

## Thoughts on Northampton Pride

By Johanna Bates

In June, I'll have been out as bisexual for 21 years. I came out at 15, and it's always felt like a best-fit descriptor for me. Not perfect, but to me, language is never perfect.

When I was in college at Brown University in the 1990s, I began seeking support for my identity as bi person. I came across Robyn Ochs, who at the time was teaching a class on bisexual identity at Tufts. I asked her to come speak on campus, and that helped start a campus group called BITE (BIs Talk and Eat) that continues to this day. Having her come speak was validating and powerful for me then, as it was for many others at my school who were exploring a bi identity.

I've lived in western Massachusetts for ten years now. I'm married to a man and we have a four-year-old son. Mostly, my sexuality is invisible, unless I talk about it. But I feel it as part of who I am every day of my life.

We moved out here, in part, because we wanted to live somewhere rural with a progressive, queer-friendly community. I went to Northampton Pride at first, but I wouldn't see more than a handful of bisexuals there. There are certainly plenty of bi people, but not many who seem to feel like being visible is important to them. I stopped going for a while.



Northampton Pride, continues on page 14

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## Changing My Mind

By Lorraine Wilson

I had two dads growing up, but I didn't know it. I honestly had no idea. None. I moved in with my dad and his "roommate" when I was twelve. I had no reason to question their situation. They kept separate bedrooms and were never affectionate. Looking back, it was sad in so many ways. I didn't know then what I know now and neither did they. We've all learned a lot along this journey. As much as it hurts to admit, religion played a large part in our shroud of secrecy and lies.

My brother leaned over during our Urban Literature class in tenth grade and told me that our dad was gay. The rest of the class was busy debating the finer points of *Down These Mean Streets* by Piri Thomas, but I was lost inside of myself. I cried, and after class I found my boyfriend and

told him my father was gay. I then dropped another bomb: so was I. He was dumbfounded and I was devastated. Perhaps I thought it was somehow contagious. Surely, my world was turned upside down. At that moment in 1993, my heart ached deeply. In fact, it felt broken.

Later that night, I confronted my father in the kitchen. I told him I was angry. I was upset about being lied to. He told me that he didn't tell me because he knew I wouldn't approve. That was true. I grew up thinking that that homosexuality was a sin and a choice. I believed that it kept you separate from God and grace. My most progressive idea about being gay at that time was that I could love the person but not their choices. I prayed for my dad to change and I believed it was possible. I feel a profound sense of shame just writing this down.

Changing My Mind, continues on page 9

## HONOR ROLL

Justin Adkins  
Katelynn Bishop  
Jennifer Taub  
Jen Bonardi  
Marjorie Charney  
Katrina Chaves  
Loren G.  
Carla Imperial  
Megan Jewett  
Lucy Lizard  
Lynne Levine  
Robyn Ochs  
Ellyn Ruthstrom  
Laurie Wolfe  
Gail Zacharias

*And many more  
fabulous people! You  
know who you are!*

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## From your editor

The theme of this issue is “Faith and Spirit.” Readers were asked, “What do you believe? What motivates and inspires you? How does the religion (if any) in which you were raised match with your current understanding of the world? In what way has your perspective changed? And how does all of this tie in with your sexual orientation?”

On the same day I began writing this editor’s note, I read of the U.S. Presbyterian Church’s announcement that it has voted to allow the ordination of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender candidates for ministry. By this action, Presbyterians join a growing Protestant movement of religious traditions that have eliminated official barriers to leadership for LGBT people. Though unaffiliated with any religious institution, I am cheered that yet another obstacle has been removed for LGBT people of faith. We must continue to challenge this false “God v. Gays” dichotomy.

We present essays by Lorraine Wilson, Chiquita Violette, Beth Kimbell and Daphne Kannelopoulos; poetry by Marcia Deihl, Lisa Bevevino, Casey Lyons, Diane Verrochi and Jo-Ann Carlson; a song by Hana Maris and another installment of Jess Wells’s “The See-Saw Family”; and artwork by Melissa Kulig and Jo-Anne Carlson.

Our “Bi Women Around the World” column features Polina Skibinskaya, a tri-national bisexual woman. Johanna Bates gives us her perspective on Northampton Pride. Ellyn Ruthstrom reviews a book for GLBTQ teens and Debbie Block-Schwenk reviews a book about polyamory. Also in this issue we present news briefs, our calendar of events, and our “Ask Tiggy” advice column.

Enjoy this newsletter, and please consider adding your voice and/or your artwork to the next issue of *Bi Women*.

—Robyn

## Next in *Bi Women*

The theme for the Fall ‘11 issue:

### Out at Work

Are you out at work? Are you involved in a workplace LGBT special interest group? Why? Why not? Share your coming out stories and curious conversations with supervisors or co-workers. If you are about to enter the workforce, what are your fears and hopes about coming out?

**Submissions for the next issue  
must be received by August 5.**

*Send your submissions and  
your suggestions for future topics to  
biwomeneditor@gmail.com.*

Upcoming themes may include: When I Knew; In/Visibility; Then & Now; another Youth issue, more. (What do YOU suggest?)

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

***Bi Women* is online at  
biwomenboston.org.**

**The Boston Bisexual Women’s Network** is an all-volunteer organization. Want to host one of our monthly brunches, be the woman who coordinates the brunches, and/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, gender identities, class backgrounds, racial, ethnic and religious groups, ages and abilities are welcome. Through the vehicles of discussion, support, education, outreach, collective action and social events related to bisexuality, we are committed to the goals of full acceptance as bisexuals within the larger LGBT community, and to full acceptance of bisexual, lesbian, gay and transgender people within the larger society.

# Bi Women Around the World:

## Polina Skibinskaya,

### A Tri-national Bisexual from Ukraine, US and Canada

By Robyn Ochs

**Polina Skibinskaya:** I was born in Odessa, Ukraine, back when it was part of the Soviet Union. Odessa had a spirit similar to New York: it has its own slang, a rich dark comedy culture, and a sort of romanticized history of mafia wars. A person from Odessa can usually be spotted among Russians as easily as a New Yorker among Midwesterners.

I finished high school in Odessa, and a few months later we moved to the US. I lived in New York for 13 years, then moved to Toronto with my partner Kiran. After the heartbreak of being a left-winger in the US, Canada feels like such a relief, though of course it's far from perfect.

I am in a committed open relationship (*not* a contradiction in terms) with a woman, and, in fact, have never had sex with a man. This doesn't make me any less bisexual: I simply consider myself a partial virgin.

I'm 36; I run my own company, which deals with translation to and from Russian.



I also write original fiction and nonfiction, though not nearly as much as I'd like to. Two of my short stories have been published in hardcore gay male magazines (apparently lesbian-identified women are responsible for a huge amount of male-male porn!), and I recently became one of a very few women ever published on AfterElton.com when the site ran my article *Death By Torchwood and the Rise of the Queer Superhero*, which made a case for *Torchwood's* vision of a future in which sexual diversity enjoys such matter-of-fact acceptance that labels that identify different types of sexuality have disappeared from use.

**Robyn Ochs:** *OK, I'm already impressed! Polina, how did you come to identify as bi?*

**PS:** I've gone through a few "phases." When I first began trying to define what I was feeling, shortly after I moved to the US, I immediately started identifying as bisexual. But then I noticed all the negative connotations bisexuality carries in the United States. From the perspective of an embattled gay and lesbian community whose basic rights are constantly under attack, it seemed important to pick a side. I also saw female bisexuality in particular being used left and right as a cheap source of straight male titillation. The messages I was getting from all sides were that bisexuality was somehow suspect, that it was a character flaw.

Very quickly, I started identifying as a lesbian.

Strangely enough, I reclaimed the bisexual label after I was already in a steady relationship with a woman—being in a committed relationship made me feel more secure with my sexuality, so even though I was with a woman (and, in fact, had never been with a man), I felt I could admit my attraction to men without feeling like a traitor to "The Cause."

In 2004, my partner and I moved to Canada, where same-sex couples had enjoyed equal rights even before same-sex marriage was legalized in 2005. Since the Canadian queer community is considerably less embattled than its US counterpart, there seems to be much less animosity towards bisexual people. There is still plenty of misunderstanding of what bisexuality actually is—but misunderstanding is much easier to deal with than animosity!

In an environment where being queer is not a big deal, labels seem much less important. Words like "gay," "straight," and even "bi," have more to do with our ideological alliances than with what we actually feel. For the most part, sexuality seems far too complex to describe using just one simple word. In that sense, "bi" seems like a better option because at least it rejects the necessity of picking one of the two imaginary sides.

**RO:** *Were you raised in any particular religion? If so, did this impact your coming out?*

**PS:** I grew up in a completely atheist environment, so religion had no impact on my coming out process. The Soviet Union was officially atheist







which, strangely, didn't stop it from being homophobic and anti-Semitic.

**RO:** *What can you tell us about the experience of being bisexual—or more generally LGBT—in the Soviet Union?*

**PS:** Homosexuality was illegal in the Soviet Union until a couple of years after we left the country. Officially, homosexuality wasn't discussed: the Soviet Union's official position was much like that of Iran: homosexuality was seen as a symptom of Western decadence, and so was understood simply not to exist in Russia.

I was 17 and a late bloomer when I left, only beginning to consciously examine my sexuality. My journey didn't really begin in earnest until I was in the US. Looking back, I remember a complete vacuum of discussion. I remember having crushes on some of the women in my mother's circle of friends—a woman from her work, a sister of her friend. These women were unmarried and what I would now call “butch”: outspoken, brash, with a loud laugh, unapologetically taking up space in a room. I have no idea what their sexual orientation actually was. It was never discussed.

I remember only one time non-heterosexuality was discussed. Many of the women in my parents' circle of friends worked in the same organization. At one of the parties, one of them mentioned their male coworker and his “husband.” I remember there was no animosity in the woman's attitude towards the gay couple, though they were definitely the butt of a joke. I remember thinking that it must be hell to be a joke your whole life.

**RO:** *What words are used to describe lesbian, gay, bi or non-heterosexual people in Russia? Are these words equivalent to their English counterparts, or do they have a different meaning?*

**PS:** The official words for “lesbian” and “homosexual” are the same: “lesbianka” and “gomosexualist.” Back when I lived in Russia (up until the '90s), I never heard bisexuality mentioned in any context. The slang word for “homosexual” is “gomik,” which is the short version of “homosexual,” and the Russian word for “blue.” I don't know if there's a slang word for “lesbian.”

Back in the '70s and '80s, a lot of audio plays (usually musicals) were released in Russia on vinyl, especially for kids. One of my favorite albums was called “The Blue Puppy,” about a blue puppy ostracized for his weird color by anyone on his island. I remember one particular song that went “Blue, blue, we don't want to play with you.” Then the pirates attack the island, and the puppy saves the day, thus earning everyone's love and respect.

I remember fiercely relating to the puppy, long before I knew that I was queer, or indeed that “blue” was slang for “gay.” It was years before I realized just how brave the album's creators had been (even though now, I find the cliché of a queer character having to save the world to earn simple acceptance just a bit questionable).

The only other mentions of any non-heterosexual lifestyles I can remember were a poem that mentioned “homo” and “lesbo” as examples of seedy Western decadence, and a production of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* I saw with my class. I didn't know that at the time, but this was my first lesson in artistic responsibility. As far as I can remember the text of the play hadn't been fiddled with—it had been translated into Russian, of course, but the events hadn't been changed as far as I can tell. But the acting and the direction had completely changed the tone of the play into a homophobic diatribe. This was years before I saw any other versions of the play, but even back then, as I goofed around with my friends, I remember feeling extremely bothered by the play and having no idea why.


**RO:** *Your partner, Kiran Mehdee, has an excellent piece in the Getting Bi anthology. Tell us about how you met Kiran, and your relationship with her. You live in a country with marriage equality—have you and Kiran chosen to marry?*

**PS:** Kiran and I first met on an Internet board dedicated to the US version of *Queer as Folk*. We bonded over our shared frustration over the show. We had so much in common that one person accused us of being the same person! Since we were both living in New York at the time, we met up, along with a few other members of the board, and connected right away.

Very quickly, we were spending most of our free time together, sleeping over at each other's apartments or spending all night talking on the phone. This went on for about a year before we actually became a couple! When we told our mutual friends that we were together, their reaction was, “Wait, you weren't together before?”

I feel like knowing Kiran has made my world bigger. We grew up in such different worlds, had completely different experiences, underwent two completely different sets of indoctrination—and yet we somehow arrived at such similar spiritual and ideological places. She's constantly teaching me new things about the world and about myself. And we have great adventures together!

One of the things that had originally attracted us to each other was our near-identical attitude towards marriage. We both grew up with mistrust of the institution of marriage. We both see it as a financial contract that has very little to do with emotions or commitment. In





Canada, couples who have lived together for at least a year are considered to be common-law married, regardless of sexuality, and common-law couples have pretty much the same rights and responsibilities as couples with a marriage license. They are treated the same when it comes to immigration, taxes, ownership, etc. (In fact, the common-law definition extended to same-sex couples even before same-sex marriage was legalized in Canada.) If in the future a situation comes up when it's more beneficial to be married, we'll reconsider.

**RO:** *In a previous conversation, you mentioned that you have been researching the Canadian sexuality-based refugee system, and finding significant bias against people who identify as bisexual. Can you tell us what you have learned?*

**PS:** Bisexuality is still grossly misunderstood, even in a relatively progressive country like Canada. While socially this doesn't seem to be a big issue since most Canadians are generally more accepting of queer sexualities, when it comes to official decisions, this can sometimes lead to terrible consequences. I've written a few articles about the Canadian refugee system, based on research and experience. But as my personal definition of my own sexuality evolved, I realized that all my information dealt only with gay- and lesbian-identified refugee claimants, and that I hadn't come across any mention of bisexuality as basis for a refugee claim.

I went to a talk by Sean Rehaag, Assistant Professor at the Osgoode Hall Law School in Toronto, and Tamara Vukov, Post-Doctoral Fellow of Communications and Media Studies at McGill University. Along with Viviane Namaste, Associate Professor at Concordia University, they are studying the treatment of bisexuals and attitudes towards bisexuality by Canada's Immigration and Refugee Board. At the time of the talk, they were just completing the data gathering stage of the project, in which they had gone through thousands of case materials and judicial decisions regarding bisexually-identified refugee claimants, and were starting the analysis phase.

They presented statistics and quotes from various judicial decisions. According to statistics, between 2004 and 2007, more than 50% of gay and lesbian refugee claims were approved (as compared to just under 50% of claims based on other factors), but only a little over 30% of bisexual claims were approved in the same period.

Quotes from judges' decisions illustrate why bisexual claimants are so often rejected.

Bisexuality seems to be constantly misinterpreted as a temporary "phase" a person goes through until he or she finds a mate and "commits" to one or the other sexuality. One judge wonders why a male claimant "still"

considers himself bisexual when he is in a committed relationship with another man.

There's also an expectation that a bisexual person must be involved with people of both genders at the same time; otherwise that person is not really bisexual. Several quotes from judges show that they are suspicious of the fact that the claimant hasn't participated in a same-sex relationship lately. One judge writes, "The claimant [has not] established his identity as a bi-sexual person. There is evidence that he is heterosexual. The claimant testified he has not had any homosexual relationships in Canada."

(In fact, any reference to an opposite-sex relationship can cause a judge to deny a refugee claim. This also goes for gay- and lesbian-identified claimants. It's very sad considering that in many countries, people are forced into marriages regardless of their sexuality or opinion, and those are usually the countries where queer people are most in danger of persecution.)

Perhaps most cruelly, bisexuality is often seen as an escape route from homophobic persecution in the claimant's native country. Some judges have a hard time understanding why the bisexual-identified claimant doesn't simply stick with the opposite sex and avoid homophobic persecution in his or her native country. This quote from a judge broke my heart: "There was some discussion whether the claimant could live safely in Pakistan as he had in Canada: that is to say, by marrying a woman and satisfying his need for male partners clandestinely. Counsel remonstrated against this argument. If the claimant claimed to be homosexual and not bisexual, I might have agreed with counsel. As he is self-described as bisexual and not homosexual, I do not."

**RO:** *Unfortunately, judges can be as misinformed as anyone else. But their judgments have greater consequences. Are steps being taken to address this inequality?*

**PS:** Hopefully this study will result in a serious overhaul of the refugee system's treatment of bisexual-identified people.

Canada's official attitudes towards bisexuality lag behind the much more progressive personal attitudes—and I think they will unavoidably catch up, though in the meantime, all this misunderstanding over artificial concepts and labels is putting very real people in great danger.

**RO:** *Polina, thank you for your time. I look forward to meeting you and Kiran in person some day!*



Polina and Kiran

# The Better Question

By Lisa Shugert Bevevino

After 70 hungry days  
and their restless nights, curled in bed  
I woke up, and the question changed.  
Good God, why can't I just decide?  
as absent as the fine white hairs  
I'd waxed, plucked from my face to hide  
the starvation, and there, right there,  
almost aloud—Can You love me  
for this? For this failure, this lack  
of decision? I have fasted,  
fasted and prayed for nothing.

My eyes looked to the wall, my head  
too heavy to lift—Van Gogh's  
irises swayed, pressed together  
in the painting's breeze, faded blue  
from purple after fifteen years  
on dorm room and apartment walls.  
In the corner of my eye  
I saw that my hands weren't clenching  
the edge of the mattress as though  
otherwise I'd be wrenched away  
from my bedroom to a dark hell  
of endless seesaws, swings, fences  
that only hunger and panic  
could create, a windy playground  
from which everyone else can jump  
or fall but where I am stuck, back  
and forth, seasick from the swinging.

But there, for a moment in bed  
it was the world that moved, and I  
was still.

My ribcage moved up, down  
jutting away from flesh, my pride,  
my only pride in those ten weeks  
now a space for air, breath, Spirit  
residing there which we welcome  
with each sigh—God demanding not  
decisions but consents to love,  
Holy covenants of ourselves.

*Lisa is currently a PhD candidate in  
French literature and is preparing to  
marry a wonderful man who has helped  
her to accept all of herself just as she is.*



Painting: "Rebirth" by Jo-Anne Carlsson

## The Scarf

By Casey Lyons  
10/2010

It moves me so  
I mourn for those who miss the point,  
who think a woman's body something vile,  
grotesque,  
that must be covered up,  
lest it offend the pious.  
Allah did not create  
a foul thing for her to hide  
under tightly wrapped layers of fabric,  
but a divine thing, sacrosanct,  
hidden from us the way God's face is,  
hidden so we will know it  
when we see it  
so we will bow in its presence  
so our eyes, starved from day to day  
will know  
when they face  
a feast.

*Casey is a queer feminist poet from Kentucky and  
has worked with a variety of GLBT organizations  
there.*

# The Bisexual National Anthem



By Hana Maris

(sung to the tune of, hmm,  
oh yeah, "America the Beautiful")

Oh beautiful for open mind  
And opportunity  
A spirit wide and soaring high  
Past limits, we can see  
Bisexual! Bisexual!  
I am proud to be!  
A joyous way  
To live each day  
We're whole, balanced, and free

Oh beautiful for willing heart  
To love the whole wide world  
Of god and earth, we are a part  
Our wonder stands unfurled  
Bisexual! Bisexual!  
We are a vision true  
Our spirit flows  
From head to toes  
Our courage builds anew

Oh beautiful for faithful soul  
When we are most unseen  
We dig deep in our guts, quite bold  
And stand tall by the dream  
Bisexual! Bisexual!  
May we decide our fate  
Create our lives  
Eyes open wide  
Beyond judgment and hate

My bisexuality is my sky blue wide way of walking the earth. It is part of my knowing that I am no more valuable than the manatee getting cut by a boat propeller or the cedar tree growing in my backyard. It is loving what is, who's here, womanmanflowerbugcloudfriendenemygoddesswonderdepressionfear.

It blows my mind that we bi-identified people seem so few, when I feel we are so many. We are everywhere, even though, perhaps, we don't know it.

*Hana is a spiritual retreat leader, wilderness guide, singer/songwriter, activist, radical feminist, Unitarian Universalist Religious Education Director, and single mom of two teens. She can be found online at [www.havenfound.com](http://www.havenfound.com), or on YouTube under "hanaheron."*

## Be Discriminating ... Wait, Don't!

By Daphne L. Kanellopoulos

In the wake of the death of Osama bin Laden, President Barack Obama asserted in his televised speech on May 1, 2011, "This is not a war against Islam." I posted on Facebook how happy I was that the President said that and I got some responses voicing the opinion that it was unnecessary for him to have said that, and that I was completely ignoring the success of our brave men and women. There is a misconception that Islam encourages terrorism, and that is simply not true. What the President said was very important.

I was baptized Greek Orthodox and, despite my grandparents' best efforts (which continue), I didn't really feel that I needed to follow the Greek Orthodox faith. I learned at the age of 16 that boys are brought up to the altar during baptism and girls are not. Had I not already decided I didn't follow the faith, I would at that point have refused to follow any religion so misogynistic.

This had nothing to do with my sexual orientation. At the time, I was sure I was straight. I identified as a pagan before I identified as a bisexual. For a while before and after I realized that I'm bisexual, I felt that the pagan community was the only community in which I could be safe and accepted.

Today, I still identify as pagan, and I have become more comfortable with people in mainstream religions knowing about my sexual orientation. It generally isn't a problem. The truth of the matter is that most people just don't give a s\*\*t. They have their own lives to worry about. Also, even if a religion or a religious leader insists that homosexuality is a sin or abnormal, not all who identify with that religion ascribe to those beliefs. Many believe that people were made however God/Allah/The Universe intended. Not all practitioners of specific religions are anti-gay, and not all Greek Orthodox Christians are misogynistic.

It no longer makes sense to me to be against a specific religion.

*Daphne runs a bisexual social support group at the Pride Center of New Jersey. She also submits articles to the Pride Center of New Jersey newsletter and Out In Jersey Magazine.*



# Fluid Spirituality

By Chiquita Violette

My general belief is “to each their own.” I don’t think that any one dogma or lack of a dogma is completely right or wrong. I am inspired by those who see beyond themselves, who reach out to aid others and feel that such people are on a higher plane of consciousness than those who think only of themselves. Growing up, my family sporadically went to Christian churches of various denominations but I found it very difficult to believe anything being said to me, especially as I got older and began to explore different faiths.

Once when I was a teenager, a preacher ‘laid hands on me’ (in that spiritual sense). I guess he expected me to pass out like everyone else before me, but I didn’t. His fingertips on my forehead, I felt him actually trying to push me backwards and down, but, to the dismay of the congregation, I wouldn’t budge. “This is a child of great will! Very willful...” He tried one more time, and I still wouldn’t fall and felt no kind of spiritual overtaking, nothing. He went on with his sermon, “God something, something... Jesus something or other...” I sat down, and the next kid he touched after me fell down and writhed like he was showing me how it should be done. I think that was one of, if not *the* last time I went to that particular church and it wasn’t too long until I stopped going altogether. For a time it was difficult to want to follow a religious faith at all, but I wanted to explore what else was out there.

Eventually, I combined aspects of different faiths to create my personal faith: I believe in reincarnation, past lives and Karma. I’m into Astrology, Palmistry and the Tarot. I borrow what works for me, doesn’t matter if it’s Buddhism, Abrahamic or Indigenous, only the positive aspects will I apply to my life. Like Wiccans, I believe in magick. One favorite thing about Wicca and other pagan faiths is that they are very accepting of all sexual orientations. There is no struggle between my spiritual path and my sexual orientation



when practicing Wicca, no condemnation for being fluid. Sex can be very spiritual and I wouldn’t want to have to feel guilty being sexual with a woman or someone whose gender identity doesn’t fit the binary. I’ll never follow a dogma or path that rejects any aspect of my being, ever. It just doesn’t make sense for me to do that.

I also believe that all things are possible and in the possibility of other dimensions and parallel universes. I daydream about this sometimes, and enjoy imagining that somewhere out there is a planet Earth with green grass, blue waters and everything beautiful and clean. Everyone is viewed as one people, and differences aren’t just tolerated or accepted, but respected as well. People live well and prosper. Technologically advanced civilizations interact and coexist easily with those who choose to live simply. There’s no stealing, no killing or enslaving other people. No one dies from drinking nasty water, breathing in polluted air. There’s no toxic waste. The Earth is respected and cared for. There are no poor, no hungry. People share, and animals killed for food are thanked and no parts are wasted, much as Native Americans did it in our ‘real’ world. There’s prosperity for all because everyone cooperates rather than competes. Hours of labor are short and far between with long days of leisure and recreation. There is abundance, and one can live so long it would make Methuselah’s lifespan seem like a minute. (Why would people die in my daydream, especially if life is so good?)

I try not to compare that Earth to this one. My daydream is bittersweet. When I look around or read in the news of struggles for equality, war, oil spills and animal abuse, I wish I could enter that dimension and abandon this one altogether. I know there are plenty of good things about life here, but it seems you have to really seek them out sometimes, whereas bad things seem to happen all around us. Sometimes I laugh and imagine that if I fantasize about it enough, my ‘dream’ world might just Big Bang itself into existence!

I just try to keep a positive attitude about the cards I’m dealt and to work with what I’ve got on hand to make my surroundings just a little bit better. I hope one day that I don’t have to daydream to escape a world where religions and the “pious” tell us that LGBT people are bad and are going to suffer eternal damnation. I hope that someday soon we will evolve to a point where differences are respected, embraced and seen as an opportunity to learn about one another.

My ultimate dream is that we all finally learn to just live and let live.

*Chiquita lives in Dallas, Texas, and is a member of Dallas/Fort Worth BiNet.*



When I think of how much my religious views interfered with my own coming out process, I am furious. Although my experience was complicated because I had gay parents, religion played a large role, too. By the time I got to college, I knew for sure that I was bisexual. I had told very few people up to that point. At college I found a Christian community. I felt that I belonged there. Except for one thing. My secret, my lie: my sexuality. I could talk about my dads and I think people really tried to understand, but they also held deep and longstanding views about the sin of homosexuality, particularly in the lives of Christians. I felt alone and afraid. My attraction to women was growing, but I continued to stifle it. I was worried people would blame my parents. I knew that my community would shun me. I feared I would lose the privilege of being a leader and I wasn't willing to risk that. I did share my feelings with a couple of people and there were definitely rumors afoot about my attraction to women, but I just tried to pretend to be the straight girl everyone thought I was. I felt like a coward.

I remember going to a conference called "Dating, Sex and Relationships," hosted by the campus group that I was a part of. I'd find answers there, I figured. I went, praying that I would somehow be shown the light. I went thinking I would come back and I would have the magic answer to what had been haunting me. I went to one workshop I had really been looking forward to. More than a dozen years later, I can't remember the name of it, but it was a married male-female couple in which both had previously engaged in "homosexual activities." They admitted it in front of a room full of college students and they told us of their healing. I began to pray that God would somehow find it fit for me to meet a man, get married and never have to worry about these other feelings—these wicked desires for women—again. I prayed and prayed. I hoped. I wished. The answer to that particular prayer never came. I was never able to "conquer" these feelings. I asked God a million times to take this away, to make it stop, to make me feel whole.

I now know that there was nothing to conquer. I was already whole. This is how things were supposed to be for me. At some point, I realized that I never *wanted* to be bisexual. I never wanted to have my first crushes on Katherine *and* Seth in elementary school. I never wanted my heart to skip a beat when a pretty girl in seventh grade paid close attention to me. It's just the way it was, so how then, could my feelings be deserving of contempt?

Acknowledging the fluidity of sexuality has freed me. It has allowed me to love my fathers in a way I never thought possible. The rift that my narrow-minded judgment had caused is no longer there. We are all better for it. I try to tell my progressive friends (while simultaneously reminding



myself) not to give up on people who express conservative views about sex, sexuality or gender identity and/or expression. I was once one of those people. I believe in hope and progress. I believe that changing minds is hard, but not impossible.

I still, and most often proudly, identify as a Christian. I worship with my partner and our children at the First Presbyterian Church in Waltham. I am a member and an elder there. It is a close-knit, "more-light," open and accepting Presbyterian Church. It took me a long time and much personal evolution to come back to my faith, but I am very happy that I have. I believe that I love a God who loves me right back – daily and without fail. I believe that I am living my best life and that there is no limit to the love of humanity or the love of any deity figure(s). My heart has expanded and so has my mind. I have a family of origin, a family of choice and so many amazing friends. My life as it is now would not have been possible had I not been open to change and I thank God for that.

*Larainne is a 34-year-old bisexual woman living in the Boston area with her fiancée Sheri and their beautiful family.*

**Are you interested in hosting one of our fabulous BBWN brunches at your place?** If you would like to host and want more information, email [elruthstrom@comcast.net](mailto:elruthstrom@comcast.net).



# Sexual Freedom, Spiritual Expression

By Beth Kimbell

*“Sex is the sacred song of the soul; sex is the sanctuary of Self.”*  
– Aleister Crowley, “On Sexual Freedom”

I was raised by an agnostic liberal Yankee and a God-fearing conservative Midwesterner in a Southern Fundamentalist Baptist world. Taught to love people for who they were and how they treated others, I was in the extreme minority in the Deep South. I grew up believing in the inherent goodness of humans, and that religion was the crutch they used to get through life without accepting true responsibility for their actions.

I have loved both men and women as far back as I can remember. My first explorations were with my father’s girlfriend’s daughter, and my second with a man I met roller-skating. I never felt the need to choose, but I could never be completely open in the restrictive, old-fashioned Christian world I inhabited.

When I came of age, I began a migration that would take me through Georgia, Oklahoma, Colorado and New York, until I finally settled in Boston. Throughout this time, I loved as I wished and in some places even found communities where I could express this fully. I even discovered a kinky side.

Through it all, I felt the absence of something...a spiritual side. I lived and loved well, but I lacked something deeper within. I knew that anything I chose to fill this void would have to take me as I was. I would not repent being exactly who I had become. It took years to learn to be myself and I would not give it up.

Armed with this decision, I considered my beliefs about the world and the place of humans in it and found Thelema, which is Greek for will. On this path, we pursue our true purpose, our will, and attempt to do that above all things. After many years, I became a Priestess in the Ecclesia Gnostica Catholica, or Gnostic Catholic Church.

Last year the Gay-Straight Alliance at Salem State College brought me to speak during their GBLT Week at an event called “Rainbow Spirituality.” There, religious leaders from various faiths were invited to speak on the place (or lack thereof) of homosexuality in their respective faiths. I had it easy in comparison to the evangelical who at best could say that she and her Savior loved homosexuals but that they were sinners and must repent or suffer in the life hereafter. In Thelema, “Thou hast no right but to do thy will, do that and no other shall say nay.” What this means is that if it is your will, if you know in your being that you love both men and women, that this is not a phase of exploration but who you are, then not only do we support your being that you, we require it. To pretend to be someone else, to restrict yourself from the natural expression of your love is true sin to us.

Our forefather, Aleister Crowley wrote that we “have the right to live by our own law.” This is not a call to anarchy, but to openly and shamelessly be whom we are, to demand the freedom to be this person, and to defend the rights of others to be their true selves. Here he also says that we “have the right to love whom we will, when, where, and how we will,” quoting from our Holy Book, *The Book of the Law*. What truer statement of individual freedom and spiritual expression can there be, when through the act of love we connect with the divine?

Love is the law, love under will.

*Beth is an advocate for sexual freedom, a bisexual, a sado-masochist, and an esotericist serving on the NELA Board of Directors and the Electoral College of O.T.O. U.S.A. She recently spoke at Thelemic Symposium X and Transcending Boundaries Conference ‘10, likes things ‘Just-So’, and idolizes Benjamin Franklin. She can be found online at [hermetic.com/kimbell](http://hermetic.com/kimbell).*



# Hell

*By Jo-Anne Carlson*

Devil found me searching  
For my heart's desire  
When I saw her smiling  
My desire turned to fire  
Oh, take me home, Oh take me home

Then the devil took my hand  
And we sang our song  
Into the depths of hell  
I was feeling strong  
On the way down, on the way down

I'm in hell, I'm in hell

She led me through the fire  
Brimstone all around  
Hot was her desire  
And then I fell down  
Into the fire, into the fire

We sat side by side  
Lovers we became  
Together we aspire  
My heart's all aflame  
We are the same, we are the same

I'm in hell, I'm in hell

My skin is burning  
My heart is learning  
I can't stop yearning  
My fate is turning

Her kingdom she does reign  
I knew I was blessed  
To have her love  
To be so possessed  
I am obsessed, I am obsessed

I'm in hell, I'm in hell, I'm in hell

*Jo-Anne is a singer/songwriter/guitarist, artist and poet. Her cd includes the song, "Hell," from which she created this poem. You can listen to her song online at [www.reverbnation.com/justjo](http://www.reverbnation.com/justjo).*

# More from Jess Wells...

*As promised, here is the next installment of Jess Wells's nine-part story, "The See-Saw Family":*

## Future Tense

Simon leans back against the kitchen sink and wants to know why I don't call myself heterosexual now. I proclaim, almost with hostility, that it would be to suggest that the last 23 years of lesbianism was a mistake.

He presses on. "If this relationship didn't work would you consider going back to women?"

I want to remind him of how much I love him, how devoted I am and how good we are together, but that's not the question in front of us. (Nor the focus of this piece. No one asks, "Why do you love Simon-the-man?" They ask, "Why are you with men-the-gender?")

His question makes me see my former selves spin out of my shoulders like a vapor trail. Women full of piss and vinegar. Full of righteous confidence that I just hadn't found The One. The just-shout-'Next'-and-you're-on belief that love was out there. But I'm nearly 50 years old now, and not only am I looking at my own middle age (exactly middle, since I want to live to be 100+) but I'm filled to the brim with the knowledge that I can't put my kid through another breakup, desertion, another set of readjustments. It's this or nothing.

If he leaves, I give up on love altogether. I mean that. I've tried every configuration and gender. I sincerely think I would shave my head and become a Buddhist nun. Not so far-fetched, really: I'm a Buddhist who has taken refuge. My Buddhism is central to my belief system and is at the core of my coping skills. I'd be a nun with saltpeter in her begging bowl, though.

What does that say about my sexuality? To honor my past, I won't base my sexual identity on my current heterosexuality. Simon will give me my bisexuality if there's a chance of having sex with women in the future. If I intend to be celibate in the future, then am I pre-celibate? Is that a category?

Whatever it is, though, I'm definitely queer. I'm the B in the LGBT so I still get to march in the parade. I may not be gay but I'm definitely in the "woman with unusual sexuality" category. You can't have double-closets and not be considered queer.

*Jess is an author/editor who can be found online at [www.jesswells.com](http://www.jesswells.com).*

# Requiem for Hal

*Hal Fuller, 61, a member of "Gendertalk" for years and a bisexual and transgender activist, died on March 28, 2011 after a long illness. His "family" was his queer family, Marcia Deihl and Rob B. Many of us create our families, and our families take care of us at the end of life when our biological families cannot. This poem is dedicated to any bisexual woman who thinks she's "too far out there" for love. Courage! "Never put a period where the Spirit has put a semi-colon."*

The day before you died,  
there you were before me—  
beautiful at your worst,  
semi-conscious and groaning,  
grimacing at some unknown assailant  
and stinking of puke.

Feeling silly and impotent,  
I tried to say the right thing,  
but there was no right thing.  
I told you I loved you, and I went on to sing  
any lullaby I could think of.

"Hush-a-bye, don't you cry, go to sleep you little baby,"  
When you wake you shall have all the pretty little horses. . ."

But I felt like an imposter,  
a drama queen,  
a character in my own movie.  
This was about you, not me;  
horses are a girl's dream, and  
you always chose a dragon for your mount.

(The prayers of others help me breathe.)

I can still see you in your glory,  
honey-deep southern DJ voice,  
layers of necklaces beneath a flannel shirt,  
that smutty-sweet Ashely smile that emerged when you felt safe.

Then I said, or something said,  
"You can go, now. It's OK if you want to go now."


"If religion were a thing that money could buy.  
Well, the rich would live and the poor would die,  
All my sorrows will soon be over."

I kissed your forehead and my tears  
plopped onto the sparkly purple  
early Easter basket you never received.

I called your latest place the next day  
to yell at them to take better care of you—







but wouldn't that just have meant hospitals, IVs, more suffering?--  
They asked if I were family (yes, as much as you had family),  
and then they said with infinite kindness,  
"I'm so sorry, but  
he died this morning."

Shock and relief.

(The prayers of others: a soft bird in my hand.)

Like with my father—  
a decade of suffering  
as hard to watch as to endure  
but this time I was there to say goodbye.

No more suffering.  
I don't know if there's a heaven,  
but you had lived in nursing home hell  
for way too many years.

No one knows how many thousands  
of sweet secrets we shared,  
like any couple, but completely unlike any couple,  
(which is also  
like any couple).

At times we were at odds,  
you stubborn old diva,  
but one forgets those times  
after nine years apart.

(The prayers of others: a flannel blanket 'round my shoulders.)

So, who's going to pay for the ashes?  
The money I can handle, but  
how is it that I,  
a small person made of vapor,  
can carry such a thing?

Staring into space  
Keeping up appearances at work.  
Oddly, one the articles I have to scan is entitled:  
"The Hall of Dragon Metamorphoses."

(Hey, thanks for the sign—  
I'd asked for one.)

The biggest gift:  
that we found each other at all.



How many  
 French horn playing,  
 pudgy-ass, show-offy  
 excruciatingly self-conscious  
 high school drama nerds  
 waiting to explode  
 out of their small town corsets  
 can there be?  
 How many raggedy two-spirit fifty-year-old  
 shaman Kinsey-2 bisexual  
 mavens of bizarre song and weird news  
 can there be?

(The prayers of others gentle me back to earth.)

How glorious that we found such a love  
 in a world  
 that condemns checkerboard lovers  
 when any love is hard enough to come by.

Did I ever tell you that your gentle touch  
 redeemed my reeking pile of ancient hungers,  
 that your tidal waves of love,  
 male and female, gentle and fierce,  
 were the jewel of my life?

Marcia Deihl, 4/21/11.

*Editor's note: Marcia is a co-founder of BBWN.*

## A Garden of Lovers

By Diane Verrochi

Hyacinths, bay laurel, and lily-of-the-valley  
 surround the ethereal shrine and are tended  
 by well-husbanded bees,  
 each a reminder of one of Apollo's loves:  
 Hyakinthos, Daphne, Narcissus, Kyrene.

At the shrine's earthly counterpart,  
 I make offerings in thanks for many things,  
 including the daily reminder that  
 falling in love with both women and men  
 is also a reflection of the Divine.

*Diane is an eclectic Pagan with a strong Hellenic (Greek) bent.*

Northampton Pride, continued from page 1



Photos for this article: Elynn Ruthstrom

*Some of the women (and one child) who attended the Bi Fabulous Brunch at Sarah's before the march*

We started going to Pride again after our son was born. But it wasn't until this year that I finally connected with other bi people. My son was scared to march, but after he got over some initial anxiety, he walked the whole way next to me, while I helped hold Robyn's grand marshal banner with her wife, Peg. It was an incredible day for me: I felt visible, supported, with my child at my side, walking with Robyn who has fought for the inclusion of bi people for so many years. All of this, and I was home, too. I felt I had finally come full circle. Many thanks to Robyn and the BRC for coming out to the valley for Pride this year. I hope we'll be marching visibly next year, too.

*Johanna is a nonprofit technology consultant who lives in the wilds of western Massachusetts with her husband and their four-year-old son.*



Painting: "Moon" by Jo-Anne Carlson

# Review: Love in Abundance:



*A Counselor's Advice on Open Relationships*, by Kathy Labriola. Greenery Press, 2010

Reviewed by Debbie Block-Schwenk

When *Love in Abundance* arrived in the mail for me to review, I told my husband, “Now I’ll find out what we’ve been doing wrong all these years.” It was only partly a joke. This straightforward and practical book is full of good advice, whether one is in an open relationship or just wondering, “What if we open things up?” There were several places where I recognized committing what the author defines as “common mistakes” (which lead to some really valuable conversations and reflections). Kathy Labriola, a self-identified bisexual, has written a guidebook to appeal to people of all sexual orientations. She sprinkles the book with examples, and makes sure to include bisexual, gay/lesbian, and heterosexual couples and individuals throughout.

If you want to open your relationship, how do you start? How does polyamory work? What relationship skills do you need to manage not just one relationship but two or even more? *Love in Abundance* provides answers to these questions, starting with basics such as the definition of polyamory and common forms that open relationships take. Labriola doesn’t attempt to sell polyamory as superior to monogamy, nor does she sugar coat the potential difficulties that can arise in an open relationship.

Rather, she asks the reader questions, many of which are useful to consider regardless of the “relationship orientation” one chooses. For example: “...How much privacy and personal freedom do you need to feel comfortable? Have you been happiest living alone, with one person, or with a group? What has pushed your buttons in past relationships?...” (pg. 21).

The next section of the book, “Building Your Polyamory Skill Set,” gave me food for thought as Labriola leads the reader through a series of examples and techniques designed to build self-awareness and communication skills. The reader is asked to examine his or her motives in pursuing monogamy or polyamory, acknowledging that there are both noble and unhealthy reasons that might inspire a person to either choice. The reader is also asked to consider what form of open relationship they want.

Labriola urges polyamorous people to only date other polyamorous people (yes, we’ve made the mistake of trying to bring a monogamous person into the fold), which is a very wise blanket statement. But she doesn’t address dating people who are “poly-curious,” or how to nurture that curiosity.

The chapter on Poly Communication Skills contains techniques applicable to any relationship, romantic or otherwise, poly or monogamous. These include paying

attention to non-verbal communication and communicating one’s needs clearly and directly (with a helpful series of questions to help identify one’s boundaries). I especially related to the section on meta-communication, in which the speaker explicitly states the goal of their communication before airing the topic. This can be especially useful for those in different-sex relationships, since men and women have a tendency to approach communication differently: men often communicate to solve problems, while women communicate to get emotional support.

The next chapter, “Common Communication Breakdowns in Open Relationships,” focuses more specifically on issues around open relationships. For example, deciding how much to disclose about an outside relationship is not something a monogamous person would have to deal with, but it can be a big source of insecurity in open relationships.

It’s a myth that polyamorous people never get jealous. Labriola identifies conditions that spark jealousy. By reviewing these, you can determine if jealousy is warranted—if there is a potential threat to your relationship that requires further effort to identify and correct—or if you’re just over-reacting. Labriola also provides a “Jealousy Intervention Exercise” designed to help untangle the feelings behind an attack of jealousy. I wish I’d had access to this tool in the past. Finally, Labriola presents some techniques for managing jealousy.

In later sections of the book, other common issues are discussed. How do partners handle different needs for autonomy and intimacy? Polyamory can help make up the gap for the partner with more needs for intimacy, but even monogamous people often face the problem of mismatched needs for intimacy.

The chapter on living together surprised me, as Labriola punctured my dream of happy group marriages living in communal bliss. While there may be some of these families out there, her opinion is that any poly family of more than three adults should not live together. Instead, duplexes, two (or more) houses on the same land, or having some people sharing their time between partners’ residences provide more successful arrangements. No matter how well you get along, living in a large group is very difficult over the long term.

Other topics covered include legal paperwork for polyamorous relationships, navigating BDSM poly relationships, being a “secondary partner,” and feminist



issues and polyamory. While modern Western polyamory is very different from the patriarchal polygamy practiced in many other cultures, it can still be an effort to throw off ingrained gender roles and embrace polyamory as a tool for women to claim greater autonomy, ask for what they need, and go after it. Labriola concludes this slim volume with a resource list, including links to lists of poly friendly therapists.

*Love in Abundance* is a quick read, although the exercises and thought experiments require time to reflect. While there are many one-paragraph examples, it's unclear how many of them are based on actual people and how many are just presented to illustrate a scenario. I would have loved a few longer stories describing how a couple or group worked through their issues, proving encouragement for those who

find the cautions in the book daunting. The book is focused on people in couples, so single people may find a shortage of examples or tips for them.

*Love in Abundance* covers a huge amount of ground in 192 pages, and I commend Kathy Labriola for creating an accessible guide that will give people new to polyamory valuable information and techniques for success and provides those of us involved in this lifestyle with new ways of looking at our relationships and making them stronger.

Regardless of relationship orientation, we should all be seeking love in abundance. This book can help some people find it.

*Debbie lives in Boston and these days gets her abundance of love from one partner and five cats.*

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## Review: **GLBTQ:** *The Survival Guide for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning Teens, Second Edition*, by Kelly Huegel. Free Spirit Publishing, 2011.

*Reviewed by Ellyn Ruthstrom*

If you are looking for a resource for a teen in your life in search of information about being LGBTQ, this book has a lot to offer. It does a very good job of covering questions related to different aspects of coming out, family relationships, friendships, safer sex and sexuality, even dealing with your religion and culture as it relates to sexuality.

The book is well designed and very readable. Sidebars provide needed information and interspersed quotes add the immediacy of personal experience. Kelly Huegel often uses a Q&A format to provide detailed answers to the most obvious and essential questions teens may have.

Especially of note is the chapter about transgender teens. There are some great resources for transgender teens and their families to turn to when trying to find answers to some very challenging questions about gender identity and transitioning. Plus, the information given would be helpful for anyone trying to educate themselves about transgender people.

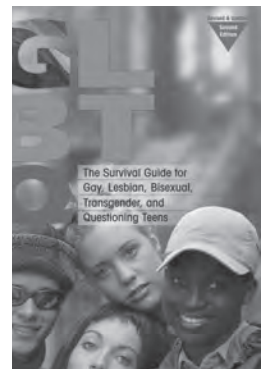
Having said all these positive things, and I mean them sincerely, I was disappointed once again to see bisexual teens not get any individual information about their identity and perspective. Why isn't there a chapter for bisexual teens as there is one for transgender teens? Why are there no bi-specific books or articles listed in Huegel's bibliography? Glancing at the index for "bisexual" sums up how little information you will actually find here: first entry is just "described" and second entry is as "homosexuals in denial myth."

While I will say that the majority of the book is written in inclusive language and often uses the word 'queer' to include the whole community, there are a few times that Huegel still maintains the sexuality binary. ("Some of these religions still do not allow women, whether straight or gay, to hold leadership roles.")

I want to be more enthusiastic about an important resource such as this, but it saddens me that even now, in its second edition, the author and publisher did not feel it was important enough to include specific focus on bisexual teens. With recent data showing that just over half of the LGBT population in the U.S. identifies as bisexual, this audience needs to be addressed.

In addition, if it is being used as a general resource it is a lost opportunity to give readers a greater understanding of bisexuality. There is much more material available now about bisexuality, with plenty of people and organizations to get information from, so it is a shame that this book does not offer as much support to bisexual teens as it should.

*Ellyn is President of the Bisexual Resource Center and a former editor (and current Calendar Editor) of Bi Women.*





# Ask Tiggy Upland

Dear Tiggy,

I am 24 years old, a new convert to Catholicism, happily married, and bisexual. My husband knows about my sexuality and is understanding, loving, and supportive. I am out only to him and a few friends. I don't know whether I should come out to my family.

My family is predominantly Evangelical and is very against homosexuality and bisexuality. They are already unhappy that I converted to Catholicism. My sister and brother-in-law even got me excommunicated from my old church just because I was dating a Catholic. I couldn't imagine how they would react if I came out as a bisexual! I am afraid of getting disowned by my sister, looked down upon by family and friends, and being terribly misunderstood. Whenever I have talked about bisexuality with family members they have always said bisexuals were people going through a phase, people who are just so horny they don't care who they sleep with, people who just haven't figured out their sexuality, or people who choose to be bisexual because it is trendy.

I am happy and monogamous, so it isn't like I am going to be bringing girlfriends over or anything. I just can't talk openly with them about my attraction to women. I don't know if it is worth it to come out to them, but I feel sometimes that I am betraying a part of myself. What are your thoughts on the matter?

—Trinity

Dear Trinity,

It seems that you can't talk openly with your family about a *lot* of things. You've described judgmental and close-minded people who believe life is lived either their way or the wrong way. Why would you want to tell them about your personal feelings?

At the core, this is about acceptance, but not theirs of your sexuality. It's about your acceptance of your family members for who they are. Although you didn't mention any of their good points in their letter, I'd wager that they have some. But they have their fair share of bad points, too, among them their willingness to wallow in their own ignorance, judge other people, and hate difference. You need to accept them as the family they are, not the family you wish you had.

It sounds like you hunger for a sister you can be close with. You don't have one. I'm sorry. A lot of us didn't get the family we wanted, and it stinks. But face it, girl, she got you *excommunicated*. That's some deal-breakin' business right there. I'm reading that you're still holding on to the hope that you'll be able to talk about women with her. She's never going to be the sister that you want her to be. Accepting that can feel kind of like a death—a death of that “dream sister”—but once you do, you can stop trying so hard to make it happen and just be.

I think if you're open about your sexuality with all of the trustworthy people in your life, your feelings of self-betrayal will fade to nothing. You have a partner you love and probably many friends with whom you can take a chance and share this information. It's your life and you get to decide from whom to withhold personal information. You have your reasons, and it's their loss.

—Tiggy



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

## Letters

Dear Bi Women,  
We would like a print copy of your wonderful magazine. What is the cost to an LGBTQI Community Center?  
~Sandy Vopalka, The CENTER, Des Moines, IA

*Hi Sandy,  
It is our policy to make print subscriptions of Bi Women available to centers and to youth groups free of charge. We do take donations (by Paypal to [biwomenboston.org](http://biwomenboston.org)).*

*org) but this is not a requirement. We'll go ahead and modify your subscription so that you receive Bi Women in both print and electronic form.*

*Robyn*

Dear Bi Women,  
That's wonderful: Thanks so much! We will see how things go with these grants we are applying for. Last week we started a new program doing outreach to the LGBTQIA homeless, and things are moving forward. Many of the women are talking about feeling safe and bi issues

that they were never able to talk about before. It's really a great feeling watching, talking and listening to women who really feel safe.

We look forward to getting a hard copy of your wonderful mag. Thanks for all you do.

~Sandy

**What's on YOUR mind?  
Please write to us!**



By Katrina Chaves & Robyn Ochs

## HOW MANY BIS ARE THERE?

A report released by the Williams Institute at UCLA's School of Law analyzed several studies estimating the prevalence of LGBT people in the United States. The findings estimate that 3.5% of adults (8 million people) identify as LG or B, with bisexuals comprising just over half of this number (1.8%). An additional .3% (extrapolated to 700,000) identify as transgender. But wait! These statistics are only talking about how people identify. An estimated 19 million Americans (8.2%) report that they have engaged in same-sex sexual behavior and nearly 25.6 million Americans (11%) acknowledge at least some same-sex sexual attraction. (Source: <http://www3.law.ucla.edu/williamsinstitute/pdf/How-many-people-are-LGBT-Final.pdf>)

**BI INVISIBILITY MADE VISIBLE:** In March, the LGBT Advisory Committee, an official chartered body of the City and County of San Francisco, approved the report "Bisexual Invisibility: Impacts and Recommendations," marking the first time a governmental body in the United States has approved and released a report of this kind.



Lindasusan Ulrich was the report's principal author. The report states, "Bisexuals experience high rates of being ignored, discriminated against, demonized or rendered invisible by both the heterosexual world and the lesbian and gay communities... Despite years of activism and being the largest population within the LGBT community, the needs of bisexuals still go unaddressed and their very existence is still called into question. This erasure has serious consequences on bisexuals' health, economic well-being, and funding for bi organizations and programs." You can read the complete report online at <http://tinyurl.com/4gmqmyh>.

## BI HEALTH... OR LACK THEREOF...

Recent data shows:

- Bisexuals experience higher rates of hypertension, smoking, depression, and anxiety disorders.

- Bisexual women in relationships with monosexual partners experience a higher rate of domestic violence than their straight and gay counterparts.

- Most bi individuals never come out to their doctors, serving to keep them invisible and uninformed about a variety of issues (i.e. practicing safe sex).

- Bisexuals remain underserved by organizations that address issues concerning LGBT people

**BIS INVISIBLE @ DADT:** When President Obama signed DADT repeal into law this winter, no openly bi servicemembers were invited. In the aftermath, there was no substantial dialogue (in most public forums) regarding bi veterans, or how this policy's repeal will affect bisexuals in the military. In light of the above data, we recommend more attention be paid to bis.

**BIS IN HOLLYWOOD:** Bisexual actors such as Natalie Portman, Christina Aguilera, Megan Fox, and Ange-

lina Jolie were among the attendees of the Golden Globes this year. Bi-themed films such as *The Kids Are All Right* and *Black Swan* were nominated in multiple categories and were Golden Globe Award winners.

**A BI PRESIDENT:** On January 27, the San Francisco Planning Commission elected bisexual Christina Olague as their president. This is her second term serving as president and her current term expires in 2012.

**BI ACTIVISM:** Bi Social Network's Adrienne Williams has been selected to represent bisexuals in the media, by the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation's (GLAAD) National Media Institute for People of Color. The Bi Social Network has been promoting the "I Am Visible" campaign to create a culture of acceptance for bis in the LGBT community.

**BIS IN FILM:** The entire First Season of FenceSitter Films' bisexual romantic comedy *Rose By Any Other Name* is now available in its entirety. Season 2 is beginning, so now is the perfect time to catch up: <http://roseseason1.filmbinder.com/>

**UP AHEAD:** The Transcending Boundaries Conference is thrilled to announce that Kate Bornstein will keynote their 2011 conference. For the last 15 years Kate has been touring the country speaking on deconstructing the binaries of sex and gender. Kate is the author of several books, including *Gender Outlaws: The Next Generation* with S. Bear Bergman (2010) and *My Gender Workbook: How to Become a Real Man, a Real Woman, the Real You, or Something Else Entirely*. The conference will be held the weekend of 11/11/11. For more info: [transcendingboundaries.org](http://transcendingboundaries.org).

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**Monday, July 11, 7pm, Straight Marriage, Still Questioning.** (See June 13<sup>th</sup>)

**Tuesday, July 12, 7-9pm, BRC Board Meeting.** (See June 14<sup>th</sup>)

**Saturday, July 16, 11:30am, Saturday Bi Brunch.** (See June 18<sup>th</sup>)

**Thursday, July 21, 7pm, Bisexual Social and Support Group (BLiSS).** Details: [www.biresource.net/bievents.shtml](http://www.biresource.net/bievents.shtml).

## August

**Wednesday, August 3, 7pm, Bisexual Social and Support Group (BLiSS).** (See June 1<sup>st</sup>)

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

**Tuesday, August 9, 7-9pm, BRC Board Meeting.** (See June 14<sup>th</sup>)

**Sunday, August 14, noon, BBWN Potluck and Book Swap at Ellyn's in Somerville.** The book swap has become one of the highlights of the BBWN brunch circuit as women come to socialize and take home a few good books. Along with bringing a dish/drink to share, feel free to bring a few books that you'd like to pass along. There are three cats in the home,

but we will probably be on the back porch. Adults, only, please. Email Ellyn at [elruthstrom@comcast.net](mailto:elruthstrom@comcast.net) to RSVP by August 12th.

**August 14-19, Carnival Week in Provincetown.** A week of festive activities including Drag Bingo, the absolutely fabulous Carnival Parade on Thursday, and much more. Bring your beads, bathing suit, and sunscreen! Info: [www.ptown.org/Carnival.asp](http://www.ptown.org/Carnival.asp).

**Thursday, August 18, 7pm, Bisexual Social and Support Group (BLiSS).** Info: [www.biresource.net/bievents.shtml](http://www.biresource.net/bievents.shtml).

**Saturday, August 20, 11:30pm, Saturday Bi Brunch.** (See June 18<sup>th</sup>)

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## New England Pride Dates of Note:

**Boston's Dyke March:** Friday, June 10, [www.bostondyke-march.com](http://www.bostondyke-march.com)

**Boston Pride:** Saturday, June 11, Boston, [www.bostonpride.org](http://www.bostonpride.org)

**Southern Maine:** Saturday, June 18, Portland, [www.southernmainepride.org](http://www.southernmainepride.org)

**Rhode Island:** Saturday, June 18, Providence, [www.prideri.com](http://www.prideri.com)

**Connecticut:** Saturday, September 17, Bushnell Park, Hartford. [www.connecticutpride.org](http://www.connecticutpride.org)



Left: "Girls With Dolls"

Right: "I Hate Sewing"

Local bi artist Melissa Kulig creates artwork in her East Boston Studio as often as possible and has a wide range of materials she uses. Recently abandoning her interest in assemblage for graphite on paper, Melissa is currently working on expanding her MFA thesis work to prepare for one or two NY galleries. You can view her work online at <http://mixedmediamaven.blogspot.com/>.





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## The "Bi Office"

is the Bisexual Resource Center, located at 29 Stanhope Street, behind Club Cafe. For info call 617-424-9595.

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### Ongoing Events

**2nd Tuesdays: Bisexual Resource Center Board Meeting**, 7-9pm. at 29 Stanhope Street, 4th floor, in Boston. All are welcome.

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### 2nd Mondays:

**Straight Marriage, Still Questioning**, 7pm. Email [kate.e.flynn@gmail.com](mailto:kate.e.flynn@gmail.com).

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**1st & 3rd Wednesdays: BLiSS: Bisexual Social & Support Group**, 7-9pm. Go to [www.biresource.net](http://www.biresource.net) for details.

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**3rd Saturdays: Biversity's Saturday Bi Brunch**, 11:30am at Johnny D's, Davis Square, Somerville.

*Sign up for our new email list!*

*Send an email to: [biwomenboston-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:biwomenboston-subscribe@yahoogroups.com)*



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# CALENDAR

## June

**Wednesday, June 1, 7-8:45pm, Bisexual Social and Support Group (BLiSS).** Meets 1st Wednesdays & 3rd Thursdays. Wednesday meetings are held at the Boston Living Center, 29 Stanhope Street, Boston. All bi and bi-friendly people of all genders and orientations are welcome to attend. 1st Wednesday meetings are peer-facilitated discussion groups, sometimes with a pre-selected topic or presenter. For the summer months, the 3rd Thursday meetings are held at local restaurants. See the individual dates for details or check [www.biresource.net](http://www.biresource.net) for updates.

**Sunday, June 4, AIDS Walk Boston.** The 6.2-mile AIDS Walk starts at the Hatch Shell at 7:30am in Boston's Back Bay. The Walk raises money and awareness for important HIV prevention, advocacy and services. Info: [www.aac.org](http://www.aac.org).

**Friday, June 10, 6pm, Boston's Dyke March.** Gather at the Boston Common Gazebo at 6:00 for a night of frolicking and marching with the queerest women in town.

**Saturday, June 11, Pride Day in Boston.** The theme this year is *Equality: No More. No Less*. Kicking off from the South End on Tremont Street, the parade will wind its way down Tremont, up Beacon Street and down the other side of Beacon Hill into Government Center. Get your bi pride on and march with the BRC contingent. Exact place to meet up will be posted on [www.biresource.net](http://www.biresource.net) and the BRC Facebook page the day before.

**Sunday, June 12, 12-7pm, Heat on the Street in Jamaica Plain: Perkins Street Block Party.** Keep on dancing at the hottest women's block party the day after Pride. Details: [www.bostonpride.org/jpbp.php](http://www.bostonpride.org/jpbp.php).

**Monday, June 13, 7pm, Straight Marriage, Still Questioning.** A peer-led support group

for women in a straight marriage/relationship struggling with sexual orientation or coming out. If interested in attending, contact [kate.e.flynn@gmail.com](mailto:kate.e.flynn@gmail.com). Meets monthly 2nd Mondays.

**Tuesday, June 14, 7-9:pm, Bisexual Resource Center Board Meeting.** All bi and bi-friendly community members welcome to attend. Info: Ellyn at [brc@biresource.net](mailto:brc@biresource.net). At the Boston Living Center, 29 Stanhope St. near Back Bay station on the Orange Line.

**Thursday, June 16, 7pm, Bisexual Social and Support Group (BLiSS).** Info: [www.biresource.net/bievents.shtml](http://www.biresource.net/bievents.shtml).

**Saturday, June 18, 11:30am, Bi Brunch. Bi Brunch** (a mixed gender bi group) is now always the 3rd Saturday of the month at Johnny D's on Holland St. in Davis Sq. in Somerville, across from the Davis stop on the Red Line.

**Saturday, June 18, Providence Pride.** Rhode Island has the unique distinction of have their parade at night, after a day-long festival along the river. Visit [www.prideri.com](http://www.prideri.com).

## July

**Wednesday, July 6, 6:30-9pm, Bisexual Social and Support Group (BLiSS),** Bisexual Resource Center, 29 Stanhope Street, Boston. (See June 1<sup>st</sup>)

**Sunday July 10, 12-3pm, BBWN's 5th Annual Poetry Brunch hosted by Fennel in Watertown.** Please bring a poem you'd like to share & read aloud (It could be one you wrote or one from an author you like). Weather permitting, we can eat out in the backyard. No-pet household. Adults only please. There's plenty of on-street parking & it's also on several bus lines. Send email to [resourcegoddess@comcast.net](mailto:resourcegoddess@comcast.net) to RSVP, for directions, & to let Fennel know what you'd like to bring. Join us!

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