

Colorado Moon

By Eboni G. Rafus



Victoria & Eboni

The full Colorado moon hung low and red like a blood orange. In the flat city below, we lay on our backs.

“It’s only for eight weeks,” Victoria said.

I knew that, but it didn’t make it better. I rolled over on my side.

“Upper left,” I said. Victoria obliged me by scratching my left shoulder blade.

“And then we’ll be back in Amherst and we can really begin our lives together,” she continued. “Next summer we can go anywhere you want.

“We’ll go to Seattle!”

I returned to my back and looked out at the moon. It was alone in the wide sky, as dark clouds shrouded the stars, and it seemed to hover over me like a haunting. I felt watched.

At the grocery store, I was gawked at while I gently squeezed tomatoes.

Eboni, continues on page 12

I Married a Lesbian

By Denise Garrow-Pruitt

It has been my experience that lesbians often fear having relationships with bisexual women. I am sharing my personal story to illustrate that a lesbian and a bisexual woman can be in a long-term relationship.

My spouse and I have enjoyed being married for eight years (that’s how long marriage has been legal in Massachusetts), but have been in a relationship for over 12 years. Our story is not unique, but it is an opportunity to teach. This is our opportunity to proclaim that a lesbian can fall in love with a bisexual and they can live happily ever after.

I am a bisexual woman. I was married to a wonderful man who was and still is my best friend. We were together for over 30 years and married for 25 of those years. We had three children together and raised five children altogether. He was my soul mate and she is the love of my life. I am happy with my spouse but refuse to deny my years before her. We are a blended family and will continue to be.

My lesbian spouse has had 10 male sexual partners in her lifetime. I have had only two in my entire life. My spouse is very grounded in who she is. While she can peacefully coexist with men, a love relationship never worked because she couldn’t become emotionally attached to men. She was told she was gay by others before she herself realized that she was. In her late twenties she fell head over heels in love with a woman. Emotionally and physically, she had found the

total package she knew existed and realized she was, in fact, a lesbian. From that point on, she continued to date women.

I was never exposed to any gay people growing up. I knew I liked looking down women’s shirts, but I thought that was normal. As a kid I dreamed of growing up and having babies. There was never a man in those dreams. I wanted a traditional life because that is all I knew. I married the boy next door because I got pregnant as a teen. He was wonderful. We built our family; we even took in foster kids. We loved each other and loved raising our children.

My reality check came when I was in graduate school and I met a woman from my town who was also in graduate school. She was very different from me. She was a single teacher living at home with her father. She was great with kids but had never married. She was a closeted lesbian. I learned a lot from her. I learned what those feelings I’d had all my life were all about. She was very clear with me that she only dated other lesbians. She was my first same-sex love.

After figuring out with my lesbian friend that I was bisexual, I spoke with my husband and told him what I suspected. He supported my feelings. (Note: this was hard for him as he did not see this coming, but he wanted me to be happy.) I started to explore my sexuality by going to coming out groups and gay social gatherings and talking with other bisexuals.

I met the love of my life in a place no one would ever guess—the local International House of Pancakes. I did

Denise, continues on page 8

HONOR ROLL

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From Your Editor

The theme of the current issue is “Mixed Marriages.” All relationships are arguably mixed marriages. Few of us have a partner with whom we share all aspects of identity: sex, gender, race or ethnicity, age, family background, religion, economic status, politics, interests, goals.

Responses came pouring in! Writers Laura Berol, Susanna Brent, Debbie Block-Schwenk, Francesca Fortunato, Denise Garrow-Pruitt, Rebecca Penzias and Eboni G. Rafus share stories covering intersections of race, gender, religion and sexual orientation. Betti Schleyer, PhD, has created—for us—a guide to affirming resources for those in mixed-orientation marriages.

Special to this issue is a report-back from a special event for emerging LGBT leaders held at Vice President Biden’s home and a summary of bi representation on television from a new publication recently issued by GLAAD: “Where We Are on TV Report: 2012-2013 Season.” I’m guessing I’m not the only bi woman out there with a crush on *The Good Wife*’s character Kalinda Sharma (acted by Archie Panjabi). There’s also a reading list generated at September’s book swap brunch.

And of course, you’ll find our usual features: Around the World, with a short story written by Carol, a bi-identified woman living in Zimbabwe; Ask Tiggy; News Briefs; Letters; and our calendar of events for women in the greater Boston area.

Enjoy!

Robyn

**Denise reads *Bi Women*.
Send us a picture of YOU reading *Bi Women*.**

Be creative!



Next in *Bi Women*

The theme for the Spring ‘13 issue:

What Happens Next

This is for those who came to bi identity by way of identifying first as straight. So you’ve realize dyou’re attracted to women, too. What did you do next? Did you look for supportive community? Read books? Try to meet other women loving women? Seek out experience? See a counselor? Look for information on the Internet? Ask friends for advice? Tell us your story. Or give advice to other women who might be in this situation now. We want to hear from you. Essays, poems, artwork and short stories are welcome.

Submissions for the next issue must be received by February 1st.

Submission guidelines are at:

<http://biwomenboston.org/newsletter/submission-guidelines/>

Send your submissions and suggestions for future topics to

biwomeneditor@gmail.com

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

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

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

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

Around the World: On the Fence in Zimbabwe

By Carol

For this issue, we feature a short story written by Carol, a bi-identified woman living in Zimbabwe.

She sat there, the fence pricking her back. She looked to either side. There were many like her, male and female, sitting on that fence.

She wondered neutrally—without those certain feelings of uncertainty, undecision and confusion—how she had ended up on the fence. She remembered an argument she'd had a few years back with a now-friend. They had been at a party and this then-dimwit had told her she was bisexual. "What?" she had replied. "You are either straight or you are not. You people are just selfish. Do you ever consider people's feelings? How can you sleep with two people of different sexes at the same time? Are you just sex crazed?"

Back then she could not understand how a person could be physically and otherwise attracted to both sexes. To her, as to many, it was either A or B, top or bottom, left or right, with nothing in between or other than that.

Now, back to the fence.

He had his hands on her lap. "So you're bisexual. You're talking about that whole ménage thing. I have always wanted to have a threesome."

She just sat there quietly. She couldn't voice her thoughts, that as long as she was with him, she would not sleep with anyone else, male or female, with him or separately. He would tell her she was confused, selfish and two-faced. There was no telling what he'd say or—worse—do if she told him the reason she had been going to school even after exams were over was not solely to check results. That she had exchanged looks with someone at school. That she had had interesting dreams. He would call her a lesbian...

He vanished. She exhaled a sigh of relief.

The girl from school came walking by on the other side of the fence and started moving toward her. Those eyes of hers *did* things to her, devastatingly good things. She looked down at her feet because she could not bear to lose herself in those eyes.

The girl moved closer and started touching her. "Do you feel this way when he touches you like this? I have seen how you look at me."

She did not speak. She couldn't. She merely cleared her throat.

"You need to leave your cocoon. Leave that facade of yours."

"It's not so simple."

The girl chuckled, a sarcastic chuckle. "So are you straight? Is that what you're telling me?"

She shook her head, "No!"

"I can't listen to this nonsense. When you make up your mind, call me."

She sat there on the fence crying. She had not wanted either of them to see. He would call her a lesbian and she would call her straight...

A couple walked by. The woman on the fence looked down at her feet, still. The couple stopped. "Hi there, trying to hide? Look at us." The guy spoke first. "Why are you sitting there all alone?" She couldn't respond, just continued staring at her feet. They looked at each other, smiling. She had heard of bisexual couples who "understood" each other. She'd only thought it was something from a movie.

He got a phone call. "Ok hun, I'll be there soon." The woman smiled and nodded. He hugged her, they kissed and he left.

The woman turned to her. Still sitting on the fence, she cleared her throat and asked, "Where's he going?" The woman chuckled, "To see his friend." She couldn't believe her ears. "And you don't mind?" She shrugged. "Why should I mind?" "He also doesn't mind?" She was not convinced. "Neither of you ever gets jealous?" The woman looked her straight in the eye. "Things are not all black and white." The woman clasped her face in her hands and kissed her on the forehead. "Don't worry, dear." She gave her a reassuring glance and then she left.

Still sitting on the fence, she lifted her head up and just as the sun was being sent away by the moon, she saw a beautiful flag being hoisted in the distance. The colors of the rainbow glistened with the now orange sun.

Carol is a member of the [Sexual Rights Centre](#) in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.



A Recipe for a Mixed Marriage Cocktail: Shake, Stir, Laugh

By Debbie Block-Schwenk

“I want to be a gay pop star for a week and then come back and tell you my adventures.” This is an actual line from a breakfast conversation at my house. I was telling Kevin about Mika, the British pop star who—over the past few years—has gone from “don’t label me” to “I guess you could say I’m bisexual” to “I guess you could say I’m gay.”

Kevin’s not particularly a fan of Mika’s music, but he’s happy to engage in the thought experiment of being in the singer’s shoes. Even though Kevin’s straight, he’s not narrow: he is happy to engage in these thought experiments, to tease me with speculation of what he might be like if he were bi and to be himself rather than some caricature of strictly-defined masculinity.

I can’t offer up a perfect recipe for a successful marriage. All I can offer are anecdotes. Every marriage involves unique individuals, and differences in sexual orientation might be the least of them. For me, though, it’s not only important that Kevin isn’t homophobic or biphobic, but that he can imagine what it might be like to be bisexual. Imagination: one required ingredient.

We have a lot in common and I’m grateful for that every day. Tonight I took a break from writing this so we could watch an episode of “Torchwood: Miracle Day” together. No, we don’t always like the same shows or the same music, but the odds are pretty good that our tastes will overlap. We work on political campaigns together. We play in the same

Dungeons & Dragons game. Maybe most importantly, we enjoy just spending time together. Friendship: without it, the taste would be flat.

Kevin has also become a friend to many in the bi community here in Boston. I love the women-only atmosphere of the BBWN brunches (everyone needs her own space) but I’m also glad that when we attend other events, Kevin is not only welcomed, his company is enjoyed. Community: it adds body and support.

Days get frantic and life gets busy, but we always make time to say that we love each other and to thank each other for doing chores and helping each other. Kindness, compassion, love—I don’t need to tell you that without these ingredients there just won’t be much flavor.

Passion gives the mix its required kick (also see imagination, above).

Finally, a generous sprinkling of laughter adds zest to the mixture. Laughing together is joyful; it is healing; it is bonding.

Shake, stir, mix well. Laugh. Enjoy. May each who is seeking it find the right recipe for your own happiness.

Debbie lives with her spouse and four cats in Boston.



Bi visibility in the UK and in Spain

M.O.M.: Not a Disorder

By Laura Berol

Mixed orientation marriages are viewed skeptically in the LGBT community, and with reason. MOMs have been touted by practitioners of reparative therapy and have been endured by gays and lesbians trying to change their orientation, with heartbreaking results. As a woman attracted to women but married to a straight man, I've been forced to consider on a very personal level whether a MOM can ever be a healthy relationship.

I recently went to dinner with a friend to meet her new lesbian partner, who steered the conversation toward solving what she considered my problem. It didn't matter that I've always been out to my husband, or that we both want to stay married. From her perspective, being in a MOM meant I was necessarily in denial and in pain. And she's far from the only lesbian who has responded that way. Even bisexual women in my meet-up groups comment knowingly, "I wonder if you're really as happy in your marriage as you claim."

I see a parallel here to what I experienced at my Evangelical church some years ago, when I asked for healing prayer to help me process my grief from my mother's death. For a couple of sessions, it was like self-directed therapy—until I mentioned my attraction to another woman. That brought the praying to an abrupt halt. The couple leading the session informed me that they couldn't help me anymore unless my husband and I came in together to heal my homosexuality, which they viewed as the root of any psychic pain in my life. Since my homosexuality was perfectly healthy, I declined, but the couple assured me as I was leaving that, if my lesbianism were cured, everything else that hurt me would be too.

Both responses—from Christians, and from bis and lesbians—discount my competence to judge what's best for me, what promotes my own mental health. They both view my sexuality as the definitive key to my personhood, and both want to grant ideology (regarding either religion or orientation) a greater authority over my life than my own life experience.

That makes some sense when it comes to religion. In fact, that's generally what religion is: an ideological framework that people defer to in directing their lives. The LGBTQ movement, by contrast, is founded on a celebration of difference. We know from hard-earned experience that not everyone fits into the same mold, and we want freedom for everyone to follow his or her own path. This freedom, to my mind, should include deciding for oneself what's most important in one's own marriage. Sexual desire isn't the only



thing that matters in human life. Why must it trump everything else in determining whether I marry or stay married?

Think about it: how would you respond if your friends criticized you for not basing your choice of a partner on maximizing your health, wealth, or career opportunities? You'd thank them for their concern and let them know you had other priorities. No one involved would consider it a case for a therapist. But that's what happens when a marriage choice doesn't maximize sexual enjoyment.

I'm the last person to discount the importance of sex. I tortured myself for two decades, trying to make my desires fit Evangelical doctrine. If I were looking for a life partner now, I wouldn't consider a man. But at this point, I'm not looking for a partner: I have one, and—for better or worse—my heart, mind and life are bound up with his. I do what I can to make sex work for me. Partner-guided fantasy and role-playing help. Even sharing frustrations can be a turn-on. Still, sex is only one facet of the life we're exploring together, and my husband is the best person for me to take this journey with right now.

This is not to say that everyone in a mixed orientation marriage should stay there. Based on the statistics and common sense, I'd guess most should not. Fewer than one in twenty MOMs survive three years past a partner's coming out. Yet statistics can't tell us what to do. Each of us has to make terms with life individually. Claiming you haven't had to compromise on anything is the only sure sign of denial, and it's bound to lead to pain because it requires closing your eyes to what you've given up. Healthy decisions are possible when we acknowledge what we're trading and why.

So if you have a friend whose life is going off the rails, by all means, reach out to her or him. Concern is one of the greatest gifts we can give each other. But if your friend isn't in distress, consider, before you start finding fault, whether you're in a position to judge the deal another human being has struck with life.

Laura lives in Falls Church, Virginia, with her husband and three sons. She's currently writing a memoir of her college years, when she was torn between her faith and her sexuality.

Ensuring That the B & the T Are Not Silent

By Francesca Fortunato

How do you like your Alphabet Soup? Is your chosen combination LGBT? Is it GLBT, LGBTQ or GLBTQA? Are there enough letters to signify all of the identities of people whose sexual orientation or gender expression is something other than cisgender/heterosexual? That last question is currently unanswerable.

I do know that, for me (and often for my partner) there's a tendency to default toward the "Q" (Queer) when identifying ourselves. Perhaps it's because Queer has a way of gathering all those Ls, Bs, Ts and even sometimes As (Allies) under its cozy wing. The problem is the lack of specificity in the term Queer. It's a word that simultaneously erases and embraces. This is especially true when one identifies as a transgender woman (my partner) or as bisexual (me).

The question of shared identity is further complicated by the fact that my partner is lesbian identified. On the surface, it seems that we should both be happy with the label "lesbian." After all, we are two women in an exclusive, committed, romantic relationship. What part of that doesn't say "lesbian"? Well... the part about my past relationships having been with men as well as with women. And the part about my partner's experience of transitioning, even if it was twenty-odd years ago.

The fact is that there is much more to her than being a transgender lesbian and much more to me than being a bisexual in a serious, lesbian relationship. Neither of us want to be "professional queers," nor are we happy with the ways the B and T in the acronym tend to be afterthoughts, acknowledged in passing, if at all.

We've discussed the fact that neither of our identities seems quite real to a lot of gay- and lesbian-identified folk. This is especially the case with a certain subset of lesbians, who tend to view transgender women as being "really men" and bisexual women as experimenters or as wimpy lesbians who are afraid to come out. Neither view fosters respect or trust for bisexual or transgender people.

One conviction we share is a support for each other's right to one's identity, not subsumed under an umbrella of convenience, not silenced, erased or forgotten. We've discussed what we can do to claim our spaces and assert the realness of ourselves in the larger queer community.

Though my partner is not generally "read" as transgender while walking down the street or eating at the neighborhood diner, her identity-related challenges differ somewhat from mine. This is partly because she has been an activist in the trans* community for well over a decade and is somewhat well known as a speaker, writer and pioneer. In that respect, her "T-visibility" is a given. Her struggle has more to do with the fact that the rights and needs of transgender (and other gender-nonconforming) people are so often ignored

or overlooked in favor of more "sexy" and media-friendly issues like marriage equality (something we both support but which is not a burning issue for either of us).

Because I was married to a man for thirteen years before getting serious with my partner, I found that my bisexual identity (about which my ex-husband was aware) had receded, as far as the wider world was concerned. People who had known me during my marriage simply assumed that I had finally admitted to being a lesbian. The idea that both my marriage to him and my partnership with her was equally "real" (albeit, in the case of my marriage, not destined to be life-long) was something that most people who knew me could not wrap their heads around. Even my ultra-liberal, staunch ally of a mother (who knew my boyfriends and my girlfriends when I was younger) now calls me her "lesbian daughter." I came out to her as bisexual when I was eleven. She seemed to believe me back then. Now, though... I guess the "B-word" simply embodies too much complexity.

The main reason why I am so vehement about claiming my bisexual identity is the fact that I just don't want to have half my life experience—half of myself—negated. I don't expect that I will ever have a sexual relationship with a man again. But that I have had such relationships is part of who I am. I am bisexual. I always have been and always will be.

So, I am trying to find ways to make sure that the "B" is not silent, even as I support my partner's efforts to make sure the "T" is not silent either. For me, writing is one way to assert my bisexual presence and make my bisexual voice heard. I've recently written articles for *Pretty Queer* magazine. I am seeking more opportunities to write my truth for publications in which it will be read and appreciated. For the last three years I have attended the Philadelphia Trans Health Conference with my partner, during which there has been exactly one bisexual-oriented workshop offered. Because that one workshop was so well attended and deeply appreciated, I plan to submit one of my own for this coming summer, in order to do my part to make bisexual-friendly space available and bisexual voices heard.

Thanks to all the readers and writers of *Bi Women*, for being here, being heard and making room for me to do the same.

(The Reverend) Francesca Bongiorno Fortunato is an ordained minister, writer and sometime actress, who earns her (pathetically low) income as an Activity Director in an Adult Home. She lives with her partner and their feline employers, Alice and Trixie, in Brooklyn, NY.



Resources for Mixed-Orientation Marriages

I am a therapist who works with LGBT individuals and couples. Bisexual issues, in particular, tend to be marginalized. What information is available is full of bias and stigma, so there is a need for positive resources for those in mixed-sexual orientation marriages where one of the partners is bisexual. I hope you find these helpful.
–Betti Schleyer, PhD

Positive online discussion groups:

Alternate Path: an affirming group for women seeking help with finding alternative solutions to divorcing their Bisexual/Gay husband. Provides positive discussions to help wives adjust to the news that their husband is gay/bi. <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/alternatopath/>

Making Mixed Orientation Marriages Work (MMOMW): for straight spouses who are married to gays or bisexuals, and also the married gays and bisexuals themselves. Welcomes all those in this situation no matter how they have decided to deal with this within their own marriage. <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/MMOMW/>

HUGS Couples (Hope Understanding Growth Support): A list for couples of mixed sexual orientation who are working to keep their relationship strong and growing. A positive environment where these couples can *express* their concerns, *share* their successes, and *give* and *receive* support and encouragement. http://groups.yahoo.com/group/HUGS_Couples2/

Monogamous Mixed Orientation Marriages (MMOM): a support group for either or both members of a mixed orientation marriage or relationship working to remain monogamous. “Mixed orientation” means that the sexual orientations of the two persons involved do not match. This includes any combination of GLBTQS persons (gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, questioning, straight). “Monogamous” means that the partners are sexually exclusive with each other. <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/mmom/>

Positive Website for bisexuals. Includes a discussion site for those in Mixed Orientation Marriages: <http://living-fabulous.org/>

Good description of basics of making a mixed-orientation marriage work, with links to resources: <http://www.transcendingboundaries.org/resources/mixed-orientation-marriage.html>

Positive stories about mixed orientation marriages:

<http://www.believeoutloud.com/boltoday/20120223/top-five-questions-asked-about-being-bisexual-minister>

<http://www.thefreelibrary.com/A+bisexual+mom+comes+out.-a0117422004>

Books:

Ochs, R., and Rowley, S. (2009). *Getting Bi: Voices of Bisexuals Around the World*, Second Edition. Chapter 6, Relationships, pp. 115 – 133. Bisexual Resource Center.

Orndorff, K. (1999). *Bi Lives: Bisexual Women Tell Their Stories*. Sharp Press.

Research showing that stable, satisfactory mixed-orientation marriages are possible:

Brownfain, J. J. (1985). A study of the married bisexual male: Paradox and resolution. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 11(1/2), 173-188.

Coleman, E. (1985). Integration of male bisexuality and marriage. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 11(1/2), 189-207.

Edser, S. J., & Shea, J. D. (2002). An exploratory investigation of bisexual men in monogamous, heterosexual marriages. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 2, 7–43.

Jordal, C. E. (2011). *“Making it work”: A grounded theory of how mixed orientation married couples commit, sexually identify, and gender themselves* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/theses/available/etd-05112011-160023/unrestricted/Jordal_CE_D_2011.pdf

Matteson, D. (1985). Bisexual men in marriage: Is a positive homosexual identity and stable marriage possible? *Journal*

Resources, continues next page

Bis at Biden's: Honoring Emerging LGBT Leaders at the VP's Home

On September 12, 2012, the White House organized a briefing with Administration officials for emerging LGBT leaders, followed by an evening reception at the Vice President's home. Bi activists Sarah Young and Dominique Gant attended the event along with Chris Pierce, a bi activist from Chicago and a couple hundred other LGBT activists. Sarah and Dominique share their impressions of the event:

Sarah Young:

I'm not one for exaggeration, so I say with sincerity that being a part of the Emerging LGBT Leaders event at the invitation of Vice President Biden was one of the best days of my life. The day began with a group tour of the East Wing of the White House (the part many would recognize as the ceremonial wing with ornate furniture). This was the first gathering of all the leaders, and a great way to meet many of my fellow honorees, including a handful of bi activists from around the country.

We went next to a policy briefing in the Executive Office Building near the White House. The policy briefing was held in what looked to be a press room, complete with the blue drapes and the presidential insignia hanging behind the podium. While the issues we discussed were serious, the tone was one of excitement and celebration. Gautam Raghavan, Associate Director of Public Engagement, welcomed us and thanked all of us for our service and our leadership within the LGBTQ community.

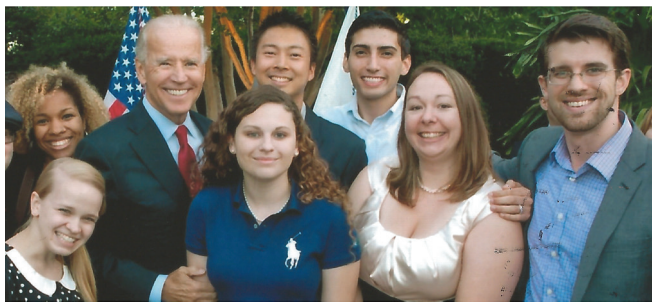
The policy briefing included three panel discussions, each about an hour long. The first panel discussion was about international issues related to LGBTQ people. It included representatives from the State Department, the National Security Office, and US AID. The information helped ground us in struggles abroad, and how our work is connected to LGBTQ leaders globally. The second panel discussion concerned legal issues facing the LGBTQ community, and highlighted key legal and policy victories that President Obama and his administration have helped spearhead. The third was a panel on LGBTQ Youth issues, including speakers from the Department of Education, the

Department of Health and Human Service, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The information was connected to bullying, health and wellness of LGBTQ youth, issues about which I'm very passionate.

In the afternoon, we were free to attend a variety of open house events at LGBTQ organizations around D.C. I chose to visit the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN), where I met Dr. Joe Kosciw, someone I admire very much. I refer to Dr. Kosciw as the "godfather of LGBTQ youth research" since he publishes widely on the subject and is a key researcher for GLSEN's school climate research. Since my dissertation will be about LGBTQ youth policy in schools, connecting with Dr. Kosciw was an exciting opportunity, one I wouldn't have had if I weren't in D.C. for the event: I was able to travel with GLSEN staff to the crowning event, the reception at Vice President Joe Biden's home.

Security was in place, and we queued up to pass a variety of screenings before we were allowed through the gates. The reception took place around the pool, which was lit up with white lights and surrounded by various food and drink stations. I happened to be in the right place at the right time, because as the vice president and Dr. Jill Biden entered the reception area, I was about five feet from the podium and I was able to shake the vice president's hand as he entered to give the speech. Dr. Jill Biden gave very moving opening remarks, highlighting the president and vice president's demonstrated commitment to the LGBTQ community. Vice President Biden spoke about the need for our country to move forward, honoring citizens and enhancing quality of life. The vice president suggested that as bi activists (or as LGT or Q activists), we may be doing more of a service for our cisgender and straight citizens than we are for ourselves. He reminded us that by serving as out people, we are educating those who don't understand but need to, we are serving as role models for youth, and we are helping make America more inclusive and beautifully diverse.

I am originally from Upstate New York, but consider myself a Southern transplant after having lived in Mississippi (and now Alabama) for four years. I moved to Mississippi after I received a New Voices Fellowship with the Ford Foundation. New Voices funds emerging non-profit leaders, and provides them the support and the tools to design and



Point Foundation Scholars, with Vice President Biden. Sarah is 2nd from the right.

Bis at Biden's, continues next page

Bis at Biden's, *continued from previous page*

implement projects of their choosing in conjunction with non-profits across the country. My vision was to support the LGBTQ and HIV work of the ACLU of Mississippi.

My fellowship led to the development of the Mississippi Safe Schools Coalition, a youth-led organization that trains LGBTQ youth leaders to tell their own stories, advocate for policy change, and educate others on how to become better allies and advocates for LGBTQ youth in the state. My work with MSSC has led to several high-profile legal cases. More importantly, I've been a part of a process that helps train the next generation of queer youth leaders in the oppressive state of Mississippi. I truly feel privileged to be able to do this work in a region where it is desperately needed.

I can't express enough how grateful I am to Jen Bonardi and Ellyn Ruthstrom of the Bisexual Resource Center for recommending me. Jen is my Point Foundation mentor, and connecting with another out bi woman has really helped me grow and feel supported. I'd also like to thank Robyn Ochs, who officially put my name forward for the event.

Here are two anecdotes from the event:

▼ I found Vice President Biden and Dr. Biden to be warm and very down-to-earth. While Dr. Biden was speaking, I noticed a German Shepherd walking around the party. I assumed, given the presence of Secret Service personnel, that the dog was part of security. However, the dog went up to the vice president and nuzzled his hand. Vice President Biden bent over and kissed the dog on his head. It was obviously his dog. This made it feel like a house party, and it humanized the vice president for me.



Dominique with Vice President Biden

▼ I noticed the ease with which Dr. and Vice President Biden circulated among the crowd of very diverse queer people. They stayed and talked, seemed very genuine, and Vice President Biden encouraged us to stay and make ourselves at home in his home. He did warn us, humorously, that if we were to go upstairs in thirty minutes though, we would be overhearing a national security briefing and we would be arrested on sight.

Dominique:

It was an amazing, humbling, experience to attend the policy briefings and the End of Summer Barbecue at Vice President and Dr. Jill Biden's home. Although it was a bit overwhelming being surrounded by so many accomplished people in our community, there was also comfort in being surrounded by people who were essentially working for the same cause and toward the same end. Especially amazing about the event was the White House's overt recognition, support, and acceptance of our efforts. It was reassuring to know that our goals and our efforts are shared by powerful people in high public office. Moreover, this event was not just a barbecue at which to be recognized, hear speeches, and network amongst ourselves. Earlier in the day, we young leaders were invited to attend panels in which issues and policy of importance to the LGBTQI community were discussed. This showed us young leaders—and me specifically—that the current administration is actively working with us to better the world for our community. The ability to hear from and comment on these panels was, I believe, just as important as the barbecue.

As a bisexual woman attending the event, I was delighted to meet a few other bi women and know that I was definitely not alone in my identity at this event. It was great to see that some effort was made to ensure the attendance of most of the identities of the acronym. I am sure I did not meet all of the bisexual leaders present, but I was fortunate to meet four of them. Although a presumably small group, I am glad that there was a bisexual presence at the Vice President's End of Summer Barbecue.

Sarah Young is a Point Foundation Scholar and graduate student at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa, AL.

Dominique is an sophomore at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, TN.

Bi Women Reading...

During the recent book swap we took our usual go-around to mention books we've been reading and might suggest for others. Happy reading!



October book swap brunch at Ellyn's

Nonfiction

Drift: The Unmooring of American Military Power, by Rachel Maddow

Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World that Can't Stop Talking, by Susan Cain

Learned Optimism: How to Change Your Mind and Your Life, by Martin Seligman

Fundamentals of Co-counseling, by Harvey Jackins

Following Atticus, by Tom Ryan

Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking, by Malcolm Gladwell

Getting Bi: Voices of Bisexuals Around the World, edited by Robyn Ochs & Sarah Rowley

Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books, by Azar Nafisi

Flagrant Conduct: The Story of Lawrence vs. Texas, by Dale Carpenter

No One Has to Die Alone: Preparing for a Meaningful Death, by Lani Leary

Catching the Big Fish: Meditation, Consciousness and Creativity, by David Lynch

Wild: From Lost to Found on the Pacific Crest Trail, by Cheryl Strayed

Fiction

Vanishing Act of Esme Lennox, by Maggie O'Farrell

Pandora's Star, by Peter Hamilton

In One Person, by John Irving

Take the Long Way Home, by Gail Caldwell

The Printmaker's Daughter, by Katherine Govier

Animal Dreams, by Barbara Kingsolver

The Art of Hearing Heartbeats, by Jan-Philipp Sendker

Daughter of Smoke & Bone, by Laini Taylor

Mysteries/Thrillers

Sue Grafton mystery series, *A is for Alibi*, etc.

Gone Missing, by Linda Castillo

No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency series, by Alexander McCall-Smith

Submitted by Ellyn

...And Bi Women on Television

According to a new publication recently issued by GLAAD: "Where We Are on TV Report: 2012-2013 Season," only one-third of the 50 LGBT regular or recurring characters currently on scripted broadcast primetime television are women. Of these, 10 (20%) are lesbians, seven (14%) are bisexual women and one (2%) is a transgender woman. Of the 32 men, two (4%) are bi.

On cable, bi women represent 15% of LGBT characters while bisexual men only represent eight percent.

Returning characters

On **Bones**, bi forensics expert Angela Montenegro continues to be a part of the series as it enters its eighth season. The popular drama **Revenge** features bisexual Nolan. **The Good Wife** has bisexual investigator Kalinda Sharma. Adrianna Tate-Duncan will continue to be a part of the series when it returns on **90210/The CW**. Callie Torres will continue on **Grey's Anatomy**.

New characters

NBC's new drama, **Chicago Fire**, features Leslie Shay, an out lesbian EMT and will introduce Clarice, her bisexual ex-girlfriend in a recurring capacity. Evelyn is returning to **Two and A Half Men** after she started dating a woman last season. And the lesbian/bi couple Santana and Brittany will be returning to **Glee**. Syfy recently started airing **Lost Girl**, a Canadian drama which follows a bisexual "succubus" named Bo and two lesbian characters.

On cable, lesbian and bi characters include Tara Thornton and Pam De Beaufort on **True Blood** (HBO), Dr. Eleanor O'Hara on **Nurse Jackie** (Showtime), and Diana Barrigan on **White Collar** (USA).

Source: GLAAD, "Where We Are on TV Report: 2012-2013 Season" <http://www.glaad.org/publications/wherewereontv12>

Eboni, *continued from page 1*

In Estes Park, small children pointed at me as I walked along the tourist-clogged streets. I was followed in the gift shops by suspicious proprietors who, because they could see my skin tone, thought they could guess my intentions.

Yet, it was Victoria who seemed spooked in the night. She had nightmares and woke up around three in the morning stretching her arms out to me. I was often out of her reach, in the darkened living room, keeping my nightly vigil over the city that looked like the sprinkled embers of a fire long abandoned. Perhaps, I was the ghost.

“I know Greeley isn’t what we expected, but this internship is great experience for me. With this Sophomore Year Program on my résumé, I’ll be able to get a job anywhere when I finish my master’s degree,” she’d said.

We’d both been naïve. This was not the Rocky Mountain adventure we had imagined.

While Victoria worked to improve the sophomore year experience for undergraduates at the University of Northern Colorado, I cooked, folded laundry and otherwise played housewife to a woman who the state of Colorado wouldn’t recognize as my legal partner. I was lonely up in my 17th-floor apartment with only a hawk to keep me company from its windowsill perch during the day, and only the moon to keep me company late at night. However, my prison did help me escape the near-constant smell of stockyard manure and slaughtered meat that wafted across the brittle fields of Greeley. Also, it seemed safer for me as a queer black woman to stay sequestered in my tower than to venture out into a town where a transgender woman was killed just one year ago.

Victoria sighed at my silence, sensing that all the stare-downs from denim-clad cowboys with rifles in the bed of their Chevy trucks were starting to get to me. Yes, the anti-Obama bumper stickers, the Focus on the Family conservative propaganda, the constant reminder of Matthew Shepard’s murder in Laramie, just over an hour away, was hard. Not feeling comfortable enough to hold Victoria’s hand when we were out in public together was harder. Worse yet—knowing that even though I could easily pass for straight — there were parts of my identity, my otherness, that I couldn’t hide.

I pulled her up into my arms so that our breasts pressed against each other.

“I don’t regret coming,” I whispered. “I wanted to be with you.”

Victoria and I kissed and talked, making plans for the weekend and our upcoming wedding until she fell asleep cradled into my neck just after 11:00 pm. I resented how easily, how early she dozed off. I resented that she would never understand, no matter how much she wanted to, what it meant to be black in Greeley. I watched Victoria snore softly for a while, her body sinking heavily into the mattress as she fell deeper and deeper

into sleep. Then I slipped out of bed to watch another night dissolve into day.

Every weekend, Victoria and I took a day trip. We went shopping in Boulder, to a gay pride parade in Denver and visited ski lodges in Vail. On that upcoming Saturday, Victoria and I would climb into her compact Suzuki Aerio and drive almost three hours into the Garden of the Gods in Colorado Springs where all of our daily problems — racism, homophobia, lack of money, loads of bills—might shrink against the impact of giant red rock formations. I lived for those Saturday trips.

Until then, it was just the moon and me.

A graduate of UMass, Amberst’s MFA program for Poets and Writers, Eboni now lives in Southern California with her wife, Victoria, and their puppy, Stella. She is currently writing her first novel.

The Triple Threat

By Rebecca Penzias

I am white; she is black. I am Jewish; she is not. I am bisexual; she is a lesbian. None of these differences prevented us from dating and falling in love almost three years ago, but they have since presented challenges.

The biggest challenge we have faced is our differing perception of our relationship in comparison to how the world sees us. My girlfriend and I often joke that she is the “triple threat” to my quasi-traditional Jewish family: a black non-Jewish lesbian. The world sees us as an interracial, interreligious, gay, female couple. We see ourselves as best friends who love and support each other. When I look at my girlfriend, I don’t see someone who is black. I see the girl I love.

Even though the majority of my friends and family are supportive of our relationship, they don’t understand how it feels. When we walk down the street holding hands, people stare. Sometimes we can ignore it, but sometimes it hurts that people can’t just mind their own business. I’m a curious person. If I were on the outside, I would probably stare too, but it’s still hard for me.

Even though we seem to have all these differences, our relationship is like any other. We fight, we talk, we love and care about each other. We spend time together, we spend time apart. We go out to dinner and we go to the movies. Our relationship is like many others, but our relationship is also unique. We have the privilege of exploring each other’s differences.

It’s not always easy confronting the staring, the judgment, the prejudice that we face, but our differences remind us of what’s important and special about our relationship, what makes us say goodbye in the morning and come back to each other every night. Our differences frequently remind us of how lucky we are to be in such a unique, special relationship.

Rebecca is a 19-year-old college student living in Boston. She has identified as bisexual for over 5 years.

Ask Tiggy

Dear Tiggy,

I'm a lesbian and I have been married to my bisexual partner for four years. For the last three months, she has lost all sexual interest in me. In other ways, our relationship is very good; we hardly ever fight. We've spoken openly about this problem and the only source for it seems to be that she is going through a "phase" where she is more interested in men.

I am really trying to be understanding and not put any pressure on her. We still love each other and she said that she does not want to have an open relationship. I'm just worried. Do you think this is really just a phase and that her feelings for me will return?

—Willa



Dear Willa,

Yes, from what you've described, I think this is just a phase. Understandably, this is all unsettling for you. But I hope it heartens you to remember that it's only been a few months, whereas you've been together and making it work for years. Furthermore, you're doing the tough but necessary work of communicating, and you've already concluded that she's not aiming to change the terms of your relationship.

I do think that this may be about something else, though. Sure, we all know that even in monogamous relationships, other folks rev our engines now and again. But it's interesting that she's having a "boy phase" while she's in a monogamous relationship that she doesn't want to exit or amend, and it's at the point where months pass when she doesn't feel like having sex at all. I think you're subtly asking me if this is a bi thing and, no, I don't think it is. I'd wager that she's subconsciously pushing you away. Is it also possible that she's crushing on a specific man?

Keep talking to her, Willa. I believe she has more to say but she's summoning the nerve. Luckily, you two are starting from such a solid place that you have an excellent chance of weathering this storm.

—Tiggy

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

Letters

Dear Robyn & *Bi Women*,
Congratulations on the Obama win. You must be happy about it! Sorry I was so busy that I didn't have time to read *Bi Women* until just now and missed writing on this month's theme! I thought you might like to know that I went to the Bi Meetup Group in London last month and was glad to learn they have five bi groups in London! It seems like a lot to explore :)
Best wishes and a big hug!
Mumico from Taiwan

Dear *Bi Women*,
Just sent another (very small!) paypal donation to *Bi Women*! I have moved and my latest issue got lost in the mail—just missing one issue was too painful to bear! Thank you for all of your hard work producing such a wonderful newsletter that has sustained me through the good and the bad.



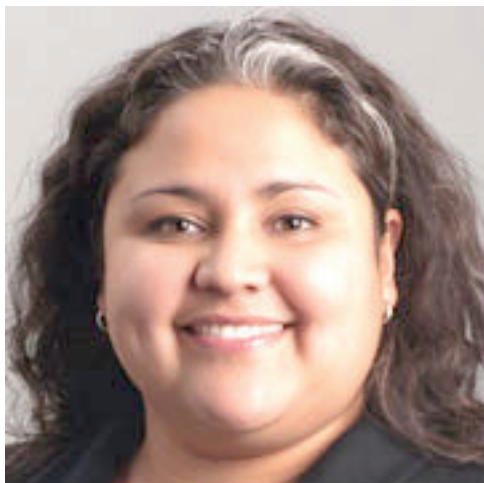
Mumico

News Briefs

By Robyn Ochs
and Katrina Chaves



Political Firsts: Kyrsten Sinema, a Democrat from Arizona, has been elected the first openly bisexual member of the U.S. Congress. Her election brings to five the number of out bi state-level elected officials who will be in office come January. Others include state reps. JoCasta Zamarripa (WI, in office since 2010) and Micah Kellner (NY, in office since 2007). Angie Buhl (SD, in office since 2011) is the first out bi State Senator. In addition to these five, out bisexual Kate Brown is Oregon's Secretary of State, making her the highest-ranking out bi official in the US. And last but not least, Mary Gonzalez has just been elected as a State Representative in Texas, making her the first-known openly pansexual elected official in the US.



JoCasta Zamarripa

According to a new report published in the *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, bi women and gay men face elevated risks of intimate partner violence. The report, based on analysis of California adults, found that bi women had elevated risks compared with heterosexual women and lesbians. However, in 95% of the intimate partner violence incidents, the perpetrator was a male partner, indicating that the violence occurred outside a same-sex relationship.

In a meeting held during the 2012 International Leadership Conference, the boards of directors of OutServe and Servicemembers Legal Defense Network (SLDN) voted to take final steps to combine the two organizations—including the two boards—and elected co-chairs to lead the board of directors of OutServe-SLDN. OutServe-SLDN announced the selection of transgender Army veteran Allyson Robinson to lead the newly combined organization. A graduate of West

Point, Robinson commanded Patriot missile units in Europe and the Middle East before she resigned her commission to pursue a calling to Christian ministry.

Olympic gold medalist Nicola Adams was listed as #1 in the UK's 2012 Pink List of most influential LGBT people. More than 1,500 readers voted for influential LGBT people who, they feel, make Britain safer, fairer, better and more entertaining. Adams, from Leeds, UK, is the first—and, so far only—woman ever to win an Olympic medal in boxing. Her image is currently emblazoned on billboards and buses around the country. Adams identifies as bisexual.



Nicola Adams

Both the Australian Bisexual Network and the German Bisexual Network (BiNe) celebrate their 20th Birthday. ABN celebrated with Bi Talk Fest on November 17th, and 'Bi-lesque,' an erotic night of Burlesque and Fetish. The German group marked their anniversary with a bi weekend. In the US, the Bay Area Bisexual Network celebrated its 25th anniversary with a series of events at the GLBT History Museum on Friday, November 16.

Shiri Eisner reports from Tel Aviv that in September the first-ever bi conference took place in Israel. It was a huge success, with over 200 people in attendance. The conference itself was made up of four panels, one lecture and three workshops, all happening over an evening and a day. The conference was totally free, included free vegan meals and was run completely by volunteers. It included lectures about boundary subversions, media representations of bisexuality/pansexuality, and political identities; and workshops about safer sex and consent, bi/pan identities, and feminist crochet. According to Shiri, there are plans to hold another conference next year.

Actress Evan Rachel Wood gets tweeted, "So does this mean you're not bi anymore," in regard to her new relationship. She responds back, "No. It just means I am not single anymore."

The "Bi Office"

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

Ongoing Events

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

2nd Tuesdays:

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

2nd Mondays:

Straight Marriage, Still Questioning. 7pm. Email kate.e.flynn@gmail.com for more info.

1st Wednesdays, 3rd Thursdays:

BLiSS: Bisexual Social & Support Group.

2nd Thursdays:

Younger Bi Group. For bi folks 20-29. 7pm. Info: [Kate at youngblissboston@gmail.com](mailto:kate@youngblissboston@gmail.com).

3rd Saturdays:

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

Boston-area women:

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



CALENDAR

December

Wednesday, December 5, 7-9pm, Bisexual Social & Support Group (BLiSS) meets monthly 1st Wed. at the Boston Living Center, 29 Stanhope St., Boston. All bi & bi-friendly people of all genders & orientations welcome. Meetings are peer-facilitated discussion groups, sometimes with a pre-selected topic or presenter. Info: bliss@biresource.net.

Monday, December 10, 7pm, Straight Marriage, Still Questioning. A peer-led support group for women in a straight marriage/relationship struggling with sexual orientation or coming out. Meets monthly on 2nd Mon. Info: kate.e.flynn@gmail.com.

Tuesday, December 11, 6-9pm, Bisexual Resource Center Board Meeting. All bi and bi-friendly community members welcome to attend. This is the year-end annual meeting when the board looks back at what it has accomplished during the year and looks ahead to the new year. Dinner & socialize 6-7pm. Meeting 7-9pm. Info: [Ellyn at president@biresource.net](mailto:Ellyn@president@biresource.net). At the Boston Living Center, 29 Stanhope St.

(Back Bay, Orange Line).

Thursday, December 13, 7-9pm, Younger Bi Group. If you are between the ages of 20-29 (or thereabouts) and identify somewhere along the lines of bisexual/omni/pan/fluid (or are questioning in that direction), please join us once a month for a few hours of discussion and support. Meet at Eastern Bank's community room at 250 Elm St., Somerville (Davis, Red Line). We'll meet from 7-9pm and then, if people are interested, we can head to a local restaurant for more discussion/merriment. All genders welcome! Info: thewriterkate@gmail.com.

Saturday, December 15, 11:30am, Bi Brunch. Bi Brunch (a mixed-gender bi group) meets 3rd Saturdays at Johnny D's on Holland St. in Davis Sq. in Somerville. (Davis, Red Line). Great way to socialize and find out what is going on locally in the bi community.

Thursday, December 20, 7pm, Bisexual Social & Support Group (BLiSS). Join this mixed-gender group for its annual holiday gathering at Bertucci's (Alewife Station, Red Line) in Cambridge. **You must RSVP to this outing** by December 17 because we have to

Calendar, continues next page

Bi Women wants you!!!



SUBSCRIPTION RATE for Bi Women (sliding scale)

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___\$30-\$99: Supporter

___\$100 on up: Goddess

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Please send my **Bi Women** ___by email; ___by postal mail; ___both ways

BBWN, P.O. BOX 301727, Jamaica Plain,, MA 02130 or online www.biwomenboston.org

Calendar, *continued from previous page*

make a reservation during the busy holiday season. Info/RSVP: bliss@biresource.net.

Saturday, December 22, 7:30pm, Forget-the-Holidays BBWN Drinks & Desserts Party at Ellyn's in Somerville. No brunch this month, but instead we'll have a festive evening to kick back and enjoy ourselves. Want to dress up? Go ahead. Don't want to? Fair enough. Please bring dessert item to share plus something to drink/share. There will be a mix of alcohol and soft drinks. Warning: home has 3 cats. Adults only, please. Info/RSVP: Ellyn at elruthstrom@comcast.net.

January

Wednesday, January 2, 7-9pm, Bisexual Social & Support Group (BLiSS), Bisexual Resource Center, 29 Stanhope Street, Boston. (See December 5)

Tuesday, January 8, 7-9pm, BRC Board Meeting. (See December 11)

Thursday, January 10, 7-9pm, Younger Bi Group. (See December 13th)

Monday, January 14, 7pm, Straight Marriage, Still Questioning. (See December 10)

Thursday, January 17, 7pm, Bisexual Social & Support Group (BLiSS). The 3rd Thursday meeting for BLiSS meets at 250 Elm St in the Eastern Bank community room for an hour's discussion and then goes out in Davis Square for food and socializing. Info/RSVP: bliss@biresource.net.

Saturday, January 19, 11:30am, Saturday Bi Brunch. (See December 15)

Saturday, January 19, 8:30pm-12:30am, Annual Lesbian & Friends Party for Breast Cancer Prevention Dance at the Holiday Inn in Brookline. Tickets \$40 in advance, \$45 at the door. Benefits the Massachusetts Breast Cancer Coalition. Info: mbcc.org.

Sunday, January 20, noon, BBWN Potluck Brunch at Melissa's in Waltham. This is a winter warmer brunch so please bring along winter comfort food and drinks to share. RSVP/directions: Melissa at cptnkulig@gmail.com. A great opportunity to meet other bi and bi-friendly women in the Boston area.

Wednesday, January 23-Sunday, January 27, Creating Change Conference in Atlanta, Georgia. The annual LGBT activist conference led by the National Gay & Lesbian Task Force is a one-of-a-kind gathering to share experiences, learn new skills, and network with people from across the country. Info: www.creatingchange.org. Let's make a strong bi presence!

February

Wednesday, February 6, 7pm, Bisexual Social & Support Group (BLiSS). (See December 5)

Monday, February 11, 7pm, Straight Marriage, Still Questioning. (See December 10)

Tuesday, February 12, 7-9pm, BRC Board Meeting. (See December 11)

Thursday, February 14, 7-9pm, Younger Bi Group. (See December 13)

Saturday, February 16, 11:30am, Saturday Bi Brunch. (See December 15)

Sunday, February 17, noon, BBWN Potluck Brunch at Jen's in Cambridge. This is Jen's annual Presidents' Day brunch. Please bring food and/or drinks to share. RSVP/directions: Jen at jbonardi@hotmail.com. A great opportunity to meet other bi and bi-friendly women in the Boston area.

Thursday, February 21, 7pm, Bisexual Social & Support Group (BLiSS). (See January 17)



October brunch at Linda & Maura's