

Bi Women & Sexual Violence

By LB Klein

Sexual violence is a global public health problem. While country-specific statistics vary, approximately one in five women will be sexually assaulted in her lifetime. That number jumps to two in five if that woman identifies as bi+ (bi, pan, fluid or another nonbinary sexuality) and to one in two if she is transgender. In the United States, the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS) found that compared to 13% of lesbians and 17% of heterosexual women, 46% of bi+ women have been raped in their lifetimes. When this survey's results were published in 2016, they made national news, but they only confirmed what many smaller previous studies had demonstrated: bi+ women face a disproportionate amount of interpersonal violence. The bi+ umbrella also has more people within it who are disabled, racial and ethnic minorities, HIV+, homeless, of lower socioeconomic status, and mentally ill. All those groups are also more frequently targeted for sexual violence.

Sexual violence has debilitating costs to individual survivors, their loved ones, their communities, and society that include physical, psychological, sexual, emotional, interpersonal, spiritual, and financial issues. Bi+ women who survive violence face an additional toll. 48% of bi+ women experience at least one symptom of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) compared to 22% of heterosexual women and 20% of lesbians. Research studies indicate that bi+ women face higher rates of depression, anxiety, physical injury, stress, suicidal ideation, completed suicide, binge drinking, and diagnosed mental disorder than heterosexual women.

Socially, bi+ women are more likely to tell their romantic partner, a formal support professional, or the police about an incident of sexual violence than heterosexual or lesbian women, but they also report fewer positive reactions from those who are supposed to help them than heterosexual or lesbian women report. Other studies show that bi+ people are unlikely to seek help because they are concerned that they will be blamed, or a provider will respond with hostility toward their sexual identity. Studies also suggest that many heterosexual people believe that bi+ women cause unwanted sexual interest toward them due to their sexual orientation, which makes them more vulnerable to victim blaming. This is consistent with studies that have shown that bi+ women are often labeled as promiscuous, less mentally stable, confused, or not to be taken seriously by both straight and gay people. People



are also less likely to view an act of violence toward a bi+ woman as a hate crime than an act of violence toward a heterosexual or lesbian woman. While more affirming spaces and well-trained staff who help bi+ women heal are emerging, finding those spaces and helping professionals can be challenging.

While efforts by activists, advocates, prevention educators, and researchers to address sexual violence in LGBTQ communities have increased in recent years, there is a need for more attention to the violence faced by bi+ women. This is especially important because bi+ survivors often do not feel accepted in either straight or gay spaces or in the anti-violence service spaces that often assume heterosexual men as perpetrators and heterosexual women as victims. This issue on Violence and Recovery provides a venue for storytelling and sharing of the often-unheard experiences and perspectives of bi+ women who have experienced trauma, either vicariously or directly. However, there is help and learning available beyond this issue.

We recognize that this issue could be triggering for survivors of sexual and intimate partner violence as well as for secondary survivors, those with loved ones who have survived violence.

If you are interested in seeking support because you or someone close to you has survived violence, please see the resources listed on page 11.

LB Klein is a PhD student in the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Social Work. Her research focuses on preventing sexual violence against LGBTQ people.

Editor

Robyn Ochs

Assistant Editor

LB Klein

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Boston-area women: Sign up for our new email list! Send an email to: biwomen-boston-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

Editor's Note

Our theme this time is Violence & Recovery. Related to this theme, we present poetry by Courtney Carola, Rae Frame, and Casey Lawrence; prose by LB Klein, Theresa Tyree, Lila Hertelius, Christie Sessa, and Apphia K.; a painting by Jo-Anne Carlson; and a powerful comic by Why Not Both Co. In our Around the World column, we meet Valerie Baud, in Paris, France. We also offer our usual staples: Advice from A Rose Bi and our Calendar.

Mindful of the subject matter, we also include within this issue resources for support. If this topic is personally relevant to you, we sincerely hope that you will use them.

And at long last, we bring back our research corner under the joint stewardship of Renate Baumgartner in Vienna, Austria, and Iranian activist Soudeh Rah, who is living in France.

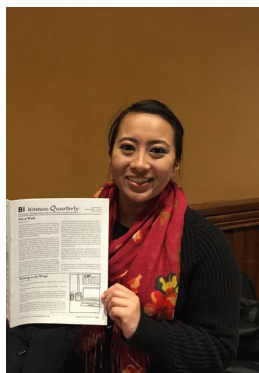
And we mark a change of staff: Catherine Rock has stepped aside as Assistant Editor and LB Klein has stepped up. I am grateful to both.

So farewell, Catherine, and welcome LB, Renate, and Soudeh!

Finally, readers: we would like to hear from you. Feel free to send in letters to the editor, or to suggest themes for upcoming issues. And please consider submitting your own work!

Robyn

Another fan reads *BWQ*. Send a picture of yourself reading *BWQ* to biwomeneditor@gmail.com. Be creative!



Upcoming in *Bi Women Quarterly*

Call for writing Fall 2017 issue

Coming Out Stories

"Speaking of bisexuality (which we weren't), that's how I identify. Please pass the salt." Please share – through prose, poetry, artwork or fiction – a coming out story. Funny, poignant, tragic, surprising, or heart-warming stories – all are welcome! *DUE BY August 1.*

Call for writing Winter 2018 issue

What I Want

Have you ever taken a moment to reflect on what you want – what you really want? We're seeking bi+ women's visions for the future, big or small. Please share your hopes, aspirations, and dreams through opinion pieces, poetry, fiction, personal stories, or artwork. *DUE BY November 1.*

Submission guidelines are online at biwomenboston.org.

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

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

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.

Around the World: Valérie Baud - Paris, France

Interview by Robyn Ochs

Valérie Baud is Secretary of Bi'Cause, the national association for the cause of bisexuality in France. I had the pleasure of meeting her at EuroBiCon in Amsterdam in the summer of 2016.

R: Tell us about Bi'Cause. How do you find or build community?

V: The bi community in France is nascent, embryonic. This activist, all-volunteer network organizes social spaces and meetings, mainly in Paris. Twice a month, Bi'Cause offers discussions on a chosen topic at the center of LGBT Paris-île-de-France. There is also an evening in a café; it is a moment of togetherness under the name of Bi'venue (a play on the word "Welcome"). And we also meet up monthly at a restaurant.

Bi'Cause's goal is to promote understanding, awareness, expression and visibility of bisexuality and of people who define themselves or are perceived as bisexual, or who are interested in this orientation. We provide support and assistance, especially to bisexuals, and we are committed to the prevention of AIDS and other sexually-transmitted infections. We have also committed to work in defense of victims of sexual violence or discrimination who have been attacked physically or psychologically, or who have been discriminated against because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, particularly if their bisexuality – real or perceived – is the cause of the aggression.

This association is the first in France that supports bisexuality. In Paris, in 1995, within the LGBT Centre, four women got together to put together an issue on bisexuality for the Center's newsletter. Feeling sidelined by lesbians, these women founded Bi'Cause in 1997. Bi'Cause will celebrate its twentieth anniversary in May 2017!

We are a member of Inter-LGBT, a national federation of associations, and political center of the activist LGBT community. In Inter-LGBT meetings, Bi'Cause makes sure that bisexuals are represented and endeavors to ensure that our concerns are considered in collective projects. As the only bisexual association in these structures, Bi'Cause brings the legitimacy of the B to the LGBT representation.

R: Who comprises the community?

V: There are those who are passing through or will come for a while; for them, this is a time to understand others and break their isolation, to find their own way and figure out what identifying as bisexual means for their lives.

There are also activists who show up – once or repeatedly – because they want to act in support of bisexuality. THEY are the hardcore, the organizers of Bi'Cause.



Valérie with bi pride flage at Bi Visibility Day event in Paris, 2016

R: Is there bi organizing outside of Paris?

V: Yes. We opened a Bi'Cause satellite in Nice. A local activist organized activities, and a group was formed within the Côte d'Azur LGBT Centre there. And when I organize evening programs on bisexuality in nearby cities such as Tours or Orleans, I find a lack of knowledge about bisexuality, so these events provide a rich learning opportunity.

In my experience, the LGBT community is currently very accepting of the bi community. What bis need to do now is to come out of their closets and create spaces for themselves. Nobody else can do it for us.

We are building community. This past September 24 was the occasion of the Second Bi March in France, scheduled around the International Celebrate Bisexuality Day, and this event was made possible through the involvement of the entire LGBT community on our behalf.

R: What do you want to see happen in the future?

Valérie, continues on next page

Valérie, continued from previous page

V: We dream of spaces such as bi cafes – non-exclusive spaces – but places where we can gather and socialize, be it in Paris or elsewhere. We dream of greater visibility. And because we are pioneers, it is important to document our history by archiving our materials and collecting testimonies.

R: How important is it to build separate bi+ support and social spaces?

V: Bi people are often victims of psychological violence. I often feel like I am a hybrid, a little bit in one world and the rest in another one, neither gay nor straight. It's a whole pedagogical process to get people's minds out of this binary equation, which is just a conceptual ideological montage, and not a reality.

It is very important to discuss our experiences, to make ourselves visible, to have our existence acknowledged with pride, and to encourage other bi people to take charge of their lives and challenge stereotypes associated with bisexuality. Biphobia starts with the denial, erasure, and stigmatization of bisexuality. Building these social spaces is one part of the fight against biphobia.

R: Why does it matter?

V: I was born in the 1970s, and people did not talk about homosexuality, and bisexuality was discussed even less. The Internet has given those of us who grew up isolated a space to find community and knowledge.

The existence of Bi'Cause has given me strength. In the early 2000s, when I was 30, I was in an existential crisis. My partner, a lesbian, saw me as a lesbian. Others thought my same-sex relationship was a whim, as I had previously

been married to a man for 10 years. It was very jarring to be in this situation, and being aware of others like me has been tremendously helpful. There were others like me, who claimed a bi identity, and so I, too, could assert my own existence. I existed. I was bisexual, and it was not just a personal fantasy. So, yes, community spaces, the sharing of experiences, stories, and real scientific studies on bisexuality, are a real pedagogical vehicle which will move things positively. So even if this space is sometimes a virtual space, it opens doors and helps us find community.

We should also aspire to a more open society overall and make space so that everyone is allowed to be whole and to blossom. There are as many bisexualities as there are bisexuals. We are moving in this direction but – watch out! – our freedoms are fragile, and – as we have learned – our societies can easily take steps backward.

Each year Bi'Cause picks a quote. To conclude, I'll share with you this quote chosen for 2016, from Simone de Beauvoir: "... the ideal should be to be capable of loving a woman or a man; either, a human being, without feeling fear, restraint, or obligation."

I have a dream...

You can read about Valérie's personal journey at <http://bicause.fr/peregrination-dune-femme-bi>. Bi'Cause is online at <http://bicause.fr>.

Translated by Kareen Obydol.



Bi Visibility Day event in Paris, September 2016

Do It for You

By Theresa Tyree

The first time I talked about marriage with a partner was when I was sixteen. It wasn't a serious talk, more like a vivid daydream between my partner and me. We would go back and forth, adding on details, deciding whom to invite and who not to invite. Then I talked about what I wanted to wear, and he froze.

"Really?" he asked me. "Pants?"

I blinked, surprised by his question. "Well, yeah. I mean, why not? You've seen my gaucho pants. They're all flowy and gorgeous—"

"Why wouldn't you want to wear a dress?"

I frowned. His question stung. He made it sound like there was something wrong with me for wanting to wear anything else. "What does it matter? It's my wedding."

"No, it's our wedding." He sighed and took my hand. "Say you'll wear the dress; for me."

I didn't answer. I changed the subject. I started talking about the catering instead. This wasn't fun anymore. The daydream was broken, the warmth of the conversation gone. When I left to go home that night, I was contemplative on the road. It wasn't like I was all that opposed to wearing a dress. The thought had crossed my mind so many times before as a child. There were at least fifteen different wedding dresses I'd marveled over and coveted for my own, the first of which being Ariel's from *The Little Mermaid* – but the way he had asked me to wear it for him bothered me.

I didn't marry him. I moved on, fell in love with a different man, then fell in love with women. Women were new. Women were different. They didn't care if I wanted to wear pants to my wedding. They didn't care that I liked the idea of wearing red or black as part of my wedding ensemble.

Yet I found myself confronted with the same feeling I'd had as a contemplative sixteen-year-old on the road home from her boyfriend's house when my second girlfriend asked me not to wear high heels out to dinner with her.

I paused, balanced on one foot, one shoe on and the other dangling from my fingers halfway down my calf. "Why?" I asked her. I cracked a smile and tried to play it off, constructing a reason for her request that didn't make me feel cold and hollow inside. "You don't like it when I'm that much taller than you?" I joked.

Her mouth twisted into the judgmental grimace she used when she found something distasteful. "They don't suit you," she told me. "I'm the girly one in this relationship. You embody our more masculine traits." She batted her plump, mascaraed eyelashes at me and gave me her best don't-hate-me-because-you-know-I'm-right smile.

Something went cold in the core of me, running from my



head through my stomach and down to my groin. It made me want to cross my legs and hide from her. This wasn't a feeling I was used to having with a woman who usually set me on fire with her laugh or the set of her eyes. I wasn't used to seeing that particular twist of lip pointed at me. I stopped balancing and stood on both my feet—still one shoe off, the other on. "Are you saying I'm too butch for heels?"

She scoffed and rolled her eyes. "Can't you just do it for me?"

I lied and told her that my slacks would drag on the ground if I didn't wear heels with them. She passive-aggressively bashed my femininity through dinner, saying things like how cute I'd be with a shorter, more masculine haircut. We broke up soon after that. I was surprised. I hadn't expected a woman to need me to fulfill a gender role in a same-sex relationship. Then again, I hadn't expected a partner to need me to wear a dress to help him maintain his own ideal of masculinity either. My standards changed again, and I started dating less – but I can't say I'm any less satisfied with life. If anything, it's more fulfilling; only getting close with those who let me wear things for me.

Theresa Tyree holds an MA in Book Publishing and currently works as a freelance editor and copywriter. Follow her on Twitter at @TheresaTyree or see her blog at noodlesfromtomorrow.blogspot.com.

three out of four

By Courtney Carola

[trigger warning: mentions and descriptions of assault]

Three out of four bisexual women are sexual assault survivors
But I fear that number may be even higher
Because of the ways these assaults slip through the cracks
in the foundation which we have been trying to build for
ourselves
Foundations of self-love and acceptance
That are being destroyed by sickening stereotypes and
toxic media representation
Our foundation is constantly under pressure, put to the test
And we aren't broken, but we are starting to break
It is through those cracks that subtleties begin to slip in
That bisexual equals slut
Equals threesomes
Equals easy
Equals always interested in sex
These subtleties spread like mold, violating us to our very core
Encouraging others to violate us as well
Others, like the man who asked my girlfriend and me to kiss for him, so he
could hold the image in his mind while he got off later in the day
I vomited shortly after
He didn't lay a finger on me, but it was still assault
It is assault when I am left feeling dirty and used at the hand of someone who
didn't even touch me but is using me for his pleasure
without my consent
It is assault when I am dehumanized to a living, breathing sex toy
It is assault when strangers on the street see us holding hands and demand we
kiss for them
It is assault when someone implies that we need to be "corrected"
It is assault when the way I love is invalidated until it becomes someone's top
search on a porn website
It is assault again and again and again
No matter how many times it happens
When is this going to stop happening?
When is someone going to stop being the bystander or the enabler and stop
this from happening?
I'm trying
With every poem I write, I try harder and harder
I am screaming at the top of my lungs
But I think I need someone with a louder voice than mine

By day, Courtney Carola is a 23-year-old college student, high school librarian,
and indie author. By night, she fights against bi-erasure and for bi visibility.

331 East, October

By Rae Frame

I weigh in at
152lbs in the local currency,
kind of light
for a punching bag
but if all you want is a lesson learned
I'll do.

Rae Frame is a Minnesota graduate student,
literacy advocate, and LGBTQ+ educator.



Ceramic tile by José Fuster, a Cuban artist



Casey Lawrence

These Jeans: A Poem for Performance

By Casey Lawrence

These jeans fit like a dream.
Every lump and bump left unseen;
Skin-tight, they fit just right,
And they are going on a date tonight.

These jeans make me feel like a queen
Giving the appearance of hips though I'm just fifteen
And have the ass of a twelve-year-old boy, 28" wide,
But even that's something these jeans can hide.

They are boot-cut and kick-butt,
These jeans; ready for a hand in the back pocket,
Or trailing up my jean-clad thigh,
Because these jeans have a date with a good-looking guy.

These jeans are a little anxious,
They thought they'd be in a movie theatre
Showing off that long-legged picture,
Not on a couch in the basement.

These jeans don't want your hand there.
Didn't expect to have to say no here.
Thought he might cop a feel with the goodnight kiss
Because in these jeans, how could he resist?

These jeans can't sit up with you sitting on them.
These jeans are trying to laugh it off
But they don't find it that funny anymore.
In fact, these jeans want to go home.

No, these jeans won't *relax, baby*.
These jeans aren't the *don't worry, you'll like it* type,
These jeans are the *get your hands off me*,
And these jeans aren't your teenage dream tonight.

These jeans are made of stronger stuff than you realized.
They won't be pushed around or down,
Just because your hands are wider than these hips,
And you have weight to your advantage.

But these jeans used to be buttoned at the top,
And that was over with an audible pop
As those wide hands yanked at this waistband
And decided that these jeans were your Disneyland.

But these jeans hide two hard knees,
Harder and bonier than whatever's in yours,
And one of these hard knees
Is aiming for your soft parts, buddy.

These jeans are getting out of here.
I'm holding these jeans together at the front
Because the zipper is broken and the button is missing
But these jeans will get me home.

These jeans are in a ditch in Niagara-on-the-Lake,
Hunkered down in the mud,
Hoping not to get caught in your headlights,
But you pull your mom's car over anyway.

These jeans will not get in that car.
These jeans can't walk back to St. Catharine's.
These jeans get in the car,
And they promise not to tell your mom, or mine.

These jeans are not a metaphor.
They are three years balled up in the back of my closet.
With a broken zipper and a rip in the knee,
These jeans have been haunting me.

These jeans are not getting packed!
They are not moving with us,
Not being put into any more boxes;
They have already been compartmentalized.

These jeans are being left behind
With all their gooseflesh memories
And popped button nightmares.
They are headed for the trash.

I can't touch these jeans again.
They make my skin crawl and itch,
Still feeling like that *frigid bitch* who said no—
Whoever buys the house can have them.

Because this poem was never about a pair of jeans.

Casey is a Canadian university student completing an undergraduate degree in English Language and Literature. She is the author of two bi+ Young Adult novels, Out of Order and Order in the Court, and has been actively involved in LGBT activism in her community since she co-founded a Gay-Straight Alliance in high school.

Drop the Ball: A Micro-Scale Solution to a Macro-Scale Problem

By Lila Hartelius



The intimate partner violence I experienced in a previous relationship wasn't related to my bisexuality ... or was it? When I learned of the high rates of intimate partner and sexual violence bisexual women experience compared to straight- or lesbian-identified women, some unsettling questions arose in my mind:

- If someone who inflicted such violence on a bisexual woman wasn't aware of the woman's bisexuality, could they have *sensed*, even subconsciously, something *different* about her that made them ill at ease and played into their eventual violent behavior?
- If the perpetrator already knew the woman was bisexual but didn't seem to mind, does that mean the conscious and subconscious motives for the violence were truly unrelated to her bisexuality?
- Could the idea of a woman's bisexuality create, in some cases, feelings of unease in someone else? Could such feelings lead this person to exhibit overt or covert controlling behaviors toward her? Might this comportment in some cases evolve into violent behavior?

In essence, what is going on inside the head and heart of someone who commits violence against a bisexual woman?

I don't mean this in a spirit of incredulous shock or one-dimensional blame, nor do I mean to side with perpetrators or excuse violence. I also don't mean to suggest that insecurity around a woman's bisexuality will in every case lead to violence perpetrated against her. I simply think it is worth considering how societal views of bisexuality might help fuel, but not justify, such violent behavior when it arises.

After I began reading bisexual activist Shiri Eisner's book *Bi: Notes for a Bisexual Revolution* (Seal Press, 2013), the question of how society regards bisexuality became, for me, not only about a collection of stereotypes about bisexual people but also about the social constructs these stereotypes point to and the value systems they uphold. From this shifted standpoint, it seems plausible to me that, in some cases, even a person who has no conscious qualms with bisexuality might be subject to collective, subconscious insecurities regarding this sexual orientation. Eisner proposes that bisexuality is perceived societally as inherently destabilizing to many cherished cultural values. Films, books, and media have often portrayed both fictional and real bisexual women as lascivious, wanton creatures who exist to satisfy others'

forbidden sexual hungers and curiosities. This image might not readily evoke anxiety, but imagine how one might feel if a creature they regarded as their personal toy came to life and started having their own needs and desires. Suddenly the opportunity to realize one's selfish fantasies might not seem so secure, unless one could find a way to get the creature under one's command again. Obviously, factors other than discomfort with bisexuality could provoke incidences of intimate partner or sexual violence against bisexual women. A perpetrator could have emotional or psychological problems that lead them to behave violently toward others regardless of sexual orientation. However, I don't think this dismisses the possibility that subconscious, collective anxiety around bisexuality could play a part in the comparatively high occurrence of sexual and intimate partner violence against bisexual women. Society's mantra regarding such individuals seems to be that we are to be desired but not to be trusted

Was my ex's potential insecurity over my bisexuality or in the face of my autonomy as a bisexual woman with needs of her own a factor that contributed to me experiencing intimate partner violence? It's difficult to say. Regardless, the inquiry evoked for me by this question could suggest that the matter of violence against bisexual women reaches deeper than incidences that are clearly attributable to biphobia.

Now, could chronic internalized biphobia on my part have contributed to the personal low self-esteem that compelled me to stay in a relationship where I was subjecting myself to abuse? Quite possibly, yes. This evokes even more questions:

- If a bisexual woman grew up feeling she was something which was ridiculed, taboo, or indecent, could this have hindered her ability to form a positive self-image and have impeded her capacity to develop adequate strategies to meet her personal needs?
- If negative or exploitative cultural perceptions of bisexuality continue to circulate relatively unmitigated, can a ten-year-old child truly be blamed for the anxiety and shame that solidifies in the brain and heart of a friend (who already understands herself to be bisexual) when that ten-year-old child whispers scandalously into her ear that a celebrity is bisexual?
- If, generally speaking, women are socialized to prioritize others' needs, how can women with less-than-adequate self-esteem be expected to automatically know what

they want and need, let alone feel confident communicating that or sticking up for themselves when they are misunderstood, ignored, disrespected, or simply not heard, even in healthy relationships where their partner has the best intentions?

- And finally, with so little relevant, positive, visible information in existence about bisexuality, how can bisexual women be expected to successfully mitigate their own internalized biphobia and improve their self-esteem?

In other words, how much damage has already been done, in terms of social “education” by the time a bisexual woman finds herself a victim of intimate partner or sexual violence?

Here again, I don’t mean to point a finger at any specific groups of people. Popular conceptions of bisexuality seem to have something of a life of their own. They are like a ball being tossed around by many different people across a wide expanse: most people don’t know where the ball came from or where it’s going; all that seems to matter is keeping it in the air. When pressed with questions, it is likely few people could even come up with a good reason for these stereotypes about bisexual women.

Given the autonomy such conceptions seem to have and the profundity with which they threaten the stability of underlying social value systems, and given the tenacity with which some humans can cling to objectifying images that meet needs as primal and irrefutable as those bound up in sexual desires, I think it is important to evaluate the efficacy of efforts made to clear up misconceptions surrounding bisexuality. Perhaps within the bisexual community too much energy is spent reiterating that bisexual people need to be understood and not enough spent contributing to the nuanced care and attention that should be given to the complex task of demystifying bisexuality.

Furthermore, as Eisner suggests, rather than simply “clearing up” so-called misconceptions” about bisexuality, maybe it would be more worthwhile to elucidate common cultural conceptions of bisexuality as they are and question their foundations. To do this, someone must cut through the absurdity and break the rhythm of the ball-toss game. Someone has to drop the ball. To get through to an absurd kind of logic, one has to do something which defies the logic and renders it absurd. Creating a schism in the continuity of the ball-toss game must, I believe, happen on a micro scale. Experience has shown me that person-to-person conversation with those in my circles can in some cases be more effective in shifting people’s views of bisexuality than can, say, a website alone explaining the ABCs of what bisexuality is. Firstly, because each bisexual person embodies a unique

and dynamic continuum of experiences and expressions of bisexuality, no one description can fully capture all the nuances of what bisexuality might mean to bisexual individuals themselves, nor can it respond precisely to potential misreadings of such a website. Secondly, if some people in the ball-toss game collectively start shouting, those near them may distance themselves to save their ears or enjoyment of the game and those farther away may not even hear; whereas if each of a handful of people asks their neighbor, “why?” and, with the insistent curiosity of a naïve but precocious child, doesn’t settle for a canned response, those neighbors may begin to ask themselves the same question.

In dangerous situations, such questioning would clearly be unwise. Even in a safe context, teasing apart the strands of a tangle of different points of view which could easily distort into misinterpretations might feel like pulling teeth or looking for a needle in a haystack. In the long run, however, I think that, where it is safe, possible, and relevant to do so concerning bisexuality, fostering open negotiations of meaning between bisexual individuals and those in their circles could potentially play a unique and vital role in fostering more realistic understandings of bisexual people (one which the sole act of holding up a banner may never fulfill on its own). Perhaps if the perceived threat implied by societal conceptions of bisexuality can be mitigated by real-life interactions with bisexual people, feelings of insecurity about bisexuality that might be implicated in, among other contexts, intimate partner and sexual violence against bisexual women could begin to be cracked open and questioned.

Lila Hartelius, B.A. (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, Tendrel (Naropa University’s diversity journal), and Bi Women Quarterly. She was a workshop leader at EuroBiCon 2016 and has contributed to the efforts of Bennington College’s Queer Student Union, Naropa University’s GLBTQ student group, and Boulder Pride.



To the Boy Who Taught Me To Carry My Own Cross

By Christi Sessa

(Trigger Warning: Rape, Sexual Violence)

After I was raped, I convinced myself that I would never let a man touch me again. Hell, I didn't think I would ever be able to have sex again *period*. The emotional toll he put on me was heavy, and I still feel it. When I look at myself in the mirror, all the stretch marks and rolls, I remember how desperate he told me I was, how desperate he was, so desperate that only someone as hypersexual and desperate as him would ever want me. I believed him; I was hideous, after all, just like he said. It was only out of pity he touched me; in his desperation to fuck, he refused to stop.

And then, I met you. You smiled at me, all soft and kind, and I knew that you were so very different from him. You were nervous to touch me, afraid to initiate. Maybe it was the edibles I'd eaten earlier in the night, but I went for it. I kissed you, and you kissed back. Your hands touched the bare skin on my neck and I was not afraid of the chokehold, not afraid of being pinned against a wall. I did not fade into you, no, we melted together like jet fuel melts steel beams, Baby, impossibly and yet so beautifully. For the first time, I was not pressured, I was not afraid. I was powerful, I was sexy, and I was strong. Your strength was my strength that night, and now, months later, when I fall asleep in your arms I am, like those cheesy love songs always say, happily and beautifully home.

But the trauma still comes to me sometimes. Trauma is something that I carry in my bones so deeply that even if I sucked away all the marrow, the flashbacks would still hold themselves high and mighty, as if they are more powerful than my waking mind. All my life I have been told by men that I am not good enough. I am not a good enough daughter; I am not a good enough son; I am not good enough to be loved; I am not good enough to be listened to; I am not good enough to have the right to say no. To them, I was just nothing.

Then I met you, and somehow I am good enough. Hell, I don't even need to care about being "good" enough because even when I am shaking in rage or despair, when I am well below my lowest lows, you still stand with me, arms outstretched to steady me when I try to stand. I can stand without you, but you make things easier, safer, warmer. When I shake from flashbacks, when my legs bounce from anxiety and fear, you hold on and you do not let go, as if to say, because you are quiet in words but loud in action,

"I am here. Things may not go away, but I am here." All I ever needed was someone to be *here*. Not *there*, because *there* implies distance, but *here*, now, closer than just close proximity. You do not cure me, but trust is the best medicine, better than any SSRI or CBT or joint can ever be. And I trust you, Love. I do.

Do not touch me there, it burns. Touch me other places, the ones he did not touch, the ones that have never been desecrated. And when I'm ready, make the sterile ground of my body fertile again with your calm touching, gently whispering for new roots to take hold so the skin can remember but live on and love on. The memories of the dark times, the abuse and the nothingness, they will live on, but the flowers on their graves will be the starting point of a field's worth of Life, built above and despite the infinitely rotting corpses of below.

When I carry the trauma on my shoulders as my cross, you do not take the weight but give me your strength. Everything is lighter, brighter. I can have sex with men again, I tell myself, because the softness of your love tells me I am more than just the unseen scars. I am more than nothing, you tell me. To you, you say with the hazy glow in your eyes when you wake up next to me, I am everything.

Christi is a student at Goshen College in Goshen, Indiana, studying Peace, Justice, and Conflict Studies. She got invited to the White House one time.



Christi

Resources




Resources for Support

- **The National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs** curates a list of LGBTQ-centered anti-violence programs across the US and Canada here: ncavp.org/AVPs/default.aspx
- **The National Sexual Assault Hotline** can connect anyone in the US with their local rape crisis center via 1-800-656-HOPE, 24/7/365. The National Domestic Violence Hotline provides similar 24/7/365 support for anyone facing abuse in a relationship and has interpreter services available in 170 languages.
- **The Hot Peach Pages** provides an international directory of sexual and intimate partner violence agencies around the world: www.hotpeachpages.net

Resources to Learn More

- **Queering Sexual Violence** – queeringsexualviolence.com is an anthology of radical queer voices from within the anti-violence movement.
- **The National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (NCAVP)** – www.ncavp.org addresses the pervasive problem of violence committed against and within the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) and HIV-affected communities. Further, NCAVP supports existing anti-violence organizations and emerging local programs in their efforts to document and prevent such violence. Click on *publications* to download their annual reports on anti-LGBT hate violence and domestic violence.
- **FORGE** – www.forge-forward.org is a national transgender anti-violence organization federally funded to provide direct services to transgender, gender non-conforming, and gender non-binary survivors of sexual assault. Since 2011, they have been the only transgender-focused organization federally funded to provide training and technical assistance to providers around the country.
- **The Northwest Network of Trans, Bisexual, Lesbian, & Gay Survivors of Abuse** – www.nwnetwork.org increases our communities' ability to support the self-determination and safety of bisexual, transgender, lesbian, and gay survivors of abuse through education, organizing, and advocacy, working within a broad liberation movement dedicated to social and economic justice, equality, and respect for all people, and the creation of loving, inclusive, and accountable communities.
- **The National LGBTQ Institute on Intimate Partner Violence** – lgbtqipv.org/participate offers monthly webinars to provide education about how IPV affects LGBTQ people. One of their tenets is to improve access to services for bisexual survivors.

Compiled by LB Klein



theNetworkLaRed
Survivor-led Organizing to End Partner Abuse
Dirigida por sobrevivientes. Movilizando para acabar con el abuso de pareja.

A national survivor-led, social justice organization based in Boston that works to end partner abuse in lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, BDSM, polyamorous, and queer communities. Rooted in anti-oppression principles, our work aims to create a world where all people are free from oppression. We strengthen our communities through organizing, education, and the provision of support services.

HOTLINE
Voice: 617-742-4911
Toll-Free: 800-832-1901
TTY: 617-227-4911

The Network/La Red's 24-hour hotline provides confidential emotional support, information, and safety planning for lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer and/or transgender (LGBQ/T) folks, as well as folks in SM/kink and polyamorous communities who are being abused or have been abused by a partner. We also offer information and support to friends, family, or co-workers on the issue of domestic violence in LGBQ/T communities. All hotline staff are trained in domestic violence, peer counseling, crisis intervention, and safety planning. You don't have to leave or have to want to leave your relationship to get support.

Does your partner
blame it on your
bisexuality?



... it could be partner
abuse

Abusers may say:

- “I know I can’t trust you alone with your friends because you’ll sleep with anyone.”
- “You aren’t really part of the LGBTQ community.”
- “If you leave me, I’ll tell your boss that you are bi.”
- “I know that all you bisexuals are just sluts.”
- “You are just confused about your sexuality.”
- “If you want to be with me, you have to be a lesbian.”
- “Don’t tell anyone that you’ve been with men before; that’s disgusting.”
- “I know you are going to leave me for a woman,” or “I know you are going to leave me for a man.”

What is partner abuse?

Partner abuse is a systematic pattern of behaviors where one person tries to control the thoughts, beliefs, and/or actions of their partner or someone they are dating or have had an intimate relationship with.

Abuse is not about size, strength, or who is more masculine. Anyone of any gender can be abusive.

Abuse is not just about physical violence. It’s about controlling the other person. Abusers can use emotional, economic, sexual, cultural and identity-related, and physical tactics to control their partners.

Abuse crosses all social, ethnic, racial, and economic lines. You can’t tell if someone is abused or abusive by race, size, strength, economic level, gender expression, religion, politics, or personality.

Abuse is never mutual. Although both partners may use violence, abusers do so to control their partners; a survivor may use violence in self-defense or to try to stop the abuse.

Abuse can happen regardless of the length of relationship or living situation. It doesn’t matter if you live together or just started dating.

Abuse does not lessen; it tends to get worse over time. Couples counseling, anger management, alcoholics anonymous, and communication workshops do not help abusers stop abusing and can be dangerous for the survivor.

From the brochure “Does Your Partner Blame it on Your Bisexuality?” from The Network/La Red. (See p. 11.)

**LGBTQ STUDENTS
EXPERIENCE HIGHER RATES
OF SEXUAL ASSAULT AND
REPORT LOWER CONFIDENCE
IN SCHOOL LEADERSHIP
CLIMATE FOR PREVENTION
AND RESPONSE.**

EROC
END RAPE ON CAMPUS
ENDRAPEONCAMPUS.ORG

*SOURCE: BUREAU OF JUSTICE STATISTICS RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT COLLEGE CAMPUS CLIMATE SURVEY VALIDATION STUDY FINAL



Reflection

By Why Not Both Co



Why Not Both Co is a duo incorporating humor and inclusivity through online comics. The duo consists of the bisexual creators AV and Amanda Wells.

#QTPOCLOVE

Love means
**MY BOO RESPECTS
MY BOUNDARIES.**

WHEN LOVE GOES WRONG, WE'RE HERE FOR YOU
TODOSINACTION.ORG | 617.742.4911 (TNLR)

TODaS
COLLABORATIVE

TODaS is an acronym for Queer, Trans, and Gender Non-Conforming. TODaS Collaborative is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. TODaS Collaborative is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. TODaS Collaborative is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. TODaS Collaborative is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

Research Corner

With this issue, we re-introduce this column, under the capable supervision of Renate Baumgartner and Soudeh Rad. Renate Baumgartner is currently researching on bisexual women and their experiences of discrimination in Vienna, Austria. She holds a PhD in natural sciences, is a bi+ activist, and offers workshops for bisexual empowerment. Soudeh Rad is an Iranian gender equality activist based in France and cofounder of *Dojensgara.org*, a website about bisexuality in Persian. Some columns will be written by Renate, some by Soudeh – and some by both. If there is research on bisexuality that you would like them to be aware of, please write to them c/o *biwomeneditor@gmail.com*.

Bisexual women and Trauma: Findings from “The National Intimate Partner & Sexual Violence Survey”

By Renate Baumgartner

Sexual violence against women is recognized as an enormous social problem. A large body of research exists on this topic. Research about sexual violence against LGB (lesbian, gay and bisexual) people is also available. However, most studies investigating the experiences of sexual violence by lesbian and bisexual women pool the data into “sexual minority women” (Rothman and Baughman 2011). Thus, data explicitly focusing on bisexuals or comparing their experiences with heterosexual or lesbian women is scarce. In 2013 the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention provided the first nationally representative data on the prevalence of sexual violence, stalking, and intimate partner violence in the LGB population (Walters, Chen, and Breiding 2013). The report is admittedly quite shocking for any woman who identifies as bisexual. The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS) is an ongoing, nationally representative survey. Data collection for the report issued in 2013 took place in 2010. Participants had to be over 18 years old and had to speak English or Spanish. People across the United States were chosen randomly and phoned over landlines and cell phones to gather responses to the survey questions. In total, over 16,500 people took part: 9,100 women and 7,400 men. During the interview people were also asked: “Do you consider yourself to be heterosexual or straight, gay or lesbian, or bisexual?” Of the women, 2.2% of the women identified themselves as bisexual, 1.2% as lesbian, and 96.5% as heterosexual.

The goal of this survey was to learn more about the prevalence of experiences of intimate partner violence, sexual violence, and stalking victimization among adult women and men in the United States. The survey included questions around lifetime victimization as well as victimization in the past 12 months.

The report concludes: “bisexual women had significantly higher prevalence of virtually all types of sexual violence and intimate partner violence...when compared to both heterosexual and lesbian women.” Put into numbers, this means that nearly half of bisexual women had experienced rape at some point in their lifetime. That is compared to one in eight lesbian women and one in six heterosexual women. Most bisexual women had been between 11 and 24 years old during their first experience of rape. Seven out of 10 bisexual women had experienced other forms of sexual violence such as unwanted sexual contacts or being pressured in a non-physical way for sexual contacts, compared to almost half of the heterosexual and lesbian. One in three bisexual women had experienced stalking, compared to one in six heterosexual women (data of lesbian women was not reported). The survey differentiated between intimate partner violence and violence by perpetrators who were strangers or acquaintances. Six bisexual women out of 10 had experienced intimate partner violence, compared to three or four out of 10 for heterosexual or lesbian women,

Lifetime Prevalence of...	Bisexual	Heterosexual	Lesbian
Rape	46%	17%	13%
Other Sexual Violence	75%	43%	46%
Stalking Victimization	37%	16%	- ²
Any Intimate Partner Violence ¹	61%	35%	44%
Severe Physical Violence by an Intimate Partner	49%	24%	29%

¹ Rape, physical violence, and/or stalking

² Not reported because sample size was too small

respectively. Half of bisexual women had experienced severe physical violence by an intimate partner, as have one in three lesbian women and one in four heterosexual women. Physiological aggressions from intimate partners were even more common: more than seven out of 10 bisexual women, six out of 10 lesbians and half of the heterosexual women reported this experience.

The report suggests the following actions:

- More research is needed to identify potential risk or protective factors for rape in adolescent LGBs.
- Training for service providers who respond to intimate partner and sexual violence should be enhanced.
- State and local criminal justice systems should consider how their services for survivors of sexual violence serve people regardless of sexual orientation.
- Unbiased training and expanded education are needed for service providers who focus on LGB issues.

The report is precise and streamlined. However, many questions remain unanswered. For example: were the women out at the time of the sexual assault or at all? Also, no hypothesis is offered why bisexual women experience sexual violence to such a high degree. I would hypothesize that society and perpetrators

look at bisexual women differently from other women. Antibisexual prejudices like hypersexualization or the attribution of promiscuity could be reasons bisexual women are targeted.

In summary, this report offers the first US national-level data on the prevalence of intimate partner violence, sexual violence, and stalking among the LGB population. It is a revealing piece of research. In addition to providing scientific validation of the importance of caring for the health and well-being of bisexual women, the study also offers valuable information for bisexual organizations and activists.

Bibliography:

Rothman, E. F., Exner, D., & Baughman, A. L. (2011). The prevalence of sexual assault against people who identify as gay, lesbian, or bisexual in the United States: A systematic review. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 12(2), 55–66. doi.org/10.1177/1524838010390707

Walters, M.L., Chen, J., & Breiding, M.J. (2013). *The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2010 findings on victimization by sexual orientation*. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Available at: www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/nisvs_sofindings.pdf

Farewell, and welcome.

With this issue comes a change of staff at *BWQ*. After serving as Assistant Editor since 2013, Catherine Rock is stepping aside to attend to family needs and her considerable teaching responsibilities at Stark State College, and LB Klein has agreed to step up.

Catherine: I am so grateful to you for your talent, your dependability, your fine judgment and editorial skills – and especially your willingness to donate your time to this project.

LB: I am excited to have you on board as our new Assistant Editor and co-conspirator.

Readers: LB Klein, MSW, MPA, is a doctoral student, social work researcher, and prevention educator. Bi+ identities, particularly addressing the disproportionate rate of perpetration of sexual and intimate partner violence against bi+ women, are core to her professional and academic mission.

In her application letter, she explained her interest in serving as Assistant Editor: “I am thrilled that *BWQ* exists because of the lack of spaces out there for bi+ women. I’ve lived in Missouri, Georgia, and North Carolina for my entire adult life and have faced a lack of bi+ community, so I have tended to seek out communities virtually. Simply being out online has led to folks reaching out and feeling affirmed in who they are, even if they do not feel they can be open with people in their own lives. Being visible and promoting (consensual) visibility is important to me.”

Farewell, Catherine, and thank you. And welcome, LB!

Robyn

On Being a Full-time Part of the Solution

By Apphia K.

Every day, I am thankful for the work I have been given the opportunity to do. This is how I start my day. I intentionally thank the universe for guiding me to make the right decisions, to be able to be in the exact spot that I find myself in. This means that I have a steady source of income, which means that I can make rent and put food on my table. This means that I walk into an office where my team creates the safest environment I have ever worked in. This means that for right now I am not looking over my shoulder in fear. This means that for now I can continue to be part of important work that needs to be done. With that reassurance and the calmness and confidence that come with it, I can begin each day with a full heart and for this I am thankful.

I work at the [Asian Task Force Against Domestic Violence](#). We serve Pan-Asian survivors of domestic and intimate partner violence. We provide services in Greater Boston and Lowell, and offer limited assistance throughout Massachusetts and New England. We currently provide services in 18 Asian languages and dialects. The office I work in is staffed by a group of fierce non-binary folx, genderfluid folx, and women of the Asian diaspora. Some of us are immigrants, some of us are citizens, and some of us are asylees and refugees. When I interviewed for my position, one of our executive directors told me that the work was hard and intense, but we support and take care of each other. I didn't really believe it until a few months into working here.

I am the Youth Education Coordinator, and a member of the Education and Outreach Department at ATASK. Part of my job is to run the Youth Empowerment Project. We hire youth and help them to become Youth Community Leaders. I like to introduce myself as a maker of trouble makers. The other part of my job is to facilitate workshops in high schools and with other youth organizations around teen dating abuse, and I train the staff at our agency.

Every day is an experience that changes my life, warms my heart, and moves my spirit. Not everything is smooth sailing, and there is a lot of work that needs to be done – but I want to share with you a few things that keep me grounded. Five things have shaped my work here at the agency:

One

During my mandated professional training when I started, I learned about domestic abuse, intimate partner abuse, and child abuse. For the first time in my life, I understood the vastness of the term *abuse*. While I was being taught, I simultaneously realized and recognized the abuse that I had experienced in my own life. I felt like a statistic. I felt small, and I was confused. It made me angry.

Two

One of the last training sessions I had was run by my peer at work – an amazing non-binary agender person. When they were building their LGBTQIA Competency training for us, we talked about the importance of including the statistics of violence faced by bisexuals. As people with the highest rates of all sexual orientations, we *had* to talk about it – and I insisted that we talk about it with the same weight that we were giving to rates of violence in trans* communities.

Three

I changed how the Youth Empowerment Project teaches youth about LGBTQIA issues and identities. This meant changing our curriculum from having a separate LGBTQIA 101 training, to integrating LGBTQIA issues into every subject – whether it was Asian American history, gender and sexuality, or understanding domestic violence and intimate partner violence. Asian cultures have suffered so much at the hands of colonizers, and I am committed to stubbornly decolonizing gender and sexuality for the youth I work with, for the communities I serve, and for myself!

Four

A couple of months ago, I ran my first staff training and

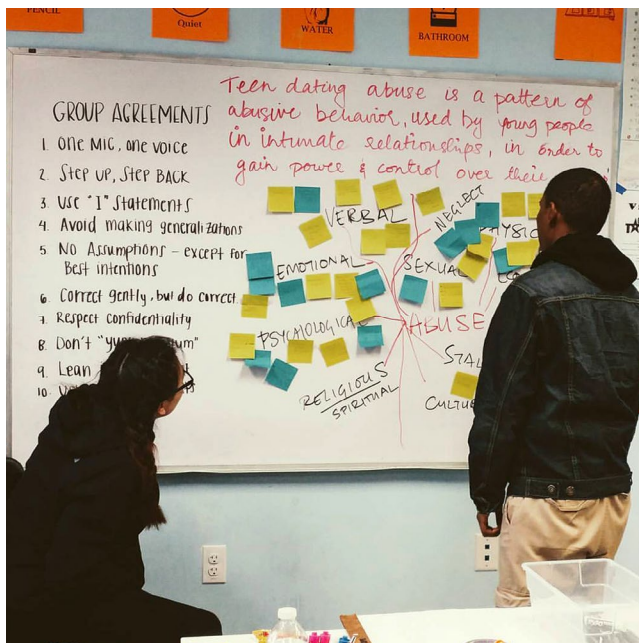


Photo courtesy Apphia K.

Youth learning to recognize teen dating abuse in one of Apphia's workshops



Youth creating signs for a rally led by the Youth Empowerment Project

I loved it! It was the first time I was in the position to set the tone for people coming in to work at our agency. Again, I integrated LGBTQIA issues into my trainings. When we talked about understanding abuse, domestic violence, and intimate partner violence, I made it a point to highlight examples of people of

all genders and orientations. It took a bit longer, but it is equally if not more important for these conversations to be had in this way.

Five

One of the programs our department runs is called Engaging Masculinity. This purpose of this program is to engage with people around gender-based violence and masculinities. The amazing thing about this program is that my peer has a queer lens to the subject that makes it accessible beyond the binary, and literally disrupts the mainstream, limited view of masculinity, while reimagining and reconstructing our perception and understanding of masculinity. We're also talking about how biphobia shows up in gender-based violence and how people with masculinities can work on not being biphobic, transphobic, and homophobic as part of this curriculum.

While this may sound ideal, hopeful and inspiring, I want to be real with you. Changing our assumptions about gender or orientation is challenging. It is a slow, lethargic process – as is any kind of institutional change. But as people who work in a field where we are helping survivors of intimate partner violence and domestic abuse, there is no excuse for us to be perpetrators of violence ourselves!

For far too long we've been conditioned not to take up too much space in this world. One of my core beliefs is that **when you hear your narrative being erased, or not being included in the work you do or the spaces you hold... take up space, challenge the stereotype, and change the narrative.** My intersectional identity as a South Asian, bisexual person has me held in a stubborn embrace of wanting to make important services that my communities need better and more accessible. As people who identify as queer, quite often the labor of educating others about our issues and teaching them how to be safe people for us falls on to us. It takes copious amounts of self-care and love to show up and disrupt the binary and create spaces that are accessible for LGBTQIA survivors. Thankfully,

my ferocious love for our community far outweighs every other obstacle and I will continue to show up as much as I can, for as long as I can.

I have been blessed to be a part of my immediate team at work, as they support me through the work we do. While we all push the binary, we also create a very intentional safer space that is empowering and uplifting to each of us. I have never experienced this kind of healthy work environment before. I had previously found this only at community summits and conferences – but this time it's my full-time job! I am honored to be able to support my team and our staff in return, and I'm constantly looking for ways to empower us in a manner that is culturally sound – both as LGBTQIA allies and members and as Asians.

Of all LGBTQ+ people, bisexuals and trans people experience the highest rates of intimate partner violence and domestic abuse. We must be centered in gender justice and gender-based violence prevention and support work. I do what I can, when I can, in the best way I know how. If you know of organizations that could benefit from a productive conversation with us, please do not hesitate to reach out! Let's change the way we love and support each other. Change is not only possible, it is inevitable!

Apphia K. is a community organizer and advocate with experience in community building, organizational development, public speaking and relations, network building, training and facilitation, fundraising, and event production. A warrior, survivor, the voice in the room reminding everyone to be bi-affirming and inclusive, a hugaholic, a poet who loves to sing, Apphia refuses to tiptoe around biphobia and bi-erasure.



Photo credit: Corky Lee

Apphia holding a Bi+ Asian Pacific Islander workshop in Chicago

Advice From A. Rose Bi



An avid BWQ reader herself, A. Rose Bi proudly identifies as a bisexual woman. She currently lives in New England with her lazy spirit animal, a Siberian cat named after CJ Cregg.

In addition to being an out bi woman, A. has a degree in Cognitive Science, has completed trainings for LGBTQ+ and sexual assault survivor advocacy, and has experience answering calls for an anonymous LGBTQ+ help line. She is passionate about feminism, the bi+ community, LGBTQ+ and female representation in the media, and helping others.

A. Rose Bi's column relies on questions from readers like you! You can send any questions you might have or suspect other readers may have to the author directly at askbwq@gmail.com or by posting on the Bi Women's Quarterly facebook group. All questions are anonymous, nothing is off-limits, and anything related to upcoming issue topics is extra-encouraged!

Dear A. Rose Bi,

My friend just told me that she was recently sexually assaulted. She won't tell me anything else and doesn't want to talk about it. I can't imagine what she's going through. I want to help, and I know talking through these sorts of traumas help people process. How do I get her to talk to me about what happened?

Thanks,

Just Trying to Help

Dear Just Trying,

First, I'm so glad your friend felt they could tell you. It's often extremely difficult to talk about a sexual assault and it sounds like your friend is having a hard time discussing it at all. Talking to you was likely a huge step, and it's great that they felt comfortable doing that.

Next, it's fantastic that you want to help your friend work through this, but talking it out isn't necessarily the way to do that. While talking about what happened can be helpful to many survivors of sexual assault, feeling comfortable doing so can take a lot of time or may not happen at all. What your friend needs right now is just to know you will be there if they feel ready to open up in the future. It already sounds like you care immensely and that they trust you, but here are some good things to remember when helping someone through the aftermath of a sexual assault:

Always believe them. The rate of people lying about sexual assault is incredibly small. Survivors have so much to fight with to even tell their story that there is very little reason to make something like this up. Believe what they are telling you.

Listen when they are ready to talk. You can't force someone to open up, and talking might be too painful. If they have already told you, they are likely comfortable with you and might open up more as time goes on.

Help them find resources. Does your community have a sexual assault survivor resource hotline or center? Does your friend want to report their assault? You don't have to be an expert on what to do next, but you can help by doing some research and finding the people who are.

Take care of yourself. I know I preach this a lot but it is so important. This is obviously a lot to handle for your friend, but this can be a lot to handle for you, too. I'm not sure if your friend has asked you not to tell anyone, but regardless this isn't something you want to be sharing without their consent. However, you need to make sure you are okay. Do you have a therapist, doctor, or close friend who might not know this friend that you can talk to? If not, there are hotlines and websites for people in a situation like yours. Remember – always secure your own oxygen mask before helping others. You are much more of a help to your friend if you are taking care of yourself.

If all else fails, you can always ask your friend what they need from you. They might not know, and that's okay – you can figure it out together. Remind them that you're here for them and that you believe and support them. That alone can be a huge relief and help for a survivor of sexual assault.

Sending you and your friend lots of love,

A. Rose Bi



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.

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

1st Wednesdays:

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

2nd Thursdays:

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

3rd Saturdays:

Biversity Bi Brunch. 11:30am at The Burren, 247 Elm Street, Davis Square, Somerville.

4th Thursdays:

Social BLiSS, Jamaica Plain. 7pm at Café Nero. Info: Mia at youngblissboston@gmail.com.

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



CALENDAR

June

4 (Sunday) 7:30am-2pm, AIDS Walk Boston. The 6.2-mile AIDS Walk starts at the Hatch Shell in Boston's Back Bay. The Walk raises money and awareness for essential HIV prevention, advocacy, and services. More info at: AIDSwalkBoston.org.

7 (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.org.

8 (Thursday) 7-9pm, Young Bisexual Social and Support Group, Somerville (Young 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! Info/RSVP: youngblissboston@gmail.com.

9 (Friday) 6pm, Boston Dyke March. Gather at the Boston Common Gazebo for a night of frolicking and marching with the queerest women in town. The Boston Dyke March is a non-commercial, community-centered, grassroots, inclusive pride event for everyone: dykes, lesbians, queers, bi folks, trans women, trans men, genderqueers, non-binary folks, allies, and everyone in between. Info: bostonDykeMarch.com.

10 (Saturday) 12pm, Boston Pride Festival and Parade. March with the Bisexual Resource Center and help us carry a giant Bi+ flag for the third year in a row! Come visit us in our booth from 11am-6pm. Info/RSVP: brc@biresource.net.

12 (Monday) 7-9pm, 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. RSVP/Info: kate.e.flynn@gmail.com.

17 (Saturday) 12pm, Rhode Island Pride. Info: prideRI.com.

17 (Saturday) 11:30am, Bi Brunch. This mixed gender bi group brunches at The Burren on Elm St. in Davis Sq., Somerville. Meets 3rd Saturdays.

22 (Thursday) 6:30pm, Social BLiSS, Jamaica Plain. This group is now for all ages who are interested in some tasty snacks and discussion with like-minded bis. Feel free to bring any topics you're interested in discussing! Info/RSVP: Mia at socialblissboston@gmail.com.

July

5 (Wednesday) 7-9pm, Bisexual Social and Support Group (BLiSS). (See June 7th)

9 (Sunday) 2-4pm, Tea with Bisexual Women Partnered with Men (BWPM). A peer-led support meetup co-hosted by BI-WOC and the BRC. We will discuss a wide range of issues related to attraction, sexuality, and gender in a supportive safe space for trans and cis women and non-binary folks of all races and ethnic backgrounds. Info/RSVP: <https://www.meetup.com/Bi-Community-Activities/events/237002701>.

9 (Sunday) 12-3pm, Women's Potluck Brunch. This one's at Kara's in Milford, NH. It may seem far away, but it is worth it. Great for northern Mass and NH folks! Lots of parking. Bring a potluck brunch item to share. This is a great way to meet other bi+ and bi+-friendly women in the area! Info/RSVP: kara.ammon@gmail.com. Mention in your RSVP if you need a ride share. We can't promise rides, but can try to help.

Calendar, continues on p. 20

Calendar, *continued from p. 19*

10 (Monday), 7-9pm, Straight Marriage, Still Questioning. (See June 12th)

13 (Thursday) 7-9pm, Young Bisexual Social and Support Group (Young BLiSS). (See June 8th)

15 (Saturday) 11:30am, Bi Brunch. (See June 17th)

27 (Thursday) 7-9pm, Bi+/Trans* Support Group. The BRC's bisexual+/transgender* support group is a peer-facilitated, safe space in Jamaica Plain where individuals can discuss many different topics. Info/RSVP: www.meetup.com/Bi-Community-Activities/events/hnwxslwkbkc.

August

2 (Wednesday) 7-9pm, Bisexual Social and Support Group (BLiSS). (See June 7th)

10 (Thursday) 7-9pm, Young Bisexual Social and Support Group, Somerville (Young BLiSS). (See June 8th)

14 (Monday) 7-9pm, Straight Marriage, Still Questioning. (See June 12th)

19 (Saturday) 11:30am, Bi Brunch. (See June 17th)

19 (Saturday) 12-3pm Women's Potluck Brunch at Mitsy & Liana's. Please join us at our little JP oasis, right off of Centre St.! We have a lovely backyard with a family-style table, so please feel free to bring picnic/BBQ items to share! We look forward to seeing new faces as well as hanging out with favorites in the bi+ and bi+-friendly community of Boston. Bring a friend, too! RSVP: mitsyblue4@yahoo.com.

25 (Thursday) 6:30pm, Social BLiSS, Jamaica Plain. Meets on 4th Thursdays. (See June 22nd)

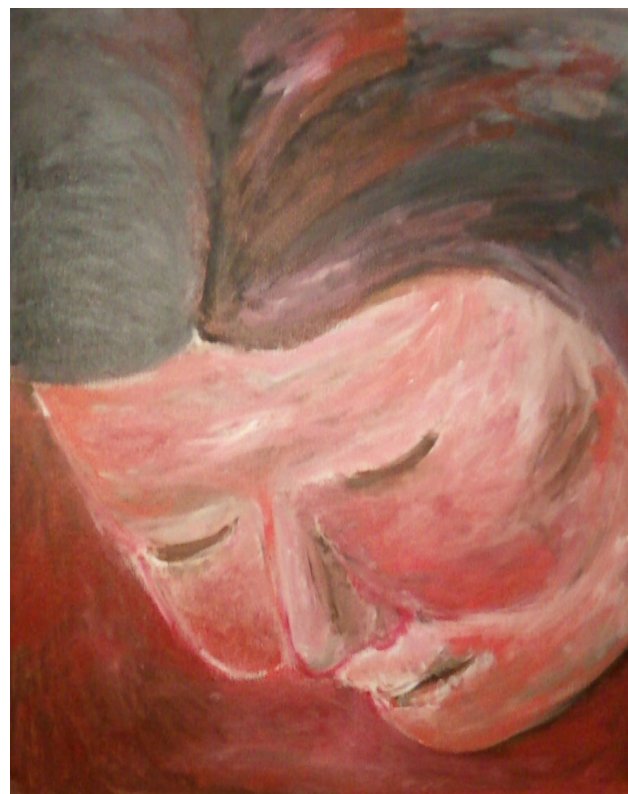


Stuff & Stuff at Robyn's (where we share a meal and prepare *Bi Women Quarterly* for mailing)



Reflection 2

Acrylic, 16" x 20" on canvas board,
by Jo-Anne Carlson



Jo-Anne Carlson is a writer, artist, and musician. She loves hearing from friends and meeting new people, so feel free to drop her a line at josexpressions@yahoo.com.