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## HONOR ROLL

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## Editor's Note

Dear Community,

As a 30-year-old woman, I am not always certain what to make of "women's space."

I think first of the oppressive associations, particularly how some versions of feminism have weaponized the word "woman" to invalidate and harm transgender women and continue to do so. I have always understood *BWQ* to be a space with deep commitments to inclusion, including of trans women, and non-binary people who feel a connection to this space (and I wouldn't be involved with it if it did not). Beginning with these non-negotiables, I wondered what the diverse members of the *BWQ* community, including those older than me, would have to offer about the meaning of women's space.

It feels intuitive and necessary to me that belonging within women's space is not contingent upon biological features. It also feels intuitive and necessary to me that women's space includes people who don't necessarily claim the label woman. All of our journeys related to that label are complex, and the point of women's space, and especially queer and feminist women's space, is that we are grappling with that category, which, though some of us claim it, has also been imposed on us. So sometimes I wonder, why call it *women's* space? Would another term be more inclusive, or come closer to what we *mean* by women's space?

While I often feel a sense of refuge and relief in spaces apart from cisgender men, I have not created *women's* space in my life in the intentional, sustained ways that, it seems to me, are more common among

*Editor's note, continued on next page*

**Kat reads *BWQ*.  
Send a picture of  
yourself reading  
*BWQ* to [biwom-  
eneditor@gmail.  
com](mailto:biwomeneditor@gmail.com).  
Be creative!**



BBWN is an all-volunteer organization. Want to proofread, edit submissions, host one of our monthly brunches, help out with our Etsy store, or with our WordPress website? Or, if you're a student, consider an internship. If you are interested in helping out, please contact Robyn ([biwomeneditor@gmail.com](mailto:biwomeneditor@gmail.com)).

## Upcoming in *Bi Women Quarterly* Call for submissions

### Spring 2020: Being an Activist

Do you consider yourself an LGBTQ+ activist? A bi+ activist? What does your activism mean to you? How does your LGBTQ+ activism intersect with other activist issues? Share your successes, frustrations, hopes, and what others can do to help support your activism. What books/films have inspired your own activism? Share personal essays, poetry, artwork, and photographs from your activist life. Submissions are due by February 1.

### Summer 2020: Finding Sex/Finding Love

How do you seek and find romantic and/or sexual connection? Do you use technology such as dating apps? Why or why not? Have you intentionally sought these connections, or stumbled upon them? We want to hear about your experiences, whether delightful, discouraging, amusing, or absurd! Submissions are due by May 1.

Submission guidelines are online at  
[biwomenboston.org](http://biwomenboston.org).

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

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

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. We strive to create a safe environment in which women of all sexual self-identities; class backgrounds; racial, ethnic, and religious groups; ages; and 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, full acceptance of bisexuality, and the liberation of all gay and transgender people within the larger society.

*Editor's note, continued from previous page*

those of older generations. For example, Robyn tells me about her memories of attending her mother's consciousness-raising group, and how transgressive it was for women to gather as women to discuss their experiences of gender inequality. I realize I take for granted that women *can* speak together and speak out about gender inequality, though it seems we are still fighting many of the same battles.

Perhaps the first moment in my lifetime when I witnessed intense political energy gathering around the category *woman* was the Women's March. But the conception of "women's space" created by this event has not always made room for grappling with the deep inequalities that exist *among* women—including those based on cis/trans identity, sexuality, race, class, religion, immigration status, ability, age, etc.—which is more important than ever, given how many of us are now under attack.

In her 1981 essay "The Uses of Anger," Audre Lorde writes poignantly about the messy process of building solidarity among women, given the divisions we have inherited. Lorde's essay is a call to face the angers caused by exclusion within women's space, and to learn from this emotion, rather than turning away from it. Focusing primarily on racism, she calls out white women for our frequent propensity to respond superficially to the anger caused

by racism, rather than looking within ourselves and addressing harmful beliefs and behaviors.

But ultimately, Lorde insists upon the power of women's space. She writes that "the strength of women lies in recognizing differences between us as creative, and in standing to those distortions which we inherited without blame, but which are now ours to alter. The angers of women can transform difference through insight into power. For anger between peers births change, not destruction, and the sense of loss it often causes is not fatal, but a sign of growth."

I admit that Robyn and I have had reservations, even deep fears, about some of the painful issues that this issue could potentially bring to the surface. And though we don't have answers to some of the complex questions raised by women's space, our hope is that this issue spurs growth in the *BWQ* community.

We were heartened by the submissions we received on this theme, and offer this issue in the hopes that it will encourage all of us to listen more carefully to one another, to support one another, and, when necessary, to look deep within ourselves and make necessary changes, so that we can hone the strength we possess when we come together.

*-Katelynn Bishop, Assistant Editor (she/her)*

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## AROUND THE WORLD: Bùi Khánh Minh, Vietnam

### *Five Times People Claim That I Am Queer, and One Time I Say I Am*

**Debrief:** *As the title suggests, this short story showcases the many ways the label "queer" and the notion of queerness can be misapplied by different people to the same individual. As the absurdity of the situation accelerates, the impacts are wide-ranging: internalized misogyny as justification for homophobia, teenage toxic romantic relationships, the relative arrogance of LGBTQ allies, fetishization of queer people, blatant homophobia, and stereotypes reinforced by community members. Intentionally or unintentionally, people from minority groups can easily have parts of their own narratives denied. The situation is only resolved once these individuals can proclaim their identity labels and encourage people around them to support them in this process.*

#### 1.2013

"That's the queer one in class 8A4. She doesn't hang out with girls, and only sticks to those nerdy dudes. Always hanging out with boys while denying that she holds any feelings for them. She probably plans on screwing with all three of them at once—no girl wants to hang out with boys that much if not to receive attention from them. Imagine a foursome between three ugly nerds and a lesbian!"

Kids at the new school are taunting me for being the new kid and are now spreading the rumor that I am a flirt or a lesbian or both because I only hang out with the three nerdiest boys in my class. This must be the price of not being like the other girls. The other girls seem to care only about curling their bangs and

lipsticks and talking to each other. Petty and pathetic girls! They weep and yelp and gossip. That is to say, the other girls are every girl that I know of. Meanwhile, here I am being sensationally better than them because I only associate with boys. Having the boys affirm that you are "not like the other girls" compensates for every snark about being "that lesbian," right? For as long as I'm not a lesbian, there's no reason to feel guilty or overreact, right? What a relief, being "not like the other girls."

#### 2.2014

"Same-sex marriage is normal!"

*Khánh Minh, continued on next page*



“What the actual loving fuck? Are you LGBT?”

“Don’t accuse me of such thing! I’m just saying that gay people already suffer enough. Can’t we help by sparing them marriage rights though?”

“Ewwwwwwww, I can’t believe you stand for the homos, you homo.”

I am outraged. I am disgusted. How dare he, my boyfriend, accuse me of being LGBTQ, just because I merely suggest that gay people should be able to get married, too. It’s all right. I take a deep breath and think, “He’s just a boy. Boys will be boys, and they just don’t care about the gays.”

“Huh, come to think of it, I feel like I am dating a man. You slouch, you curse, you don’t get scared of silly shit like the other girls. Should I worry for myself?”

I playfully hit his arm, as he chuckles lightheartedly.

What a silly boyfriend I have.

### 3.2015.

“Hey, the dude from French class says that you have lesbian energy.”

“Excuse me?”

“I dunno. He says that he often sees you walking around school with those boots of yours, talking to people about your plan to establish the school’s first LGBTQ support group. He says that you radiate angry lesbian energy.”

“Ha, see how I manage to be better than everyone? I like boys, yet look cool enough to be mistaken for a lesbian. See, when you are unproblematic and doing God’s work....”

“Wait, you are not gay?”

“No. I only like boys.”

“Then why are you fighting so hard for LGBTQ rights?”

“Because my friend in secondary school only dated trans boys and lesbians, and our teachers and her parents were assholes to her. I want to change that. So I’m starting with the support group.”

“That is so noble of you.”

A cosmic shift occurs in my life once I become a high school freshman. There is no hesitation in the way I conduct myself on the campus. I am walking, walking, walking with determination. I demand that people pay attention to minority groups. My parents take pride in me for battling to claim rights for a group of people that I do not personally relate to. The only downside of being a social justice warrior is that people often mistake me for a member of the LGBTQ community, which explains why not many boys ask me out.

What a sacrifice I am making.

### 4.2016

“Why do you have to make a fuss over a nine-year-old kid calling you a dyke? Sure, he was mean, and that was out of line and he should have known better, but shouldn’t you spend your energy on more positive things in your daily life?”

“Because he saw my short hair and decided to use that slur with me! Because I don’t look like a girl to him! That was offensive and homophobic!”

“How can it be homophobic when you yourself are not queer! Why do you care so much! If you end up being upset about this for years, I guarantee you that you will soon lose the joy in life, and it will be all your fault for not training your mind to think positively!”

Oh. OH. So, I can’t vent to my parents about being insulted on my school playground by a nine-year-old kid, apparently. Their daughter was called a dyke on campus, but why on earth should she be upset over that, because she personally is not one? Alas, her sensitivity will one day prove to be her fatal flaw. I pick up the discarded uniform jacket on the couch and walk back to my room, hanging the uniform on the clothing peg. My eyes stop at the tiny bisexual flag that I secretly drew on its left arm.

What a shallow breath I just heave out.

### 5.2017

“I think that you are very pretty and you dance very well will you go out with me?”

“Excuse me?”

“I said that you are very pretty and you dance very well! Don’t make me repeat it! I have anxiety! I think that you are really cool, will you go out with me?”

“Oh, you’re queer? Yeah, I thought so too. Since you cut your hair really short last year, I already knew that you were somewhat of an LGBTQ member. I noticed you, too. Let’s meet up after school today, yeah?”

And on that note, my crush leaves to meet her friend, her hair bouncing against her back, God help me, while I am frozen to my feet with a very dry mouth and a stare. My friend nudges me:

“Well, that went well, right?”

“I hadn’t identified as queer when I first cut my hair.”

“What?”

“Yeah. I didn’t cut it because I was queer. It was a celebratory haircut. I had just got out of an eight-month depressive episode at the time, so I decided to commemorate it by getting that haircut.”

*Khánh Minh, continued from previous page*

“Hold up, are you telling me that the haircut that blew up the gossip market happened not because you wanted to come out?”

“No. Actually, it was because of that haircut that a girl in my class started flirting with me because of my androgynous look. Then I realized I was attracted to girls too.”

“But you are not depressed anymore, right? Why do you still keep it short?”

“I still have episodes, just not as frequent. And the hair? Well, the boys here claim that I look like a trans lesbian to them, so I can’t bother to give a single f\*ck. So, I thought why not charm all the freshman girls’ pants off with my androgyny?”

My friend is speechless. If only she knew the loud silence that people gave to me when I first came back to school with that haircut.

What privilege she possesses.

### +1.2018

“Wait, are you a volunteer for the LGBTQ booth? So you are a supporter of the LGBTQ community?”

“I am the LGBTQ community.”

“Wait, what? I thought you were straight?”

“Excuse me?”

“B-because you don’t look ‘queer.’ Y-you have long hair and wear lipstick and are wearing a floral dress. I have never ever seen an LGBTQ person who looks this—”

“This—?”

“Normal.”

“Are you implying that being LGBTQ is not normal?”

“No no no no, I don’t mean to be offensive. It’s just that some people present themselves too ... loudly, you know? Like you take one look at them and you know immediately that they are gay. What is the word? Ah yeah, gaydar. There are people that my gaydar can catch a signal of very easily.”

“All right. Let me ask you. How do you introduce yourself to a foreigner?”

“Uhhh, I will go with my name and say that I am Vietnamese? Then—”

“Do you need to wear a *Tôi yêu Viet Nam* t-shirt so that they will know that you are Vietnamese?”

“Well, no—”

“Yeah, because you know that you are Vietnamese. But some assholes sometimes still call you Chinese before they even bother to ask you. How does that make you feel?”

“Well, probably not great.”

“Lesson learned! Don’t go around and assume people’s identity. Just. Ask.”

“So you are—”

“Queer. I am queer. Precisely, biromantic—asexual.”

“Thank you for telling me. So, tell me more about these rainbow bracelets?”

I find a smile in my heart travelling back in time. This is for the boy-obsessed lesbian, homo girlfriend, lesbian energy straight savior, dyke senior, tranny haircut LGBTQ icon me. Rainbow bracelets for all of them now, if I could.

What a label to claim. Queer.

*Bùi Khánh Minh is an undergraduate at Fulbright University Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. She is one of the two founders and now the president of FulPride & Alliance—Fulbright University Vietnam’s first-ever LGBTQ+ support group. Her close extended family is currently divided by the reasons behind her passion for LGBTQ+ activism: worrying that she fights for equality because she is a lesbian or passing her off as “normal” with a love for revolution. Unbeknownst to them, she is a bisexual girl who happens to really love taking down discrimination and challenging the conduct of leadership.*



# All Spaces, All Women

By Alicia Ortiz

The majority of my romantic relationships have been with women. I've spent much time in lesbian and "women only" spaces as I've navigated the different aspects of my physical and emotional attractions over the years. I came to understand my sexual and romantic attraction to women at 18 years old, almost 20 years ago, which happened to be at the same time that I was developing a conscious awareness of gender-expansive identities. To me, it didn't make sense to identify my sexuality based upon someone else's gender, considering that gender is a construct and that everyone comes to an understanding of their own gender identities over time. Nevertheless, as I grew into adulthood and began dating more seriously, and my long-term relationships continued to be with women, I understood that representing myself as a queer cisgender woman who dates women was politically important to the social activism I was a part of. When I was asked to participate on a panel as the lesbian voice, I agreed to be presented that way. When a straight person wanted to understand more about my identities and there wasn't enough time to elaborate on the fluidity of gender and sexuality, I would often simply say that I'm gay.

My partner and I, when we were in our early 20s, would joke that we weren't "lesbians," because we didn't want to be associated with the stereotypes associated with that label—women "u-hauling" or moving in together after the first date; possessive



controlling "drama" on the dance floor; and other problematic examples. On some level, the resistance to this label may have been a version of internalized homophobia. However, I'm aware that it was also a subtle way of asserting my attraction to people of all genders, and more importantly, it was a rejection of the rampant attitude I frequently witnessed within lesbian or "all women" spaces: that transgender women did not belong.

I've sat in social settings with cisgender lesbians as they swapped sex stories, competing over who was the "most gay," i.e. who had engaged sexually with the fewest penises. I've heard cisgender lesbians vocally criticize other women's masculine gender expression by saying things like, "If I wanted to date a boy, I'd go be straight." There's long been a pervasive policing of women's choices to express their gender in the world, even by other women who claim to love them. In my view, commentary like this is a symptom of heterosexism and internalized sexism, not an intrinsically flawed characteristic of all lesbian-identified people. On the contrary, I have a deep admiration for many lesbians who have been on the forefront of intersectional feminist movements and liberation for all LGBTQ+ people.

I can understand the desire to separate women and our bodies from the clutches of patriarchy by literally distancing from men in general, and from bodies and expressions that are perceived to be exclusively male, masculine, or manly. However, this type of exclusionary thinking is inherently transphobic. It's also inherently biphobic and, in some contexts, it can even be hostile towards women who have experienced sexual assault from cisgender men. Not to mention that it conflates patriarchy with maleness alone, which is fundamentally inaccurate, and ignores the reality that women regularly play an instrumental role in upholding this oppressive system. There's much to dig into here, but that's a subject for another day and another essay.

In short, women's spaces are not a place to exclude each other based upon our experiences in the world, consensual or otherwise, nor upon our rich and vast identities. Trans women are women and they belong in women's spaces just as much as anyone else. Women of all gender expressions deserve to be in women's spaces no matter where they land on the spectrums of femininity or masculinity. Non-binary people navigating a gendered world who feel safer in women's spaces deserve to be there. Women's spaces provide a crucial opportunity to strengthen, support, and encourage one another within our interconnected fights for justice and equality in an unjust society. It is our responsibility to use this opportunity wisely.

*Alicia (a.LEE.cee.a) Ortiz is an educator and musician living in Boston.*



# Narcissism of Small Differences

By Tamsin

As a non-binary individual who has been part of the Boston Bisexual Women's Network for years, I feel like I have an interesting point of view on "women's space." I will admit, part of my motivation for writing is to justify my own presence; for many months after being aware of the topic of this issue, I felt attacked by its very prompt. Why must "non-binary world" be contrasted with "women's space," as if the former somehow challenged/negated the other? And, given that the concept of "women's space" was made to be the central topic, how could I not feel anything other than, well, "othered"? But I wouldn't truly be part of the LGBTQIA+ community if I didn't put aside my pride for the greater good, now would I?

So now that I have paved my self-righteous war path, let me tramp down it. First, there is no one agreed-upon definition, nor has there been, nor should there ever be, of what it means to be a "woman," nor is the very idea of "woman" some sort of platonic truth. We all have different experiences, and it is beyond any individual's rights to deny the experiences of others. It is not contradictory to value one's views and experiences, while realizing their limits. To do otherwise is to lack humility. On these grounds, I can assert my views on the topic of women's space as valid, if not universally espoused.

If you as a reader are politically minded, you might wonder what right I have to assert my views on womanhood while rejecting that label. In response I have two lines of thought. The first is to assert that, to the best of my knowledge, womanhood in the West has never been defined (contested?) in isolation; there is indeed a reason why people use the phrase "the opposite sex," for womanhood and manhood [to say nothing of androgyny] have always mutually informed each other in the popular conscious-

ness. Whether we like what "the other half" has to say on the topic does nothing to negate my point. My second assertion is that perhaps I do not fully reject the label of woman at all, not because I internally espouse it, but because it has been applied to me. At a certain level, yes, I am "othering" myself in the way I decried a few sentences ago. On another level, how others see me has practical implications. I have been discriminated against, and have been socialized in certain ways despite my best efforts, born with a body that bears certain consequences in this world. I therefore partake in the experience of "womanhood," whatever that is, even against my will. So how "invalid" were my thoughts on the matter to begin with?

So why have I participated, you ask? Well, for one thing, I didn't fully know the words to understand my non-binary identity at the time I joined the group. For another, I wanted to meet people and make friends, especially with women, which I have always sucked at. I can't say I've gotten much better. But the main reason I've stayed is because I've had a place. I could DO something for someone, even if what I do is small and I'm not the only one who could do it. To be given the chance to do it meant something to me because it is harder to fight against concrete actions. I can also say that this group helped me get over my abusive lesbian ex-girlfriend. That was huge. Thanks.

So, yeah, fine, I'll affirm this place so that you all can feel comfortable while my own position, for all I know, remains tentative (I await this issue with bated breath).

*Tamsin is a data analyst living in Boston. Their interests include public health, history, and dogs.*



Volunteers from Tufts University came over and put together the mailing of the Fall 2019 issue of *BWQ*!



November 2nd brunch, at Robyn's

**If you are in the Boston area, please join us at one of our events. See our calendar on page 24.**

# Collectives, Spiral Dancing, and Loads of Uncommon Women

By Ellyn Ruthstrom

For me, women's space has always meant feminist space; it's not just having other women around. In fact, some all-female spaces feel incredibly unsafe and uncomfortable to me, such as the mega-hetero-normative ritual spaces like wedding or baby showers or how about a Tupperware party? Not *my* idea of women's space. Women's space to me is about connecting about our strengths and resilience. A place to acknowledge the repression and barriers we've experienced due to our identities as women and our other intersecting identities. It is a space that is all about being gender non-conforming because there is no *one way* to be a woman.

From the time I went to my first Women's Collective meeting at Heidelberg College in Tiffin, Ohio, back in 1977, I was hooked on women's space. There I was, a freshman, first year away from home, talking about feminism with classmates, women professors, and members of the administration. We would have deep conversations about the inequalities we all experienced in our varied lives, and I learned so much from those who were older than me who were finally speaking up because they wanted more for themselves and more for younger generations of women.

The Collective brought feminist speakers and performers to campus for the first Women's Week, including the groundbreaking Sweet Honey in the Rock, an African-American performance ensemble that sang of resistance, women's strength, and Black history. I also remember hearing an amazing lesbian folk singer/songwriter from Cleveland who taught me that every movement needs its radicals. The radicals have to run out front and cause trouble while proposing things that seem crazy to average people, thus making things slightly less radical appear more reasonable. Every centrist needs a radical to achieve anything at all.

By my senior year, my commitment to building women's communities was just a part of my everyday life. That year I directed and produced Wendy Wasserstein's *Uncommon Women and Others* with a cast of all senior women. The play centers around a group of white women who attend Mount Holyoke together and then reunite five years after graduation. It delves into the

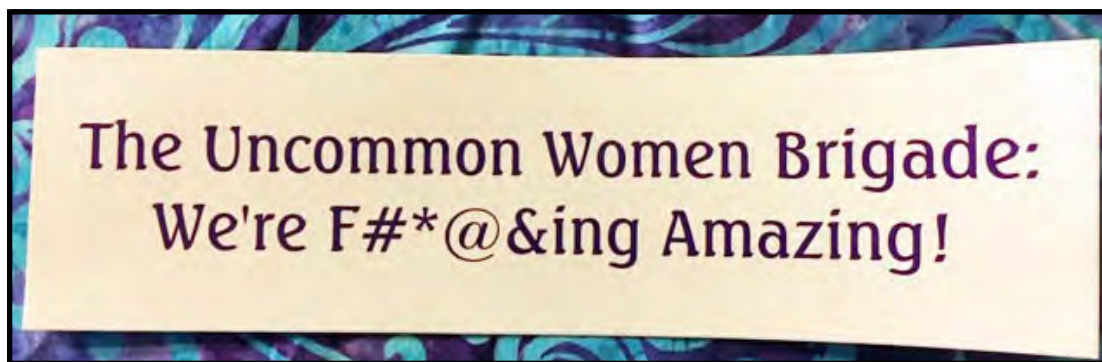
varied experiences of young college-educated women during the second wave of feminism, including sex, careers, intellectual challenges, relationship pressures, marriage, and babies.

As a young actor on my campus, I had been frustrated by the choices of the top director who often selected works with very few female roles. My choice of an all-female cast was intentional, and I not only cast other women like myself who had found it hard to get one of the few stage roles, I also cast women who had not acted before. Originally, I was not going to be in the play, but one of the actors had to drop out, and I took on her role, something I cherished.

Some of the cast were already close friends of mine, some had been feminist comrades from the Women's Collective, and some became new friends, but the production bonded us together in a most unique sisterhood for many years. We only performed the play one night on a makeshift stage in the student center dining hall, and we all cried when the packed room gave us a standing ovation. At our 20<sup>th</sup> class reunion, the whole cast came back together, and we did a dramatic reading of the play on the main stage of the campus that had felt unwelcoming to us decades before. Still to this day, we cheer each other on with one of the play's recurring lines: "When we're 40 (or 45 or 50 or...), we're going to be fucking amazing!" And we are!

Wherever I have lived over my lifetime—D.C., England, Northampton, Boston, Columbus—I have established a women's space for personal sustenance. When I was living in England with my boyfriend/husband, I sought out a women's group that was a multi-generational and multi-cultural feminist space that connected me to the women who were demonstrating at Greenham Common in the south of England against the presence of U.S. cruise missiles. Talk about women's space! These anti-nuke activists created women's encampments outside the U.S. base in protest and intersected their anti-war message with an anti-patriarchal one. Women maintained camps at Greenham from 1981 until 1987, and this woman-centered activism inspired many other women's actions throughout England, Europe, and beyond.

Moving to Boston with my husband, I ended up working for a quarterly feminist spirituality and politics magazine, *Woman of Power*. During that time, led by the incredible Starhawk, I danced the spiral dance with a roomful of women yearning for a connection to goddess energy. I was also part of a repro-



*Ellyn, continues on next page*



*Ellyn, continued from previous page*

ductive rights group in Cambridge that included women of all sexual orientations, and I volunteered at *Sojourner* magazine, a national feminist monthly. I was a part of all of these spaces as a straight woman, ostensibly.

I didn't come out as bisexual until I parted ways with my husband, and once I was out, my need was not just for women's space, but for queer women's space. And, more specifically, bisexual women's space. One of the first things I did when I moved back to Boston in 1994 was to visit the Women's Center in Cambridge to look for a place to live, to find a job, and find bi women. I found the Bi Women's Rap Group, a weekly, peer-led, two-hour meeting that centered around a different theme or question each time. Often, every seat would be full, and people would be sitting on the floor, 15–20 bi women soaking up a safe space, talking to each other about issues they'd never spoken to anyone about. I met women in that room who are still close friends to this day. And from there I joined the Boston Bisexual Women's Network (BBWN), which is still my community touchstone after 25 years.

The concept of women's space has never been uncomplicated, and my nostalgic retelling hasn't yet included any of those ripples. What about spaces that women of color didn't feel welcomed into? What about the spaces where middle-class women didn't open themselves to working-class or poor women? What about when cisgender women didn't want to include transgender women in their spaces? What about when lesbians didn't want to include bisexual women? Or when straight women didn't feel comfortable with queer women?

All of those things have happened within spaces that I participated in or heard about. And though some of these clashes were *absolutely* wrenching experiences to live through, those reckonings are so important for movements to come to terms with in order to grow, become more inclusive, and to deepen the connections between women of differing identities and experiences. Feminist communities are not the only ones that have been pushed to do this, but in some ways, they are more likely to lay bare these conflicts.

Queer women's space constantly goes through these growing pains and so does the larger feminist movement. But I'd rather be a part of a community that wrestles with these complexities instead of trying to ignore them. I am also not naïve enough to believe all feminists hold the same values of inclusivity that I do or even have the same understanding of what feminism is. Despite all its faults, I still turn to women's space, to feminist space, still believing that there is no one way to be a woman.

*Ellyn Ruthstrom is not letting the bastards grind her down, even when it seems like we're surrounded by them. She feels so lucky to be a part of the vibrant bi+ community of Boston.*

## Couch Safety

By Jane Barnes

Colette, one of my fave bi writers, wrote a long story called "Le Toutonier," which is French for a womb, a woman's place (such as a gym) *gynaecium*—the women's quarters, the "only comfortable, comforting place." Alice, newly divorced, returns to her sisters' apartment in Paris, where there's a toutonier—by which they mean a great big old leather couch—upon which they've shared secrets and pains their entire lives. To this refuge, Alice returns without having to do anything but be her sad self.

Girl Scouts was all girls, and so was 4-H, where Judy and I stitched in a house with three generations of women. Her father, a quiet man, hardly made a dent in this female household. Then came Home Ec and biscuits and sewed aprons and discussions of periods. Then the girls' showers at gym, and slumber parties, which weren't entirely chaste, if you get my drift! Of course, my sister and I occupied adjoining twin beds, and at night we'd whisper all kinds of things. An aside: in the recent California fire, she evacuated, and we texted in the same way, saying "Night, night," like we had as kids.

At 25, consciousness raising groups *had no men!* An assortment of women looking out for each other. Their support helped me leave an abusive husband. Later women's poetry workshops, readings, and magazines gave me the space to write very personal poems. No one there to roll their eyes or refuse to listen. A friend at an all-woman event reports to me that one woman said, "I don't know how to act; no men are here."\* Oh, my. But I *really* felt all-women space when I went to my first lesbian bar. Fearing the same kind of harassment I'd get at a mixed bar, I was terrified. Then shocked to see the gentleness of women. Their welcoming. Their sweet cuddling and slow dancing... Not to mention being in bi women space, like *here*.

How to make the world feel like a toutonier—a worn, leather couch where we can say anything? Some good men have been that for me, and I loved them. But speaking generally? No. The world hasn't changed. Me Too. Christine Ford. The president, whose name I can't even type here. So many injustices, and in every country—others much worse than the U.S. We still need refuge, and I find it in New York's LGBTQ Center, in twelve-step meetings of women, with women friends. We're still speaking a private language. What a world it would be if more men learned how to speak it.

\*Thanks to Cynthia Berkshire

*Jane Barnes is completing a new poetry manuscript called "Deceptive Cadence," cooking pad thai, and wearing her Fall beret.*

# A World Not So Binary

By Deanna Pistono

I was around six years old when I first asked myself: why do girls wear dresses, but boys don't? Why is it ok for me to wear pants, but not for a boy to wear a dress? Why is a boy in a dress funny and weak, and why is a girl in pants strong?

Why? Children ask questions, and while we may think they're naïve, they do know more than you think. Already, I understood—without anyone having ever explained to me—that there was a line in the sand between me and the boys at school.

At the time, I decided that boys didn't wear dresses because they "didn't want to"—a perfectly acceptable answer from a six-year-old. But, looking back, maybe the question shouldn't have been why they don't, but why don't they want to? What was it about a dress—innocently swishing around your legs, a whole outfit in one—that provoked so much ire?

The prompt for this issue is women's spaces in a nonbinary world. As I think I've shown with the example from my past, I've always been a questioner and a bit of a quibbler—and the use of the word "nonbinary" was what caught my eye.

Is the world, I questioned, really nonbinary?

While people can and will be free to choose what they believe, to me it's pretty clear that my answer has to be no. While I identify as a cis woman, I've had the privilege of knowing several wonderful nonbinary people. While we do not face oppression in the same ways, there is no doubt that they can be treated just as harshly as women by societal standards—something that, you'd think, wouldn't occur in a nonbinary world—a world, which, by definition, would center their experiences.

It's not a nonbinary world that we live in. Our world is overwhelmingly patriarchal—historically and currently run by men—usually straight, white men—and constitutes a space toxic to both women and gender non-conforming people. After all, patriarchal society upholds a gender binary—probably because, if there are assumed to be only two genders, you can more easily say one is "superior," and thus "justify" institutional sexism and misogyny. The idea that the gender dichotomy doesn't exist, and/or that it is fluid rather than fixed, threatens that basic principle

of male superiority. So, nonbinary and genderfluid people are just as likely as "rebellious" women to be hammered into compliance by the patriarchy.

Women's spaces are important in that they allow women to gather and to discuss situations relevant to shared experiences, without the emotional burden of having to explain these experiences. Mixed spaces, however—where various identities marginalized by masculine, white and cis-heteronormative world coexist—are equally important in providing spaces for marginalized identities. One need not threaten the other, and both remain necessary.

*Deanna Pistono is a mixed-race Asian-American woman who grew up in China. She graduated from Cornell University in 2019, and writes short fiction and poetry at [thisissealedinink.wordpress.com/](https://thisissealedinink.wordpress.com/).*



*Consider this: If you rarely (or never) see people like you represented in print, your voice is especially important. When you lift your voice, someone, somewhere will FINALLY see their own experiences reflected, perhaps for the first time. (See our call for writing on page 2.)*

# Women's (Head)space

By Alexandra Ash

*I wrote this piece while pregnant. On August 9th my wonderful baby Liana was born. She was a week early, so I didn't have time to finish this essay properly. Perhaps that is fitting as the project to diversify tech is very much a work in progress. This essay addresses only one small part of that challenge.*

To my male coworkers at my new job as a software engineer I'm just another guy on the team—a guy who earned their respect as a coder and teammate—and who now happens to be pregnant.

The other day I was in a Zoom (teleconferencing) meeting with teammates from the California office discussing the timelines for several upcoming projects. One of the projects was delayed because folks were on vacation. Someone asked when I would start maternity leave and I responded that my due date was August 15, but I planned to work up until the baby came.

The group laughed. “Why is that funny?” I asked earnestly. It wasn't funny to me—I was hoping to save all my weeks of leave until the baby was born.

“Well, because we were just talking about how everyone is going on vacation and here you are with child and you are so dedicated to your craft that you are working up till you are in labor,” was (approximately) the response.

We joked for a bit that I would probably take my laptop into the hospital with me. And they weren't completely wrong—I am a workaholic, and the idea of sitting at home not working while waiting for the baby was not appealing. In fact, my partner and I had been joking similarly at home.

But the lack of awareness from my male coworkers of the pressure I was feeling took me aback. Their manner wasn't unkind and, if anything, it was a compliment to my work ethic. But what seemed obvious to me—that I had better conserve my leave, and that the more time I took the more my career might take a hit, hadn't even occurred to them.

My pregnancy had shepherded me into a very female (if not feminine) space, full of prenatal yoga, maternity clothes, and mommy blogs. I found myself immersed in the blogs for pregnant career women that discussed how to avoid being “mommy tracked,” the need to save up vacation time toward maternity leave, and why not to talk too much at work about being pregnant, pumping milk, or babies.

It isn't only online that I am steeped in the message that women face extra challenges in tech. I sometimes attend Tuesday evening meetups hosted by Women Who Code, a group that strives to address the “leaky bucket problem” of women dropping out of careers in tech at higher rates than men.

In the lounges of generous tech companies, women at these meetups sit on folding chairs and eat pizza, while sharing advice about

breaking into the field or trading war stories of “mansplaining” coworkers and struggles with imposter syndrome. Following this, members present short talks on a variety of topics. This space, and others like it, gave me confidence to break into the field of software engineering as a career changer.

But all the best coding meetings in town happen on Tuesdays, and to attend a women's only gathering I often miss an opportunity to delve deeper into a specific coding topic at a meetup hosted (usually) by men and open to everyone.

That's the thing about “women's spaces”: to enjoy one you have to withdraw from the larger community, at least temporarily. Which means that men end up dominating the all-gendered spaces even more heavily.

Last year I attended an all-women's coding program that was part of a larger for-profit Bootcamp (a fast-track educational program that prepares career-changers for software engineering positions). My fellow students were younger and straighter than I (and younger and straighter than I expected) but, despite the occasional chatter about engagement rings, I enjoyed the collaborative culture and dedication to learning.

But I have to say I found the all-female nature of the program just plain weird. By offering an all-women's program with deferred tuition within a larger school, the institution ended up funneling women out of their program that is open to all genders. The result was a separate environment where stereotypes thrived; we continued to think the guys were smelly immature mansplainers and they continued to think we were—well, I don't know what they thought about us because they were nine stories down.

I recently attended a conference that had a very nice Women's and Trans Coders Lounge complete with better food, comfy and stylish couches, and good speakers. But I didn't end up hanging out there much because I would have missed lectures or networking opportunities.

So, you might say, who cares? What's the problem with women being in their own comfy space, away from the threatening mansplainers stomping around and taking up all the air?

Well, that's exactly the problem—immersed in this space, it's easy to get lost in a nightmare fantasy, and forget that for the most part, male coders are welcoming and respectful colleagues and co-workers. Also, when women withdraw, it prevents the men from interacting with women coders, so prejudices they may have fester. This does not help foster diversity in the long run.

There are groups doing the work to reverse these trends. They have their work cut out for them, but I am hopeful for the future.

*Alexandra is a web developer who lives in Boston with her husband and daughter. She enjoys reading, going to the farmers market, and walking along the Emerald Necklace.*



# A Festie Virgin No Longer

By Kristen G.

Wednesday, September 18, 2019. I'm heading to my friend's house to pick her up and start our trip to the Ohio Lesbian Festival! I'm super excited because this is my first women's festival. Even though I have been out as bisexual since my twenties, I had only recently plunged into the lesbian scene in the last couple years of my thirties. This year, as I turned 40, I gave myself two overnight trips to Provincetown over Memorial Day (aka "baby dyke weekend") and Women's Week in October, in addition to this trip to Ohio to celebrate four decades on Earth and my burgeoning lesbian lifestyle.

It's been a lot of fun to be a part of a huge group of women where we share something in common: the fact that we are not straight. Sometimes the lesbian community feels like one big sorority. I never really was comfortable around a whole bunch of straight women because I knew I was different, but here I find myself getting into the most intimate of subjects with women I hardly know! And given that I already love camping and live music, I was naturally pumped for a women's festival that embraces these aspects.

This year marked the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Ohio Lesbian Festival (OLF). I had heard awhile back about the Michigan Womyn's Festival but never managed to fit in a trip before its final year in 2015. Going to OLF helped me feel like I was catching up on lost time. My friend had been to "MichFest" many times, starting with its second year in 1977, as well as a few times to OLF. As she put her stuff in my car, my friend tells me she brought CDs of some of the women who used to play at MichFest who would be performing at OLF this year. The long drive from Massachusetts to Ohio doubled as a great way for me to hear about my friend's experiences through the years. I was very grateful to her.

My friend and I haven't known each other for very long, just since June, and we both knew taking a trip together that involved a 11-hour car ride was risky. Whenever the topic of trans and festivals came up previously, she would let me know that she would abstain from talking about it. She knew I had dated someone who had transitioned to a woman and didn't want to rock our new relationship. We only lived a town apart and both valued having another lesbian friend nearby in our suburban area.

However, during the car ride she was more outspoken, and I thought it was a great way for me to finally hear her perspective. I listened respectfully and picked up on the new-to-me jargon of "gender critical" as my friend labeled herself, sharing her belief that gender should be defined by our chromosomes. Now I understood why she kept her opinions to herself for so long! I passed it off as a generational difference since she was the same age as my parents. I could have explained the mental and physical pain and suffering my ex went through to shed her masculinity to finally be the woman she felt inside. I also didn't

want to welcome any arguments that could ruin our long car ride. Anyway, this weekend was going to be about me and my exploration into the lesbian world, and my friend was helping me get there.

We arrived at OLF! With the current political climate and movements such as "Black Lives Matter" and "#MeToo," it was encouraging to see dedicated spaces for Women of Color (WOC) and so great to be around a campground full of women. Seriously, when do we get to just hang out with 1500 women for a few days? Some of the performances any woman could relate to, such as personal stories stemming from our misogynistic culture and rallying to get Trump out of office. However, it didn't take me very long to notice that there likely were very few trans women there. Any signs of the bisexual community were practically non-existent. There was a trans-dedicated space that flew the transgender flag but usually no one was there. I camped near that space and saw the bisexual flag there crumpled on the ground, the only time I saw the bisexual flag at all.

With so many wonderful choices of workshops at OLF, you couldn't attend them all. I was glad to catch the one led by Bonnie Morris, author of *The Disappearing L*, where she talked about her research covering women's festivals through the years. It seemed that the wax and wane of women's festivals nationwide and their decreasing number of attendees correlated with diminishing lesbian spaces in general. The air had a mixed sense of nostalgia and sadness, mostly from those "festies" who attended MichFest back in its heyday. Despite this, it was encouraging to see that I was far from the youngest person there. Across the festival, there were many attendees in their 20s to 30s, even some groups coming from colleges. The older festies were happily noticing that OLF this year didn't show "a sea of gray hair" like in recent years. Some of the younger attendees spoke up in the workshops that they need lesbian space and will be fighting to protect it at their colleges and community centers.

I had heard that MichFest shut down in part because of excluding the transgender community, but I didn't know much more than that. I figured it was because they wanted to hold the space just for lesbians. As someone who identifies as bisexual, I am grateful for inclusive spaces but also appreciate having bisexual-dedicated gatherings to discuss topics unique to us. There are times when we need our own space and times when we include everyone to bridge all colors of the rainbow. I was encouraged to see at the top of OLF's website "All Womyn Welcome, Always!" When I went to purchase my ticket for OLF, I had to first acknowledge their Anti-Oppression, Anti-Racism, and Anti-Bullying statement to drive home that all women were welcome here.

After seeing the lack of trans individuals at OLF and only one trampled bisexual flag amidst a sea of labrys flags, I decided to go to the "Difficult Dialogues: lesbian feminist, queer, trans, and..." workshop. This was really the name of it, ending with ellipses. By

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a long shot, this was the largest workshop attendance I experienced. There must have been more than 100 people sitting in a large circle, and you could already feel the tension in the room. It was at that moment that I realized the atmosphere was very incongruent with OLF's "all womyn welcome, always" statement. The workshop started with us all introducing ourselves and the leader started us off to demonstrate how she wanted us to go about it. She said she was a woman born woman, a feminist and a lesbian, and a Latina, from Mexico. This was very different from how we introduced ourselves at home in Boston: no mention of cisgender, no mention of pronouns. Then almost everyone after her introduced themselves as a radical feminist woman-born woman, with the remaining comprised of trans women and a couple of trans men. The way some introduced themselves with such steam, you would swear someone really ticked them off. Halfway through the circle they reached me, and I interjected into this unstated war between the radical feminists and trans women by introducing the unwanted Switzerland in the room: "I'm a bisexual woman." I was hoping this would encourage the other fifty-plus women after me to label themselves differently, thinking that perhaps some of the younger ones were going along with what everyone else said. Sadly, only a few after me said non-binary, bisexual, or transgender, with most keeping with the radical feminist woman-born woman label. I didn't feel any progress in understanding across groups after that workshop, and instead felt rather disheartened and disgusted by the lack of

compassion and ignorance there.

Trans-Exclusionary Radical Feminist ideology had finally reared its ugly head in my exploration of the lesbian world. It posed to me a challenge to understand it better, but to also keep a distance. This was not an ideology in line with my inclusive values. Here I thought my friend who came with me was the outlier, but it seemed I was surrounded by women at OLF who think just like her. I now know that the "womyn-born womyn" line originated at MichFest. I also found out that many of the workshops, dedicated spaces and other components of OLF organization were introduced and refined through the years at MichFest.

Lisa Vogel, the founder and organizer of MichFest performed one of the nights and the crowd went wild. It was great hearing Lisa tell stories about MichFest, just like I heard from my friend during our long drive. On the other hand, I also wish OLF had set itself apart from MichFest by holding true to its inclusivity statement. It's not enough for it to be printed on the website and the festival program; the attendees need to collectively agree and work towards it, too. With OLF celebrating their 30-year anniversary this year, I wonder if it will ever build that inclusive identity for itself independent of MichFest.

*Kristen lives in the Boston area and enjoys exploring what she wants to be when she grows up.*



Credit: Elvert Barnes from Baltimore, Maryland, USA [CC BY-SA 2.0] (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/>)



# A safe place in space // for those who feel marginalized // empowered misfits

By Martine Mussies

*One of my best friends is a true activist. He stands on the barricades for equality, for better wages for workers, for a basic income, to solve the climate crisis and more. I admire that enormously. Because of my autism, I am scared to death of large crowds of people. The only moments that I dare to face them is when I can perform—be it for hundreds or even thousands of people in a church, concert hall or stadium—because then they are there and I am here, on stage: sheltered, secluded, and safe. Sometimes I blame myself for being too cowardly to stick my neck out. But then I realize that I have a softer, quieter form of resistance: my writing.*

As I believe that words shape the world we live in, I write to change that world in baby steps. About the importance of the coral reef system, on how the Korean concept of Nunchi can empower “Westerners,” about ways to see the religious treasures in my church through a feminist lens, and about what “polygamish” folks can learn from all the mistakes in Netflix’ series “You - Me - Her” (just to name some examples). But most of my writing can be labelled as “auti-ethnographic”—writing on the autistic self, by the autistic self. By sharing my lived experiences, like in this essay for *BWQ*, I try to empower other “misfits” and improve their lives in various ways. I think that writing is important for, to paraphrase Gloria Wekker (in her portrait of Misi Juliette Cummings), while my narrative is a uniquely individual story, it is as much a collective story, a story of bisexual, non-binary Aspergers of my generation, ethnicity, and class background. And as I am convinced that oppressions are interlinked and cannot be solved in isolation, I also try to open up in writing in an intersectional way. But sometimes I am afraid to make myself so vulnerable. My writing as a verb is a means to connect with the safe space in myself, but my writing as a noun needs a safe place as well. To be read aloud and heard or to be published and read. A place intended to be free of bias, conflict, criticism, or potentially threatening actions, ideas, or conversations. We as oppressed groups—like women and minorities—need safe spaces for individuals who feel marginalized to come together to communicate and where violence, harassment, and hate speech are not tolerated.



The most well-known example of such a safe place is the idea of “women’s space”, which refers to the creation of places by women and for women. Women’s spaces, though under attack in the present day, are not recent phenomena but have existed for a long time. Women’s clubs, women’s gyms and women’s co-working spaces among others are just but a few examples of women’s spaces that fulfill the idea of women having a place of their own (Paley, 2019). Primarily, women’s spaces have been used to nurture, grow, and empower women and to encourage autonomy outside male influence (McFadden, n.d.). As long as women are oppressed, for example, by cat-calling and wolf-whistling in the streets, we need these spaces just as much as we need gender-neutral bathrooms, respect for people’s preferred pronouns, and trigger warnings. We should realize, however, that these spaces are not centered on the exclusion of men and should not be defined by such. In truth, women’s spaces are spaces where certain hobbies, passions, and beliefs are given attention and significance equal to those in the male mainstream (Spain, 2016). These spaces give freedom to women regardless of who they are and where they come from. But as Moira Kenney explains, safe spaces “are more than freedom from crime and harassment. [...] As developed in the context of the women’s movement, the notion of safe space implies a certain license to speak and act freely, form collective strength, and generate strategies for resistance” (from: *Mapping Gay L.A.* p. 24). Additionally, women’s spaces create a sense of sisterhood while at the same time creating environments that foster deep friendships, empowerment, and support for each other. As such, a safe space doesn’t have to be a physical location.

Virginia Woolf famously stated that “women need money and a room of their own in order to write fiction” (Woolf, 1929). This statement presents a unique definition of women’s space in writing and publication. Woolf reiterates that financial independence and intellectual freedom should ideally be the primary constituents of women’s space in publication—even though she acknowledges that such is not the case (Hawlin, 2017). In a complex and rapidly-evolving world, it is becoming an arduous task to define women’s spaces accurately. This is because there are

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various genders which are struggling to gain recognition and acceptance while at the same time battling the bludgeoning flames of discrimination. In a non-binary world, it is imperative to take note of and include non-binary persons and trans persons when defining women's spaces (Merryfield, 2019). Using labels such as "Women-only" or "Just Girls" excludes many people, such as non-binary or trans people who feel feminine. It is important to have explicit descriptions of the target groups that these spaces want, as labels are important to all genders, the queer community in particular. Therefore, paying attention to the description of spaces allows room for the creation of inclusive, affirming, and welcoming women's spaces, such as *Bi Women Quarterly*. Other examples of safe spaces where I feel at home are Women in Language and the Dutch movement AutiRoze (auti+pink), a meeting group for those that belong to two minorities: LGBTI+ people with autism. Members do not have to explain to each other what it feels like to be "doubly different." They are not in the minority during an Auto-Pink evening and don't have to explain to anyone that they are autistic, transgender, and/or gay. Often, little needs to be said to feel a sense of belonging. To belong together to a minority, even though there are many variations within that minority, still gives a kind of common ground. This ground offers the opportunity to make connections, something autistic people often find difficult.

Some critics suggest that safe spaces are a direct threat to free speech, foster groupthink, and limit the flow of ideas. But in my personal experience, quite the opposite happens: whereas in the outside world, I am often cocooned in my privilege of being white and able-bodied, wearing my mask of pretending to be normal (aka neurotypical, cis and heterosexual), in a safe space, I can strip myself to the core, break out of all (unwritten) rules and expectations and share my innermost thoughts. When openly speaking my mind as a kid and a youngster, countless times I was told to shut up: "Don't be difficult," "Could you please be normal for once?" and "Just adjust, how hard can it be?" But finally, in the safe space of *BWQ*, my voice is valued. For in *BWQ*, my Otherness as an autistic bi woman is regarded as part of a larger whole, where all our "different" voices become a beautiful choir.

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Combined pansexual & non-binary pride flag

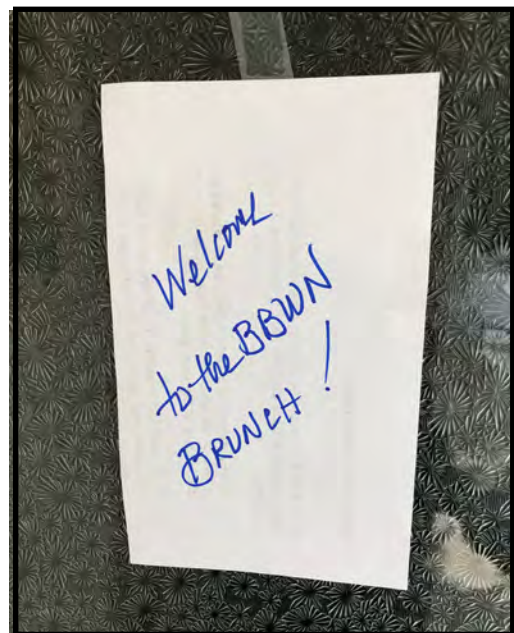
[tonomy&catid=127:theme-mens-involvement-in-womens-empowerment](https://www.eventbrite.com/rally/united-states/womens-spaces/)

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Welcome sign on the door at our September brunch

# Separatism Sacred Space

By Loraine Hutchins

As a young woman in high school the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) taught me about resisting racism (black and white relations) and how people can unite interracially in struggle around justice and identity. A basic lesson was that we must craft our truths from separate touchstones and find common will and common good to work for a better world. And that a better world IS possible.

In 1969, when I joined SNCC, the voter registration glory days were over. Assassinations, infiltrations, and betrayals had done their damage. SNCC leaders asked white volunteers to stop helping with (black) voter registration drives, to “go back to your own people, organize in the white community against racism, that’s what we need you to do.” I sensed as a white woman that my fate was different—because of my identity, my race, my class. SNCC spoke to us about the truths of separatism and separate organizing.

Though young, I learned the message that there is a sacredness, a key touchstone inherent in identity politics from a vital, centered, and intersectional space/place. But the many levels of deep-seated, complex racial/cultural/class lessons are more complex. As I emerged into womanhood, the women’s movement was rising up, during the 60s and 70s. So the women’s identity piece fell into place first.

*Here I am, this woman discovering her own Lesbianism, in the presence of this man, who’s FURIOUS at these Lesbians called **The Furies**, who, in his reality, have stolen a piece of property (the used printing press) ... he stroked his beard, put his feet up on the desk, tried to lean back and behave reasonably, act like he really wanted to understand. He asked ME why these women did it. I didn’t know ‘em. But I knew they called themselves **The Furies** and didn’t want to work with men, and that seemed sensible, but SO hard to explain ... to men.*

***The Furies** confused me, too, actually. I’d seen them in public, at poetry readings and movement events, being separatist and provocative, putting each other and all us women on the line, pointing their fingers in a crowd of women they knew, who were still straight. “You must LEAVE your man!” ABANDON your boy child!” I thought they were obnoxious, but certainly the most sexy and interesting stuff around.*

*The woman I talked to said, “You’re crazy to be working for that man. He will screw you over. You shouldn’t give your energy to men, they will screw you over in the end.” And I said, “Thank you for the advice. I think it is ... uh ... probably true, but I feel my role is as a mediator, between forces, and I’m gonna try to do this.” And I did. For years and years.*

– *The Day the Lesbians Stole The Press*, 1989, by L. Hutchins

## WomYn-centered feminism!!!

Creating women-only space, we spelled womyn differently, taking the “man” out. An exhilarating, heady thrill; a secret club where we could keep men away. Girl Scouts first sparked this; camping out alone, protecting ourselves, as women and girls. In my twenties, I hitchhiked cross-country to women-only land in Oregon, celebrating at women’s music festivals, women-only wiccan coven rituals, making the circles safe and complete. Once we got more confident as women alone, it was easier to include people who were not women-identified in our groups, but we held onto the notion that women-only space was a touchstone to return to whenever needed.

Our monthly women’s consciousness-raising group included heterosexual, lesbian, and bi women. We lived with men, sometimes dated and married them. It’s just that we looked at each other with that same wonder we had for men; reached out and touched each other and ourselves, bringing our women-loving-dreams to life and trying to value our relationships with women, whether sexual or not, as importantly as our ties with men.

In the 70s, in D.C. women’s liberation the Radical Lesbians, *The Furies*, commanded us to “abandon your boy children. stop giving energy to men, put women first.” It felt exhilarating, honest, and right-on, even if difficult and absolutist as well.

## Refusing to be shouted down, stereotypes not binaries yet

“Ours” and “theirs” were much more distinct back then. Feminism required separatism, given that the men we worked with silenced us and made it hard to think. When women tried to stand up and speak at big events the men shouted us down. We created women’s caucuses at professional and political associations. These caucuses got things done, shifted the balance of power. Elders taught us brainstorming and facilitation skills, how to propose actions, and theorize about goals and programs. Meeting in women-only groups was useful, healing, effective, empowering. (We white women were also learning from people of color and other minority identity groups who were also doing caucusing and identity group agenda-setting at larger movement events.)

Back then, there wasn’t really the use of the words “gender” or “binary” at all. We challenged gender stereotypes by wearing pants in formal settings and making our voices heard in the public sphere. The culture talked about “unisex” hair and fashion styles as a big deal. We spent the 80s and 90s exploring orientations and identities, making space for people to talk about and express bisexualities and transgender identities, as well as articulating differences and connections between women who were different races, classes, ages, abilities, cultures, religions, regions. We debated theories about essentialism and constructionism and

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resisted attributing everything gender-wise to inherent biological/natural characteristics. We were wary of social influences and social pressures around gender expectations, and yes, this was the beginning of some understandings and analysis of the gender binary (male/female only, nothing in between) and its limits. Yet, because of the emergency of the AIDS crisis and other global neo-colonial dynamics rooted in world economics and politics, we were compelled to work together in many mixed-gender ways.

### **Putting the B in LGBTQ**

By the time the 90s opened and we'd released *Bi Any Other Name*, we were working to form a national bisexual network out of the local bisexual groups around the country. We toggled between identity-specific groups (like bisexuals or women) and forming larger coalitions of diverse identities addressing common issues. We loved the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force's annual Creating Change conference because it moved around the country and involved thousands of queers sharing ideas and flirtations. As bisexual activist women, we experienced the painful gap between lesbians and bi women (who often sniped behind the scenes and didn't resolve conflicts so well). We wanted to bridge that gap, to find solutions and connections via feminist practice. Although there were also strong lesbian political leaders, no one (women or men) in that national queer group was doing any same-sex/same-gender organizing at those events. We bi women proposed a *women's dialogue* and persuaded some of the bi and gay men to conduct a *men's dialogue*. These dialogues occurred for several years in the early 90s at the annual gatherings.

### **Becoming Aware of Trans Presence**

One year in the early 90s, the focus of the dialogues shifted dramatically. We were asked to be inclusive of trans women in the women's dialogue. A lot of discussion went on, and by the next year, we bi women organizers found politically active trans men and women ahead of time to plan the dialogues. We expanded into three-way dialogues of gay, bi and trans (not that any of these are exclusive categories, and yes, they often overlap). After a few years the dialogues stopped and other themes took their place, including more explicit programming on trans and bi issues.

### **Embracing Intersectionalities**

In the 90s, the mainstream LGBT movement queerified and expanded to include intersectionalities more explicitly. We learned that when we grapple with differences in race, culture, socioeconomic status, age, or other categories, gender and sexuality still matter, but they matter within the context of their intersections with these other dimensions of identity. The old categories of us/them and self/other were no longer as distinct or important. What women of color and others in social justice movements have taught me most is the importance of creating and working in coalitions that work, educate, motivate. This is why we formed the first board of directors of BiNet USA with people of color and women in leadership, and focused more



on grassroots autonomy and coalitions, than on developing a separate base for bisexuality as an identity group.

### **Before and After Obama – shifting priorities, broken spirits/hearts**

The advent of the 21<sup>st</sup> century included the damping down of the AIDS crisis and medical resistance, the militarization of 9/11 and subsequent globalization (of the queer movement, of capital fluidities). Perhaps, in reaction, the LGBTQ movement became more conservative—fighting for inclusion in the military and marriage equality, and letting go of other agendas of redefining families, dismantling gender stereotypes and defending women's rights—all of which proved harder to accomplish. Many LGBTQ people fought to get the economic securities of military service and marriage rights. Some of us didn't get married or enlist and built our families and lives in other ways.

The eight-year Obama administration allowed many in the united LGBTQ movement to organize for liberation across our intersectional identities. Now, post-Obama, when our dialogues relate to women-only space behavior, the hypocrisy and harm of trans exclusionary radical feminism has arisen and the need to expand our dialogue is again paramount. My spirit is firmly with trans women as women, included in women-only space. At the same time, the older women labeled as TERFs are some of the elders who raised me in the women's movement. I don't want to silence their voices. We need to hear all voices and to dialogue on the responses while not giving the exclusionary impulses power

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to define who women are. Trans women are fully women and deserve the full extent of women's and human rights. And we must work this out. For all of us.

### Women-Only Elderly, Sisters Even More

Embarking on my 70s, I treasure the women I live near here in this retirement community, Friends House, who are in their 80s and 90s. It's still a treat to go to this community's monthly Women's Breakfast. I continue to love women-only space and want to keep creating it in my life. I am sad that a lot of my women students say they have no curiosity or interest in women-only space, and regard the lesbian separatism of the 70s and 80s as weird and odd, not something they could benefit from or enjoy.

However, I have a new insight about women-only space I want to share from my experience living here in a majority-women population. Women-only space doesn't necessarily mean feminist. It can merely mean separate-from-men. When I speak with the women here, depending upon their experience, they may hold very feminist views and have had experience organizing with the National Organization for Women or campaigning for the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment. However, when I ask them to caucus and strategize on feminist analysis about what is going on here in the administration and in our governance, our decision-making, as a community and our own dynamics with the men in leadership here, I experience a strong resistance and reluctance to apply that feminist analysis to our current situation. So I am left questioning my own commitment to women-only space and wondering if some of my nostalgia or attachment for it was more related to just wanting to "avoid men" (as my mother accused me of, way back when). It's not that I truly want to avoid men, and/but, I am weary of all the dynamics we must negotiate in mixed-gender spaces. So maybe women-only space can hold us back as well. We people who identify as feminists and who treasure women-only space must remember that it is most useful as a touchstone, as a home-base and NOT as a place to retreat into away from the common, earthly, human dilemmas that face us all, which we must all solve together.

Lorraine Hutchins co-edited *Bi Any Other Name: Bisexual People Speak Out* and co-founded *BiNet USA*, serving on its first board of directors. She teaches inter-disciplinary sexuality studies at a community college.



Lorraine, left, at Friends House

## Seventh Annual Bisexual Book Awards Winners Announced



Photo: Efrain John Gonzalez

In New York City on June 1st, the Bi Writers Association held its eighth annual Bisexual Book Awards event. Here are this year's winners:

**Non-Fiction *and* Memoir/Biography:** *Many Love* by Sophie Lucido Johnson, Touchstone/Simon & Schuster

**Fiction:** *America Is Not the Heart* by Elaine Castillo, Viking/Penguin Random House

**Romance:** *Filted* by Lilah Suzanne, Interlude Press

**Erotic Fiction:** *Carnal Knowledge: The Adoration of a Dangerous Woman and the Death of a Dream* by Lexi Mohny, independently published

**Speculative Fiction [Bi-fi/Sci-fi/Fantasy/Paranormal/Horror/Etc.]:** *The Worship of Mystery* by J.R. Mabry, The Apocryphile Press

**Teen/Young Adult Fiction:** *We Are Young* by Cat Clarke, Quercus Children's Books/Hachette Children's Group

**Mystery (a tie):** *Reckless Behavior* by Cari Z & L.A. Witt, Rip-tide Publishing, and *Who Is Vera Kelly?* by Rosalie Knecht, Tin House Books

**Poetry:** *God Was Right* by Diana Hamilton, Ugly Duckling Presse

**Publisher of the Year:** Less Than Three Press

**Bi Writer of the Year** (a 3-way tie—let the jokes about bisexuals and 3-ways commence!): Elaine Castillo, *America Is Not the Heart*, Viking / Penguin Random House; Duy Doan, *We Play a Game*, Yale University Press; and J.R. Mabry, *The Worship of Mystery*, The Apocryphile Press. A complete list of finalists as well as previous years' winners and finalists can be found at [www.biwriters.org/finalists-winners](http://www.biwriters.org/finalists-winners).



# Allies On All Levels

By Miriam Katz

Over the past year, I have come to identify as a genderfluid person who uses they/them pronouns. I was assigned female at birth, but I don't know if I ever really felt like a girl or woman. I know that I'm attracted to women, and I practice polyamory; however, most of my relationships, whether platonic or romantic, have been with men. I have met many bisexual women who report similar stories, and often feel unwelcome in women's spaces if they have a partner who isn't female. In this sense, there is a natural alliance between the bisexual and the trans and non-binary communities. We all have an interest in creating spaces where folks of varying genders and sexual orientations are welcome.

The world is becoming increasingly gray. I am 36 years old, and folks in my generation and younger are much more likely to identify as bisexual, pansexual, or queer; be non-monogamous; or have a non-cisgender identity. In my experience, women's spaces privilege cis women who are partnered with other cis women, and those of us who are different feel as if we don't belong. When I still identified as a woman, I attended a women's only play party in Vancouver by myself; I remember sitting alone for a long time before anyone spoke to me. I wonder, would I be able to attend such a party now, as a person with different pronouns? Could I bring a trans or non-binary partner? My body hasn't changed, but I want to be in an environment where both my masculine and feminine sides will be respected. Many women's spaces seem to assume that attendees all have the same body parts, when that may not be the case. Respecting how people self-identify is of the utmost importance, regardless of their biology.

If we want to create welcoming spaces, everyone needs to leave their assumptions at the door. A person like me may appear as a woman, but that does not mean that that is how they identify. A woman may be partnered with someone who is not a cis woman, and still be in a healthy relationship that will not threaten the safety of women's spaces. I don't think we need to eliminate women's spaces entirely; I just want to feel that I could freely enter such a space, presenting in the manner I feel comfortable. If I happen to be partnered with someone who isn't a cis woman, I would want to feel that they could come with me and be themselves.

As a society that is questioning what gender, sexuality, and relationships mean, women's spaces will have to adapt. Women have been marginalized for millennia, as have those who identify as trans, non-binary, and bisexual. Despite the fact that the majority of LGBTQ2S+ individuals are bisexual, we have been excluded from queer spaces or told that we are just in a phase that we will eventually outgrow. As bisexuality has become more visible and accepted, there are more events and spaces that cater to us and that do not exclude people on the basis of gender. Including a variety of people in women's spaces is imperative, especially with the resurgent conservatism around the world that we are currently witnessing. All of our identities are under threat, and this is precisely the time when we should all work together.

*Miriam Katz resides in Toronto, Canada and is involved in bisexual, polyamorous, and non-binary communities. They are passionate about travelling, writing, cycling, good food, and hold a Master's of Social Work.*



Credit: Efrain John Gonzalez

Lexi Mohny, winner of the Erotic Fiction Award, reading from her work at the Bi Book Awards event in New York





Mary Jo, continued from page 1

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Many of us bi+ women know the structural reality uncovered in that research: bisexual women (61.1 percent) report a higher prevalence of rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner compared to both lesbian (43.8 percent) and heterosexual women (35 percent). Additionally, 90 percent of bisexual women who experienced gender-based violence reported having only male perpetrators.

Since its inception, the saloon has housed so many amazing voices and late-night dialogues, from anti-fuck-boy poetry readings following the Kavanaugh hearing, to an author exploring Satanic panic and the cult of virginity. Most recently, in honor of the 2019 International Women's Day, the saloon featured a presentation on the queer aesthetics of Janelle Monae and a sex toy show-and-tell celebrating sexual pleasure and radical affirmation of kink communities. We ended that night, all 15 people, reflecting on the harm of sex-worker-exclusionary radical feminists (SWERFs) and trans-exclusionary radical feminists (TERFs) in our movements.

So, is this a "women's" space? My goal is to emphasize community healing in this space, not a gender binary that perpetuates exclusion. This inclusivity is especially critical in a rural context. The Nancy Drew Saloon offers a space where we can both struggle to dismantle binary and essentialist logics of social identities indebted to white supremacy and heteropatriarchy, and create imperfect communities built on shared social and political commitments to social justice.

After all, like Nancy Drew, we are all seeking answers.

*Mary Jo Klinker is a scholar-activist of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Winona State University.*



Laurie, continued from page 1

and then it would get out, and no one would want to play with me, or I would get beaten up. I knew this 'cause Robert, my neighbor who was two years older, had told me this would happen.

I could go on and on, and list more examples, but it would just be more depressing. I locked up all my thoughts of wanting to live in women's spaces, or stand in the other line, hold baby dolls and stuffed animals, wear dresses and skirts and princess clothes. I locked them up tightly



so no one could hear them. Which is why it took them decades to re-emerge fully. It took the arrival of the internet to become aware of others living their lives as themselves (thank you, On Q and AOL chatrooms). And later on, therapy helped me find myself again, and begin to remember wanting to be a girl. And then I could reclaim all my thoughts and memories and develop internally as a woman. Thank you, Fenway.

The first time I was able to be in women's space again in the world was at the Women's Center in Cambridge. I called up to see if transwomen were welcome at the bi women's meeting there, and they said, "Yes, you are welcome." I went to a couple of meetings, but it took more time to grow in confidence. A couple of years later, I found the Bisexual Resource Center via a friend at work and attended a house party. And I began to go to the bi women brunches.

Since that time, the women's space inside me has taken root; the women I have been honored to have in my life have grown in number and importance, And my heart and soul have been nurtured.

What the heart has, the heart shares.

*Laurie Wolfe is a speaker and trainer with SpeakOut Boston, the nation's first LGBT+ speakers bureau. She also volunteered with Keshet and the Massachusetts Transgender Political Coalition and has served on the board of the Bisexual Resource Center. Laurie also appeared for four years with the cast of Bilicious, sharing stories and poems about her life. Her writings have appeared in Bi Women Quarterly, the Pride Haggadah, and other places.*



# Mistaken Identity, Or Birth Versus Transition

By Sharla “Skyspirit” Shotwell

While there are many groups which have rules against allowing anyone not “naturally-born female” into events such as lesbian bars, music festivals, rituals, or sacred rites, I have made progress in changing at least a few minds in this regard.

In one case, a friend of my late husband’s—and now a good friend of mine—had posted an event notice for a ritual that indicated that only natural-born women were welcome. I was dismayed and distraught and, when I first approached her, her response was that this was her event and she could welcome or deny anyone she chose. I knew at that moment we would be having a number of uncomfortable conversations in the future, especially since I refused to attend until *all* women would be allowed to do so.

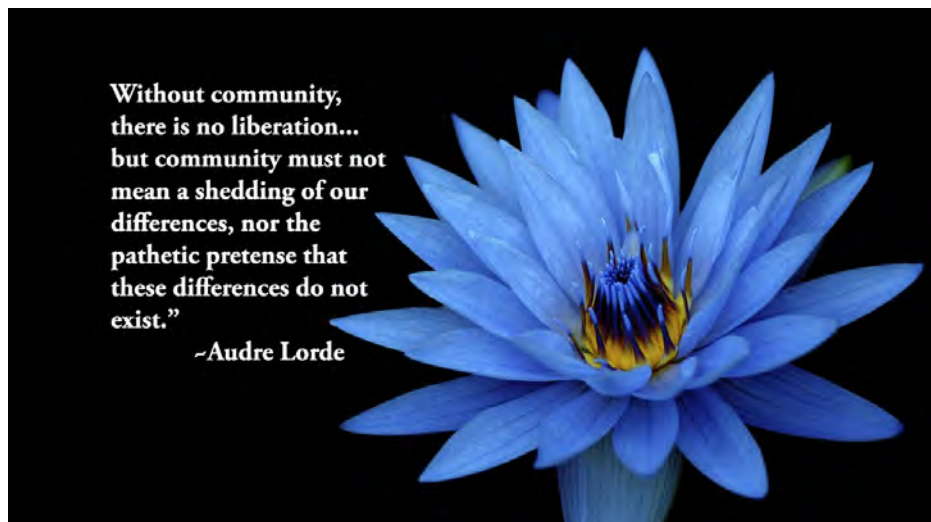
On my second attempt to get through to her and share my feelings on the importance of allowing *all* women into events, she still wouldn’t budge. However, once I explained to her that it was my understanding that most transgender women, specifically those who had transitioned from male to female, had actually identified as women from an early age regardless of gender assignment and even before transition, her mood began to change.

During our next conversation, I continued to make the case for inclusion. Soon thereafter, she agreed to allow *all* women to attend future rituals and other events which she organizes in Northern California, a change which I believe will benefit all of us.

*Sharla “Skyspirit” Shotwell was quite active with BiNet USA, BBWN, the Bisexual Resource Center, the Boston Pride Committee, and BiPol in the mid-1980s to early 1990s under the name Sharla Clos. In 1990, she founded the Dallas Bi-Net Group, the first ever bisexual support group in Texas.*



Credit: Alec Perkins from Hoboken, USA [CC BY 2.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0>)]



## Advice from A. Rose Bi



*A. Rose Bi lives in New England with her cats who love to sleep on her lap while she spends most of her time watching TV and playing video games while her partner cooks amazing food. In addition to being an out and proud bi+ woman, A. has a degree in Cognitive Science, has completed trainings for LGBTQIA+ and sexual assault survivor advocacy, and has experience answering calls for an anonymous LGBTQIA+ help line. She is passionate about feminism, the bi+ community, LGBTQIA+ and female representation in the media, and helping others. Her pronouns are shelher and they/them.*

*Have questions of your own for A. Rose Bi? Email [arosebi.questions@gmail.com](mailto:arosebi.questions@gmail.com).*

Dear A. Rose Bi,

I sit on the board for my company's employee resource group for women. Recently, we've started having more and more conversations about how to make our organization and our events more inclusive to trans, non-binary, and gender-non-conforming employees. While I'm all for this, some members of the board aren't sure they want to open up membership in this way. So, I'm trying to simultaneously convince them of the importance and benefits of this type of inclusivity while working with the other women who are already on board to figure out how to make this happen. Where do I even start?

Sincerely,

*Trying to Make a Change*

Dear *Trying to Make a Change*,

I love that this is something you're discussing! I think a lot of women's only groups right now are having similar conversations, and I think it's great. It can be a tough topic though, especially for cis women (women who were assigned female at birth) who are nervous about changing a community they've valued for so long—they likely don't yet know how much more rewarding a more inclusive organization can be!

Let's break up your question into two parts: first, how to help your fellow board members understand the benefits of a women's group that includes trans women and non-binary/gender-non-conforming folks and second, how and where to start implementing change.

Women-only groups should already be inclusive of trans women. Trans women are women. Period. I think if there are board members who have issue with that, it's a bigger problem to potentially address with leadership and/or HR. When we look at trans women and other trans, non-binary, or gender-non-conforming folks who were assigned male at birth, we have to understand that they have experienced a world, grown up in a world, and navigated a world—including and often especially a corporate one—where being a man is to be in a default position of power and authority. Being any other gender, whether closeted or not, includes having experiences around being "less than" and "other" to the dominant gender. And for trans men and other trans, non-binary, or gender non-conforming folks who were assigned female at birth, they have by default had key societal experiences and discriminations that come with being assigned female or presenting as a girl or a woman. All of these experiences are valuable in a conversation about how to encourage and support women. In the same way that women of

different races don't experience oppression, bias, and discrimination in the same ways, people of all kinds of non-male genders and gender identities experience sexism in as many ways as there are people. Remembering two things—that (1) women-only groups are there to create a safe and empowering community for those oppressed by the patriarchy and sexism and that (2) they have to be beneficial and welcoming to every kind of woman—leads us to a clear conclusion that we will all be better with the inclusion of our trans, non-binary, and gender-non-conforming friends, and colleagues.

Onto the next part: where to start! Try starting with some simple but wide-reaching changes if you can, such as adding a + to your name after "women" or the equivalent. For example, She+ Geeks Out, an organization based in Boston with events around the country, was originally called She Geeks Out. After one of the co-founders got questions and feedback about whether trans, gender-non-conforming, or non-binary folks were invited to their women-only events, she formally changed their name to She+ Geeks Out and changed the language on the site and for their events to women+ and she+. Something as basic as adding a plus can make it clear to those questioning whether they're even invited to the club that they are not only invited, but they have actively been considered and will be welcomed. Another great way is to add language like this to your events, membership, info page, etc.: "This is an event/group/etc. aimed at the experience of women+. Please join us if you identify as a woman or femme in any way that is important to you." Again, this shows active consideration and a welcoming message. If possible, all events (meetings, socials, talks, etc.) should provide pronoun pins or stickers and/or should encourage attendees to put their pronouns on their nametags. Normalizing the open sharing of pronouns helps to create an environment where people don't feel singled out and othered if their pronouns don't match exactly what everyone's expectation of their gender is. Finally, as you move in this direction, try to encourage some trans, non-binary, and gender non-conforming folks to run for or take on leadership roles in the group! Having someone with a different experience is invaluable as the board will continue to make programming, community, and leadership decisions in the future.

I wish you the absolute best of luck in your goals! Try to find your allies—those who agree with you and are ready to do the work to make it happen. Audre Lorde said it better than I ever could: "I am not free while any woman is unfree, even when her shackles are very different from my own."

Lots of love,

*A. Rose Bi*

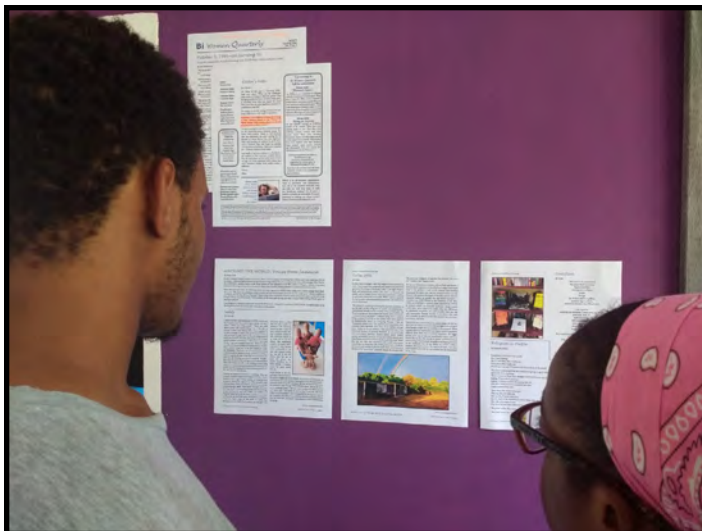


# LETTERS

Dear *BWQ*,

Here are a couple pics with the Jamaica extract from *BWQ* on our wall. The full edition is in our library. In the photo is our Project Assistant on the right, along with one of our centre-users.

Best, from Jamaica



## *Bi Flag is Raised in Santa Clara, California*

*Submitted by Moria Merriweather*

For the 3rd year in a row, the County of Santa Clara, California has held a ceremony to raise the bisexual pride flag.

This year's ceremony was held on Celebrate Bisexuality Day, September 23rd, 2019, outside the county government building in San Jose.

Pictured (left to right) are bisexual community members who spoke (Bob Sheehan, Richard Mehlinger, Reverend Nancy Palmer Jones, and Sera Fernando), along with Maribel Martinez, the director of the Santa Clara County Office of LGBTQ Affairs.



## *Visit Our ETSY Shop!*



### **PINS. Amazing pins.**

Also, bisexual, pansexual & Philadelphia pride flags (rainbow flag with black & brown stripes).

And bi, trans, and rainbow earrings.

That's one of the ways we raise funds to cover the production, printing, and mailing costs of this publication. There are 49 amazing bi, pan, lgbtq+, anti-racist, and other social justice pins on our new ETSY page. Please take a look. Favorite. Place an order. Then write a review. Spread the word!



# CALENDAR

## The "Bi Office"

is the Bisexual Resource Center. Check [www.biresource.org](http://www.biresource.org) for address.

### Ongoing Events

**Come to our monthly bi+ women's brunch! See calendar for dates.**

#### 2nd Mondays:

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

**Tea with Bi Women Partnered with Men.** 7pm. Info: [kate.e.flynn@gmail.com](mailto:kate.e.flynn@gmail.com).

#### 1st Wednesdays:

**BLiSS (Bisexual Social and Support Group).** 7pm at The Living Center, 29 Stanhope St. Info: [bliss@biresource.org](mailto:bliss@biresource.org)

#### 2nd Thursdays:

**Young BLiSS Group. (20s & 30s)** 7pm. For bi folks 20-29. Info: Gabby at [youngblissboston@gmail.com](mailto:youngblissboston@gmail.com).

#### 3rd Saturdays:

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

More about Boston-area groups [biresource.org/boston-groups/](http://biresource.org/boston-groups/)

**Metro-Boston women: Keep up with local events by subscribing to our Google group: <https://groups.google.com/forum/#!forum/biwomenboston>**

**We offer FREE electronic subscriptions to this publication. Sign up at [www.biwomenboston.org](http://www.biwomenboston.org).**

## December

**4 (Wednesday) 7-9pm, Bisexual Social and Support Group (BLiSS).** Bi and bi-friendly people of all genders and orientations welcome. Meetings are peer-facilitated discussion groups, sometimes with a pre-selected topic or presenter. Meets 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesdays. Info: [bliss@biresource.org](mailto:bliss@biresource.org)

**8 (Sunday) 4-7pm, Stuff-n-Stuff.** Join us as we share a meal & prepare the *Bi Women Quarterly* mailing. RSVP: [robyn@robynochs.com](mailto:robyn@robynochs.com)

**9 (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 2<sup>nd</sup> Mondays. RSVP/Info: [kate.e.flynn@gmail.com](mailto:kate.e.flynn@gmail.com)

**12 (Thursday) 7-9pm, Young Bisexual Social and Support Group (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 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursdays for a few hours of discussion, support, and/or the eating and drinking of delicious things. Info/RSVP: [youngblissboston@gmail.com](mailto:youngblissboston@gmail.com)

**15 (Sunday) 2-4pm, Bi+ Women of Worcester.** A peer-led social support group for bisexual, pansexual, queer or fluid women and non-binary folks in Central Mass. We will discuss a wide range of issues related to attraction, sexuality, and gender in a supportive safe space for folks of all races and ethnic backgrounds. Info/RSVP: <https://www.meetup.com/Bi-Community-Activities/events/cpmnkryzqbtb/>

**21 (Saturday) 11:30am, Biversity Brunch.** This mixed gender bi group brunches at Foundry on Elm St. in Davis Sq., Somerville. Meets 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturdays. Info: <http://www.biversity.org>

## January

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

**12 (Sunday) 12-3pm, Bi+ Women+ Brunch at Jill's in Cambridge.** Please bring a potluck dish and come socialize! The closest T station is Harvard Square and the #1 bus stops right in front. Some street parking. Building has an elevator. Pet-free home. Info/RSVP: [mccainjill@gmail.com](mailto:mccainjill@gmail.com)

**13 (Monday), 7-9pm, Straight Marriage, Still Questioning.** (See Dec. 9th)

**18 (Saturday) 11:30am, Biversity Brunch.** (See Dec. 21st)

**19 (Sunday) 2-4pm, Bi+ Women of Worcester.** (See Dec. 15th)

**19 (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. RSVP: [www.meetup.com/Bi-Community-Activities/events/259707121/](http://www.meetup.com/Bi-Community-Activities/events/259707121/)

## February

**1-2 (Saturday-Sunday) SFBiCon in San Francisco, CA.** Info: <https://www.sfbicon.com>

**5 (Wednesday) 7-9pm, Bisexual Social and Support Group (BLiSS).** (See Dec. 4th)

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

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

**15 (Saturday) 11:30am, Biversity Brunch.** (See Dec. 21<sup>st</sup>)

**22 (Saturday) 12-3pm, Bi+ Women+ Brunch at Charlotte's in Dorchester.** Bring a potluck dish to share and meet friendly faces in the community. Two-story walkup. Info/RSVP: [avon.alger@gmail.com](mailto:avon.alger@gmail.com)