

Boxes Be Damned

By Jennifer Miracle

As someone who identifies as queer and is the partner of a person who identifies as trans*, I often feel that I have a common bond with both bisexual and trans* people. In my opinion, it's the thing that sets us both apart from those who identify as strictly gay, lesbian or straight. It is that we are not necessarily focused strictly on what's in a person's pants. At the very least, we don't let it be a determining factor as to whether we are attracted to a person the way that so many gay, lesbian and straight people have a tendency to do.

My experience has been that most people who do not identify as bisexual or queer are very rigid about what it is to which they are attracted. Gay men are generally not shy about voicing their aversion to vaginas, and consequently can sometimes seemingly reduce a woman to her parts. Likewise, lesbians have also been known to be pretty vocal about either their distaste specifically for the penis or more generally their resentment of, the patriarchal society in which we live, and project that onto the male body. Because heterosexuality is the most socially accepted sexual orientation – “the default,” if you will – it seems straight people rarely feel the need to overtly express their attraction or even their aversion to the opposite sex. In my experience, people – particularly straight people – tend to

assume everyone is straight until they perceive a reason to think otherwise. Generally, it is only when their straight identity is questioned that they – particularly homophobic people – are quick to clarify.

However, my bisexual and queer friends tend to have a different perspective. So often I've heard bisexual and queer people say something along the lines of, “I'm attracted to the person, not their gender or their body parts.” I've said it myself. However, as an older – and I like to think wiser – version of myself, I think it more accurate to say, “I'm attracted to the person...and their gender...and their body parts.”

While gay and lesbian people cross the binary with same-sex relationships in a lot of ways, there's still an ironic perpetuation of the binary that inadvertently occurs based on our tendency to limit ourselves to only one gender, particularly if we further limit ourselves to only cisgender people. Although I did not identify as bisexual, I had a very bisexual relationship pattern early on in my life until 2001, when I made a very conscious decision that I was done with men. Done. And I very consciously dismissed men as an option when it came to dating. Likewise, even gay and lesbian people have a tendency, when trying to read someone's sexual identity, to only think in terms of gay or straight and often do not even consider the possibility that someone might be attracted to more than one gender. On

Jennifer, continues on page 12

Beyond the Heteronormative

By Robyn Walters

Okay. Okay. I'll admit it. I was a heterosexual guy. Only attracted to women. Not to men. No. Never. Period. End of argument. Was like that for 61 years. Let's say 48 years because I didn't pay attention to sex at all until I was 13 or so.

That is quite a gap, 13 to 61. I hadn't really wondered why bisexuality hadn't risen to the surface. I now look back at 61 with 15 more years of experience.

If one has never acted on that part of one's identity, then I suppose it could be a case of insufficient, what? Drive? Desire? Libido? Opportunity? What if one isn't even sure which direction is the bisexual direction?

A cisgendered woman has several possibilities of sexual orientation: heterosexual, homosexual, asexual, bisexual, pansexual. A transsexual woman faces more degrees of freedom. If she was a heterosexual male and remains attracted solely to women, she has become a lesbian. If she becomes exclusively attracted to men, she is once again heterosexual. If she was straight as a man and is now attracted to both men and women, she is suddenly bisexual. Such was my journey.

In a male body, my attraction was only to women. The thought of sexual contact with a male was anathema and evoked feelings of panic. Once I began my transition,

Robyn, continues on page 13



Robyn, on her 75th birthday

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From Your Editor

The theme of this issue of *Bi Women* is “The Bi*-Trans* Connection.” I’ll begin by explaining why “bi*” and “trans*,” rather than “bi” and “trans”: These terms reference the constellation of identities that people use to describe, respectively, non-binary sexual orientation and gender identities. There are so many different terms in use to describe the spaces between and outside of gay/straight, man/woman and male/female, and bi* and trans* refer to all of these terms. And why this theme? I have long seen a connection between bi* and trans* communities. Our existence disrupts binaries. We are often omitted or excluded from LGBT discourse and spaces. Our legitimacy and very existence is too often disputed. Some of us are both bi* and trans*. And we have the potential to be powerful allies to one another. I have been proud of the moments when we have created alliances and I want to strengthen these alliances and move the conversation forward.

You will find in these pages essays, poems and creative writing by Jane Barnes, Vanessa Brown, Sam Schmitt, Rev. Francesca Bongiorno Fortunato, Angélique Gravely, Jen Miracle, Sarah, Selena Quiros, Robyn Walters, Laurie Wolfe and the work of photographer Jess Dugan.

The “Around the World” feature is back, with an interview with Sally Goldner from Melbourne, Australia. There are reports on the first bi issues roundtable meeting at the White House and of the Out & Equal Workplace Summit. Jennie R. reviews *The B Word*. Pauline Park talks about the history of bi* and trans* inclusion in NYC.

And finally, there’s Ask Tiggy, News Briefs and a rich calendar of events.

I hope you enjoy this issue.

Robyn

Maura reads *Bi Women*. Send us a picture of YOU reading *Bi Women*. Be creative!



Next in *Bi Women*

The theme for the Spring '14 issue:

Mental Health

Recent research shows that bi* women have high rates of anxiety, depression and suicidality—often higher than straight or lesbian women. What’s going on here? What special challenges do bi women face? How do you find a counselor who is bi-affirming? Is it enough to find a counselor who specializes in LGBTQ issues? Are support groups helpful? How do you practice self-care? If you are a mental health professional, what do you want us to know? 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: SALLY GOLDNER, Victoria, Australia

My first coming out journey was in relation to trans in 1995 when I was 29. There was very little information and knowledgeable support on this issue at that time – the Internet was only very new and there was no social media. (Yes, Virginia, there were times like that. *smile*).

I was not helped by the fact that the psychiatrist to whom I had been referred by my local doctor tried the psychological side of conversion therapy on me (re: trans) without explaining the “therapy” and without my consent. I ended up in a bad way.

What saved me was that the only friend in whom I’d confided came out to me as bisexual. I was one of only three people on the planet whom they (I’ll protect their identity in every way) had told. While it was not the same as coming out as trans, it gave me a huge sense of connection and a much-needed boost to my mental health.

I eventually found a psychologist who knew about trans and resolved the gender identity side of things.

I identified as the “cross-dresser” part of the trans kaleidoscope for around the next two and a half years, still identifying largely as male, occasionally presenting as female but making no permanent changes to body or identity. I still thought of myself as only attracted to females and therefore heterosexual.

It was around 1997 that the next layer peeled off and I first imagined/visualized the idea of being with a male. Because my friend had explained bisexuality so well, I knew very quickly what this all meant and all seemed OK.

So I knew I was bisexual even before affirming my identity permanently as female in 1998, so I didn’t have to change my sexual orientation label upon affirming my identity.

It was not until after coming out to myself that I encountered biphobia from some gay and lesbian people. I remember in 1999 going to a screening of Jewish and supposedly queer films in Melbourne. One included a scene about a party for Jewish lesbians. The organizers received a phone message from someone saying, “I have a friend who is bisexual. Can she come?” They shook their heads while listening to the message and laughed at each other. Most of the audience laughed, too. I was horrified.

Another incident included going to a regional event in 2002 and being asked by a lesbian in an accusing tone of voice, “You’re not one of those bisexuals, are you?”

A former lesbian housemate complained to my face about “bisexual women bringing disease into our [the lesbian] community” – in our own home.

A further incident even occurred while representing Transgender Victoria on JOY 94.9 radio about our support for a petition against vile remarks (about a bi man) by Jeff Kennett. Someone emailed in saying, “Everyone knows bisexuals don’t exist.” I was at least able to respond, “I think the 300-plus people on the Bi-Victoria Yahoo group would disagree.”

Which leads to the good parts of the story. The group Melbourne Bi Youth in the late 1990s was really supportive (even if I was an older youth). In 2001, Bi-Victoria (which preceded Bisexual



Alliance Victoria) consulted with trans and intersex people and came up with an inclusive definition for their website of bi being “attracted to more than one.” I really appreciated that inclusiveness and respect for intersectionality which was way ahead of its time. It’s that emotional connection to bisexual which explains why I’ve been slow to embrace the term pansexual, but I’m now beginning to use bi/pan when describing my sexual orientation.

And, of course, since 2010 I’ve been hugely proud to be a part of Bisexual Alliance Victoria’s steering committee.

And I’m open to polyamory although I haven’t been in that situation yet. I’m rarely if ever jealous or envious in other ways, but of course multiple relationships can be a test of jealousy and envy. I’m up for the challenge.

It is heartening to see the shift in attitudes about bisexuality. Generally speaking, young people are so much more fluid in themselves about sexual orientation, gender identity and sex – including intersex – and have an approach of “whatevs.” They want to leave behind the tribal separatism of years gone by – hooray! Older people are getting the message too. And I suppose there is something serendipitous that I’m writing this as reports emerge from the Celebrate Bi Day meeting that took place at the White House in the United States a few days ago.

We are marching equally with everyone. We will no longer be bi-standers!

Near Bi

By Laurie Wolfe

1. Near Bi

Up until ten years ago I thought I was male, keeping my truth locked deep inside. In the '90s when I took up with a woman who had been in a long-term relationship with a woman, I was thrilled, so much so that I shared it with my best friend. When he asked why, I didn't have an answer. He didn't understand it and I neither did I, but I continued to be extremely happy with the idea and felt comforted by it. It was almost, but not quite, my first non-traditional relationship; it was almost my first bi relationship, so I'm going to say it was a near bi relationship (I hear some of you groaning; go for it). Also, my partner did not identify as anything, so I guess you could say it was near bi for that as well (or perhaps doubly near bi), but you can't. I was in the closet and she wasn't identifying as anything, at least to me. She just was herself. Which I respected. And pushed against, perhaps out of my own desire to be more near bi, but it was what it was.

2. Questionable kiss

Earlier, when I was in graduate school, I became friends with a lovely man, a young French professor. I met him in the library at a nearby college and we came to enjoy and look forward to each other's company. Eventually he invited me over to his home on a Saturday evening for dinner for a special home cooked fish dish (he was from a French-speaking Caribbean Island). As I was leaving, he kissed me, a real good one on the lips; I freaked out. The thought was, "He's a guy and he's kissing me" (which got me setting off warning bells in my mind, warning my internal village of impending doom). I furiously questioned him about his sexual identity, thinking that if it were a cultural thing it could be okay, which he wisely did not respond to. I left in a state, and I kept away from the library after that (I imagine you with a sad face and going ohhh in that sad way... I am so with you).

A few years ago I was taking inventory of my bi-ness (I do that from time to time, less so now) and thought about how I never dated a guy, let alone kissed one. And then I remembered Arthur and that evening, and how it actually felt when he kissed me; it was sweet, lingering and very warm, a possible beginning to something. After remembering this (I spent a while remembering it) I felt huge regret and badly about my behavior. I wanted to tell him I was a jerk. I located Arthur online (he pronounces it Artour) and emailed him a few weeks later to see if it was him, and to



apologize for my behavior. To let him know he really was lovely and that I was a perfect jerk. He dismissed my concern, and remembered me fondly; he was that nice of a guy.

And though I still haven't kissed a guy, a guy kissed me when I wasn't quite myself. You don't have to be trans to have that experience. The curious thing is he might not have kissed me if I was myself, if I was female. He might or might not have. Also, the funny thing is I think in some way it was me back then too, but honestly it's not true. I am different: I didn't present as female, let myself feel female, or let myself be who I am naturally. It's different, inside and out. The only piece that I can say is consistent is Arthur kissed me, and I changed my perception of it. I regret I wasn't there to respond.

I won't say it was a near bi kiss because the interval between not me and me was just too long. And it wasn't a relationship. Oh, what might have been.

3. Trans(woman) invisibility

I don't feel bi invisibility is an issue for me, because as a trans woman it appears that I'm invisible as a sexual being. I admit that for a number of years I wasn't ready to date, but

Laurie, continued on next page

Laurie, *continued from previous page*

now that I am, it's a bit of a wtf: being a transwoman is like being the perpetual friend in rom-coms, except that Joan Cusack gets asked out sometimes.

So, I don't get asked out on dates, ever. Well, not exactly; this one time a woman was very interested, but the first time we got together, she retracted all interest, claiming she had an aversion to a part of my anatomy which I never discussed or mentioned. (A woman I know in the bi community surprised me around this time with a very personal question that I answered. I suppose anyone who shows any liking for me is entitled to know this before we ever meet or get to know one another, because I'm invisible). I suppose if she thought as many do that it's the person and not the body, something might have happened, a date at the very least. Though perhaps not, because a few months later she posted on FB that for her it's the person, not the body. I admit I had some feelings over this. Lots. But the truth is it's okay if it's the body as well as the person. You don't lose any bi points over this. I completely understand this because I have similar preferences too. Plus I have an aversion to penises, but if I found the right person it was attached to, male or female, I'd want to date them to see if it held up. The aversion, not the penis. (Penises usually do hold up, though you may need to give them some love and attention. I know cause I've had some experience with this, though I've been a one penis woman so far (hence the aversion; I've only known one).) And if I loved the person, I'd definitely want to see what's up, and have fun with it. Regardless of what it is. Cause for me, it is the person, not the body (though bodies are rather spectacular).

I hope someday I meet someone with a similar attitude who knows that people are entitled to respect, and to be met and known for who they are, and loved for it as well. And when that happens, I'll be a lot more visible.

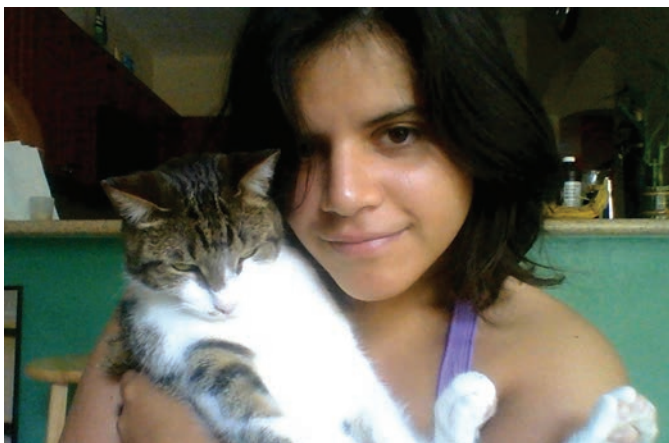
*Laurie Wolfe is a writer, poet, performer and healer. She's appeared in *Bilicious Boston*, *Body Verse* and others. She is on the Massachusetts Transgender Political Coalition (MTPC) training committee and chairs the Trans Working Group at Keshet, the Jewish LGBT organization. She also does speaking gigs on trans and/or bi themes.*

Fluidity

By Selena Quiros

People who choose, to not be one way
People who choose, to actually have a say
Not one way or the other
Completely ambiguous in fact
Not afraid to keep other's curious ignorance intact
Fluidly flowing, wondrously glowing – exuding true energy from within
Not confining sexuality into a small cubicle bin
A lack of rigidness, because who you can be is surprisingly limitless
However to be authentic is to deal with difficulties
But it is worth it not to appease

Selena is a student at Florida Atlantic University studying Psychology, Sociology, Gender and Sexuality Studies. Selena identifies with fluidity and has realized energies cannot be confined into distinct categories, preferring not to identify self and others through body parts correlating to constructs of sex or gender.



The Bi*-Trans* Connection: Connecting the Dots (or Not)

By Rev. Francesca Bongiorno Fortunato

I was excited to learn that the theme of this issue of *Bi Women* is “The Bi-Trans Connection.” As a bisexual woman married to a trans* woman (lesbian) the theme seems to be about me/us. It also seems timely because two of my trans* woman friends have recently come out to me as bisexual (one of them through Facebook and the other via the happy accident of bumping into each other at a bisexual support group meeting: having that moment of, “Oh! You’re bisexual too?”)

So...The bi-trans connection. I know there is one. And, as I set out to write this piece, I felt very ambitious about it. I wanted to come up with some game-changing Grand Hypothesis that would explain and illuminate this phenomenon for the world. Sorry (sorry for my ambitious self as much as for my readers), but that’s not going to happen. The light bulb is not appearing. The apple is not falling and bonking my head. So, I’m just going to riff on this and hope something helpful emerges.

Those of us who are bisexual and those of us who are transgender have gotten used to being defined by others in ways that don’t usually jibe with our inner identities and self-definitions. We have become accustomed to crossing borders between worlds, seen but rarely recognized. We have been fetishized. Demonized. Idealized. Feared.

Perhaps we come together, as lovers and as friends, because we can cherish each other’s complete, perfect and beautiful humanity?

I don’t spend a lot of time thinking about the fact that my wife is trans*, nor does she spend a lot of time thinking about the fact that I’m bisexual (at least I don’t think she does). But we’re probably both most aware of our B-ness and T-ness when we’re together at events (like the Pride happenings in June) which purport to be “LGBT” but don’t really seem to include either one of us very much.

I have had trans* friends pretty much all of my life, though I’ve made a few new ones in recent years, through my wife’s connections and events we’ve attended together (especially the Philadelphia Trans Health Conference). My parents had trans* (and lesbian, gay and bisexual) friends when I was a child. (The fact that there were bisexual adults in the “village” that raised me is why I started to identify as bisexual before my teens; I had been given the gift of that B-word at an early age, and knew that it described me.) As a teenager and *Rocky Horror Picture Show* fan, I had a lot of trans* (and “differently gendered”) kids in my crowd. There were also probably more teens in that scene who identified

as bisexual than there were gay, lesbian or straight kids! SIGH. That was probably the only time in my life that being bisexual has felt “normal.”

Being spiritual people (and ordained clergy) my wife and I have both pondered a lot about where God is, in her being trans* and in my being bisexual. God made both of us “outside the box.” As people of faith (I think she agrees with me here) we’re called to seek the holiness in who we are, knowing that this, too, is part of what it means to be made in God’s image. Being “created outside the box” means finding the faith and courage to say yes to God by saying yes to the Godliness within us rather than retreating from it by trying to build boxes for ourselves. And, now that I think of it, my two friends who are both trans* and bisexual are both deeply spiritual women as well. I imagine that epiphanies of this sort have been part of their experience, too.

We (bisexual people, trans* people and those who are blessed to be both) are finding our ways in this world, together and as individuals, with pioneering spirits and minds opened to human goodness and beauty, in all of its wondrous forms. Perhaps, in some sense, we are leading the way for those who are still more at home inside boxes? I hope so!

Rev. Francesca Bongiorno Fortunato is an Interfaith Minister, dancer/lactress, writer and dance teacher. She lives in Brooklyn, New York, with her wife, Lynn and the cats-in-charge, Alice and Gracie.



My Debt to the Trans* Community

By Angélique Gravely

The first time I felt the urge to be vocal about my bisexuality was in a transgender support group. I still remember the mix of anxiety and eagerness that pumped through my body as my roommate and I made our way that night from our suburban Christian college into the Philly Gayborhood. The easiest way for me to wrap my mind around what I was doing was to compare it to my favorite musical, *Rent*. Like Mark, I was going into a support group for people different from me for a project. Unlike Mark, I was doing this project for class rather than personal reasons. In retrospect, though, that's debatable.

It's true that I was attending the group in order to fulfill a class assignment, but it was my personal questions that had led me to select trans* issues over other potential topics. I wanted to understand more about the people whom I'd viewed as distant concepts until college. I wanted to know if exposure to the LGBTQ community could help me solidify my shifting beliefs and identity. I had committed to the assignment not just for class, but also for me.

Waiting in the small group room with my roommate that night, I couldn't focus on any of those personal motivations. I was too distracted by my questions about the group. What would it be like? How many people would there be? Would we be the only allies during the open hour? Did that matter?

By the time more people started trickling into the room, I had convinced myself that I had made a mistake by coming. Somehow, they'd be able to sense that we weren't connected to the LGBTQ community, and they'd kick us out. Or, if by some miracle they didn't realize immediately, they'd know as soon as I told them why I'd come. Then they'd kick us out.

As we all introduced ourselves, I waited for the inevitable moment of being told to leave, but it never came. Instead, I was encouraged to stay and listen to what the group members wanted people to know about being trans*. I learned how they realized they were trans*, how they'd tried other identities, and how they'd handled a range of reactions from family members. I learned about some of the frustrating moments in their journeys of acceptance, as well as the encouraging ones. And in the process, I realized that we weren't as disconnected as I had thought.

These were kind, hilarious people who were simply trying to find a place where they belonged and an identity that felt right. Sitting with them in that group, I could no longer deny my own search



for those things. Like some of them, I had been living with a label that didn't quite fit because it seemed easier to explain to myself and to those around me. I had been lying to myself, because I wanted to believe that despite all the signs, I was something other than what I was. That night, for the first time in my life, I didn't want to lie to myself anymore.

As they spoke, I could feel the word "bisexual" rising in my throat. I could feel a description of the confusion and forced silence of the past few years of my life organizing in my head. But then, I looked at my roommate and I remembered everything I would risk by saying that word out loud—my friends, my reputation, my entire sense of community on campus—and I kept my mouth shut.

I buried the urge to speak underneath my interest in the lives of the trans men sitting around me and my need to do well on my assignment, but I never forgot that moment of almost coming out in a transgender support group. I never forgot how comforting it felt to sit in a circle of people accepting themselves and to feel encouraged to accept myself as well. Because of that moment, I found the courage to come out at a women's studies program a month later. Because of that moment, I found the strength to join the LGBTQ community. That moment firmly planted me on the path to a proud bisexual existence, and for that, I will be forever indebted to the trans* community and especially to the five men who welcomed me and my roommate that night two years ago.

Angélique is a recent college graduate and blog editor for her alma mater's alumni-run LGBTQ support organization, OneEastern.

Gender Warrior: My Bi/Trans Journey

By Vanessa Brown, MA, MFTI

I felt a personal and political connection to the transgender community before I came out as bisexual. I had the opportunity to work as a volunteer for a nonprofit organization that provided counseling and mentorship to LGBT youth, many of whom were transwomen whose parents had kicked them out of their homes and were trying to survive by working as sex workers in New York City. We provided them with safe sex education, safe sex supplies and outreach training, and they in turn would distribute safe sex supplies and information to their fellow sex workers who didn't have access to these resources. Having grown up in a heterosexist, conservative environment for my entire life up until that point, I had never known about the transgender community. However, as soon as I found out about gender fluidity and transsexualism, it just made sense to me. I immediately felt an admiration and empathy for them – I saw them as the warriors and strong human beings that they were; individuals who, against all odds, came out as transgender; and in spite of the stigma and risk of surviving on the streets they did it and held their heads high. They were transitional age youth, between 17 and 24, and many of them people of color. As an African-American cisgender woman from a working class, inner city background, I found that their unwavering courage, pride in who they were, and fierce resiliency were humbling and to this day inspire me constantly.

I continued to educate myself on transgender issues and read everything I could get my hands on, including work by iconic activists Leslie Feinberg, Susan Stryker, and Kate Bornstein, among many others. When I was 28, I was traveling through this learning experience, meeting members of the transgender community through various events and going to trainings and conferences, I came out as bisexual. While going through my own coming out process, I continued to work with many wonderful transgender people throughout the years in community-based organizations, facilitating support groups for transgender individuals, engaging in advocacy work in the community, and addressing issues of discrimination that transgender folks experience on all levels.

As much as I have been involved personally and politically in the transgender community, my involvement reached another personal level six years ago when I met and fell in love with my partner, J, who is an FTM transgender person. When I met J, he had just been transitioning for six months, after identifying and being an active and influential member of the lesbian community

for over 25 years. I have been one of the closest people to him throughout this process. As a trained and experienced therapist, I have been working with our transgender brothers and sisters for years; however, when you are partners with someone, of course the perspective is somewhat different. There is a level of intimacy that I had never experienced as a professional working with people going through this process. I have been witness to all of his victories and challenges in every area of his life related to his gender presentation, providing love and support along the way.

The most frustrating times are when I am unable to really do anything tangible for him while he deals with a medical system that, for the most part, has little to no knowledge of how to effectively help its transgender clients, instead, putting them in a box and assuming what they “should” receive in terms of “treatment,” like believing that every transman would want a hysterectomy, or that all transgender people have to undergo sex reassignment surgery.

When J tells me about these experiences, I want to go out and yell at these providers. To me, there is no excuse in 2013 for any medical or mental health provider not to have at least basic knowledge of transgender biological, psychological, and sociological issues. However, since I can't do that, I am resigned to limiting my support to validating and empathizing with his frustrations and providing information on as many transgender-friendly resources as I can. He also provides support for me when I encounter ignorance from others who either place me in a box because of my sexual orientation or refuse to acknowledge my bisexuality as a sexual orientation at all.

As with other individuals I have had the pleasure of working with through gender transition, I have a huge level of respect and admiration for J as he moves through the world as a gender warrior. He tells me that he is pleased I am in the mental health field, and that my work is needed in the community. That truly encourages me to continue to fight, advocate, and educate to get the human rights that everyone deserves.



Vanessa Brown is an openly bisexual marriage and family therapist intern currently living in San Francisco. She has been working with the LGBT community for the past 13 years.

Bi & Trans: Considering Non-Linearity & Inclusivity of Bi Journeys

By Sam Schmitt

I lack the language to encapsulate my gender and sexual identities. I once toyed with the “*I am human*” mantra in lieu of larger identity claims, but I dislike forgoing words to describe myself. The ability to merely call myself “human” easily eludes my race privilege as well as the areas in which I might be marginalized. Eventually, I concede that I cannot get away from the fact that language is political and bodies are political and we use words to describe bodies, both normative and deviant. Thus, I feel invested in describing myself to locate community and position myself in the landscape of power, oppression, and privilege. I suppose I would describe myself as a white, middle-class, feminist, recovering-Catholic, polyamorous, bisexual, genderqueer, femme transguy who uses gender neutral pronouns, loves radical queer politics, and spent 28 years being socialized as a woman. Likes dogs and long walks on the beach.

I am not plural to the point of oblivion nor do I reject the importance identities play in the lives of queer folk everywhere. However, I want to emphasize that available language (particularly in the English language) to describe the vastness of the human experience is severely lacking. Of all of the identities I shared with you in my introduction, “bi*”/“bisexual” offers a pliable framework for the complexity of my gender and sexual identities. The boundaries around “bisexual” could be understood as more permeable than any other identities I shared with you. I understand “bi” as an identity with a “both/and” orientation, allowing for greater inclusivity, different definitions, and embodied practice. Here, I offer my own experiences to illustrate how I understand “bi” as a non-linear, “both/and” identity and how this definition interacts with my trans* identity.

I was recently asked to moderate a panel on LGBTQ health care at Texas A&M at College Station. During the first telephone conference call, the planning committee coordinator asked, “I’m sorry, I don’t understand your biography... er, what *are* you?” His need for certainty was very clear. He needed to grasp onto something certain, something specific. In this case, my fluidity challenged the discreteness of gender and sexual identity categories. This was not what he expected. Only by using multiple—and sometimes conflicting—words can I attempt to describe myself. Consequently, I encounter a lot of pressure to neatly fit those identity categories. I am sometimes asked to explain why I started testosterone. I am usually asked, “Why did you decide to transition?” This question troubles me because the definition of “transition”

refers to a process of changing from one state or condition to another; a conversion or changeover. An essence of linearity is attached to the word “transition,” denoting a journey with a specific destination. As I wrote in *The Feminist Wire*,¹ some trans, genderqueer and gender-outlaws are expected to lean into a larger transnormative narrative or risk invisibility. We are subsumed beneath the “classic transsexual” paradigm where gender and sex are discrete realities: M to F or F to M. The transnormative narrative of gender does not readily recognize categories outside of the proscribed gender binary or genders that may move in and out of those categories. Thus, I feel pressure to adopt certain aspects of transnormativity and submit to categorical control. There is pressure to pack,² adopt masculine pronouns, or “pick a side” (gender-wise) coming from both within and outside of the transgender community. I have a complicated and plural relationship with my body and my presentation. Forcing myself to fit a discrete gender box is not an option for me.

The language of transnormativity also poses a problem for me as a person who identifies as bi. However, of all the words I use to describe myself, “bisexual” best describes my gender and sexual identities. People commonly assume that bisexual is defined as “an attraction to both men and women.” [Read: only two rigid gender categories.] To me, this is a mistranslation of the prefix “bi-” interpreted to mean “two.” The tacit reference to opposing poles on the gender binary becomes problematic because it obscures many other genders that exist between and/or beyond masculine or feminine.

I conceptualize “bi-” to also mean “both/and.” Calling myself “bisexual” helps me describe the potential to be attracted to individuals who may not neatly fit into either of the available gender categories. This definition also encapsulates the way that my sexual attractions may shift over time and/or vary by degree. To quote Robyn Ochs: “I call myself bisexual because I acknowledge that I have in myself the potential to be attracted - romantically and/or sexually - to people of more than one sex and/or gender, not necessarily at the same time, not necessarily in the same way, and not necessarily to the same degree.” Bisexual as a both/and concept denotes more depth and complexity than other words available to describe my sexuality. A both/and conception of “bi” helps me describe the (delightfully!) messy relationship between my gender and sexuality that other identity labels do not. I am able to harmonize all aspects of myself, even if these elements are seemingly paradoxical.

Sam, continued on page 11

1. S. Schmitt, “Checking Our Privilege, Working Together: Notes on the Virtual Trans* Community, Truscum Blogs, and The Politics of Transgender Health Care.” *The Feminist Wire*. July 2013. (Web) <http://thefeministwire.com/2013/07/checking-our-privilege-working-together-notes-on-virtual-trans-communities-truscum-blogs-and-the-politics-of-transgender-health-care/>

2. “Packing” is an informal term that refers to the practice of wearing a prosthetic phallus and/or other materials for the purposes of feeling gender congruent or passing.

Three by Jane Barnes...

You Look Like a Girl

She looked down at my ID, and said,
“You sound, look, and act like a girl
and this ID shows a man, therefore I’m
not giving you a laptop.”

It looks just like me. I identify with
my ID. I wasn’t there dressed up.
I didn’t have on a dress. I wasn’t
Dressed in character.

Yes I sometimes wear feminine clothes,
But on this day I wore shorts and a
hoodie and had my hair pulled back
I’m a gay man but this is prejudice

based on how others see me so that
shows you how discrimination
laws are crucial for all different groups.
Finally I got to use a laptop

for my studies, but only after
I asked three. Different. librarians.
Freedom of speech, ladies
(and gentlemen) I’d like to

check out the U.S. Constitution
for a couple of weeks so run my
copy under your electronic checkout
gizmo Check out one for yourselves

oh guardians of language and reality
it’s a good read full of suspense

Priapus Dream

I dreamed last night that I’d grown a penis I felt rather clever but the men – I was now hanging out with men – thought this was almost impossible I asked why they said because you were a beautiful girl but now they were straight and I seemed so different they got to laughing nervously with one another and said so where’s your beard and of course my voice went lower and lower I asked Does size count and they said The chicks seem to think so I said can we say women chicks is so pre-feminist they said whatever can you hand wrestle us so we found a table the proper height and I smashed down the arm of three or four of them then they said Forgive us because you’re really a lady and ladies don’t wrestle and when they went into the men’s room to take a pee I went in behind them and in front of this bowl right by me I went to take my penis out like I’d seen my brothers do when they were just kids and instead I had a vagina I was so relieved so... and then the guys started hitting on me

Jane Barnes has finished a poetry manuscript covering 25 years in 250 poems called “The Inbetween: Poems 1982-2007.” A short story of Jane’s (too big to hug) is carved on a granite pillar at Copley Plaza in Back Bay, Boston.

The Visit

The three of us page through Xeroxes of Brinne’s story. Max, who introduced Brinne and me, sits on the spare twin bed in my room at my senior residence. Brinne’s very femmy, femmier than I, in her black corduroy jeans, white shirt with cuffs, and black leather jacket. Knee boots, three bangles, a purple ring and dangly copper earrings. Flawless eye makeup and a nice shade of red lipstick for a black-haired girl. Sits with legs crossed and leans back in my only chair, clicking and unclicking a pen. I suppose I look like the wise bi that I am, all in black with my silvery long hair and rebellious poetry.

Max had sent me a story of hers in which a transgender woman answers a match.com email from a straight man who has no clue that she’s a man, technically speaking. They meet up. Match.com man likes her immediately and invites her to come up to his place for dinner. They’re about to go up – the sparks are flying – when she decides to come out to him as transgender, and does so. For once he’s relied on his instincts, and they have tricked him. In the shocked silence that follows this admission, he angrily lets go of his attraction, then clings to it. Rarely has he felt such passion for anyone, and, his bitterness getting hold of him, he shudders and holds his head in his hands.

That’s her story, and, feeling very foolish to inquire, I ask whether the reader needs to know about the transgender woman’s decision to reveal herself. Everyone’s experienced romantic rejection, but the pain of this one is even greater. I notice I’m attracted to Brinne through my bi “lesbian” side. A brunette – the same dark beauty as my first girlfriend in the sixth grade. Brinne says she doesn’t think the story needs any changes.

I feel clueless – the same as when I was straight, learning about lesbians. As lesbian, learning about bis. As bi, learning about transgender people. About Brinne, by the way, who sees no need to make physical changes. As she slides the story into her neat leather satchel, I thank her for allowing me to read it. Brinne doesn’t say more than a few polite words of leave-taking. Here is a woman who thinks that you can stand on a ledge and jump off, believing the risk is worth it.

Bisexual & Transgender Inclusion in NYC: A History of the Coalition for Unity & Inclusion

By Pauline Park

Nowadays, most organizations serving the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community in the United States use the term “LGBT” in describing themselves and the people they serve. Adoption of bisexual- and transgender-inclusive nomenclature is an important statement of what our community institutions stand for, as well as a signal to those groups – including bisexual and transgender people – who have not always felt fully included in our community, that they are welcome, too.

In New York City, the largest LGBT community center in the US was founded as the Lesbian & Gay Community Services Center in 1983. In 1999, Sheela Lambert, a bisexual activist in New York, asked me if I would partner with her to start a campaign to get the Center to change its name, and we formed the Coalition for Unity & Inclusion, which over the course of the next few years was successful in persuading a number of important community institutions to change their names.

Pressure from us, as well as years of internal work by the Center’s Gender Identity Project, helped persuade the Center’s board to change the name of the organization to “LGBT Community Center.” We were also successful in persuading the New York Gay & Lesbian Film Festival to change its name to “LGBT Film Festival.” And we were also able to persuade Heritage of Pride to change the names of all of its events to the more inclusive “LGBT Pride March,” “LGBT Pride Rally,” etc. It is worth noting that each of those organizations, while bisexual- and transgender-inclusive in their work before the change of organizational name, expanded the bisexual and transgender components of their work after their change of name.



Sheela Lambert & Pauline Park

But there is still much work to be done, as there are still some prominent organizations whose names are still not fully inclusive, notably, the National Gay & Lesbian Task Force, the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD), the Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network (GLSEN), the National Lesbian & Gay Journalists Association and the Los Angeles Gay & Lesbian Center, just to name the most obvious. Full bisexual and transgender inclusion in every organization and institution throughout the country still awaits attainment.

Pauline Park is chair of the New York Association for Gender Rights Advocacy (NYAGRA) and president of the board of directors and acting executive director of Queens Pride House, the only LGBT community center in the borough of Queens, N.Y. She led the campaign for the transgender rights law enacted by the New York City Council in 2002.

Sam, continued from page 9

My fantasies, desires, and attractions are in no way conflicting with other aspects of my identity. My increasingly masculine presentation is not in conflict with my femme behaviors. Thus, I am able to forgive myself for not fitting neatly into the mainstream LGBT-Martha-Stewart vision of what a “real” transgender person is supposed to be like.

Defining “bi-” as a “both/and” concept helps me sort through the toxicity left by a legacy of Western thought, particularly the investment in linearity and chronology. Defining “bi” as a non-linear, inclusive identity helps me understand why many of the typical questions asked of LGBTQ folks feel strange to me:

“When did you first know?”

“How old were you?”

“Did you always know?”

“What will you change your name to when you finish transition?”

“Who do you date if you’re trans *and* bi?”

“How can you be genderqueer, transgender, and bisexual all at once?” [I want to say: *Like this! TA-DA!*]

I did not have a precise “Aha!” moment when I knew I was not cisgender or heterosexual. I was not sure that I wanted to take testosterone nor was I certain that testosterone would offer me the kind of changes that I wanted. I do not understand my “transition” (for lack of a better word) as getting from point A to point B, and my “transition” does

Sam, continued on page 16

Jennifer, *continued from page 1*

the other hand, bisexual and queer people generally take a more pluralistic approach to sexual orientation that sets us apart from a lot of gay, lesbian and straight people.

Similarly, while I have certainly seen and known a number of trans* people who ironically perpetuate the gender binary in the very process of bucking it, my experience has also been that many trans* people are also much more open to people whose gender identity and/or sexual orientation do not necessarily fit neatly into a box, or even people whose labels are not necessarily consistent with their behaviors or current relationships.

For example, at the time that I began dating my fiancé, who identifies as a trans guy, I had been identifying as a lesbian, dating only cisgender women for at least ten years. However, when I found myself attracted to him – a male-identified person – I did not shut my attraction down because I was a lesbian making him, by default, out of the question. Rather, I explored the feelings I was having for him, opened my mind to being with a male-identified person who didn't necessarily fit my understanding of "male-bodied" and fell in love with the person...his gender...and his body parts. Admittedly, this fucked with my identity a bit, which leads me to his openness in terms of not forcing me into a box – nor out of my own box.

Based on my interactions with a number of trans* men on a professional level, I presumed – and in some cases assumed – a lot of things about how to interact, both personally and intimately with him. Some were right on, however, others were not at all. Almost immediately, I became uncomfortable with my label of "lesbian" as, in my mind, I clearly was no longer only attracted to women. To continue to identify as lesbian somehow felt disrespectful to his masculinity; yet, at the same time, I wasn't completely ready to let go of that label and definitely had not identified one that seemed to fit better. However, as someone who never subscribed to labels himself, he expressed to me "You can be a lesbian and be with me. Doesn't bother me at all." See, the important part to him was not about what I called myself, but how I felt about him. Only then did it become clear to me that labels are for other people...not for ourselves.

Having connected early on in his transition journey, despite my own dissonance in exploring his body, he had a level of comfort and oneness with his coexisting, yet ever-changing masculine and feminine features that I would think most cisgender people would struggle with reconciling, even conceptually. Despite never really identifying as bisexual, early on in my life, my relationship pattern could certainly be described as such. Perhaps this is why, rather than my dissonance causing discomfort or a challenge for me in terms of our developing relationship, it actually compelled me to broaden my understanding of gender and the body and the relationship between the two. Indeed, having the honor of witnessing and experiencing his physical transition has completely dismantled my previous

understanding of sex and gender and caused me to think about it in ways I could never have previously imagined.

Likewise, as someone who has never really fit the rigid gender norms that we as a society seem to be so comfortable with and even cling to, my fiancé continues to challenge my own paradigms and we stretch each other's understanding of identities and the intersection and relationship between them. Of course, one can never know for certain; however, I feel pretty confident in saying that I don't think my understanding of sex, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation and, as a result, people in general would have ever been so elaborate or complex had I restricted myself to one box by only acknowledging my attraction to one gender or the other. Likewise, I would imagine that the lives of trans* people would not be so rich and meaningful, had they restricted themselves to the box they were assigned.

Jennifer is a public speaker, educator, and consultant about all things gender and sexuality related. Her current mission is to Make Our Private Parts Private.



Robyn, continued from page 1

however, with its regimen of antiandrogens (testosterone blockers) and estrogen, I began to view men differently. Any thoughts of sexual contact were still troublesome and remained off limits. It would still have been a physically gay sexual encounter, and I wasn't gay.

What was so magic about the age of 61? Sudden enlightenment? Release of repressed desires? No, it was much simpler and took the form of two magic pills. That was the year that I gave in to the realization that I wasn't a man and never had been despite fathering four children. That was the year I began cross-hormone therapy. One pill was an antiandrogen that blocked testosterone; the other was estrogen, true magic and much, much better than chocolate.

Suddenly, men – some, anyway, became increasingly attractive, but the idea of sex with men was still off the table.

About \$20,000 of sex reassignment surgery resolved that mind problem and hormone problem, and I found myself married again. This time to a man, a very special man. My man, my husband, is a transman, and we are coming up on our 14th anniversary. Female to male surgery is not yet as advanced as male to female surgery. My thirteen-year-old renovation remains untested.

Surprise. My old attraction to women didn't disappear, and a well-turned female still turns my head and makes my heart and other body areas go pitty pat. All to no avail, of course, because I am married and have always been a faithful serial monogamist. No hanky panky outside of the marriage vows. Mental, maybe, and dreams, of course. (Even at 76, one has the occasional dream about sex.)

So this old gal became bisexual by chance, and by choice has never acted on it. My marriage, my love for my husband, is too important to me to trade for experiences I can only imagine.

A non-practicing bisexual. That's my label. At least until much earlier in my next life in which I hope to be born into the right body (female) and into a liberated family.

Robyn is a transwoman who had her surgery 13 years ago on her 63rd birthday. Becoming a non-practicing bisexual was an unexpected part of her journey. She and her author husband live in Hawaii. Her husband has written, and she has edited, seven published LGBT coming-of-age books so far.

Chomping at the Bi*T

By Sarah

I was invisible. My boyfriend “accepted” that I was bi and trans, but didn't want to know about it. I wasn't out about either to his family. We looked like a typical male/female couple to his friends, family, and community. I say “his,” because I moved away from mine. I was so happy to have been accepted at all, at first.

But there was so much of myself I couldn't express. I was invisible. I had a box of books about sexuality and gender that I hid in the shed to make sure nobody would see them. I was happy for the kind-of acceptance I had, but I had hidden a piece of myself in the shed to win it.

I put up with threats and put-downs. “He just does that, it's OK.” My boyfriend demanded to know why I was sad, but I was already hiding because of expectations. Explaining that led to confusion and anger. Being myself wasn't OK, so I hid further.

Meeting up with the poly community, a shared interest my boyfriend and I eventually found, triggered a chain of events that turned things around. He wasn't comfortable when I said, “Actually, that works for me as well.” Bigger threats led to my seeking counseling. Counseling led to learning to identify his behavior as verbal abuse. Counseling and support from an accepting community led to my decision that I'd had enough. After ten years in that relationship, I finally moved out and moved on.

I'm accepted now, for all of me. I don't have to hide.

Sarah lives in Australia, where she is involved with the intersection of poly, bi and trans* communities. She is discovering her own voice.*

REVIEW

Maria San Filippo's *The B Word: Bisexuality in Contemporary Film and Television*

Reviewed by Jennie R.

I really wanted to like this book. When I got *The B Word* in the mail, I was excited to get right into it! However, starting at the cover, the book seems stuck back a decade ago. I was working in a bookshop for the summer when I agreed to review it. I was so excited that a new book on bisexuality was out that I suggested our bookstore carry it as well. The owner agreed; however, the book was so visually unappealing, that the owner didn't want to put it on our main display table. Trying not to judge a book by its cover, I delved in, hoping to be blown away.

However, once I started reading, I quickly became disillusioned with the book. Most of the television and film examples that San Filippo gives are from the 1990s and a few are from the early 2000s. In my opinion, since the title states that it is bisexuality in "contemporary" media, it should at least focus on the new millennium. Hoping that after the introduction we would move on, I kept reading. The book is broken up into four chapters: "Unthinking Monosexuality: Bisexual Representability in Art Cinema," "Power Play/s: Bisexuality as Privilege and Pathology in Sexploitation Cinema," "Of Cowboys and Cocks: Bisexuality and the Contemporary Hollywood Bromance," and "Bisexuality on the Boob Tube." While the chapters do try to get more contemporary in their examples, I found this book to be stuck in the past. I was born in 1990, so I have never seen (nor heard of) many of the examples. Yes, I might be a reader on the younger side of the spectrum, but having graduated with my bachelor's degree in Women's and Gender Studies, I could see one of my classes wanting to use this book as teachable material. I find it hard to believe that more examples of bisexuality could not be found in the current millennium, and if not, that would have made an excellent subject to discuss in this book.

Other than the dated nature of this book, I found it very hard to read. Examples are drawn out and convoluted, making for confusing reading that felt overly stuffy and academic in nature. Unless a reader is well-versed in Queer Theory, Women's and Gender Studies or Feminist Studies, this book is very tough to read and understand. Having written a thesis on LGBT topics myself, I understand the importance of making sure your audience is able to understand your writing and ideas. In my opinion, if you write above someone's head, you are not helping them to learn from your work. I didn't expect this book to be a young adult novel, but it read like a really long academic journal. I want mainstream readers to be able to read this book and

understand why the lack of bisexuality – or the presence of problematic bisexuality – in media is a problem. It would be very hard for someone with no prior knowledge of this subject to make it through this book cover to cover. It was hard enough for me to finish it.

While I've been harsh on *The B Word*, some of the content was redeeming. The last two chapters were the most interesting for me. While I disagree with many of San Filippo's examples of "bromances" as bisexual content, her section about *Brokeback Mountain* was excellent. It is her one shining moment in discussing bisexuality in contemporary media. It is understandable, current and gave me a new way to think about the relationships within *Brokeback Mountain*. If all of her examples had the kind of insight and depth that this one does, this would be a different book review.

San Filippo's last chapter has many short examples of contemporary material, something I had been waiting for the whole book. But many times she just lists the television show without delving into detail or analysis. I wish San Filippo had focused her research on the gems she hid in the last two chapters, instead of going on at length about examples that feel out of date.

While this book definitely belongs in the academic sphere, I hesitate to recommend it to most readers who aren't doing research on bisexuality. I had such very high hopes for this book and what it could do for bisexual visibility not only on bookshelves, but perhaps even the media. Sadly, from cover to cover this book was a struggle to finish. I appreciate the time and effort given to the subject by Maria San Filippo; however it just did not meet my expectations.

Jennie R. is a recent graduate with her B.S. in Women's and Gender Studies and Nonprofit Administration. She currently works at a public radio station.



A Very Special Celebrate Bisexuality Day

Bisexuality Day is celebrated each year on September 23rd. On this date in 2013, at the request of the Presidents of the Bisexual Resource Center and BiNet USA, 32 bisexual advocates from across the United States (and one from Canada) gathered at the Eisenhower Executive Office Building in Washington, DC to meet with government officials and representatives from several LGBT and transgender organizations in a three-hour meeting co-organized by the Bisexual Resource Center and BiNet USA to discuss the unique challenges facing bisexual people. Topics discussed included bisexual health disparities, hate crimes, intimate partner violence, and more. This was the first bi-specific event ever hosted by the White House Office of Public Engagement and bi advocates who were present celebrated the meeting as an important first conversation and hope that it will lead to programmatic and policy attention to the specific needs of our communities.

For additional coverage of this event, I recommend Amy Andre's article at http://www.bilerico.com/2013/09/bisexuals_finally_at_the_table.php.



New E-Book Version of *Getting Bi* Available Now!

Getting Bi: Voices of Bisexuals Around the World is the definitive anthology of international voices about bisexuality. Co-edited by Robyn Ochs and Sarah Rowley, *Getting Bi* includes over 220 different narratives from 42 countries. A compelling look at contemporary bisexual, pansexual and fluid experience, *Getting Bi* shares perspectives of teens, parents, elders and everyone in between.

And now this bi **must-have** is available as an e-book for only \$9.99. Visit Amazon.com today and order yours.



Published by the Bisexual Resource Center, profits from print and e-book sales of *Getting Bi* go towards the BRC's work raising awareness and providing support to the bi community.
www.biresource.net

News Briefs

By Robyn Ochs



IT ISN'T JUST A GOOD IDEA, IT'S THE LAW!

There is much U.S. news of relevance to bi and LGT folks: In 2013 alone, California, Delaware, Illinois, Minnesota, New Jersey, Rhode Island and Delaware achieved marriage equality and, as I write this, Hawaii is poised to become the 16th U.S. state (plus Washington, DC) with marriage equality. Federally, part of the so-called “Defense of Marriage Act” was struck down by the U.S. Supreme Court, allowing for same-sex recognition of legally married same-sex couples, *regardless* of their current state of residence. Also on the legislative front: the U.S. Senate passed a transgender-inclusive Employment Non-Discrimination Act by a two-to-one margin: 64-32. Now, sadly, it's up to the Republican-controlled House of Representatives, which has not passed a single significant piece of legislation in this year's session. Sigh...

In other countries: New Zealand, Brazil, France, England & Wales now have marriage equality.

Sam, continued from page 11

not have a discrete beginning or end. I was not always okay with so many vague identity labels. I felt invisible for many years and still do to some degree.

The difference here is between a spiral and a straight line. In non-linear time, we are always looping back and around again, even as we might make some forward motion. Defining “bi” as non-linear helps me understand the fluidity of my identities and the shifts that I made/will probably make over time. Thinking of “bi” as having a cyclic temporality offers me a way to unify all of my histories and reminds me that all of my experiences shape the way I move through the world as a bisexual trans person today. Being able to harmonize past with present is an important part of the work I do as a social justice educator, feminist, and queer radical activist. I teach my students that our past is threaded into the present. “Then” and “now” are artificial terms since colonialism is not “over.” Racism is not “over.” Sexism is not “over.” I, too, must acknowledge that my present is actively influenced by my past. For several years, I understood myself as a femme queer woman who sometimes challenged what it meant to claim that gender by way of drag or gender-bending. In high school, I understood myself as a “lesbian” who sometimes dated men, both out of necessity and

TWO NEW BI THINGS TO CHECK OUT:

The Bi Inspired Project (Bi-inspired.com) is a new website organized by Lawrence Brewer (UK) and Apphia Kumar (India) that aims to “create a visible support system of bisexual individuals across the globe, contributing to bisexual visibility across varied forums. You can currently find stories from folks in Australia, Bulgaria, Fiji, Canada, India, Israel, Kenya, the Netherlands, Spain, Uganda, the U.K., the U.S. and Zimbabwe.

521 is a new non-profit organization dedicated to creating a state-wide response to issues facing non-monosexual individuals in Wisconsin. The current goals of 521 are to challenge bisexual erasure through education, visibility and the creation of safe spaces. 521 takes its name from a playful reference to the range in the Kinsey Scale that potentially could refer to bisexuality or non-monosexuality. Organizing to form 521 started in May 2013, when Victor Raymond, Cabell Gathman, and Jess Becker began a discussion about the need for a statewide organization advocating for bisexuals and non-monosexuals. This is possibly the first U.S. bi organization to organize at the state level, to fill the gap between local and national level service providers and advocates. You can find 521 online at wi521.org, and on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/wi521/>), Google+ (<https://plus.google.com/u/0/communities/114658911566809094390>), and Twitter (wi521). Thanks to Victor Raymond (badger2305@gmail.com) for spearheading this project.

personal desire. Much of my early social justice work rallied around notions of womanhood and I still strongly identify with feminist histories as grounded in women's knowledge-making. After all, I was socialized as one for many years! What do I do with these histories? Do they cease to exist because they are “in the past”? Were they merely transitional identities? I like to think that these experiences continue to shape my life today in ways that are not readily visible.

As a trans* person, “bi” gives me the freedom to welcome changes and paradoxes with open arms. “Bi” as a non-linear identity helps me to remain open to other changes that might happen in my life without losing a sense of who I am, where I have been, and where I might be going.

Sam Schmitt is a former Bostonian living in Denton, TX, studying and teaching at Texas Woman's University in the women's studies department. Sam's academic and research interests include LGBTQIA politics; critical legal theory; law and legal movements; the prison-industrial complex; sex work and sex worker movements; race and labor; epistemologies of whiteness; and arts-based research methods. Sam holds a bachelor's in psychology from Smith College and a master's in criminal justice from Washington State University.

Out & Equal Workplace Summit 2013

By Ellyn Ruthstrom

Over 2,500 LGBT people and allies gathered in Minneapolis, October 27-31 for Out & Equal Workplace Advocates' 15th annual summit dedicated to training Employee Resource Groups to help create more LGBT-sensitive work environments. Out & Equal's Bisexual Advisory Committee, chaired by Heidi Bruins Green, did an incredible job of providing a wide array of bi-specific content over three days of the conference, with at least one bi-focused workshop session in every workshop slot. Subjects covered included information about bisexuals in the workplace, bisexuals in the media, creating a bisexual equality index (thanks, Lauren Beach) and thinking beyond the binary.

Many members of the Minneapolis Bisexual Organizing Project (BOP) attended workshops and welcomed visiting bi* leaders (representing the Bisexual Resource Center, BiNet USA and the American Institute of Bisexuality) with a night out at a local eatery. For more info about what Out & Equal does, visit www.outandequal.org.



Letter to the Editor

Dear BBWN & *Bi Women*,

Please find my enclosed contribution toward the production of your valuable newsletter and organization.

I am a baby boomer and recently went to my first event in Boston. I am from NY originally but have been in New England for decades and NEVER knew we even had a real voice! I just can't believe I never knew any of these things existed and the bis were so organized and for so long in Boston! I am on the southern coast of Maine and have been so busy just living my life I had no clue we had a voice at all.

I am a smart, accomplished woman and I am completely dumbfounded as to how I could have missed all this! I have been maneuvering the complex waters of having lived an actively adventurous bi life for an eternity so it was a revelation to even just listen to other bi people talk about the dismissive, disrespectful way we are thought of in the gay community. And of course joining the circus as high flying tarts for the straights to be amused by is the other end of the spectrum. I have never been a liar but I confess to having learned how to blend masterfully on both sides to survive.

I now represent the button I saw for the first time at the pride gathering... "**Bi-Furious**," because I'm tired of the continual undercurrent of passive aggressive ignorant disrespect that screams so loudly from my so-called "friends" from both sides of the fence.

I am relieved to have found a resource and link to my true contemporaries. It has been a very long life of floating rather successfully out on my own in the twisted rocky sea of complexity. It has not been without extreme discomfort or scars but having a real voice now because of you is a Godsend, liberating and completely exhilarating to know even at this late stage in my life.... I am not an island, and I can donate my knowledge, experience and dollars to help intelligent, mindful, committed individuals like you and your volunteers run with the baton toward a cause that is so important.

Thank you for giving me a place to breathe freely and for your courage to put yourself and the gifts that you have mastered out there to take a stand and educate in a world of ignorance.

Respectfully,
Rene in Maine



Jess T. Dugan, Jess and Vanessa, 2013, from the series "Every breath we drew." You can find Jess's work at www.jessdugan.com.

Ask Tiggy

Dear Tiggy,

My local bi support groups are divided by gender. I'm bi and trans, and a bit uncomfortable with picking which one to attend. What would you do, Tiggy?

—Mack

Dear Mack,

As stoked as I am to hear that you have even one local bi support group, never mind *more* than one, it can be disappointing for some when queer groups break up by gender. On the one hand, dividing into sections based on certain pieces of our demographic profile can give much-needed voice and validation to those to whom society accords

lesser social status, rights, access and expectations. On the other hand, it could have the unintended effect of denying us that same intersectionality of our identities. I find that LGBT entities tend to split along these lines because their social opportunities (e.g., bars, clubs) are attractive to either men or women, not both.

If I were you, I'd attend the next male and female bi meetings and ask if others felt the same way. If a majority of people do, you can ask if you might re-divide the groups based only on time and place of meetings. If fewer than a majority in the current crews are into switching things up, then lead the way by starting your own all-inclusive assembly.

—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.

The "Bi Office"

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

Ongoing Events

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

2nd Mondays:

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

2nd Mondays:

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

1st Wednesdays

BLiSS: Bisexual Social and Support Group. Mixed gender. 29 Stanhope St., Boston.

2nd Thursdays:

Younger Bi Group. For bi folks 20-29. 7pm. Info: [Kate at kate@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@yahoogroups.com.



CALENDAR

December

Tuesday, 12/3, 6-8 pm, Straight Marriage, Still Questioning Western Massachusetts:

A peer-led support group for women in a straight marriage/relationship struggling with sexual orientation or coming out. Meets first Tuesdays. Info/location: appleday621@yahoo.com.

Wednesday, 12/4, 7-9pm, Bisexual Social and Support Group (BLiSS)

meets 1st Wednesdays. All bi and bi-friendly people of all genders and orientations welcome to attend. Meetings are peer-facilitated discussion groups, sometimes with a pre-selected topic or presenter. Info/RSVP: bliss@biresource.net.

Monday, 12/9, 7pm, Straight Marriage, Still Questioning.

A peer-led support group for women in straight marriage/relationships struggling with sexual orientation or coming out. Meets second Mondays. Info/RSVP: kate.e.flynn@gmail.com.

Monday, 12/9, 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. We gather from 6-7pm for dinner and to socialize, then continue with the meeting 7-9pm. At the Boston Living Center, 29 Stanhope St., Back Bay Station (Orange Line). Info: Ellyn at president@biresource.net.

Thursday, 12/12, 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 questioning, please join us for a few hours of socializing and support. We meet second Thursdays at Eastern Bank, Davis Sq., Somerville (Red Line). All genders welcome! Info/RSVP: [Kate: youngblissboston@gmail.com](mailto:youngblissboston@gmail.com)

Thursday, 12/19, 6:30pm, BLiSS Community Holiday Dinner.

We will celebrate a year of support and socializing with a community social outing at Bertucci's in Alewife (Red Line). All bi and bi-friendly people of all genders and orientations welcome. Join us at 6:30 at the bar area for a drink, or at 7pm for dinner. Info/RSVP: bliss@biresource.net.

Calendar, *continues next page*

Bi Women wants you!!!



SUBSCRIPTION RATE for Bi Women (sliding scale)

___\$0-20: pay what you can

___\$20-39: suggested

___\$30-\$99: Supporter

___\$100 on up: Goddess

_____Renewal _____New Subscriber

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

EMAIL _____

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*

Saturday, 12/21, 11:30am, Bi Brunch. This mixed gender bi group meets 3rd Saturdays at Johnny D's on Holland St. in Davis Sq., Somerville (Red Line).

January

Tuesday, 1/7, 6-8pm, Straight Marriage, Still Questioning Western Massachusetts. (See December 3rd)

Wednesday, 1/8, 7-9pm, Bisexual Social and Support Group (BLiSS), will be on second Wednesday due to New Year's Day. Bisexual Resource Center, 29 Stanhope Street, Boston. (See December 4th)

Thursday, 1/9, 7-9pm, Young Bisexual Social and Support Group (BLiSS). (See December 12th)

Monday, 1/13, 7-9pm, BRC Board Meeting. (See December 9th)

Monday, 1/13, 7pm, Straight Marriage, Still Questioning. (See December 9th)

Saturday, 1/18, 11:30am, Saturday Bi Brunch. (See December 21st)

Sunday, 1/19, noon, BBWN Potluck Brunch at Kelley's in Cambridge. Bring a potluck dish to share. A great opportunity to meet other bi and bi-friendly women in the Boston area. Directions/RSVP: Kelley at kelkeld34@yahoo.com.

Wednesday, 1/29-Sunday, 2/2, Creating Change Conference in Houston, TX. 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. Visit www.creatingchange.org for more details.

February

Tuesday, 2/4, 6-8pm, Straight Marriage, Still Questioning Western Massachusetts. (See December 3rd)

Wednesday, 2/5, 7-9pm, Bisexual Social and Support Group (BLiSS). (See December 4th)

Monday, 2/10, 7pm, Straight Marriage, Still Questioning. (See December 9th)

Monday, 2/10, 7-9pm, BRC Board Meeting. (See December 9th)

Thursday, 2/13, 7-9pm, Younger Bi Group. (See December 12th)

Saturday, 2/15, 11:30am, Saturday Bi Brunch. (See December 21st)

Sunday, 2/17, noon, BBWN Potluck Brunch at Jen's in Cambridge. This is Jen's annual Presidents' Day brunch: a great opportunity to meet other bi and bi-friendly women in the Boston area. Please bring food and/or drinks to share. Space is limited, so RSVP to jbonardi@hotmail.com.



Photo: Christine A. Banna

Bilicious returned to Boston November 8-9 for its fourth annual bisexual-themed multimedia variety show. This thought-provoking evening playfully mixed serious issues with entertainment through film, comedy, poetry, and burlesque. Audience participation was encouraged during a Q&A discussion with the performers immediately after the performance. The show featured: Tiggy Upland, Laurie Wolfe, UnAmerika's Sweetheart Karin Webb, Michael Monroe and Bobby Crawford. Our own Susannah Layton is the producer, and we are fortunate to have her in Boston.