

To Myself at Age 13 (and to other young women like me)

By Sara McCormick

To myself at the age of thirteen (and to other young women like me):

It's been ten years. You're imagining me pretty decently, and I think you might even recognize me if you saw me. Surely some things would surprise you. But be patient. You will live it. I want to talk about you.

I remember you. All long limbs and baggy clothes and prickly misanthropy. You are thirteen and confused and alone, and I'm not sure there is a more typical or more troubling combination. People will disregard you because you are young. They will convince you that you are invisible. That you aren't real. Every once in a while you still dig your nails in deep to remember that you are.

I remember your terror. You are so afraid, so constantly afraid that you will be alone, and so constantly afraid that you won't be. You are afraid of your best friend. Afraid because she has furious and wonderful wild hair, because she smells safe, because she has read the embarrassing poems you write and called them beautiful, because she makes you feel like you aren't alone.

I have a secret for you, dear self. You love her.

I wish that in telling you this you would realize it. Wish you would tell her for all it wouldn't do you any good. Wish

you would know it just to see what you could do, knowing your powerful and fragile and new self.

And I'm sorry. Because you won't realize it until you are twenty-two and bitter and aching and missing a time when you knew what your world was. You will spend almost all of these ten years in confusion and you will pretend to know nothing. Because no one told you what you could be. Because no one told you that you are real.

But I remember. I remember the time when all you wanted to do was to gently kiss her. I remember the time she wrote you a love letter and you kept it until the day you left for college. I remember telling yourself over and over again that you aren't gay, you just care about her like best friends do.

You are right, self. You aren't gay. But the truth of what you are will only hit you when you have stripped away the years of invisibility and of telling yourself you don't matter, and walk unflinching into the flames because you know now.

You are bisexual, young woman. Young self.

And I want you to know, with all my heart, that you are real.

Sara is a Clinical Psychology student, activist and writer. Her priority is the growth, development and acknowledgment of young girls everywhere.

Dear Women

By Meaghan Shaw

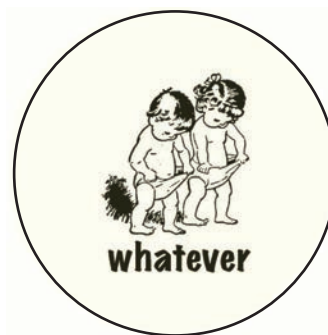
I have so many questions! What is it like for you in your generation? How have you found love and support? How have you seen things change from your generation? Have you even *seen* any change?

I've wondered about this ever since I came out as pansexual last year, my first year in college. I was taunted a few times by ignorant people who decided to mock my identity rather than take an opportunity to learn something new. But I know things were different for you. *Tell me more.* I want to know your stories. I want you to open up to me, if you want, and share some of the bad times with me.

I want to know the good times. I want to know how you were accepted, where you found love. How did your friends react? Your family? Have you found love? Are you in a

place that accepts you? If not, how do you manage? What keeps you there? Are you happy anyway?

And for the younger generations, those born into a more accepting world: what are your lives like? Do you see as much hatred? Do you even talk about sexuality? Or is it just something that's accepted and moved past? Are you finding more and more people who accept you for who you are? Or are people still caught up in the logistics of it all, the "How does that work" of it all? The "I don't understand your lifestyle" of it all?



Meaghan, continues on page 14

HONOR ROLL

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From Your Editor

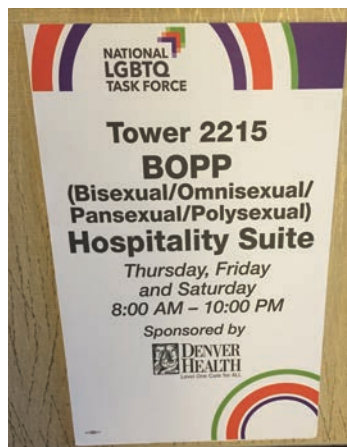
We received so many high-quality submissions on the topic of Intersection: Age that we've decided to run a second issue on this theme. This issue includes prose and poetry by Sara McCormick, Meaghan Shaw, Lila Hartelius, Robyn Walters, Emma Love, Rae Watanabe, Chiquita Violette, Jane Barnes, Ann Schranz, Jess McGowan and Andrea.

The Bi Women Around the World feature returns with an interview with Luigia Sasso in Verona, Italy. New Bisexual Resource Center President Julia Canfield introduces us to Bisexual Health Awareness Month. There's also Ask Tiggy, News Briefs and a calendar of events.

And 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.

We hope you enjoy this issue.

Robyn



Loren reads the *Bi Women Quarterly*. Send us a picture of YOU reading *BWQ*.



Next in *Bi Women Quarterly*

The theme for the next issue: **Toy Stories**

After several serious topics in a row, we're lightening up with the theme "Toy Stories." Yes, we're talking sex toys. What was your first? How do you talk to your lovers about them? What do sex-positive bi women need to know about to keep their sexual selves happy? And more! Personal stories (humor encouraged), poetry, artwork and short examples of resources to keep our playtime exciting, safe and FUN!

Submissions for the next issue must be received by May 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

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.**

BBWN is an all-volunteer organization. Want to host one of our monthly brunches, be the woman who coordinates the brunches or 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).

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

LUIGIA SASSO, Verona, Italy

By Robyn Ochs

Luigia Sasso is the bisexual chairwoman of Lieviti, the only Bisexual, Pansexual and Queer association in Italy, so far. She was born in Verona, but grew up in a small country town where she spent her childhood. She attended high school in Verona, where she was introduced to big city life, and discovered “values” different from those in the countryside. But she still carries within herself the healthy values from the farming world.

Luigia married at 25, became a mother at 30 and three years later gave birth to her second daughter. Up until then, her life was the one of a typical bourgeois woman with a family and a job (she works as a technical collaborator and computer programmer in a health institution in the Verona province), like all the women she knew.

I interviewed Luigia by email:

How did you get from your traditional life to the life you are living today?

Had fate so willed it, I would have continued that way forever. The catalyst for change was separating from my husband, with whom I couldn't get along anymore. I felt different from my peers. I had wonderful girlfriends, and, unlike other women, I always chose to socialize with women rather than with men. I spoke about my same-sex attraction with a colleague, and admitted that I wanted to test whether I was just longing for transgression, or it was my “inner ego” expressing itself.

I was 40 when this colleague introduced me to Rita, who then became my partner. She changed my life, and we were together for 10 years.

These were very busy years, full of adventure, public demonstrations and lesbian activism. I legally established the Veronese chapter of Arcilesbica [the main Italian lesbian association]. I chaired it for many years, and I can say that all this changed me a lot. From a reserved, somewhat shy and bourgeois employee, I became a militant advocate for LGBT rights.

Then when I was 50, the relationship with Rita had become unhealthy because it was too conflictive. I kept fighting with her, and I grew closer to a good, thoughtful and very learned man in whose presence I always felt a sense of great serenity and peace. This was what I had been looking for. My dire need for a family and for peace brought me so close to Raffaele that I eventually married him.

It was through this relationship that I became aware that I was bisexual. With Raffaele, I wasn't the self-defined-



Luigia, with Raffaele

heterosexual-until-40-Luigia, but a different Luigia with a new self-awareness I had acquired thanks to my cultural and social experiences in the lesbian world. I wasn't therefore “reverting to heterosexuality,” but rather “progressing towards bisexuality.”

Italy has a reputation as a very Catholic country. What is your religious background, and what impact did this have on your coming out?

I received a strong Catholic upbringing. This Catholic baggage made me suffer a lot, up to triggering a strong rage and aggressiveness towards that world which made me feel “elected” (as a bourgeois mother) until 40, and after 41 a “depraved sinner,” so wicked that I was unworthy of raising my children. I left Catholicism, which was oppressive and detrimental to my self-esteem, to embrace a different and more welcoming religion. I'm now a Waldensian [an Italian Protestant denomination], and this has given me a lot of opportunities.

What terms are used in Italian to describe bi, pansexual or queer people? Are these words equivalent to their English counterparts, or do they have a different meaning?

Bisessuale = Bisexual; Pansessuale = Pansexual; Queer and Bi have the same form in both languages. The meaning of all these words is also identical.

That said, bi people are non-existent in Italy. The prejudice stating that a person is either straight or gay/lesbian is still widespread. Bisexuality is more spoken about among trans people. In Siena [Tuscany] there is a self-defined pansexual group [www.movimentopansessuale.it/], and in Milan there

Luigia, continues on next page

Luigia, *continued from previous page*

is an association that has a lot of bisexuals [www.milkmilano.com]; then there is obviously our group here in Verona, but we don't know anyone else. I think that most bi people present themselves either as gay or lesbian to prevent discrimination, and some (actually, a few) people may present themselves as queer.

What rights are accorded to LGBT people in Italy? What progress is being made?

I've been an activist for the last 10 years, and, to tell the truth, I'm really disappointed, because we haven't attained anything politically. Perhaps we aimed too low, and got less than nothing. On the other hand, public opinion has changed. While there was a lot of gay bashing (certainly because of the Catholic culture), the climate has become more welcoming and accepting. There are some extremists, like the *Sentinelle in piedi* [literally, "Standing sentinels," the Italian version of the French movement *La Manif Pour Tous*], but, in my opinion, it is just a reaction to an already settled change.

Are bi folks well-integrated into Italy's sexual minority community?

Alas, bi people aren't accepted as such, and they often pass as gay or lesbian to prevent being "othered." There is still a lot of work to do.

You are chairwoman of Lieviti. What does the word "Lieviti" signify?

"Lieviti" literally means "Yeast." Yeast can change their sex (or better, "mating type") at will, so we loved to choose an anti-binary and sex/genderfluid organism as an eponym.

And please tell us about this organization.

We want to increase the resilience, self-worth and dignity of all minorities (especially sexual minorities, especially those belonging to the bisexual spectrum) through counseling, cultural initiatives and political action. We have joined Verona Pride, which will hold its parade on June 6th, 2015, striving to increase bi visibility.

We now meet weekly, on Thursdays at Casa di Ramia, a municipal institution which is supposed to help migrant women (but, since our mayor Flavio Tosi has been sentenced to two months' imprisonment, with probation, for hate speech against Roma people, there is little surprise that Casa di Ramia is forced to rely only on volunteer work and funds); there we used to hold Kundalini Yoga courses, and we're now teaching something akin to Laughter Yoga.

From time to time we join forces with the Milk Verona LGBT Community Center, the main Veronese LGBT association, to hold cultural events.

Our mailing list has 45 members, most of them living in or near Verona.

Meeting participation is quite varied: our self-help group drew from 5 to 15 people, while the cultural events organized together with Milk Verona draw 20 to 25.

We advertise our activities via Facebook or through leaflets spread across town. We've also become allies to the UDU, the main students' association in the University of Verona, so we are organizing a couple of lectures on LGBT families (and even one on the 'Ndrangheta, the most powerful criminal organization in the world, and the most homophobic one in Italy). We do our best when we cooperate with other organizations – the upcoming Pride is a wonderful occasion.

What bi resources are available in the Italian language?

There is next to nothing. We've translated the Open University's Report on Bisexuality, and we're translating Shiri Eisner's book, *Bi: Notes for a Bisexual Revolution*, even though we're more liberal than radical. There is a Wiki project on Queer sexualities (<http://www.wikipink.org>) and Raffaele has authored the entry on bisexuality.

Are you in contact with bi activists in other countries? Do you see a value in transnational activism?

Raffaele has quite a good command of English, but I use it rarely. Raffaele acts as our "Minister of Foreign Affairs." He corresponds with some European activists in the EuroBiNet Facebook group, and he is managing our joining ILGA [International Gay & Lesbian Association]. Transnational activism is certainly useful – when you learn that bisexuals in France, Holland, Israel, Italy, Serbia, Spain, the UK, the US, etc., go through the very same experiences, you understand that bisexuality exists and is not an artifact.

Thank you, Luigia, for your time. Do you have any last words?

Diversity enriches.

With special thanks to Raffaele Yona for serving as a linguistic bridge for this interview.



A Bisexual Spinster Turns Thirty

By Lila Hartelius

When I was six years old, my dad sat down with me and walked me through the creation of an age-contingent “life goals” document. “Age 16: Learn to drive . . . Age 18: Become an adult [whatever that means] . . . Age 30: Get married.” Yikes. I just turned 30. As much as I can say to myself, “Scrap that stupid document – my dad was out of his mind imposing that on a six-year-old,” these societal expectations still ring in my ears even when I’m not looking. It is a ring so close and so imperceptible that sometimes even I don’t hear it – not until I turn around and notice how much of it has taken the liberty of setting up house in my psyche.

I’ve heard some self-identified bisexual people profess that they don’t envision having any problem being in a life-long monogamous relationship – they don’t feel they would miss being with someone of a different gender. I’m not one of those people. I’ve always felt torn between, on the one hand, a desire to find a life-long partner and, on the other hand, a very clear sense that whichever gender such a partner happened to be, I’d always miss being with individuals of other genders. Polyamory is something I’ve considered – and even dabbled in – but I fear my jealous and clingy heart is too fragile for such a multifaceted relationship dynamic.

In the heat of a romantic moment, I sometimes get the notion that marrying the person I happen to be sharing the moment with would be a deeply satisfying thing. But in my everyday-laundry state of mind, I usually feel altogether quite uninterested in the idea of marriage, partly due to its gender-confining partnership nature. This feels strange as I launch out into the uncertain waters of a decade that, according to my culture, is supposed to be defined by holy matrimony and child-rearing. And if the idea of marriage seems at least mildly repulsive to me, the question of children is off the charts.

With respect to my decision not to get married and not to have kids, the only name I’ve found to describe what I am (and intend to continue to become) is “spinster” – not the most complimentary of terms. Add to that the fact that I might want to date people of other genders than male, and I start to disappear completely.

Being bisexual in high school and college was easy – well, as easy as it could be. It was cool to be something that happened to be “outside the box” or “risqué” – especially when nothing more than support for “coming out” was needed or provided. Being bisexual in my 30s – and a bisexual spinster, no less – is downright effacing. Not in a shaming sense, but in the sense that there is no identity I’ve found for someone of my bent who happens to be in this stage of my life with respect not only to my age bracket but also to the progression of my relationship to my bisexuality.

Coming out was easy. There were support groups for that. After that, what was there – a cliff? A sign saying, “We gave you the tools, now go build your own life”? Sorry, the tools you gave me weren’t made for the rough societal waters of my 30s. What’s worse than coming out to people who expect you to rebel because you’re young? Coming out to people who don’t even see you because they don’t have a name for what you are.

In my last weeks of being 29, I was terrified of either being swallowed beyond recognition into the conventional death-grip of turning 30 or adopting a new-spangled transparent identity. I frantically scoured my memory for women I’ve known in their 30s who embody the unconventional, passionate boldness I want to finally give myself permission to embody in rebellion against the usual “be responsible” mantra of one’s 30s. Looking over the list of women I came up with, I gasped to realize they were all bisexual.

Being this bold, unconventional self, I realized, has a lot to do with embracing my bisexuality. It would be so easy to overlook this aspect of my identity and instead generalize that the unconventionality has to do with embracing the uniqueness of “who I am” (whatever that means). But in a society to which I’ve responded by hiding my bisexuality (in order to avoid naïve comments that are frustrating at best, disheartening at worst), I cannot ignore the role bisexuality plays in my experience of myself. It is essential. It forms a great deal of my sense of myself as someone who has always wanted to be “different,” to “break out of the mold” – someone who feels the most vivacious when she embraces the differentness in her that she relishes.

So, at the end of the day, it’s not about making sure I get enough time in bed with people of a variety of genders (although that would be nice). It’s about holding a vision in my mind and heart of the kind of person I want to be in this phase of my life. Rather than fall prey to the conventional identity that could so easily creep up on me, I’m creating my own identity for my 30s – an identity that’s about loving and celebrating the beautiful, blazing incongruence that I know I am and love to be: bisexual, spinster and downright contrary!

Lila Hartelius, BA (lilahartelius.wordpress.com) is a published writer and editor who has written funded grant and business proposals and served as editorial assistant for the International Journal of Transpersonal Psychology. Her work has been published in Weird Sisters West and Tendrel (Naropa University’s diversity journal), and she has contributed to the efforts of Bennington College’s Queer Student Union, Naropa University’s GLBTQ student group and Boulder Pride.

The Meaning of Sex

By Robyn Walters

Ah, my dear adult child. (Nearing 77 years, I can call most anyone 'child'.) I'm writing this note about an age-related topic: sex.

There you are, in the full bloom of life. Here I am, supposedly sedate but definitely not. Both of us think about sex, but it might be more on your mind than mine. Or we may think of it, relate to it, differently. You see, there are at least two aspects to sex: having sex (action) and being a certain sex (passive).

At your age, I imagine you spend more time thinking about the actionable meaning and hoping that it involves either undying love or variety, maybe of the bisexual kind. Enjoy, no matter what the Puritans and certain politicians say. For many of us, the bloom doesn't last forever. Age can be, often becomes, a factor.

No, no, don't feel sorry for this old lady. I still think of the "having sex" now and then, but my current circumstances stand in the way of that likelihood. So my interests turned, some years ago, to being a certain sex. It took me 63 years to fulfill my destiny as a member of the female sex. In that same year, I finally found a marriage I believe will last, one in which I have pledged fidelity. Thank goodness that for us having sex is not very important, since that seems to be our one incompatibility. Do my loins burn now and then? Oh, yes. Do I act on it when some hunk or some pretty woman shows some interest in little old me? No. Having sex in my reformed body will have to wait until the next reincarnation, which I hope will be a little more straightforward.

Do you ever think about the sex you were designated at birth, or has it always matched your gender? Life is more simple, more straightforward and more comfortable if sex and gender match. If they do not, child, be comforted that many of us have gone before you, and there are some old women who understand and can help.

But now, finish getting into that little black dress and go have some rollicking safe fun with your date tonight, be it a man or a woman.

I'll leave the porch light on for you.

Love,

Aunt Robyn

Robyn Walters is a transwoman who had her surgery 14 years ago on her 63rd birthday. Becoming a non-practicing bisexual was an unexpected part of her journey. She and her author husband live in Hawai'i.



Dear Michelle Obama

By Emma Love

I told my mom that my breasts don't belong to me.
She laughed.
The news came on
and you smiled at the miles between us.
And all I could think
That's what a woman looks like
Poised. Feminine. Beautiful.

I told my sister that I loved another girl.
She laughed.
Don't tell anyone, she said
That's a bell you can't un-ring.
But I took a hammer to that bell and still
Silence.
You cut your hair – a bold move
The world rejoiced.

I told my father that I didn't belong
in this world.
He laughed.
You're either one or another
It's just the facts he said.
But the title of Woman or Man
Don't belong to my body
Nor my mind.
But you are America's lady,
The epitome of a Woman.

I'm telling you I am one of many.
Don't laugh.
We are given these coffins
That the ignorant call gender roles
But we will not bury ourselves.
We will not submit to the silent murder of
our identities.
I speak – my world laughs.
You are the Woman of women
You have the ear of the world
You speak – the world listens.

Emma is 18 years old and lives in Mukilteo, Washington. Emma plans to earn a degree in political science and a law degree in order to work in human rights law.

Synthesis

By Rae Watanabe

I was having one of those days – the kind where I rushed from place to place and completely violated the idea of being fully present in every moment. I hurriedly stepped out of my car and dashed toward the restaurant for yet *another* meeting. Two beautiful young women, holding hands and in their own little world, yanked me back into the moment. Then, they noticed me, let their hands drop, moved away from each other, and let tension surge within their bodies.

At 49 years old, I wanted to scream, “No! I have worked all of my life so you can do that!” Instead, I just smiled to let them know it was all right and not to be afraid. The tension in their bodies dissipated and they smiled back. Later, I would realize that I still did not look stereotypically lesbian, whatever that means. After almost 30 years after coming out, older – usually butch – lesbians asked if I was lost whenever I’d wander into a lesbian bar and two young lesbians did not recognize me as “one of them.”

But am I still? A few months after that exchange of smiles between two generations, I would make the conscious decision to date a man. I had dated women all of my life up to that point, but I had also been through some fairly traumatic transitions, which could fill up a book. But that’s another story. Suffice to say, I am now 55 and married to a man who adores me, who supports my career by willingly doing housework, and who treats me the way I’ve always dreamt of being treated – with kindness and respect.

At the age equivalent of the speed limit, I have no complaints about my personal life, for I have discovered what

heterosexual privilege is. Previously, I had only a textbook understanding of it. Now, because my husband and I enjoy traveling, I understand it in ways that make me sad – and sometimes mad – for openly gay and lesbian couples: There’s the warm welcome in small towns across America and Europe, there’s the best table with much fawning at fine restaurants, there’s the immediate greeting and superior service at designer to discount stores. I could go on; I won’t because I believe it’s hurtful to my amazing yet slighted gay and lesbian family.

Sure, same-sex marriage is legal now in Hawaii. I have attended some wonderful soirées. I have seen fantastic wedding cakes, my favorite being a tower of rainbow cupcakes! I have even introduced my husband, who is a videographer, to Melissa Etheridge’s music, so that he’d have a more complete offering of soundtracks for newly married fans of Melissa.

My life, my world, is easy now. My life, when I was younger and openly lesbian, seemed fractured in parts, no matter how hard I tried. Work seemed separate from home though I was “out”; I suspect because we live in a heterosexist world. It also seemed more of a struggle simply to exist in a world where I was sometimes not wanted nor welcomed. For me, that struggle is over.

A new one has emerged. While I enjoy my life now, I miss gay and lesbian culture. I make time to see my gay and lesbian friends because they really are the family of my heart, and a few still invite me to “big events” like when Margaret Cho comes to town. Often, however, they just forget to let me know because they don’t see me at “all the usual” places. I don’t take it personally, but I do enjoy going to see Margaret, Melissa, David Sedaris, Wanda Sykes, k.d. lang, etc. whenever they play in Honolulu. It’s just that, now, in order to do so, I have to do the asking. After a lifetime of being asked to events, I have learned to be okay with doing the asking.

Oh! There is *one* more struggle in my new life. It turns out that my husband, whom other heterosexual women have assured me is typical, hogs the TV remote. I told him that he treats that thing as if it’s part of his penis; he couldn’t stop laughing – though he wouldn’t let go of it!

Rae N. Watanabe has taught English at Leeward Community College in Hawai‘i for 20 years, much to the detriment of her creative writing. Earlier this year, she made a conscious decision to return to her writing roots. This essay is one result.



Untitled

By Chiquita Violette

Millennials, Boomers, Gen Xers:
Remain stoic when the blood boils, we all go green at times.
Construct with, instead of destructing each other.
Cross-generational mentorship. All points on the age continuum have something to offer and a need to be met.
Listen. Listen, listen. No seriously, like, you know, like . . . listen.
Counsel and console, get funky. Dialogue (and dance) to healing.
Cooperative, inclusive creative leadership.
Conscious exploration of the self and each other.



Chiquita Violette is a plurisexual 29-year-old student, artist and activist. She is founder of Nonmonosexual People of Color and a Dallas Morning News LG-BTQ Insider.*

New York City

By Jane Barnes

I'm in love with New York the delis
never close, there's always take-out
pretty women and men will chat you
up and there are ATMs subway lines
fashion mistakes moccasins and
little black heels there's this young
couple she met the love of her
life at Delmonico's while gazing
at the cold cuts in the refrigerator

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.

Aging and its Surprises

By Ann Schranz

Kilo kilo six kilo tango x-ray (KK6KTX) – I never imagined that, at age 58, I would have just recently received my ham radio call sign, but it is true. I pressed the radio’s “push to talk” button yesterday for the first time and introduced myself to nearby ham radio operators who are prepared to relay messages in the event of an emergency.

I never imagined that, at this age, I would be wildly enthusiastic about Olympic-style boxing, but it is true. I have taken boxing lessons for the past two and a half years, and I have started a Meetup group for women seeking boxing sparring partners. I was never athletic at earlier times in my life. However, today I need a small shelving unit to hold my athletic gear: boxing gloves, head protection, boxing shoes, mouth guard, hand wraps, towel, sweat bands, ankle braces.

My work as a Unitarian Universalist minister is both challenging and fulfilling. I openly identified as bisexual and poly during the ministerial credentialing process, which occasionally made for interesting times. My partner and I live 35 miles apart – close enough to see each other a couple of times each week, yet far enough away that we each have full lives in our respective towns. Sometimes we long for more sustained time together, but it looks like that will have to wait.

All in all, life is more satisfying today than it has ever been, and that is a happy surprise. Still, I find myself reflecting on mortality fairly often. That is an occupational hazard / spiritual opportunity. I am aware that eventually we say good-bye to everyone and everything we care about. I aspire to cherish relationships and nurture them, while at the same time recognizing that change is the only constant.

I feel optimistic about my ability to navigate the aging process. My mother is in her early 80s, and she is an inspiring



role model. I do not have any children, which simplifies my options in older age in some ways, though it complicates options in other ways. I have no regrets about my decision not to have children, nor do I regret my decision not to marry.

It has been 10 years or so since I was involved with bisexual activism. I have fond memories of the people I met in those intense days. I am grateful for the Facebook connections that still link us. Who knows what I will do in retirement? I may reconnect with people and causes dear to my heart. I do not want to wait until retirement to stop and smell the roses. By then, I hope stopping to smell life’s roses will be a matter of habit.

Ann Schranz is a Unitarian Universalist minister serving a congregation in Southern California. She is 58 years old.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES:

We are looking for folks with graphic design skills to create some gorgeous graphic images for this publication, to help us improve our look, and to design the pins that we sell as a fundraising tool to support our work. We’ll also be hiring a summer intern (details will be posted at biwomenboston.org). And to all women in the Boston area: please consider showing up at a Stuff & Stuff. Other volunteer opportunities are available as well.

Interested: Contact Robyn at biwomeneditor@gmail.com.

Too Young to Know

By Jess McGowan

Everyone knows that teenagers have a veritable minefield of hormones raging inside, and with explosions going off in every corner, it's understandable that people might be skeptical of their emotions.

Furthermore, being in a time for finding yourself, many young people feel compelled to try out every possible thing they can. I myself have several friends that have dabbled in same-sex relationships, only to conclude that it isn't for them. And that is totally fine. And yes, some people do just go through phases. It's as much a part of growing up and finding yourself as being plagued by spots and the ability to sleep for 18 hours a day.

However, when people turn around and claim, "You are too young to know," that's when something has gone wrong. First of all, if someone were to tell a thirty-year-old person that their feelings were not valid, people would kick up a storm. Secondly, dismissing someone's feelings on the basis that "it's only hormones" is not only patronizing, but downright damaging. Who gives anyone the right to decide what someone else feels?

How narrow-minded it is to compress the entire spectrum of human emotion down into platonic and romantic feelings! Plenty of people who identify as heterosexual have non-platonic feelings for people of the same gender, and these may be because there is simply so much for a person to feel about another – love, lust, admiration, awe – that there will always be a crossover (see Youtube user Jenna Marbles, who so eloquently stated; "I can't tell if I want to be you or be on you"). And maybe, at the end, that person will shrug and claim it was a phase. Or, they might stop identifying as straight. Both of these things are fine, but they have nothing to do with age.

I am 16, and I am in sixth form. When I tell people that I identify as a pansexual – besides the inevitable "what is that?" or pan-related joke – they will quite often dismiss my feelings as nothing more than attention seeking. Sometimes, they look at me like I'm high as a kite, sometimes they laugh, and sometimes they ask me if it's because I haven't found the right guy yet. It takes more self-restraint than I'm willing to admit to stop myself from tearing out my own hair.

But, returning to the point about the inevitable question about what pansexuality is, the entire issue of age could possibly be solved with a little more education. Of course people aren't willing to accept that a 16-year-old person could know who she truly has feelings for, if they don't even understand those feelings. I'll be the first to admit that I didn't even know what pansexuality was until a few



months ago, having lumped my feelings under bisexuality – admittedly, my understanding of Latin affixes has improved since then. If I, a member of the LGBT+ community, didn't even understand it, how can we expect other people to?

So, yes, I am often dismissed as a teenage phase because of how old I am. But people cannot form opinions on things they do not truly understand. There is so much turbulence during those adolescent years that I think people are almost justified in their skepticism. This is understandable when you consider that in the UK – depending on what survey you believe, if any – that only about 3-6% of the population identify as anything but straight. But, no matter what the statistics say, no one has the right to tell anyone who they have feelings for. No one has the right to tell you that you are something you are not. And no one on this Earth is allowed to tell you that your feelings don't matter, cradle to grave.

Jess is a 16-year-old female living in Britain. A strong believer in social equality, and someone who identifies as pansexual, it's important to her that people have the chance to listen to every side of the story.

Letter to Young Queer Girls

By Andrea

Dear young bisexual, pansexual, fluid, queer or questioning girls:

Hi there. You're around 10-13 years old. We probably share common experiences: the stress of school, you're more than likely slap bang in the middle of puberty and you're most likely on a (frighteningly awkward) journey to find who you actually are – and a part of who you are includes your sexuality.

You probably look at boys, girls and people of varying genders and think, "Hey, they are pretty cute." You wouldn't mind kissing or dating them. While many of your female friends develop crushes on the cutest boys in school, you perhaps think the girl sitting next to you in English is cute, too. Which is odd, because everyone is into one gender or the other, right? Wrong.

Figuring out that you're neither straight nor gay/lesbian can be a long, hard process. I initially thought I was straight because I was into boys, and thought that if you liked boys, then you're straight. Granted that was because I experienced a lot of bi-erasure, with people around me defining sexualities as either "gay" or "straight," conveniently leaving out all the other sexualities that include attraction to more than one gender. But, while I thought I was straight, I was so confused: if I liked boys, and was therefore straight, then why was I developing crushes on girls? Why could I picture myself in relationships with both? The answer was that I wasn't straight. Unfortunately, I didn't know it until I turned 17. But you may know now, or may figure it out kind of "late," like me, and that's fine too. Different people realize their sexualities at different times of their lives for many different reasons.

I was confused when I thought I was straight... but when I figured out I was bisexual, I was sure and happy in realizing the reality of my sexuality. But most people will call

people who identify with bisexuality, pansexuality or fluid sexualities "confused." And because you're young, they will also most likely brand you as "attention seeking" or as "going through a phase." If you are confused, that's perfectly okay. What's not okay is for people to dismiss you because you are young and queer. Just remember that the only person who can define your sexuality is yourself, and if your labels change over time, that's perfectly okay too. And remember: your dating experience does NOT dictate your sexuality. You can be pansexual and never have had your first kiss. You can call yourself bisexual and have only dated girls, or queer even if you've only dated boys. What you call yourself is up to you!

You may not be ready to come out yet, and that's perfectly fine. Coming out, especially to parents and family, can be scary and even dangerous. Only come out when you are ready, but have someone who knows and to whom you can talk about it. Whether it's one best friend, a few close friends or all of your friends, having good friends you can trust and talk to make all the difference in the world.

You're young, and about to conquer puberty and high school and along the way find out who you are. There will be confusing and hard times and some of those will be about your sexuality. Talk to people you trust about your issues. Find out what you love and honestly, it will get better.

Much love,
Andrea

Andrea is an 18-year-old bisexual woman currently living in a small university town in South Africa. She is a first-year Journalism student majoring in Journalism and Politics.

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



News Briefs

By Robyn Ochs



BIG NEWS: Kate Brown is the first out bisexual Governor in US history. On February 18, the Governor of Oregon stepped down and Kate Brown, who had been the state's attorney general, ascended to this position. Brown, a Democrat, has been in state government since 1991, including a time as Senate Majority leader. She has been out as bi since shortly after being elected to the Oregon House of Representatives. In OutHistory's project, "Out and Elected in the USA: 1974-2004," she wrote:

I believe it was during my early 30's that I figured out who, or what, I am. But it wasn't until it was written in the Oregonian newspaper that I was bisexual that I had to face the inevitable and let those around me know. Thus began my very public coming out as a bisexual:

- Coming out to my parents – who flew in from Minnesota “to have a talk.” Their response – “It would be much easier for us if you were a lesbian.”
- Coming out to my gay friends – who called me half-queer.
- Coming out to my straight friends – who never thought I could make up my mind about anything anyway.

And, most frighteningly to me:

- Coming out to my legislative colleagues. At the beginning of the next legislative session sitting in the House lounge, representative Bill Markham, who is over 70 years old, extremely conservative, and a legislator for more than 20 years comes to join me. Over lunch he looks up to say, “Read in the Oregonian a few months ago you were bisexual. Guess that means I still have a chance?!”

Some days I feel like I have a foot in both worlds, yet never really belonging to either.



Photo: Peg Preble

Gov. Brown with Robyn Ochs at the first LGBT Reception at the White House, June 29, 2009.



Photo: David Tuffen, Dallas Voice



Photo: David Tuffen, Dallas Voice

At the Creating Change Conference in Denver, Colorado

December 4-8, bi+ activists facilitated several workshops: Building Community & Resisting Biphobia; Intersection Electric; Building Bisexual Health Awareness; Bisexual/Pansexual/Fluid Caucus; Beyond Binaries; Bi the Agenda; Shaping Bi Inclusive Advocacy. In addition, they participated in a daylong Bi Organizing Institute; hung out in the BOPP Hospitality Suite; and chatted, shopped and collected materials at a display table shared by various bi groups (thanks, Task Force!). On Saturday, just before the State of the Movement plenary, 50+ loud and enthusiastic bi folks carrying signs and chanting “We are the B in LGBT” engaged in a bi visibility action.

And on a recent episode of *Grey's Anatomy*, “Bend and Break,” Callie finally used the ‘B’ word: “So I’m bisexual! So what? It’s a thing, and it’s real. I mean, it’s called LGBTQ for a reason. There’s a ‘B’ in there and it doesn’t mean badass. Okay, it kinda does, but it also means bi.”



Bisexual Health Awareness Month

By Julia Canfield

Bisexual Health Awareness Month (BHAM) is back and kicking into full gear for March 2015! The Bisexual Resource Center (BRC) is proud to launch the second year of this social media campaign dedicated to raising awareness about the bisexual community's physical and mental health disparities. Because bisexual individuals report consistently higher levels of depression, suicidality, anxiety and other mood disorders compared to our heterosexual and homosexual counterparts, this year's theme for BHAM is Mental Health.

BHAM will engage the community at large and form local and national partnerships throughout the month of March to raise awareness about the various mental health disparities experienced by the bisexual community. Follow the BRC on Facebook (Bisexual Resource Center), Twitter (@BRC_Central), and Tumblr (biresourcecenter) all month long for the following focus weeks:

March 2-6: (Statistics) A focus on current statistics and research data concerning mental health disparities in the bisexual community.

March 9-13: (Intersectionality) An emphasis on how race, ethnicity, class, age, ability, etc., can further impact mental health disparities in the bisexual community, particularly in regards to experiences of oppression and discrimination.

March 16-20: (Resources) A spotlight on and creation of current or new resources that can address mental health disparities in the bisexual community.



[BHAM Graphic designed by Kena Ravel]

March 23-27: (Action) The promotion and development of interventions, policies and other activities that work to prevent or decrease mental health disparities in the bisexual community.

Our goal is not only to educate others about our community's most pressing mental health disparities, but also to support bisexual individuals in need and to advocate for lasting change. If you have any questions about Bisexual Health Awareness Month, or want to get involved, please reach out to us at bham@biresource.net.

Julia Canfield, MPH, CHES, is the Board President of the Bisexual Resource Center, the oldest national bisexual organization in the United States that advocates for bisexual visibility and raises awareness about bisexuality throughout LGBT and straight communities.

Reader Feedback

To Robyn and the *BWQ*,

Thank you so much for all you and others do to make *BWQ* happen. I particularly loved the recent issue about spirituality. I am in a phase of my life where I am investing a lot of energy in work-related passions and this publication keeps me tied into the bi community in the midst of that, every time I pick it up! A donation is enclosed.

Sheri in Seattle

Respond. React. Suggest. Praise. Share.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Write to us at:

biwomeneditor@gmail.com



Ask Tiggy

Dear Tiggy,

I started questioning my sexual orientation when I was 15 years old. When I came out to my mom as a bisexual, she said it was just a phase. Since I had a serious boyfriend at that time, I sort of forgot about my bisexuality and didn't think about it for years, until now at age 20. I noticed that I was pushing women (my own gender) out of my life and it got me wondering whether I was doing so because I like them and that scares me.

I decided to go to the local LGBT Center – thank God we have one in my small city (Kherson, Ukraine). I met lots of lesbian girls and a few days ago, they asked me to hang out and play guitar with them. It was fun and I even met a girl who I liked. As the evening wore on, we were already sitting closer to each other and holding hands. I kissed her a lot and we danced slowly... it felt great.

But the next day when we went for a walk, it was very different. I had all of these thoughts in my mind, imagining myself hugging and kissing her, but I couldn't make a move *at all*.

Is it possible that I was just drunk that night and that's what caused my behavior? Or maybe I am so afraid of my feelings that I freeze up any time I think about touching her? She and I are pretty different and don't have things to talk about, which makes it difficult for me to spend time with her.

– Lera

Dear Lera,

I suspect that you're dealing with internalized homophobia. That's when you take all of the anti-LGBT messages that society – school, church, the media, etc. – has pounded into your head for your entire life and you believe them.

Experts say that internalized homophobia is like Stockholm Syndrome. Named after the city where a bank robbery took place in the 1970s, this syndrome describes the mindset that drove the robbery hostages to defend, identify with and admire their captors.

Like Stockholm Syndrome, internalized homophobia is a type of self-preservation. If you grow up hearing from all sides that non-straight feelings and behavior are only for bad people, you try as hard as you can not to be "bad" in the eyes of your friends and family.

I want you to give yourself a major pat on the back for recognizing that you might be avoiding women due to fear of underlying feelings for them. That was some excellent insight. But you didn't stop there; you plucked up your courage and went to the LGBT Center. And then you partied with a girl you liked! Lera, you're doing a fantastic job finding out who you are and what you like.

Keep going to the Center and hanging out with new friends. If you're not ready to kiss other women yet, that's OK. Please don't feel like you have to rush into anything.

It sounds like this one isn't the girl for you but maybe you'll want to kiss someone you have more in common with. As for figuring out how you really feel, see if there's a coming out group at the center. You might also ask the staff if they can recommend a bi-friendly therapist who will help you with coming out.



Are you a bi lady in need of some good advice? Write to Tiggy Upland at 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.

Meaghan, continued from page 1

To future generations: I hope you don't have to worry about all this. I hope it's not a question necessary to ask. I hope you're accepted as you are: a perfectly imperfect human being, flaws and all. I hope you, my future children, find happiness. I hope you are accepted for who you are. I hope all of this hatred that stems from ignorance is remedied. I hope you can be free to be who you are, free to express yourself.

I hope I have the courage to continue to just be myself in this world, following my own winding, twisting path wherever it may lead me. And I hope I'll find love and acceptance along the way.

With love,
Meaghan

Meaghan Shaw is a student at Southern Methodist University studying Environmental Science. She has found an accepting community at her school, and thanks her friends and family for being as supportive of her as they are.

The "Bi Office"

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

Ongoing Events

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

2nd Mondays:

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

2nd Mondays:

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

1st Wednesdays

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

2nd Thursdays:

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

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

March

4 (Wednesday) 7-9pm, Bisexual Social and Support Group (BLiSS). All bi and bi-friendly people of all genders and orientations welcome to attend. Meetings are peer-facilitated discussion groups, sometimes with a pre-selected topic or presenter. Meets 1st Wednesdays. Info/RSVP: bliss@biresource.net.

6 (Friday) 6:30-8:30pm, Bi Women of Color (BIWOC) Coffee and Chat. A safe and supportive space for bi women of color to discuss a variety of topics, meeting at Dado Tea in Harvard Square. Meets 1st Fridays. To RSVP/for info, email Gwen at biwocinfo@gmail.com. For online discussions please visit <https://www.facebook.com/groups/BostonBIWOC/>

7 (Saturday) 7pm-2am, BUST*OUT at a radically-welcoming, bi-friendly social. BBWN teams up with Madfemmepride to cosponsor this famous Party to celebrate Bisexuality & Sexual Diversity. Mingling activities followed by dancing. Find us in the back room @ Club Cafe, 209 Columbus Ave, Boston. \$10 at the door; \$8 in advance. Club Cafe is a bar, so this event is 21+. Get advance tix & more at <http://www.meetup.com/madfemmepride/>

8 (Sunday) 2-4pm, Tea for Bisexual Women Partnered with Men. We will discuss a wide range of issues related to attraction, sexuality, and gender in a supportive safe space for only trans, cis, and agender self-identified women of all races and ethnic backgrounds. Meets at the Blue Shirt Café in Davis Square. To RSVP/for info, visit <http://www.meetup.com/Bi-Community-Activities/events/219837729/>

9 (Monday) 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 2nd Mondays. Info/RSVP: kate.e.flynn@gmail.com.

12 (Thursday) 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 are questioning in that direction), please join us on the second Thursdays for a few hours of laughter, discussion, activities, and/or the eating and drinking of delicious things! Activities and locations will vary, so please contact Kate at youngblissboston@gmail.com for info/to RSVP.

15 (Sunday) 12pm, BBWN Potluck Brunch at Marcia's in Charlestown. Bring a potluck dish to share. As this date (traditionally called "the Ides of March," which Caesar was warned about) also marked the first full moon in the earliest calendars, please bring a memory associated with the moon to share. This is a great opportunity to meet other bi and bi-friendly women in the Boston area. Info/RSVP to marciazuckerman@mac.com

21 (Saturday) 11:30am, Bi Brunch. This mixed gender bi group brunches at Johnny D's on Holland St. in Davis Sq., Somerville across from the Davis stop on the Red Line. Meets 3rd Saturdays.

27 (Thursday) 6:30-8pm, Young BLiSS Bi-Weekly, Discussion Edition. Join us for our brand spankin' new other-side-of-the-river discussion group! This group will meet 4th Thursdays. It will be more discussion-based than our usual monthly meetings, so come prepared for some excellent relevant conversation! Meets at the Prudential Mall Food Court, near Copley. Info/RSVP: contact Gabby at gmblonder@gmail.com.

April

1 (Wednesday) 7-9 pm, Bisexual Social and Support Group (BLiSS). (See March 4th.)

3 (Friday) 6:30-8:30pm, Bi Women of Color (BIWOC) Coffee and Chat. (See March 6th.)

9 (Thursday) 7-9pm, Young Bisexual Social and Support Group (BLiSS). (See March 12th.)

Calendar, continues on next page

Calendar, *continued from previous page*

11 (Saturday) 12pm, BBWN Potluck Brunch at Beth's in Belmont. Bring a potluck dish to share. A great opportunity to meet other bi and bi-friendly women in the Boston area. Info/RSVP to bethinnis@gmail.com.

13 (Monday) 7pm, Straight Marriage, Still Questioning. (See March 9th.)

17-19 (Friday-Sunday) BECAUSE Conference in Minneapolis. For information, see <http://www.becauseconference.org>

18 (Saturday) 11:30am, Saturday Bi Brunch. (See March 21st.)

23 (Thursday) 6:30-8pm, Young BLiSS Bi-Weekly, Discussion Edition. (See March 27th.)

May

1 (Friday) 6-8pm, Bi Women of Color (BIWOC) Coffee and Chat. (See March 6th.)

2 (Saturday) 12-5pm, Northampton Pride March & Festival. Kick off Pride season in Northampton! March goes from town to the Tri-County Fairgrounds for the festival. Info: www.nohopride.org.

6 (Wednesday) 7-9pm, Bisexual Social and Support Group (BLiSS). (See March 4th.)

9 (Saturday) noon, BBWN Potluck Brunch at Robyn's in Jamaica Plain. Please bring food and/or drinks to share. There are cats in the home. Children welcome. A great opportunity to meet other bi and bi-friendly women in the Boston area. Info/RSVP: robyn@robynocho.com for directions.

10 (Sunday) 2-4pm, Tea for Bisexual Women Partnered with Men. (See March 8th.)

11 (Monday) 7pm, Straight Marriage, Still Questioning. (See March 9th.)

14 (Thursday) 7-9pm, Young Bisexual Social and Support Group (BLiSS). (See March 12th.)

16 (Saturday) 11:30am, Saturday Bi Brunch. (See March 21st.)

16 (Saturday) Youth Pride. Pride Events aimed at the under-21 crowd. Info: <http://www.bostonpride.org/youth-pride/>

28 (Thursday) 6:30-8pm, Young BLiSS Bi-Weekly, Discussion Edition. (See March 27th.)



November 2014 brunch at Heron's