality, and sometimes you can see the discrimination. Even within gay groups because the lesbians might say: "They're not like us; they're something different," and I don't know but if you're in between, come on, what are you? People seem to often have a lot of difficulty with the middle position. As if people are supposed to be either cold or hot.

**Robyn:** Is there pressure on you to identify as lesbian?

**Maria:** No, really I don't feel like I have to identify myself as something specific. That is exactly the thing about bisexuality. Even yesterday, the girls talking with me last night, asked "Maria, who are you more attracted to, men or women?" I said to them, "It's not about whether I'm more attracted to



Cuban LGBT educational poster: "Two of a kind also make a pair [a couple]"

men or to women, because I like specific men and specific women. It's about the beauty of the person, not the beauty of the sex."

**Robyn:** When we were in Havana, I spoke with a man in a small LGBT group who said that two women in that group were bi but that they didn't want to be identified as such.

**Maria:** Yes, sometimes people are very concerned about speaking and especially giving an interview because, how will that look? And then there's also the reality that bisexuality is seen to be a lot like prostitution. Especially with foreigners. There are people who are seen during the day acting very hetero, very manly or very girly, and at night go to places...

**Robyn:** Yes, because there is a difference between identity and behavior. I'm wondering: have you ever had access to written materials about bisexuality?

**Maria:** I've never seen any. It's one of the taboos. People know about it, people talk about it, but mostly about gays. The thing is that you see it, but the topic is rarely mentioned. When I attended that event in Cienfuegos with a group of Latin Americans, there were girls from Colombia and Costa Rica. I realized that I had a lot of freedom with my sexuality. I was surprised, yes. Because I thought that in those countries with Catholicism, religion would have a greater influence than in Cuba and that they would be behind us in terms of openness. But I found the girls to be super open. It's a nice difference because we get to see that yes, other places are revolutionizing.

**Robyn:** The world is changing quickly around LGBT issues.

**Maria:** Yes, people are opening up and all that. Some are lagging, for example, older people who were educated in a different era, but now young people and kids... Young people are not only changing attitudes but also taking action. Almost all of the folks [at the conference] who came from Latin America were involved in social and community projects to support diversity. The El Salvadoran I knew had a project involving mini-works with a highly marginalized community. It's excellent, and it helps a lot. Here, recently, the group "We Are" formed in the evangelical theological seminary. In other words the Church too is opening up.

**Robyn:** Maria, thank you so much for speaking with me.

# Choosing Where to Live

By Harrie Farrow

Perhaps the most important current issue for bisexuals is overcoming invisibility. This battle requires more out people, which ironically requires more out people—to provide a community for support, information and camaraderie. It's important, then, that those of us who feel most safe take the lead.

When I look at what steered me to becoming a person secure enough to not only be out but also out loud, I know much of it started before I was born, with the family I was born into and the community I grew up in. I know too, that when I hit adulthood and began making decisions for my life, my sexual identity always figured into the choices I made—whom I associated with, who I got close to, where I went to college and where I chose to live.

So when I considered the question posed for this issue of *Bi Women Quarterly*, “How has your geographic location affected your experience of your sexual orientation?” I realized, for me, it's more that my sexual orientation has affected what geographical locations I have chosen to call home.

Growing up with liberal open-minded parents in a diverse community in the Virgin Islands with what at the time (the 1960s) was a relatively large out population helped shape me into a teen who had no problem accepting my sexual identity.

Perhaps having this strong foundation helped me understand that I wouldn't be able to tolerate living anywhere that wouldn't tolerate who I am. Every time I've moved, I've chosen places that were LGBT-friendly and had large out LGBT communities.

Not only did this help make me feel welcome and accepted by the community at large, but also safe enough to not have to be closeted. Additionally, as a bisexual who was in a mixed-sex relationship for a long time and was often assumed to be straight, living in areas with large LGBT populations also helped make me feel less disconnected from my queerness.

I realize that not everyone has the luxury to be able to live where they choose. I also realize that there were sacrifices that came with the choices I made. In my mid-twenties, I moved from San Francisco to central Florida to be near family. I'd lived so far from parents and siblings for many years, and missed the connection. But I couldn't stay. I'm sure I could have found an LGBT community in the area if I had looked for it, but the fact that I would have had to look for it is enough

to explain why I did not feel at home there, even amongst my family. I returned to San Francisco in less than a year.

I currently live deep inside the Bible Belt, in the south, in a state tarnished by its historical intolerance. However, the town I live in is an oasis of respite from all the above. In 2007, Eureka Springs became the first city in Arkansas to offer civil unions for same-sex couples, and in 2011, the first to provide health care coverage for the domestic partners of municipal workers. This year, the first same-sex couples to be married in the South and in the Bible Belt were married in this little Ozark village. Our tiny town of approximately 2,000 celebrates three Diversity Weekends a year.

Currently, this area is having a crisis in regards to an environmental issue. At a hearing on the matter, many talked of the sacrifices they made to live here, having taken major cuts in income and upward mobility to be near natural beauty and serenity. On a personal level, living in this small, isolated, town is severely impacting my income and career prospects. Logistically speaking, at this point in my life it would be easy for me to move someplace where there would be many more opportunities. Ultimately though, it comes down to the fact that this is where I want to be because here I have tolerance and diversity, nature and community. These are the things that are most important to me.

When choosing where to live, we all weigh the pluses against the minuses. Can I earn a living? Can I maintain sanity? Can I build community? How important is nature? How important is nightlife? How important is being accepted for who I am? What is the housing situation? Etcetera, etcetera. When I do life coaching with bisexuals who want to be out but feel that where they live, where they work or

whom they rely on would make this untenable, I help them explore the possibilities of changing these things. Though, unfortunately, sometimes there are limited prospects to alter one's geographic location, more often people *can* change where they live to make being out safer and easier; it all comes down to a matter of priorities.



*Harrie is the author of a bisexual themed novel, [Love, Sex, and Understanding the Universe](#), writes a blog about bisexuality, does bi-activism on twitter as @BisexualBatman and is a Life Coach for Bisexuals at [Navigating the BiWays](#).*

# I am from here

By Gwendolyn

I am from the Universe; the space between the seen and unseen. *Prana*. Atoms. Galaxies. Solar Systems.

***Invisible to the naked eye, yet we know it is there. It - we are everywhere!***

*Mwen soti nan Ginen*<sup>1</sup>. My ancestors are from the former African Kingdom of Dahomey which existed from 1600 to 1900. Colonized by the French starting in the late 1870's until 1960. Benin as we presently know this West African nation was once home to my family ancestors.

***Ayibobo!***<sup>2</sup>

*Je viens de Haiti. Yo soy Haitiana.*<sup>3</sup> I am from Hispaniola, the 22nd largest island in the world. Home to our ancestor Anacaona, Taino caica (chief). I am from Haiti, the world's first Black Republic and one of the world's oldest republics in the Western Hemisphere. My people freed themselves from forced servitude from France, Belgium, and Spain. We currently struggle from unfair wages and work conditions from American entrepreneurs, and social justice issues both in Haiti and in the Dominican Republic.

***Bi identities. Bi cultures. Bi history. Bi nations: 1 island - 2 governments.***

*OFD: Originally from Dot*<sup>4</sup>. The place of my birth, Dorchester is a neighborhood in Boston, Massachusetts, USA. Dot was once a geographical space that was inhabited by Puritan settlers and filled with pear trees, farmlands, and a chocolate factory. Dot is also a place with a history of racial segregation. I am from the Dot of the late 70s, 80s, and 90s, the place where public school racial segregation met with challenging attempts for integration, drive-by shootings, rampant misogynist street harassment, and gangs with drug deals gone wrong.

***Bi stander.***

*I'm from Bahston.* I am also from a place where girls safely played double dutch outdoors with other first and second generation Immigrant children, Caribbean Carnivals on Blue Hill Ave gave the community a culturally safe place to "whine our waists," and where I had the stability of the Haitian-American community to teach me about my cultural history and as a teen secretly desired to attend Boston Pride. Boston is the social geographical location where I first noticed my attraction to various genders; sadly, it's the same place that gave me pressure to stay in the bisexual closet or face losing my life and my family of origin.

***Bisexual: Attraction to same and different genders.***

*I'm currently a Cantabrigian;* I reside in the city of Cambridge, MA, which is also known as the "Intellectual Capital of the World." This is the place where I have been challenged to transition from an "unlabeled" identity to a bisexual sociosexual political identity. Cambridge is the place where I first adopted the word "bisexual" publicly as my own. In 2004, Cambridge became the first municipality in the US to issue same-sex marriage licenses. I am a member of the bisexual community, a safe space where all my life's roads intersect and my identities are embraced.

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1 Haitian Kreyol saying for "I come from Africa or the spiritual place of my ancestors."; Ginen is a Haitian name for the ancestral home of enslaved Africans by European colonists. See: <http://dreamsofginen.wordpress.com/2012/05/07/fran-ginen>.

2 Haitian Kreyol translation for "Amen" typically used by practitioners of the Haitian traditional religion Vodou.

3 I come from Haiti (in French and Spanish)

4 Dot is the local abbreviation for Dorchester.

Gwendolyn, continues on next page

Gwendolyn, continued from previous page

*My romantic and sexual identities are political and are road maps.*

*Borders and territories: some flexible and some rigid boundaries.*

*Pathways and routes: curvy—winding—not straight.*

*I am from here.*

*Gwendolyn is a writer, librarian, archivist, mental health advocate, and vegan personal chef. She is also the founder of Bisexual Woman of Color (BIWOC), an online and in-person support and discussion group.*



## Ramona

By Jane Barnes

Well off and bi and rather well turned out, Ramona Cross was considered a little wild according to her friend Virginia. Divorcing her husband after a six-month-long marriage, she held a yard sale of whatever he had left behind. Since he had offered to be the one to go, she offered her garage as a place to store his comic book collection and his books about New Age therapy. Ramona moved from Portland, Oregon, to New York City, to Queens. She said she liked it because “You’re not stuck in a lonely car all day long; but you have that amazing subway system.” In which, Ramona didn’t say, you’re stuck in a subway car and lonely with strangers smashing into you from every side. Excuse me, Miss Sorry. Sorry.

*Jane Barnes has finished a poetry manuscript covering 25 years in 250 poems called “The Inbetween: Poems 1982-2007.” A short story of Jane’s, “too big to hug,” is carved on a granite pillar at Copley Square in Back Bay, Boston.*



# Queer Reflections

By Simone Wise

When I think back to what it was like growing up in Pocatello, Idaho, about how I left when I was 17 never to return for longer than a couple days, I wonder what would have happened if I had stayed. I imagine walking downtown, past my old high school with the politically incorrect mascot of an Indian. I imagine waking up in the middle of the night, just for a moment, when the train whistle blows, as it does each night in that town. I always felt so out of place there. Would I have settled in eventually, accepted my lot in life, learned to be satisfied with my surroundings? What would I be doing for work? Who would I be in a relationship with? Would I be happy? Would I be queer?

I remember the feeling of being in high school. So many unhappy memories of jealousy: of the pretty cheerleaders who looked like someone had taught them how to put on make-up, of my friends who had found boyfriends, of other people who seemed so much more confident than I ever felt. A burgeoning feminist, I simultaneously scorned the cheerleaders for buying into normative ideals of femininity, while wishing more than anything that I could take their place just for one day. Just long enough for one of the cute boys to notice me. Just long enough to feel like I fit in for a moment. Now I wonder about that jealousy – was it misplaced attraction? Did I want to be a cheerleader, or did I secretly desire cheerleaders? This realization feels embarrassing.

Until recently, my longest relationship was with a boy. We met in Seattle, Washington, the summer before my sophomore year of college and stayed together for four and a half years. I thought I would marry him and that we would have children together. I thought we would be together forever. About a year before the end of our relationship, we went to a party at our neighbor's house. In the midst of an impromptu dance party, I found myself grinding on the dance floor with the girlfriend of one of my boyfriend's Ultimate Frisbee teammates. I was surprised at how turned on I was, how I couldn't stop talking about her afterward, how I couldn't stop thinking about her for weeks. I told my boyfriend that I thought I had a crush on her. But, I never imagined that it could mean anything beyond that. I'm surprised that I never questioned what it meant that I felt attraction toward a girl.

My first date after that was with a girl who picked me up at a coffeeshop in Boise, Idaho, where I was living in the aftermath of a horrendous break-up with my college boyfriend. She was slight and very cute, with short hair and a wide smile. She said she recognized me from yoga class and wondered if I wanted to get together sometime. She asked for my number. I was sitting with my roommate, a boy who was often mistaken for my boyfriend, and it took his outsider perspective to clue me in that I had just been

picked up by a girl. After a couple weeks of butterfly phone calls, a summer date to the ballet, and a very steamy make-out session, I determined that I was most definitely straight.

In graduate school in Madison, Wisconsin, my very bisexual friend opened my eyes to the possibility that I might be queer. My eyes were wide open when I sat next to my lover on the first day of class. Wide open when she quietly (and somewhat covertly) courted me through spring and the duration of a summer. Wide open when I invited her into my bed that first time in the fall, long ago. I wonder if I had met her during high school, whether I would have been equally intrigued by her hazel eyes and serious mouth? If I had met her in college while I was with my ex-boyfriend, would I have been drawn to her as I was immediately, on that first day of class? If I had met her when I was mourning the break-up with my ex, would I have tried her on for size, ultimately concluding that I was straight? Perhaps I wasn't ready for her until I was. Perhaps I wasn't ready to be queer until I was good and ready. Now I can't imagine being anything else. I can't imagine what it would be like not to feel attractions toward women, men, trans men, genderqueer people, my lover.

A circuitous path to queerdom. Sign posts notwithstanding, I'm here now—comfortably so.

*Simone is a researcher and writer living in Boston, MA.*

## What About YOU?

BBWN, home of the *Bi Women Quarterly* is a **not-for-profit organization with no organizational hierarchy operating entirely on volunteer power.** All of our work is funded entirely from pin sales and from your donations. If you are interested in getting involved and sharing your time and/or your dollars, please contact Robyn at [biwomeneditor@gmail.com](mailto:biwomeneditor@gmail.com). Remember: **“WE” are “YOU.”**

We're looking for:

- A graphic artist to design a new look for this publication
- Designers to help create some nice outreach materials
- Help with social media outreach
- Folks to show up at volunteer events
- Are you a STUDENT? Consider becoming an intern.

**Hold the date: the Boston Bilicious Show will be December 5th and 6th. We'll post more info closer to the date to the [biwomenboston.org](http://biwomenboston.org) email list!**



# A Dyed-in-the-Spandex Bisexual Manhattanite

By Rev. Francesca Bongiorno Fortunato

To most people who have never lived in New York City, Manhattan *is* New York. I was born in Manhattan but have spent many years (on and off) living in other places, including the “outer boroughs” of Brooklyn, Queens and the Bronx, as well as some other towns and cities. I live in Brooklyn now, having moved here when the relationship with Lynn (now my wife) got to the point where we were ready to live together.

I often describe myself as a “dyed-in-the-spandex Manhattanite.” I use the word “spandex” to contrast with the wool of “dyed-in-the-wool.” Wool is natural. Spandex is synthetic. Wool is country. Spandex is city. And that is how thoroughly urban and Manhattanite I am: born this way (almost to the same extent that I was born bisexual).

Living in Brooklyn again has reminded me that there are real cultural differences between Brooklyn and Manhattan, and it is in these differences that I recognize the intersection of sexual orientation and geographical location in my life. Manhattan, even those parts outside the known queer enclaves of the Village and Chelsea, is safe space for queers of all stripes. When Lynn and I are in Manhattan together, we feel free to hold hands, walk arm-in-arm, or kiss each other in public. In the section of Brooklyn where we live, though (ironically named Dyker Heights), the majority of residents are Republican Roman Catholics and there is definitely no sense of queer culture. When we walk the streets near our apartment building together, people most likely assume that we’re sisters or “just friends.” I think that’s probably for the best. Lynn seems to think I’m a bit paranoid and that there is less homophobia than I perceive, but I’d rather not risk it. Manhattan is home. I can be me there. When I go there (several times a week, for various reasons), I get off the subway and take deep, sighing breaths. I feel safe and authentic and good. I feel free and easy. Honest and real...

But this is the *Bi Women Quarterly* and I’m supposed to write about being bisexual, specifically; not just about being queer in general. So...if my queer identity is mostly erased in this section of Brooklyn where we live, my bisexual identity is completely erased. There have been two places in the neighborhood where I have been partially out (that is, out as queer—in a same-sex marriage—but not out as bisexual). The Assisted Living home where I serve as Pastor is one of those settings. The people there know that Lynn is my wife. I’m guessing that, if any of them even know the word “bisexual,” they would not connect it with me. I haven’t used it there. Honestly, I wish I could, but it feels safer and simpler to just let them see me as a “normal married lesbian” (like their beloved Ellen DeGeneres). The other space in which I was partially out (for the same reasons) was the after-school program in which I taught drama during the school year just past. My boss and co-workers there

were all very much in the mold of this neighborhood’s stereotypes (Italian or Irish Catholic, married, with big houses and lots of kids). Unless there were some closeted queers amongst them (which there might well have been, but I’d never know), I had to assume that they might just barely be able to wrap their heads around the idea of me as a married lesbian. Bisexuality would, most likely, be beyond the scope of what they could consider acceptable. I think those co-workers considered me sort of snobbish because I didn’t join in the conversation when they went on about husbands and children. I was just trying not to stick out like a sore thumb and make people uncomfortable. Had I been teaching at a Manhattan school, I would have felt fine about being thoroughly out, even if most of my co-workers were straight. That’s because Manhattan is pretty much the queer capital of the world. People who live in Manhattan know that homophobia is unacceptable. Probably most even know that biphobia is unacceptable. If you don’t like us, go back to fly-over country!

As I write this, Lynn and I are contemplating a move to Philadelphia. Not because Philadelphia is a first choice place to live for either of us (though we both like it there), but because Lynn will be retiring in a year or so and believes that Brooklyn will be too expensive for us once her income is reduced. (Manhattan is already unaffordable; if it were not, I would have an apartment there and Lynn and I would have a part-time commuter marriage!) So...why Philadelphia? Well, we do like it. We have friends there. Pennsylvania has marriage equality now, so we wouldn’t lose our rights as a married couple. But the main reason is that, while being a much less expensive place to live than New York, Philadelphia is “city enough” for our purposes. It is sufficiently urban to have the sort of reliable public transportation that I, as a lifelong non-driver, require. It is also sufficiently urban to have places that are definitely safe for us to be out as a couple, including a section that is actually called “the Gayborhood.” Really. It says that on the rainbow-painted street signs! But again...it’s “Gayborhood”; not “LGBT Land.” The use of the word “Gay” as an umbrella term for lesbians, bisexuals and transgender folk, as well as gay men, is irritating to me. But that’s a subject for another day...

The fact remains that I can’t think of a better place in the world to be my whole self (of which bisexual identity is an essential aspect) than my native Manhattan. I wish it were not so expensive to live there. If I won the lottery, I’d buy an apartment there in half a heartbeat. I am, indeed, a dyed-in-the-spandex bisexual Manhattanite, and I always will be, no matter where I happen to live.

*Rev. Francesca Bongiorno Fortunato is an Interfaith Minister and dance teacher. She lives in Brooklyn, New York, with her wife, Lynn, and their feline employers, Alice and Gracie.*

Jan, continued from page 1

where I worked. He took me to nearby Castroville, the artichoke capital of the world, to a restaurant with a two-story plaster artichoke in front of it with spines as thick as my arm. Down the main street – the only real street – was a bar and restaurant called Norma Jean's.

Every Saturday night at dusk Norma Jean's turned into the only gay bar this side of Monterey. Mexican men in snake-skin boots and ten-gallon hats drank 40's of Corona and Tecate with wedges of lime on the bottlenecks. They danced together to slow *bachatas* while a disco ball sent twinkling stars across their faces. When it came time for me to leave Salinas, the family practice residents I'd been teaching at the hospital threw me a going-away party at Norma Jean's. At the stroke of midnight, under the disco ball, a beautiful Mexican drag queen danced around a sombrero on the floor to the strains of the *jarabe tapatio*.

I'd been going out with a straight psychiatrist from the hospital and wanted to stay with him when my job there ended, but I couldn't find a decent long-term position in Salinas or Monterey. I interviewed at hospitals up in the San Francisco Bay Area, thinking we could keep up our relationship over a one-and-a-half-hour drive. Part of me knew I had to get to San Francisco, the home of *Anything That Moves*, the first bisexual magazine I had ever seen. While I was working in Salinas, they published a bi manifesto of mine called "I Just Do This to Seduce Gay Men." It was a reply to the gay man back in Boston who wouldn't define himself as bi despite sleeping with a man and with women, and who felt the need therefore to declare that bi people didn't exist. I had been reading *Anything That Moves* in Boston, dreaming of a place with enough out bi people to run a magazine.

Before my job interview for a pediatrics position at Kaiser-Permanent in Hayward, just across the bay from San Francisco, I visited a now-defunct women's bookstore on the Berkeley-Oakland border called Mama Bear's. It was across the street from a friendly neighborhood gay bar called the White Horse, where I still play pool sometimes. I asked the woman behind the counter at Mama Bear's where their bisexual section was. She glared at me and said they didn't have one, only lesbian and feminist sections. I asked if I could use their pay phone (it was before everyone had cell phones) and defiantly called my boyfriend, who proceeded to dump me over the phone right before my job interview.

I hung up and looked around the store, which was full of cute women. I should have felt awful, but instead I felt light and free. I thought about all the women I could date now, and how narrowly I had escaped a straight marriage and the psychiatrist's four-bedroom house in the bedroom community of Morgan Hill. After the interview, I called my best friend, and we drove out to the Golden Gate Bridge. I pitched my birth control pills over the bridge railing into the bay. My friend, a lesbian obstetrician-gynecologist, talked about all the estrogenized fish I was creating. I looked across the bay at San Francisco, and I knew I had come home.

Within the year, I met my husband-to-be at Berkeley Bi-Friendly, a monthly get-together at the Au Coquelet Café. We've been together for sixteen years, and he still hosts the group. We march every year in the Bay Area Bisexuals Network contingent in the SF Pride Parade. The other night, we dined at the café again for the monthly meeting, reminiscing with bi friends he's had for twenty years and I for sixteen. Some of them have children now who come to the café and play math games with us. One of the adults presented as a man when he started coming, but now she's been living as a woman for a decade and a half. These are my people. This is my peer group and my support group. I'm always glad to see them, for the laughter, the understanding, the full warm hugs when we meet and when we part. I don't have to explain or pretend, and neither does anyone else. This is what it means to be home.

Jan's full-length poetry book *The Horizontal Poet* (Zeitgeist Press) won a Lambda Literary Award for Bisexual Nonfiction. Her writing has appeared in *Yale Medicine*, *Scholastic Magazine*, *Anything That Moves*, *Bi Magazine*, *Bi Women Quarterly* and elsewhere. Her work has won numerous awards and has been nominated three times for a Pushcart Prize. She is currently shopping around a short story collection to publishers.



**Are you in the Boston area?**

**Would YOU like to host one of our monthly bi women's potluck brunches?**

*If so, please contact Kate: [thewriterkate@gmail.com](mailto:thewriterkate@gmail.com).*

Linda, continued from page 1

And then, I moved to Boston.

What a difference a hundred miles can make. Without realizing it, I had moved to the Mecca of bisexuality!

Things didn't start with a clear-cut roadmap, though, even right here in the bi capitol of the USA. After finally managing to find the Bisexual Resource Center's pride booth, an unstaffed card table on the Boston Common with no banner or sign, and taking one of everything to go home and figure it out for myself, I was still feeling discouraged. But moving to Boston made it possible for me to access the resources, community and support I needed to face my own fears and come through with rainbow colors, especially the bi rainbow colors of blue, pink and purple, flying on the other side.

There will always be special locations in the city that I see as central to my coming out as bi here. The first one was the LGBT bookstore on Boylston Street, across from the library, where I attended my first reading from *Bi Any Other Name* and met several of the anthology's contributing authors. These brave bi writers opened my mind and my heart to reconciling my conflicting emotions and became my role models, as well as trusted friends, to guide me along my journey ahead.

There was my Dorchester apartment, where I came out to my boyfriend, who listened sympathetically, and then later held me lovingly, while I cried when it became clear to me that we would break up over the changes taking place in my life, and that there was really no better solution that was going to work for us.

Being new to the city, I learned my way around Boston and the art of self-acceptance at the same time, as I began attending the brunches, movies, parties, readings and other activities that Biversity Boston, the mixed-gender bi group, or the Boston Bisexual Women's Network held every week. As my calendar filled up, so did my sense that I could find my own way, with the help and guidance of a community of people who had traveled this road before.

There was the Winter Hill house where my first girlfriend lived, and Walden Pond, where she took me one crisp, cold winter morning for a walk. The relationship lasted just under two years, but my memory of that love-struck day will last forever.

And then there was the "Bi Office," once located on Clarendon Street in the South End, but later moved to its current



Linda on a recent trip to the Italian Alps.

location on Stanhope Street. The office was where the bi community gathered to mail out the newsletters and calendars that kept us all informed about upcoming events in the days before the Internet. It was also where I would come to spend countless hours editing this publication, and serving on the board of the Bisexual Resource Center.

From the office, I would field phone calls from people around the country who were unsure of what to do about their bisexuality, and were seeking information and understanding. Later, I helped found and facilitate a bi support group for people within driving distance of the Boston office. I also met there regularly with fellow bi activists to find better ways to reach people across the country, and even the world, with information and education around bisexuality and to facilitate the creation of bi community.

Lately, I've become interested in world geography and studying maps. And with the world such a big place, it can be easy to generalize and think that a whole country, region or state is all the same. But, as the world becomes a slightly smaller and more comprehensive place for me, with the pieces starting to fit together, I will never forget how a mere hundred-mile move, given the right circumstances, can make all the difference in the world!

*Linda moved from Northampton to Boston in 1989 and has called Boston, and the bi community there, home for the last 25 years. She lives there with her wife Maura and their cat Sintra.*

## Reader Feedback

Respond. React. Suggest. Praise. Share.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Write to us at:

[biwomeneditor@gmail.com](mailto:biwomeneditor@gmail.com)





# News Briefs

By Robyn Ochs



There's a lot to report this time, folks. Here's some of it:

## THE LAMBDA LITERARY AWARDS

On June 2nd at the 26th annual Lambda Literary Awards in New York, Susan Choi was awarded the Bisexual Fiction prize for her novel, *My Education*. The Lammys, as they're known, recognize the best lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender books of the previous year. The Bisexual Nonfiction award went to *The B Word: Bisexuality in Contemporary Film and Television* by Maria San Filippo, Indiana University Press.

## AND THE BISEXUAL BOOK AWARDS

The Second Annual Bisexual Book Awards ceremony, organized by the Bi Writers Association (BWA), took place on Saturday, May 31, honoring six categories of bisexual books and two special categories, for books published in 2013. A total of 60 books were nominated.

Congratulations to all who were nominated and especially to those who won this year's competition:

**Bisexual Fiction:** *The City of Devi* by Manil Suri, W. W. Norton & Company

**Bisexual Non-fiction:** *Anything That Loves: Comics Beyond Gay and Straight* edited by Charles "Zan" Christensen, Northwest Press

**Bisexual Speculative Fiction** [Sci-fi/Fantasy/Horror/Etc.]: *Pantomime* by Laura Lam, Strange Chemistry

**Bisexual Teen/Young Adult Fiction:** *Inheritance* by Malinda Lo, Little, Brown Books for Young Readers

**Bisexual Biography/Memoir:** *The Blind Masseuse: A Traveler's Memoir*

*from Costa Rica to Cambodia* by Alden Jones, Terrace Books/The University of Wisconsin Press

**Bisexual Erotic Fiction/Erotica:** *The Revolution* by Adriana Kraft, B&B Publishing

**Bisexual Book Publisher of the Year:** (Tie) Circler Press and Riverdale Avenue Books

**Bi Writer of the Year:** Shiri Eisner, author of *Bi: Notes for a Bisexual Revolution*, Seal Press

## THE FENWAY INSTITUTE HOSTS GROUNDBREAKING MEETING ON BISEXUAL HEALTH RESEARCH

Leading bisexual health researchers and community activists from across the country agreed to form the Bisexual Research Collaborative on Health (BiRCH) at a meeting hosted by The Fenway Institute in Boston on June 26. BiRCH will continue high-level discussions of bisexual health research, plan a national conference, and look for ways to raise public awareness of bi health issues.

The meeting was held to discuss the state of the research on bisexual health. Judith Bradford, PhD, Co-Chair of The Fenway Institute, and a Co-Chair of the meeting, noted the importance of such a gathering: "For all of the remarkable progress that has been made in the field of LGBT health, we still simply do not know enough about the full range of health needs and health concerns facing bisexual people. Today's meeting was an important step toward addressing this significant gap."



White House signing ceremony.  
Faith Cheltenham, far right

Read the full release at: <http://fenwayfocus.org/2014/07/the-fenway-institute-hosts-groundbreaking-meeting-on-bisexual-health-research/>

## STANDING BEHIND THE PRESIDENT

On Monday, July 21, President Obama signed an executive order prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation against workers employed by federal contractors. This order covers 30,000 companies and approximately one-fifth of the workforce. A roomful of LGBT activists were invited to witness the signing, and a handful were invited to stand on the stage during the signing ceremony. Among those was BiNet USA's President, Faith Cheltenham. Represent, Faith!

## AND WAIT! THERE'S MORE...

On June 8, actress Anna Paquin posted on Twitter "Proud to be a happily married bisexual mother. Marriage is about love not gender. @eqca @NOH8Campaign @ItGetsBetter"

And on July 21, she was on Larry King Now, during which she set the record . . . er . . . straight about bisexuality. Here's a snippet of the conversation:

*Larry King:* Are you a non-practicing bisexual?

*Anna Paquin:* Well, I am married to my husband and we are happily monogamously married.

*Larry King:* So you were bisexual?

*Anna Paquin:* Well, I don't think it's a past-tense kind of thing. It doesn't prevent your sexuality from existing. It doesn't really work like that.

And Congratulations are due to the well respected bisexual journalist Heather Cassell for being named one of GO Magazine's "100 Women We Love 2014." In addition to her other fine work Cassell's byline (bi-line?) has frequently been seen in the Bay Area Reporter covering the doings of the Bay Area Bisexual Network (BABN) and the larger bi community in the San Francisco Bay Area.

# In the Middle at Camp Pride 2014

By Lily Crawford

Being a woman who identifies in the middle of the sexuality spectrum is hard. You're constantly running into people who think you're either straight or gay, but not both, or who refer to your identity as a phase. At least this has been my experience.

I started to question my sexuality at a very young age, though I didn't understand it completely until later. In high school, I dated this amazing girl; so entering college I decided to label myself as a lesbian because it made sense, at least in my awkward freshman mind. I would walk around telling people I was lesbian. I tried to meet girls, and I cited that one high school experience when people questioned me, but it still didn't feel right. I didn't think I was a lesbian; the term felt awkward to say, and it just didn't sit right, but I liked girls sometimes, so that meant I had to be gay, right? As I continued through my next two years in college, I decided I was questioning. I didn't think I was straight—obviously I liked girls—but I wasn't gay either; I had plenty of romantic experiences with men, too. At the time, I was under the impression that being bisexual meant you liked men and women equally, so I tossed the term out of my mind the minute it entered.

This summer, however, all of that changed in a big way. In July, I was fortunate enough to have won a scholarship to Camp Pride, an LGBT summer leadership conference for college students. For one week in Nashville, TN, about 75 student leaders gathered to build community, attend workshops on identity, power, privilege and effective leadership strategies, and listen to lectures by leaders of the LGBT movement including Mandy Carter, Robyn Ochs, Rev. Dr. Jamie Washington and Janet Mock.

One part of this program was breaking out into caucuses, where people of similar identities could gather to talk. At first, I was lost choosing a caucus to join. I knew I didn't want to go to the lesbian caucus—I had already determined that I wasn't a lesbian—so I decided to go to the middle sexualities group. It was the best decision I ever made.

The first night, we split off into small groups of three and told our personal stories. I was worried that I wouldn't fit in because I hadn't really labeled myself as bisexual, even though I knew the two ends of the spectrum were not me. To my surprise, the two other individuals in my small group were just like me.

We shared the same struggles, were feeling uncertain about our identities, and had been trying to find a bisexual community to be a part of. For the first time in my life, I felt a part of a queer community and I was proud to be bisexual. Talking with my small group and with the larger group, I realized that bisexuality is so much more than the exact middle of the sexuality spectrum: it's the big chunk in the middle with an amazing community I had been missing out on.

Being at Camp Pride and choosing to go to the middle sexualities caucus gave me an opportunity to meet more bi\* identified people, and I didn't feel alone anymore. I knew this was where I was supposed to be. Even though we all identified a little differently, we shared the middle of the sexuality spectrum and having this bond allowed us to open up, grow closer together, and think about ways to improve our respective campuses. I know that this year, my university, the University of Notre Dame, is definitely going to pay more attention to the middle sexualities, and I already have ideas for programs, social events, and educational materials that I hope to begin working on when I get back to school in the fall. Camp Pride not only taught me how to be an effective leader, it gave me the tools to do so, a network of people to help me and the confidence to cause real and lasting change on my campus.

I still face those people who tell me being bisexual is really just a questioning phase on the way to being a lesbian, but now I'm able to be a strong, confident, bi\*sexual woman and leave my doubts behind. The feeling of validation Camp

Pride gave me truly changed my life and I'm excited to begin my journey in the bi\* community and in my Notre Dame queer community as a leader, activist and role model.



Middle Sexualities Caucus at Camp Pride 2014. Lily is 2nd row, right.

*Lily is a junior at the University of Notre Dame in Indiana, studying Anthropology with a minor in Gender Studies. She is the current Vice President of PrismND, the university's LGBTQ student organization, and a FireStarter peer educator for the Gender Relations Center.*

*(Note: Bi\* is a term used to describe the constellation of identities that exist between and outside of the binaries.)*

*You can find out more about Campus Pride Summer Leadership Camp at [www.campuspride.org](http://www.campuspride.org).*

## New E-Book Version of *Getting Bi* Available Now!

*Getting Bi: Voices of Bisexuals Around the World* is the definitive anthology of international voices about bisexuality. Co-edited by Robyn Ochs and Sarah Rowley, *Getting Bi* includes over 220 different narratives from 42 countries. A compelling look at contemporary bisexual, pansexual and fluid experience, *Getting Bi* shares perspectives of teens, parents, elders and everyone in between.

And now this bi **must-have** is available as an e-book for only \$9.99. Visit Amazon.com today and order yours.



Published by the Bisexual Resource Center, profits from print and e-book sales of *Getting Bi* go towards the BRC's work raising awareness and providing support to the bi community.  
[www.biresource.net](http://www.biresource.net)

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## Ask Tiggy

Dear Tiggy,

I recently discovered that I'm bisexual. However, I live in Pakistan. Here, sexuality is hardly discussed and, in many cases, is considered taboo. I want to know more about myself and my sexuality. Can you please advise me on how to do that in a safe, open way?

-Nora

Dear Nora,

Yes: read! My October 30, 2012, column on biresource.net suggests bi magazines (print and online) and Facebook pages. Allow me to add to the list "Bisexual Bloggers" Facebook page which connects you to some excellent electronic reading material. And if you like Tumblr, you're in luck: bisexual scholar Shiri Eisner created quite a rundown of bi Tumblr blogs to follow on [bidyke.tumblr.com](http://bidyke.tumblr.com), posted on January 4, 2014. Note that one of them is "Bisexual Books" which will give you even more to read.

But the thing I'd most like you to read, the tome that'll knock your bisexual socks off, is an anthology called *Getting Bi* edited by Robyn Ochs and Sarah Rowley. The book consists of over 200 personal essays from bisexuals on what it feels like to be one of us. The authors come from 42 different countries and offer a wide range of experiences, so I have no doubt that you'll find multiple stories that resonate with you.

I understand that in places like Pakistan where access to the internet is both limited and restricted, you may find it close to impossible to read blogs or purchase a book online. If you're in this position, I urge you to get involved with zine culture. A zine is a small, self-published magazine, typically produced and distributed by one person. Popular in the 1990s, they were assumed obsolete once the digital age arrived. But that's not the case – zines continue to thrive and are becoming widespread in various Eastern countries. The latest issue of Broken Pencil magazine just did a terrific feature on how zines have always seemed tailor-made for queers, as we strive to express ourselves and communicate with each other in a world that often discourages it.

Polish up those reading glasses, Nora, and don't forget to have a pen at the ready. These books, blogs, and zines may well inspire your own bi writing.

-Tiggy



*Are you a bi lady in need of some good advice? Write to Tiggy Upland at [tiggyupland@gmail.com](mailto:tiggyupland@gmail.com). This advice column is for entertainment purposes only. The columnist reserves the right to edit the letters for any reason. Find more Ask Tiggy on [www.biresource.net](http://www.biresource.net).*



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## The "Bi Office"

is the Bisexual Resource Center, located at 29 Stanhope Street in Boston, behind Club Cafe. Call 617-424-9595.

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### Ongoing Events

**Come to our monthly bi brunch! All women are welcome! See calendar for dates.**

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#### 2nd Mondays:

**Bisexual Resource Center Board Meeting.** 7-9pm at the Bi Office. All are welcome.

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#### 2nd Mondays:

**Straight Marriage, Still Questioning.** 7pm. Info: kate.e.flynn@gmail.com.

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#### 1st Wednesdays:

**BLiSS: Bisexual Social & Support Group.** All genders welcome. 7pm. Info: bliss@biresource.net

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#### 2nd Thursdays:

**Younger Bi Group.** For bi folks 20-29. 7pm. Info: Kate at youngblissboston@gmail.com.

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#### 3rd Saturdays:

**Biversity Bi Brunch.** 11:30am at Johnny D's, Davis Square, Somerville.

#### **Metro-Boston women:**

Keep up with local events. Sign up for our email list! Send an email to: biwomenboston-subscribe@yahoo.com.



# CALENDAR

## September

**Tuesday, September 2, 6-8pm, Straight Marriage, Still Questioning Western Massachusetts.** A peer-led support group for women in a straight marriage/relationship struggling with sexual orientation or coming out. Meets first Tuesdays. Info: appleday621@yahoo.com.

**Wednesday, September 3, 7-9pm, Bisexual Social and Support Group (BLiSS).** All bi and bi-friendly people of all genders and orientations are welcome to attend. Meetings are peer-facilitated discussion groups, sometimes with a pre-selected topic or presenter. Meets first Wednesdays. Info/RSVP: bliss@biresource.net.

**Friday, September 5, 6-8pm, Bi Women of Color (BIWOC) Coffee and Chat.** This is a safe and supportive space for bi women of color to discuss a variety of topics, meeting at Flour Bakery on Clarendon Street in the Back Bay. Meets first Fridays. Info/RSVP: Gwen at biwocinfo@gmail.com. For online discussions visit: www.facebook.com/groups/Boston/BIWOC.

**Monday, September 8, 7pm, Straight Marriage, Still Questioning.** A peer-led support group for women in a straight marriage/relationship struggling with sexual orientation or coming out. Meets second Mondays. Info/RSVP: kate.e.flynn@gmail.com.

**Thursday, September 11, 7-9pm, Young Bisexual Social and Support Group (BLiSS).** If you are in your 20s or mid-30s (or thereabouts) and identify somewhere along the lines of bisexual/omni/pan/fluid or questioning, please join us for a few hours of socializing and support. Meets at Diesel Cafe, Somerville, on the Red Line second Thursdays. All genders welcome! Info/RSVP to Kate: youngblissboston@gmail.com

**Saturday, September 20, 11:30am, Bi Brunch.** This mixed gender bi group

brunches at Johnny D's on Holland St. in Davis Sq., Somerville. The Davis stop on the Red Line is just across the street. Meets third Saturdays.

**Sunday, September 21, noon, Annual BBWN Book Swap & Potluck Brunch** at Loren's in Medford co-hosted by Loren and Ellyn. It's time for our annual book swap where members bring books to swap with other members. Books can be of any genre and should be in good condition. Bring food and/or drinks to share. A great opportunity to meet other bi and bi-friendly women in the Boston area. Info/RSVP/directions: lorengomez@comcast.net.

**Tuesday, September 23, 15th Annual Celebrate Bisexuality Day (CBD).** An annual day to honor and acknowledge our community around the world. For details of how the Boston community will be marking it this year, visit the Bisexual Resource Center's website at www.biresource.net or check the BRC's Facebook/Twitter.

## October

**Wednesday, October 1, 7-9pm, Bisexual Social and Support Group (BLiSS).** (See September 3<sup>rd</sup>)

**Friday, October 3, 6-8pm, Bi Women of Color (BIWOC) Coffee and Chat.** (See September 5<sup>th</sup>)

**Tuesday, October 6, 6-8pm, Straight Marriage, Still Questioning Western Massachusetts.** (See September 2<sup>nd</sup>)

**Thursday, October 9, 7-9pm, Young Bisexual Social and Support Group (BLiSS).** (See September 11<sup>th</sup>)

**Monday, October 13, 7pm, Straight Marriage, Still Questioning.** (See September 8<sup>th</sup>)

**Calendar,** *continues on next page*

## Calendar, *continued from previous page*

**Saturday, October 18, 11:30am, Saturday Bi Brunch.**  
(See September 20<sup>th</sup>)

**Sunday, October 26, noon, BBWN Brunch at Steph's in Arlington.** Full Fall Theme: Pumpkins, Rust and Gold, Witches, Almond Joys, Apples, and Ghosts. In Bi fashion, up to you to choose!! This is a great opportunity to meet other bi and bi-friendly women in the Boston area. Please bring a potluck dish to share. Info/RSVP to Steph at smiserlis@gmail.com.

## November

**Tuesday, November 4, 6-8pm, Straight Marriage, Still Questioning Western Massachusetts.** (See September 2<sup>nd</sup>)

**Wednesday, November 5, 7-9pm, Bisexual Social and Support Group (BLISS).** (See September 3<sup>rd</sup>)

**Friday, November 7, 6-8pm, Bi Women of Color (BIWOC) Coffee and Chat.** (See September 5<sup>th</sup>)

**Monday, November 10, 7pm, Straight Marriage, Still Questioning.** (See September 8<sup>th</sup>)

**Thursday, November 13, 7-9pm, Young Bisexual Social and Support Group (BLISS).** (See September 11<sup>th</sup>)

**Saturday, November 15, 11:30am, Saturday Bi Brunch.**  
(See September 20<sup>th</sup>)

**Sunday, November 16, noon, BBWN Brunch at Heron's in Somerville.** The theme will be Thanksgiving, so please bring a themed dish to share. This is a great opportunity to meet other bi and bi-friendly women in the Boston area. RSVP/info/directions: Heron at herongreene smith@gmail.com.

### **Bi Women Quarterly** wants you!!!



Please support our work.

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## Coming and Going

*By Nikki Smith*

Coming and going is a guilty privilege  
Because my home and journey do not hold the same hearts  
Because I pass in nonbinary, where others cannot  
Because in a two-step system, we start out as Descartes  
I can never go back.

Coming and going is a guilty privilege  
I stepped out of Seattle with a veil of order  
Energy high and no care for those othered  
Awaiting my selfish goals every quarter  
I can NEVER go back.

Coming and going is a guilty privilege  
I didn't care whether my mom knew about me  
My friends care about me, none too devout we  
Praise our location and spread ourselves out  
Didn't need to look back.

Coming and going is a total privilege  
"We're so advanced! We're so open!" we're taught.  
"We're so progressive and moral!" we thought.  
Here in our liberal bubble, so caught  
Up in colors and rhetoric.

Coming and going was a lucky privilege  
I learned fast what was good and what would not do  
They accepted me, but not the rest of my crew  
Because gender and sex are the same? It's not true!  
I will NEVER GO BACK

To the coming and going and whitewash they had  
Across the treeline, I expected they would  
Disprove all the stereotypes that they could  
I placed onus on them to explain like they should  
That it wasn't a trap

That I hadn't grown up in a privileged place,  
They were just as far forward in love and in justice  
That what I had heard was a farce and it's just as  
Important to keep your heart open because  
That small town's got your back.

But coming and going was privilege, see.  
I came back, and I can't hold it all up inside  
Of me, swirling and curdling emotions we hide  
I never had to keep myself hidden, but I'd  
Love to never go back.

Coming and going is a guilty privilege.

I will never go back.

*Nikki Smith is a Veterinary Assistant with a love for social science and a disdain for unnecessary qualifiers. She practices skepticism and computer programming on a daily basis.*