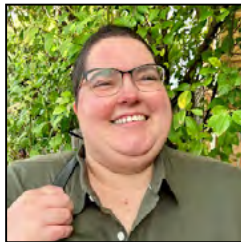


Mr. Mac

By Clare GM

In my final year of high school, I shared an English Literature class with half the boys' football team and a handful of girls who hated my guts. Our school was a conservative Christian school in a conservative city in Australia, and I was desperate to get out of both. Our English Lit teacher that year had gotten sick of trying to force Shakespeare into the brains of bored teenagers, so he'd decided to shake things up a bit. Alongside studying Ian McEwan's *Atonement*, Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie*, and a poetry unit which helped me discover the works of W. H. Auden, we were going to watch the iconic 1972 film *Cabaret*. The football boys were unimpressed from the start. I was enraptured. I had first whispered the words: "I'm bisexual" to a close friend in an airport bathroom 3,500km from home while on a school trip when I was 13. Since then, I had been quietly soaking up every bit of queer culture I could get my hands on and carefully carving out tiny pockets of community wherever I could.



in real life at this point! But here was a teacher I'd written off as being pretty much checked out, glaring down some of the most privileged kids in the school and telling them that homophobia had consequences. After making his pronouncement, the teacher returned to his desk, started the movie again, and the moment passed. But I never heard another homophobic word in that classroom.

My English Lit grades improved immensely after this incident, and I even got up the courage to start dating my first girlfriend somewhat publicly. I found it really inspiring to have someone who was willing to stand up for me, even if he didn't know it was me he was standing up for. I often think of that teacher. He exemplified, to me, a number of the values I wanted to demonstrate in my own life, such as honesty, bravery, justice, and compassion. I'm now a community advocate, both in the queer and disability spaces, and this is a story I frequently share about the effect speaking up against discrimination and bigotry can have.

Clare GM is a disabled queer person living in Melbourne, Australia. They love singing and advocacy work.

One moment in the film grabbed me:

Brian: Screw Maximillian!

Sally: I do!

Brian: So do I.

My heart leapt. I'm not sure if Brian was the first explicitly bisexual character I encountered, but he must have been close to it. And I was getting to study him!

Of course, just as quickly as joy hit me, it was ripped away again, as everyone else in the room started groaning and yelling. "Gross!" "Ewww, why are we watching this?" "That's so wrong."

I wanted to cry. But I couldn't let them see me be weak. And I *definitely* couldn't let them see me care. Thankfully, I didn't have to. All year, our teacher had taught the class somewhat laconically from his desk at the back of the room. He didn't get up for anything, and he basically let us settle disputes among ourselves. But not today! Today he switched off the video, got up from his desk, walked slowly around to the front of the class, looked us all in the eye and said firmly, "If you are going to be homophobic in my classroom, you can get out and you will fail."

It was all I could do not to leap from my desk and cheer. This was the *last* place I expected to find support—I'd certainly never heard an adult say anything positive about queer people

Blooms

By Deb Morley



Deb Morley lives outside of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, U.S. with her wife Gina and kitty cat Everett.

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Boston-area women:

Join our Google group:
[groups.google.com/
g/biwomenboston](https://groups.google.com/g/biwomenboston)

Editor's Note

This issue's theme is "Teachers & Mentors." The prompt:

We all have teachers in our lives that have helped to form us into the people we are today. Some of them may be traditional educators; others may be mentors, colleagues, authors/artists, friends, relatives, or even students themselves. What roles have teachers played in your life? How have they helped shape your understanding of bisexuality or of yourself more generally? What is the most important lesson (or lessons) that you want to pass on to others? Tell us who has impacted you the most.

And you did. For that, we are grateful.

We realize that the outcome of the U.S. elections and the move toward autocracy here and in other countries have been devastating to women, to the LGBTQ+ community, to immigrants, and more, and will impact lives around the globe. We need each other more than ever. Let's hold safe our communities and do what we can to strengthen them.

It is my hope—and the hope of the entire *BWQ* team—that this will be one of the spaces that nurtures, validates, and supports you.

If you'd like to get involved in this project, here are a few ways to do so:

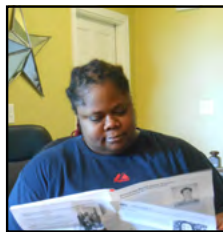
- * Donate at BiWomenQuarterly.com/donate
- * Spread the word about our existence. Join us on social media, and share our posts. Tell friends, co-workers, family members, and random strangers on the bus about this resource.
- * Submit your own writing or visual art for a future issue.

-Robyn

Shelita reads BWQ.

*Send a picture of
yourself reading BWQ to
biwomeneditor@gmail.com.*

Be creative!



**Upcoming in
*Bi Women Quarterly***

Calls for submissions

**Spring 2025:
Pieces of the Puzzle**

This issue focuses on formative elements from your youth or early bi+ journey. Consider toys, books, movies, media, or other influences/creative works that helped you realize you were bi+. Was there a specific influence that made you feel less alone while you were figuring things out? Reflect upon the beginning of your queer journey and write about the things that stand out to you. **Submit by February 1, 2025.**

**Summer 2025:
Finding Community**

How do bi+ people find community? Write about your experience navigating the world as a bi+ person and trying to find your own community, whether that be a friend group, chosen family, knitting circle, or so on. Did you join a club or organization that led to you making some of your closest queer friends? Did you meet your best friend on a dating app? Did you start a group or meetup? Explain how you successfully overcame the struggles society forces upon us as LGBTQ+ individuals and how, through it all, you found your own community. **Submit by May 1, 2025.**

We welcome essays, reviews, poetry, short fiction, news articles, and visual art. Our submission guidelines are on our website. Send your submissions and suggestions for future themes to biwomeneditor@gmail.com. You may use a pseudonym, if you prefer.

If you value this resource...

PLEASE support our work with a tax-deductible donation. Visit:
BiWomenQuarterly.com/donate

Bi Women Quarterly (ISSN 2834-5096) has been in continuous publication since 1983. It began as a project of the Boston Bisexual Women's Network (BBWN), a feminist, not-for-profit collective organization whose purpose is to bring women and nonbinary folks together for support and validation. Through the production of *Bi Women Quarterly* and related activities, we seek full acceptance for bisexuals and those with other nonbinary sexualities. More broadly, we work through an intersectional lens and seek the liberation of people of all genders, sexual orientations, abilities, nationalities, and racial and ethnic identities.

AROUND THE WORLD:

Interview with Barbara Oud, Bi+ Netherlands

Interview by Lejla Delalić

Barbara Oud (she/her) is executive director of Bi+ Nederland, the Dutch organization for bi+ people & bi+ inclusion. She is also director of Bi+ Equal, the project that works towards a European bi+ umbrella organization. Barbara, 34, is passionate about working on bi+ equality. She lives near Amsterdam, is part of a blended family, and is a once-a-week-yoga-lover.

Lejla: The last time you were featured in Bi Women Quarterly was in the Winter 2017 issue. You discussed the fallout from being featured in a well-known Dutch magazine as an out bi+ woman. Have perceptions changed since then at all and, if so, how have people viewed you after being publicly out for seven years?

Barbara: It's hard to believe it's been seven years! Back then, I was appointed as a program manager at EuroBiCon—a European conference on bisexuality—which introduced me to the field of bi+ equality. I had no idea what I was doing, but hosting that event was transformative. I connected with many people and began collaborating with them, solidifying my commitment to this work.

With a few others in the Netherlands, we decided to continue the network we had formed. What started as a six-evening think tank discussion on bisexuality blossomed into something much larger. We eventually decided to formalize our efforts, leading to the creation of an official non-governmental organization (NGO), Bi+ Nederland. In a twist of fate, that discussion about our organization coincided with my going into labor! Two weeks later, as I was breastfeeding my daughter, we discussed our organizational structure at my kitchen table. Now, both my daughter and the organization are the same age—a fun and key reminder that whenever something goes sideways, that both are still growing and learning.

Over the past five years, we've built alliances with other LGBTI organizations in the Netherlands, and we recently launched a project called Bi+ Equal in collaboration with Spectrum, a French eco-feminist organization. Our goal is to create a European bi+ umbrella organization, similar to the International Gay and Lesbian Association (ILGA) and others. We want to organize by the bi+ community, for the bi+ community.

Lejla: Congratulations on both births—,of your daughter and the organization! I appreciate how your organization embraces inclusivity, viewing issues from multiple perspectives. That seems crucial for solidarity and community building.

Barbara: Absolutely! There's a significant overlap between the bi+ and trans communities, and it's essential to address these issues together. We also include those who identify as pansexual or anyone attracted to multiple genders who may not want a strict label for various reasons—which is exactly why the organization carries the “bi+” identifier. Recent statistics show



that of the 2.7 million LGBTI individuals in the Netherlands, 1.7 million are bi+. This data emphasizes the importance of recognizing attraction rather than just identity labels. For a long time, I felt uncomfortable labeling myself as a bi woman, having had no romantic or sexual experiences with women. I later learned, with the help of a graphic model, that sexual orientation is shaped by attraction, behavior, and self-labeling, which aided me in understanding my own experience.

Lejla: It seems that while the bi+ community represents a significant portion of the queer population, funding for bi+ issues remains limited. Is that a challenge you're facing with your organization?

Barbara: Yes, it's frustrating that the bi+ community, despite being the largest under the LGBTIQA+ umbrella, is often the least funded. Many organizations lack secure funding and resources but still strive to improve the lives of queer

individuals. I deeply admire the efforts they put into their work despite all challenges. However, Bi+ Nederland is fortunate to have government funding, which allows us to focus specifically on bi+ equality, but in the end that funding is not enough to meet our goals.

Lejla: Bi+ Nederland and Bi Women Quarterly—specifically, our editor Robyn—partnered to promote the Bi+ World Meetup. Can you share more about this initiative and its significance?

Barbara: In 2020, we planned to organize the first Bi+ Day in the Netherlands, but then COVID-19 hit. We adapted by hosting an online workshop with Robyn, which was a huge success. This led to the ongoing Bi+ World Meetups, where we connect people globally. Despite time zone challenges, the energy from these gatherings is infectious. Hearing diverse stories creates deep connection and understanding, making the experience heartwarming, and allowing people to be more open. I never tire of these meetups and seeing familiar or new faces; there's always something exciting and meaningful to be shared.

Lejla: You once mentioned that as an activist, you stand on the shoulders of giants in the bi+ and queer rights movements. Who do you consider a standout figure in this field?

Barbara: Robyn Ochs introduced me to bi+ themes, while I was still insecure in this field, through her book, which I found at a feminist bookstore. Meeting her at EuroBiCon in 2016 was a significant moment for me. I also want to highlight Hilde Vossen, who has been instrumental in building a network of bi+ individuals across Europe. She co-founded Bi+ Nederland and has dedicated her life to nurturing a sense of community for bi+ people. Her tireless efforts inspire me and many others in the movement.

Lejla: What's the most important lesson you've learned that you'd like to pass on to your daughters or young volunteers in your organization?

Barbara: That's a difficult question. Working with a diverse group brings challenges, but it also shows the immense power of community. While we face our own struggles, other parts of the world experience far greater dangers for advocating equality.



The annual Amsterdam Pride Canal Parade is held on the first Saturday of August. Barbara is in the center of the boat, waving. This photo is from 2023.

It's crucial to recognize the strength within our community, even when things get tough. There are many compassionate individuals striving to create a better world. We should be like them.

Lejla: Who has been an important mentor or teacher in your life, particularly regarding your identity?

Barbara: Jantine van Lisdonk, a co-founder of Bi+ Nederland, has been my guiding light. Her strategic thinking and kindness have helped shape our organization. Whenever I encounter challenges, she provides clarity and direction. Working alongside her has been a transformative experience.

Lejla: What motivates you to continue your work, inspire others and be a mentor or a teacher yourself?

Barbara: I strive to be a positive role model for those in this field and beyond. Each day, I remind myself of the importance of my work, especially in showing my children that it's okay to be true to oneself and love who you love.



Photo: Lera Manzortova



Lejla Delalić is a 25-year-old bisexual woman from Bosnia and Herzegovina, working in biology and genetics. She is driven by a deep sense of purpose to challenge injustice, inspired by the strong, resilient women who have shaped her path.

Sally & Lani

By Lani Kā'ahumanu



I met Professor “Just call me Sally” Gearhart in a Basic Feminism 101 class in 1976, the year the Women Studies B.A. program was launched at San Francisco State University. She, the lesbian feminist separatist and her co-teacher Mina Caufield a communist feminist and a heterosexual married mother of five children. They eloquently taught/discussed their view of feminism, patriarchy, sex, race, and class, all while modeling respect and love for one another.

Sitting halfway up the stairs I watched women of all ages come into the lecture hall looking for a familiar face and a seat. The room was buzzing. Many of us, including me, were out or coming out as lesbians. We were woman-identified women loving women. Some of us were womyn loving wimmin, others liked wemoon. I'd taken “Women and Madness” the previous semester, but none had prepared me for Sally's lecture—

TYRANNY IN THE DELIVERY ROOM

Sally
Preacher of the hour
Loving every minute of her time with us
Poised and self-assured

Breaking down the patriarchy
Pink and blue
Dolls and trucks
Sex roles
Sexism
Tomgirls and sissies
Heterosexism
Marriage motherhood
Men's control of women's bodies
Women's lives
Violence
She had the whole class in her hands
and held us asking
Who are we separate from men?

Her deep expressive voice
Matched her dramatic physical gestures and facial expressions
Her large hands emphasizing each point

She came for the patriarchy again from another direction
broke it down and put it back together
It's not like I hadn't heard some of this before
It was her full-bodied passion
and awe-inspiring performance
sparking the possibility, NO the probability
of a lesbian feminist revolution
Nothing would stop us
I heard the call
I was ready to run down the aisle
She was the role model I was looking for

In the decade before I met Sally, I was a happily married full-time suburban housewife and mother. I married my high school sweetheart in 1963—I was 19. College was not on my dance card. I'd enrolled in high school business courses, so I'd have skills “to find a job in case my husband died and I was left to raise the children.” I looked forward to stepping into my career and was determined to do my best version of wife and mother.

Six years later, in 1969, my husband was teaching at the high school where we met, our son was in kindergarten, and our daughter was three-and-a-half. I canned and sewed. I loved being a room mother at my son's and then my daughter's school. My husband and I had a great relationship. I was active with Another Mother for Peace, supported the United Farm Workers grape boycott and the Black Panther Free Breakfast program. I'd started taking a night class every semester at the community college. I remember feeling happy and fulfilled—I'd done it all.

I paid close attention to feminist authors appearing on talk shows. I was curious, interested in, and quickened by what they were saying. Feminism began making sense. I traded in my Mrs. for Ms.—an edgy radical move branding me a feminist.

In the early '70s, I started crying for no apparent reason. I was struggling and confused. Neither one of us knew why until one day my husband and dearest friend said he'd figured out why I'd been crying. "You've never had a life of your own. You need to leave. I'll take the children; you can't do what you need to do if they're with you." As soon as I heard it, I knew he was right. We'd grown up to be very different people. We did our best to take care of our children and each other. He loved me and we let go.

I was then 31 years old and living on my own for the first time in my life. Leaving my children was [and still is] the hardest thing I've ever done. At the end of the kids' school year, I moved to the city and transferred to San Francisco State University. And after seven years of college, I registered as a full-time student.

For me
Women Studies
most especially Sally
made sense out of my life
gave me permission
encouraged me
to be
unapologetically
myself
a woman
Separate from the roles, the rules and
the assumed selflessness

I switched my major to Women Studies

Sally and I became friends when we served on the Women Studies Hiring Committee. I was a student rep. We had long meetings and dynamite discussions. Sally invited me to come up to Women's Land north of SF. She and several other lesbians had purchased property and were creating a women's community to explore what it meant to live as free of the constraints of patriarchy as possible. I arrived in my VW bus. There she was, 40 ft away swinging an ax, splitting logs for her wood stove. She left the ax in the log, waved, and came to greet me with a big smile and hug. Her accessibility and open heart supported me.

Sally was the first out lesbian in the U.S. to be offered a tenure-track position. She put that position on the line in 1978 when she and Harvey Milk led the successful fight against Proposition 6 which would have banned homosexuals from teaching in California.

Sally was an action figure
I wanted to be like her
She was my hero and guide
12 years older than me
She was like a sister
And in time my cherished friend and mentor

~ ~ ~

After 11 years of college, I graduated in 1979 with a B.A. in Women Studies. I was the first person in my family to graduate from college. I attended the March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights and left the city to heal my exhaustion.

Eighteen months later, when I returned to my beloved San Francisco lesbian family of friends/community, I knew what was in store for me—in the interim I'd fallen in love with a bisexual man, an anti-sexist community organizer. In 1980, two weeks into our relationship, we began talking about organizing a feminist bisexual revolution.

I came out as a lesbian-identified bisexual to clarify where I'd stand if the shit hit the fan. This identity assuaged my internalized biphobia and my deep sense of loss. The harsh personal attacks, public humiliations, and shunning stunned me. I visited Sally. She asked, "Is it true—you're bisexual?" I told her I was, and nothing had changed, not my woman-centered identity, not my feminist politics. This is my community. I wasn't going anywhere. She listened and heard what I was saying, saw I was happy, loved me, and wanted to understand, but she didn't. She "needed time to think about it." As I sorted through my coming out process, Sally hung in there, asked me hard questions, and kept listening. Unlike so many others, Sally engaged me, loved me, and never doubted me. I sent her the bisexual articles I published in the lesbian and gay press. She told me I was hitting my stride and cheered me on.

When *BI ANY OTHER NAME: Bisexual People Speak Out* (Alyson, 1991) was garnering rave reviews and heading towards its third printing, Loraine Hutchins and I—as editors—were catapulted into the national spotlight.

Email exchange:

May 21, 1991

Sally,

How do we balance the token, the pioneer, the pedestal with the struggle to be truly free our selves inside ourselves, and with others?

How do we learn to be graceful and gracious?

How do we spark and shine publicly without being seen as conceited and full of ourselves?

Oh sweetheart, remember this is all a dance, all the same thing.

You remember by asking.

It is a balance, yes,

but you know already that love is what is happening to you.

You know when you're embracing love and when you're not.

I've seen you for years now. You're already doing it and someday you'll believe it.

Trust your loving self. We can reflect ourselves back and forth to each other

until it's clear that there's only one, and love is.

Journal:
 July 25, 1991
 Sally calls
 leaving me a message
 I can hear her voice on my machine
 I run down the hall to say hello
 to say oh Sally how are you
 we laugh, she asks
 how are you doing in your hero stage
 are you enjoying it
 is it fun
 she of course is moving into her
 sage period
 she says she's not quite there yet
 it's not something you get
 she says it will come over her
 she doesn't know
 if she's ready
 her voice filling me
 with love, esteem,
 inspiration, confidence
 she is proud of me
 and appreciates how far I've come

My life took off. I didn't see her for several years. We emailed and called each other occasionally. When I finally had some real down time, I made my way up to Willits, CA. Sally loved the sun. We sat naked, she in full sun while I was just a few feet away sitting on a chair under an umbrella in the shade. We talked about the latest happenings in our lives and always my writing. When Sally noticed me glance *down there*, she immediately pointed to her vulva and declared, "Them's not gray hairs honey, they're cobwebs!" I thought we'd pee our chairs!

~ ~ ~

I don't remember who or exactly when someone told me Sally had Alzheimer's, but two days later we were sitting across from one another laughing and catching up like we'd always done. At 85 she was as energetic, and sure-footed as ever. Sally asked me to visit again; we made a date.

On the drive home, I thought about visiting her one weekend a month. I wanted to be there with her. I would be an Alz-doula for her journey. I'd never heard of such a thing but losing your memory is a form of dying separate from your body dying. You're aware of losing your awareness. I would want a safe place to think/talk about all that if I needed to. I would want a safe place to be myself even as I was forgetting who I was. I would want a safe place to let go and be who I was becoming. I would want a safe place with someone who shared lived memories with me and never got tired of hearing me ask or tell. I would want the safety and comfort of an old friend who held a joyful positive space filled with the possibility of laughter at any moment, who could look me in the eye without sadness, or

fear, or grief, or pity, or drama, and love me.

Three weeks later, we had easy fun. I told her I wanted to visit one weekend a month. "For how long?" she asked. Meeting her eyes, I said, "For as long as you're here. It's an honor and a blessing to accompany you." She thanked me.

"I love you, Sally Miller Gearhart."

"I love you, Lani Ka'ahumanu."

This was the only time around me she ever gave a nod to her illness.

As the months turned into years, I witnessed her courage, facing her fear of the unknown, letting go to the unraveling, and the loss of her memoried-self.

Sally Miller Gearhart (1931-2021)

*A time will come—
 Do I know you? Have we met before? You're so familiar.
 We must have known each other in another life.
 And we'll laugh and laugh
 And be fast friends
 Again...*

Parts of this essay were previously published in Sinister Wisdom 126, Fall 2022 and at <https://sallymillergearhart.net/sallys-story>. Reprinted with permission.

Lani Ka'ahumanu lives rurally on the rural coast just north of San Francisco in the U.S. She is kanaka maoli kupuna / Bi+ OLD and care-giving her adult son who lives with her.



love poem to a teacher

By Anna Lucia Deloia

This year, sidewalk chalk is contraband, and cardboard must be registered with the dean. The quad is a high-end neighborhood: nowhere to sleep, nowhere to pee without a license. Our books and blankets are buried (they're growing bunkers underground) but everything that parts the earth is mowed;

still: in your classroom, we are slowly peeling paint off walls with scotch tape. We are drawing clementines from a bag, reminding ourselves that everything in the archive was once alive. We are gumming minutes and hours under desks, for later—for when we have the energy, again, to dance.



Anna Lucia Deloia is a White, queer poet and educator based in Massachusetts, in the U.S. Her work is published or forthcoming in Rattle, Midway Journal, and Paterson Literary Review, and her debut chapbook ('of god and merriment both') was published by Bottlecap Press.

Luis in Colombia

By Jane Barnes

Years ago, at the City College of New York, I had a brilliant student, from Colombia and abject poverty. I had high hopes for him. He thought he couldn't afford to write. I thought he couldn't afford not to. About 25 years later, his wife Roberta Paoletti and I are still hoping. You can't do it for them. People write when they need to. No urging from me will change that. As a teacher, lesson learned.

My brilliant City student
Wrote of sitting on his roof
To escape that mud floor
The fighting. In NYC he
Marries artist Paoletti.

20 years later reunited
No novel but two engineering
Degrees later. He is still
Up on the roof, hiding.

A New York City poet, Jane Barnes, 80, has published stories and poems in over 75 literary magazines.

Abstract no. 2

By Jo-Anne Carlson



Fabric art, 27 inches diameter



Jo-Anne Carlson is a writer, artist, and musician from Yakima, WA, in the U.S., who believes that who you love, how you love, and how many you love, shouldn't matter. Hearing from friends is a joyous occasion, so please drop her a line at josexpressions@yahoo.com.

The Teachers' Kid

By Caro Fritz

I was a teachers' kid. I was part of the life most students don't think about and are shocked by encountering at the grocery store or coffee shop.

I was a teachers' kid. When my friends complained about my mom giving them homework, I would laugh and say, "Imagine having to live with her."

I was a teachers' kid. My dad would grade my papers more harshly than the others to "avoid bias."

Throughout school, that felt like my defining characteristic. I was Mr. Fritz's kid. Mrs. Fritz's daughter. Sure, it could be awkward for angsty little pubescent Caro, but I mostly felt a strange sense of...pride.

My parents were born to teach. Watching them come alive in the classroom was a sight to behold. My mom commanded the room with her powerful "teacher voice," tough enough to silence troublemakers with a look and funny enough to joke around with them afterwards. My dad loved class discussions, sitting in a circle on a backwards chair, stroking his beard, asking too many follow-up questions. We'd often get into debates that lasted the whole drive home. Because of my parents, I will never settle for less than a job I was made to do. They showed me that work isn't just something you do to get by. It can be fulfilling, even fun.

There were also some downsides, of course. One time my dad wrote me up for being late, despite driving me in. (Which is pretty funny in retrospect). Sometimes my friends would get in trouble and tell me about it, like I could intervene—my parents would ground me!

I truly believe my parents have a calling for teaching, and I couldn't picture them doing anything else. But even callings take their toll. Being around kids is exhausting, quickly depleting your work-sona of friendly professionalism. Being on your feet and talking constantly, all day every day, can be draining. Unlike most jobs, teachers have to have a vested interest in each one of their students. Their success in life partially depends on the work they do in school, and teachers are there to help them reach that success. Significant pressure comes along with those expectations from parents, administrators, and themselves.

I had two sets of parents. There was Mr. and Mrs. Fritz, my teachers, and Mom and Dad, my parents. Same make, different model. Mrs. Fritz would grade my essay, and Mom would make dinner. Mr. Fritz would be "on" all day, and Dad would hit the couch snoozing the second we got home.

I never begrudged my parents their fatigue (as an introvert, school also wore me out), but sometimes it felt like I had about 80 stepsiblings that my parents had partial custody over. Just like parents, teachers spread themselves very thin; they have so much to give and yet not enough because the job always demands more, more, more. Sometimes it felt like there wasn't enough left over for their real children. Maybe other parents are like that; they spend so much time working to support their family that they get less time to actually be a family. (This is more a testament to the evils of the Industrial Revolution, but I digress).

I empathize with my teacher friends now because I had a front-row seat to that struggle. The job will eat you alive if you let it. It's so easy to see teachers as just teachers—the people who give us homework and tell us to get off our phones. But they have lives and kids and bad days and good days and days where they just want to quit, like anyone else. Because of my parents, I have a deep, profound respect for both teachers and the humans behind them.

Caro Fritz is a bisexual baddie from Philly, USA. When she's not writing, you can find her reading the latest Madeline Miller book or playing Stardew Valley.



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Seriously, we need you. You are the fuel that keeps us going, and we are always looking for volunteers. Areas of need include: fundraising, marketing, and outreach—we are trying to increase our readership and our base of content contributors GLOBALLY. We also welcome fuel in the form of donations: BiWomenQuarterly.com/donate. Contact Robyn at BiWomenEditor@gmail.com for more info.

My Mentor: Audre Lorde, Hunter College

By Julene Tripp Weaver

It took years of therapy before I enrolled for an undergraduate degree. I had taken courses at night at a community college to figure out my next step. After I moved to Manhattan, living on East 76th Street, in a tenement building with low rent, I was ready to pursue my long-buried goal of writing. After my father died, when I was 12, I started writing to cope with my grief. By 1982, I was ready to face my fears and study with one of the most powerful poets, Audre Lorde. A lesbian feminist icon who wrote the book *Cancer Journals*. After her breast was removed, she refused to wear a prosthesis. She taught poetry at Hunter College one semester each year. Living in Manhattan, I was taking writing classes at the YMCA, had joined the Feminist Writers Guild, and was in a critique group. I knew I had to study with Audre.

In her classes, we read our poems out loud and critiqued each other's work. In Poetry I, she handed out a Xerox of the e.e. cummings poem, "anyone lived in a pretty how town." Passing it around, each of us read a line out loud, then we discussed the poem. How it surprised us, the impact we felt, what the author was doing to craft the poem. Without a background in poetry, it was my introduction to e.e. cummings. I adored his quizzical, off-centered language. Other than a classic poem Audre brought in on occasion, there was no formal study of any of the usual canonical poets.

Audre Lorde spoke and I listened, taking notes, even though she preferred we simply listened. If tired, I woke up in her presence. I wanted to absorb everything she said. After any of us read a poem, her first question was: "What do you feel?" Five semesters I sat in a circle with her in a small group, typically under 10 students. Mostly women with an occasional man, and many of us took every class Audre taught. My biggest lesson was from her insistence that a poem's purpose was to make the reader feel.

One of my early poems did not please Audre, she walked over to me and asked me how old I was. I answered 32. "Thirty-two!" She huffed, "You know more than this!" She threw the poem at me. My face turned bright red. Her huge "HUH!!!" written across the page. My poem about foot binding left her cold. When I told a friend my horror at Audre's response, she said, "Well, you'll have to write a poem she likes." It helped to be supported by a calm friend who was in a Ph.D. program. Her simple statement helped ease my anxiety. She was right, I had to buckle down and write from what I knew.

Another long narrative poem I wrote about my experience in a sweat lodge did not interest her. She said, "A poem is not a story."

On Tuesday October 25, 1983, Audre entered the classroom like a storm, asking, "Do you know what happened today?"

She threw her huge handbag filled with books onto the desk. We sat in silence. "Today is not class as usual. The United States is invading my home country, Granada. My family and friends are at risk!" She gave a long impassioned speech about the history of U.S. imperialism. I began to understand how our country manipulated other countries.

Meeting with her one-on-one was awkward because I never wanted our meetings to end. She asked, "What do you want?" She saw the longing in my eyes. I didn't know what to say. My subconscious wanted a connection I never had with my mentally ill mother. She suggested, "Go jogging; do anything to get yourself moving." Studying with her was what I was doing. I needed so much from her. She hugged me that day. Enclosed in her arms, I felt loved. Something I didn't feel from my mother. Her nervous system calmed me, I didn't want to let go. After I graduated, I found Continuum Movement work as a way to work with my body.

Audre would tell us we had to carry on the work, that she would not be here forever. How could any of us live up to Audre's work in the world? A few poets from our groups continued her work; Donna Masini has published and now teaches at Hunter; Melinda Goodman works with the Audre Lorde Center. I've published four books. What she did for human rights, gay rights, women's rights, and outsiders in every realm was huge. I still ask myself how I can live up to her stamp on our wide world. After moving to Seattle, WA, I achieved a master's in counseling and became involved in the AIDS movement, working for 21 years in AIDS services.

Hunter should have been honored to have Audre as a professor. We didn't know she still had cancer. She didn't talk about it in class. I remember her telling us she asked for health insurance coverage for the semesters she didn't teach. The dean of Hunter, a woman who later became an official in the federal government, told her she was "lucky to have a job as a poet," and refused her request. Audre was already a world leader for human rights; she set up an organization in St. Croix for women in abusive relationships; traveled to speak at conferences worldwide. She spoke in Australia and was known as "Sister Outsider"; a book of her talks was published with that title. She had a degree in library sciences from Columbia; she deserved health benefits. Audre shared that she had worked in a factory painting radioactive radium onto clock dials and how all the workers, young women like herself, used their bare fingers. When she died, her body was riddled with cancer.

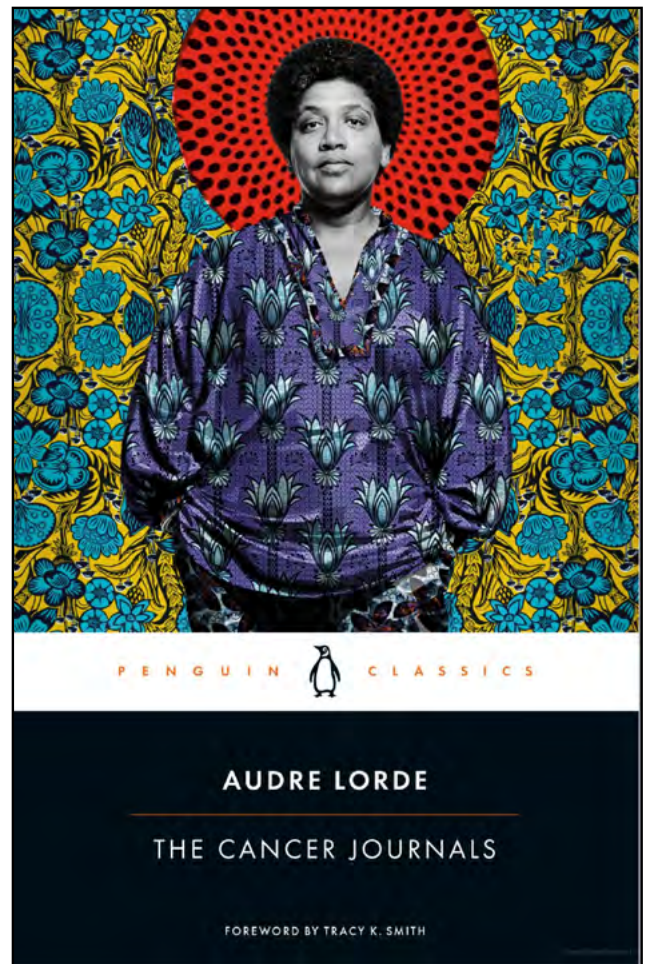
Audre used her writing and voice to change the world—and she wanted us to step up. Working with her in class, I never felt up to her standards, but I learned many skills from my moments of mortification. One time, incensed that my lesbian Black lover

didn't vote, I wrote a poem about it. Audre expressed anger at the tone, the blame, and the racism in my poem. "This is not the way you change people," she said. She asked the others in the group what they felt in my poem, and they too felt anger. I had a lot to learn.

There were many embarrassing moments with Audre. She didn't hesitate to say what was on her mind, which I admired. I wanted her honesty. The basic learnings for writing poetry came through critique. Why the gerund? Why did you use a suffix "ly"? We didn't study form or the classics but were encouraged to go to readings and to keep a journal of each one. Our work was to engage with poetry in the real world. June Jordan's reading in an off-off-Broadway theater had me sobbing. Why weren't women poets like Audre and June running the world? Audre recommended I read Wanda Coleman and Faye Kaskin, two poets whose work she believed resonated with mine. Reading their work, I felt Audre's awareness of the strengths of my poetry. My final project for one of the classes was an interview and report. I chose to interview Kaskin, who used drawing with her poetry. I felt seen and heard by Audre in her recommendations.

Despite my fear, I studied with Audre every semester she taught. I wrote and re-worked poems, and I organized a poetry manuscript by the end of my fourth year. A few poems were published in the school's two journals, *The Olive Tree Review* and the *Returning Student Newsletter*. At graduation, my poetry won the Honorary *Mary M. Fay Award in Poetry*. After graduation I gave a reading at *La Mama*, an experimental theater in the East Village. Long after I graduated, Audre came to me in a rare dream and hugged me. In every poem I write, I revisit her questions. Her mentorship from those early years continues to be a guiding light.

Julene Tripp Weaver is a writer and psychotherapist in Seattle, Washington, U.S. Her fourth collection, Slow Now With Clear Skies (MoonPath Press, 2024) previewed in June; her last book, truth be bold: Serenading Life & Death in the Age of AIDS (Finishing Line Press, 2017) won the Bisexual Book Award, four Human Relations Indie Book Awards, and was a finalist for the Lambda Literary Awards. Her work is widely published and anthologized. She was a Jack Straw Writing Fellow (2023) and is a Through Positive Eyes "Artist."



Baba

By Dr. Jamie Marich

In her classic *Women Who Run with the Wolves*, Clarissa Pinkola Estes tells the tale of the misplaced zygote. This magical fairy child, brimming with joy and light, was so excited to be born that she hopped out of the basket early! As a result, she ended up with parents and a birth family who could never fully appreciate her.

I've long identified as one of these misplaced zygotes. My parents, as the cliché goes, did the best they could with what they had. Forged from the Croatian Catholic mold of the U.S. rust belt, my father (who later became an Evangelical) and mother (devoted mostly to the Gospel of what people think) did not know what to make of me. By kindergarten, I was crying profusely when I saw the bad guys paint Big Bird blue in *Follow That Bird*, or whenever Judy Garland belted out "Over the Rainbow" during the thousands of times I took comfort in *The Wizard of Oz*. I was that kid who read encyclopedias just for fun and journeyed to fantastical places in my own imagination. I already knew by 11 that I liked both boys and girls, and that Christianity did not have all the answers—which is why I am so grateful that three decades later, the God of my understanding reunited me with the man who was intended to raise my fairy magic all along, the man I call Baba, Dharl Chintan.

Baba is a term of respect and endearment used in India for any older man and depending on the context it can mean father. Up until the lockdown caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, on any Thursday night when I was not on the road for work, you would find Baba and me co-teaching a meditation group near our homes. Baba has been "out" as a yogi here in my northeast Ohio home almost as long as he's been out as a gay man, which makes him a legend in my book.

Baba, now in his early 80s, dresses like any other grandfatherly type in our area—khakis, button-down shirts and those zip-up windbreakers. I've only known him with a head of white hair, yet his complexion and freckles that pop in the summer reveal a mischievous redhead look when he was younger. He's the type of person I can go to lunch with and talk about the precepts of Quaker philosophy in one breath, and kinky sex in the next. His smile always makes me smile, and his hands are always cold.

Baba is my soul father in every sense of the word. Baba and his husband Mike have been together for almost 60 years. They were "out" here, in northeast Ohio, when I couldn't have imagined it was particularly safe to be out anywhere in the country. Almost 10 years ago, shortly after deciding to come out as bisexual in my public as well as in my personal life, I started attending a 12-step fellowship meeting specifically for LGBTQIA+ folks. At 12 years sober I was feeling my recovery stagnate a bit and I knew I needed both a new meeting and a new sponsor. A

common saying in recovery is to pick a sponsor who has what you want. As soon as I met Baba and heard a little of his story—and his willingness to be authentic for so long in a place like Youngstown, Ohio—I said, "THAT!"

I. Want. That.

I want someone with that level of courage to mentor me through the next passage of my life. I want to learn everything this man is willing to teach me.

In some 12-step cultures it can still be taboo for a man to sponsor a woman, although there's some flexibility in queer contexts. I didn't care anyway—I was a rebel who needed another rebel in my life. I carried a great deal of shame with me into that first chat with Baba. My international reputation as a trauma and addiction specialist was growing, yet my personal life was in shambles—again. My second marriage was beginning to traumatically crumble. While I was becoming even more comfortable in my skin as a queer person who advocated for other queer people, so many people in my life just didn't get it.

"Why do you have to make a big deal about coming out?" I was asked repeatedly by friends and family. "You're married to a man."

"Because I have to," I replied. "I just have to."

I didn't have to explain that to Baba. He got it. In that first of many visits with him, I was more honest about my life, my feelings, and my struggles than I had ever been with any of my other sponsors or therapists combined. Being in the presence of that authentic soul just brought it all out of me and from that first, "Oh Jamie, I love you," my life has never been the same.

Before long, that marriage I had no business being in ended in the most dramatic of fashions, and for the second time in seven years, I found myself sitting in the second-floor lobby of Trumbull County Family Court. I beat myself up, wondering how someone so "smart" and so spirited keeps hopping out of the basket and into the arms of men who will never get her?

With that much shame burning inside of me, the only two people I could bear to have with me in court that day were Baba and Mike. My ex-husband ended up not showing for court, which could have been a serious impediment to the divorce being granted as quickly as possible. The judge did everything in her power to make sure that she could still grant me the divorce.

In teaching courses on a global stage, one of my true talents is answering tough questions on the fly. I was none of those things in court. First, I cried, then I wailed, and then I checked out into a dissociative haze, overwhelmed by it all.



“Why can’t you just answer the questions?” she asked.

I wanted to explain how abuse can cause this in a person—shuts us off so that nothing makes sense anymore. But I just froze.

And Baba saved the day.

Not only did looking at him give me a sufficient level of grounding to at least scratch out some semblance of answer to those very difficult questions, he had also agreed to be my witness, testifying to my incompatibility with my ex-husband.

Baba, a retired clinical social worker, spoke to the problems he saw in my dynamic with my ex-husband and helped to clarify for the judge why I was shutting down and why I had difficulty answering so many of these questions. In truth, it was the shame fire that made me embarrassed to address her queries about my business, for how can a respected clinical author who helps so many people be brought to this heap of mess by her own personal choices?

When Baba spoke about my stellar reputation in the community and in my field, my tears continued to flow. When he began to testify to my moral character, another crying jag started. It was similar to what I did as a little girl watching Big Bird get kidnapped. But the family into which I was born could never understand. Baba did.

Somewhere in the middle of that haze the judge banged her gavel and granted me the divorce. The steady stream of dissociated tears turned into an uncontrollable maelstrom. I couldn’t believe it was over. I was free, my reaction a revelation of just how much I’d been holding in throughout that marriage.

Baba knew. He knew and he didn’t have to say a word. He escorted me out to the waiting area again and let me cry it out as the 38-year-old baby he held in his arms; not once afraid of or intimidated by my tears, my emotions, or my humanity like so many before him were. Those closest to me, especially as I grew up, often judged my tears as weakness or weirdness. That day was a corrective experience. I finally made it over the rainbow to that land I had heard of, once in a lullaby. For I was accepted exactly as I was, in all of my glorious mess.

Baba and Mike took me out for sushi and processing after court, and that’s when I asked if I could officially call them my dads. For even though Baba is my sponsor and personal sage, Mike’s role in my life is just as important. The two of them represent everything I was raised to despise—a man loving another man.

Whoever spouts off this stuff has obviously never experienced this kind of love: to be loved so unconditionally and validated so fully. Baba surely has had to work through layers of shame in his own healing, and now he is sharing the gift of how to cut it down at the roots with me. I am so proud to have adopted my gay dads. They are the centerpiece in the cadre of weirdos that comprise my family of choice.

That day over sushi we processed the shame around feeling like my behavior in court reflected badly on my professional reputation.

“Stop it,” Baba said. “You’ll be in real trouble if you ever stop forgetting that you are human, that you are vulnerable. And that vulnerability is your greatest strength.”

The misplaced zygote, in that moment, realized she was no longer misplaced. She was a fairy princess who found her way home to her red-headed fairy queen.

Baba. Pa. Dad.

Dr. Jamie Marich (she/they/we) is a Croatian-American licensed professional clinical counselor based in Ohio, U.S. She began her career in human services while working as an English teacher and learning the intricacies of social work in post-war Bosnia-Herzegovina from 2000-2003. She is a bisexual person in long-term recovery from an addictive disorder and is one of the few professionals currently teaching on dissociation to be “out” about her reality of living life with dissociative identities. Marich is the author of over a dozen books and manuals in the field of trauma and expressive arts.

It’s I-identity, Not You-identity

By Anonymous

Robyn Ochs has taught me many things in her/their clear, gentle, and kind way. She/they has been a teacher to many. The main lesson I recall is about identity policing. What stands out most about this concept to me is that no one gets to tell someone else who they are or how they identify themselves in any arena of life. People make all kinds of assumptions, but the best thing is to let people tell you who they are. It’s intrusive to do otherwise. One example is someone could see an apparently cis woman with short hair and assume they are LGBTQIA+, but maybe they just like having short hair! Or maybe someone thinks someone is trans, and assumes their pronouns instead of asking. The lesson I learned was to let people tell you who they are when, how, and if they choose. Assumptions are intrusive and can make people uncomfortable. We don’t know why people do things unless they tell us. Don’t police people’s identities.



Anonymous lives near Boston, Massachusetts, in the U.S.

The Note Card

By Sydney Glide

I am sitting in my feminist film theory course during my senior year of college. At this point, I'm fully steeped in taxonomy, connotations, and denotations. Semiotics is king. My professor hands us note cards. We are instructed to anonymously write about our gender and sexuality. The catch? We need to describe these facets of our identity without using traditional terminology. My professor would collect the cards after the exercise was complete, shuffle them, and pass them out. We then went around the room, reading these cards out loud.

Some of us wrote haikus and poetry, connecting the human spirit to nature and the cosmos. Others interrogated the effect of media and consumerism on their attractions. There was a wide range of thought and experiences shared amongst a group of peers. Each examination beautifully danced around these in-between spaces—spaces we often ignore because they don't fit the checkboxes often placed before us. Firm definitions didn't constrain ideas of who we truly are as humans.

Because it rid all binary language from its conceit, this activity made a place for the celebration and revelation of bi+ identities: a rarity in a society that wants folks to fit neatly into predetermined categories. I felt euphoric knowing who I am can't be tethered to a few words. I experienced a weightlessness that only exists when the mind is focused and clear. Who we are is so much more than a label, and yet, those labels can be a jumping-off point in our identity journey. There was a vulnerability and beauty in seeing beyond constructions and looking inward to the self. The note card served as a reminder that even though we may subscribe to a label, that we all experience said label in a unique way. With our minds constantly juggling a million different things in our busy lives, it's rare that we take time for ourselves and meditate on who we are as people. Consider this exercise for yourself. You'll meet someone you love and that someone is you. You might have to stop at the store for some note cards first.

Sydney Glide (she/her) is a Michigan, U.S.-based writer and an indie comic book creator. She loves cooking, watching sports, and buying new hats.



Remembering Cole

By Gia Choquette

Teachers and mentors come in many different forms—some traditional and others surprising. I consider my late friend and ex-partner, Cole, to have been my greatest teacher in regards to bisexuality. I met Cole (they/them) when I was 13 years old at a local summer nature camp, and then soon after we crossed paths again at church and at a music school where my mom taught piano and their mom taught clarinet. We never really clicked in high school, but we reconnected in college and ended up dating for a few years right after I graduated. We were both passionate about feminism and gender studies, which led to us becoming better friends as we discussed what we were learning in our respective undergrad programs.

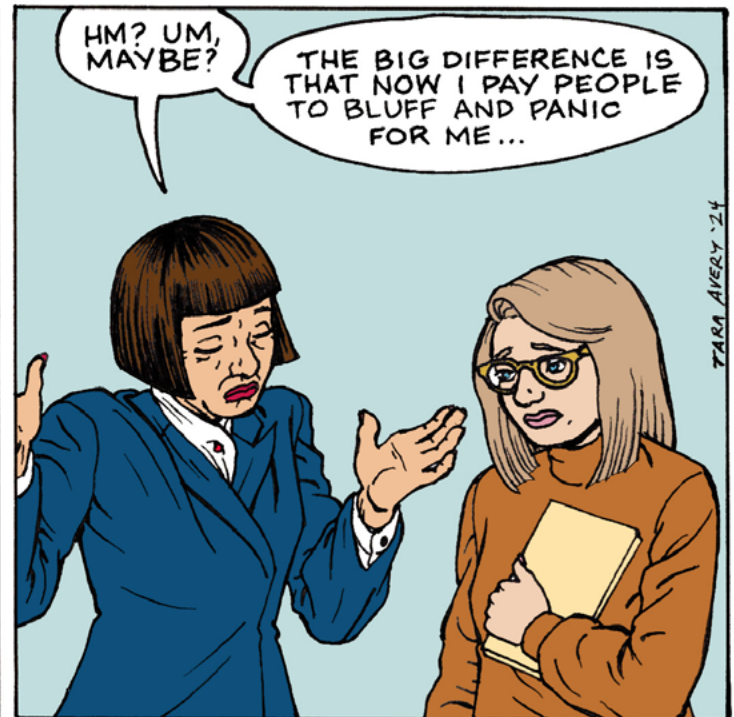
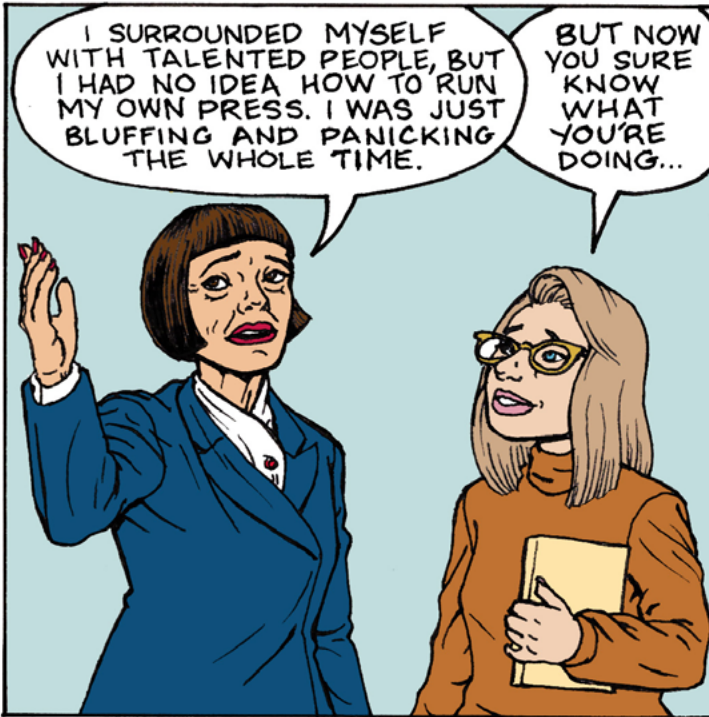
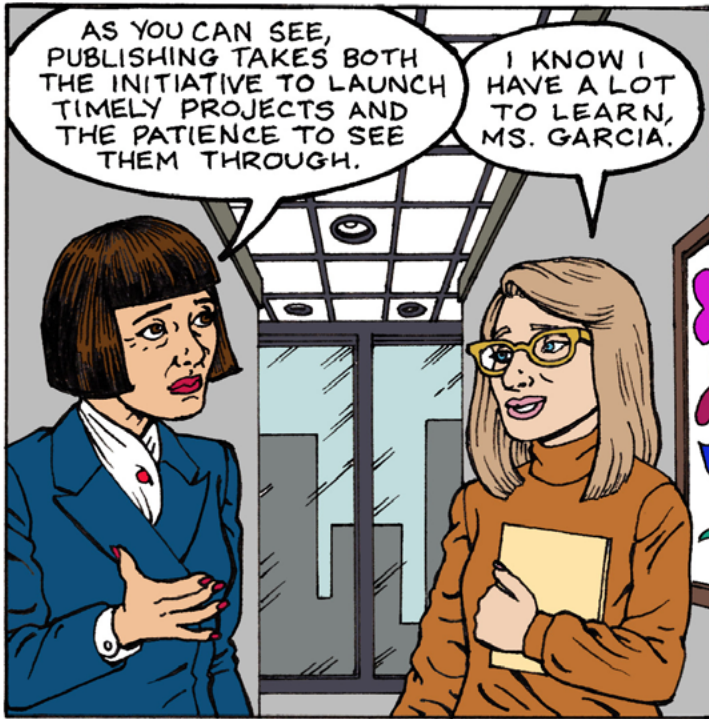
At the time, I identified as straight despite having had a few crushes on girls, as I did not yet know Robyn Ochs's fabulous definition of bisexuality as recognizing in oneself "the potential to be attracted to people of more than one gender...not necessarily to the same degree." I am attracted to men more frequently than women, so I felt I didn't "count" as bi. Cole, however, was bi and came out to me through a text where they explained: "I'm only out to people I trust and know are cool :)".

Cole and I both loved books and would share book lists, recommending different authors to each other. Around the time we began dating, they lent me the book *Bi: Notes for a Bisexual Revolution* by Shiri Eisner. I initially read the book out of my interest in feminism and gender studies and also with the intention of learning more about bisexuality to be a supportive partner to Cole. It was through this book that I first read Robyn Ochs's definition of bisexuality and began to feel more open to claiming the "bi" label for myself. I loved the fluidity of bisexuality and I loved its radical potential. Like Cole, I continue to only be out to "people I trust and know are cool."

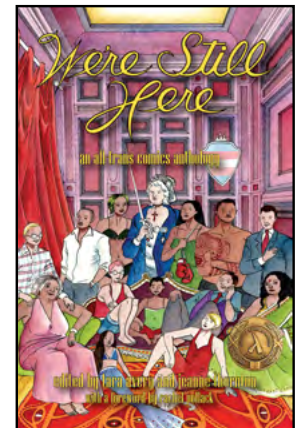
When our relationship ended in 2018, I carried everything I learned from them about bisexuality with me. Cole tragically passed away in a hiking accident a few years ago. We fell out of touch soon after our breakup, but how they shaped my self-understanding and world-view has remained an indelible part of who I am. In their short 29 years, they lived with an incredible passion for life, for knowledge, for social justice, and for making the world a better place. They were a soulmate and a teacher from whom I learned how to truly embrace bisexuality, and I feel that they live on in our bi+ community, in all those who knew and loved them, and in me.

Gia Choquette is a graduate student living in central Massachusetts with her boyfriend and their cat, Nyx.

"Cole" is a pseudonym.



Tara Madison Avery is a cartoonist, publisher of Stacked Deck Press, and a board member of Prism Comics. She is known for her comics work such as We're Still Here: An All-Trans Comics Anthology and the bisexual-themed webcomic Gooch.



Modeling Myself on Madonna

My Role Model Didn't Let Society Tell Her Who to Love

By Tanya Anne Bassie Bowers

My first day of college, I proudly wore a black t-shirt with colorful Andy Warhol-like images of Madonna silkscreened on the front and her full name, "Madonna Louise Veronica Ciccone," on the back. To anyone who commented on my favorite celebrity, I declared, "If Madonna were interracial, she'd be me." In addition to our both having been given two middle names, I tried to project the same spunk, the same charisma that the singer/dancer/actress did. No one could tell her who or what to be. She was an influencer before that was a thing.

I hadn't always felt so inspired by her. One weekend in sixth grade, the MTV VJ Martha Stewart shared that the 23-year-old singer, Madonna, hailed from Michigan. In the *Burning Up* music video, a bleached blonde heavy on the brown roots rolled around an asphalt street. The visual story cut to different images—a closed door with many locks, multiple eyes, and a mouth with hot pink lipstick. The nominally pretty woman jumped and spun around in black and white clothes. The song was OK, but I wasn't particularly impressed.

After the *Borderline* video premiered, White girls started affixing bowtie clips to their sprayed hair, wearing rubber gummy bracelets around their wrists, and layering fluorescent with netted shirts. I thought that style was cheap.

Over that 1983-1984 school year, I transitioned from my preppy style with my wavy shoulder-length side-parted hair to zippered Guess denim cigarette jeans held up by a navy spiked leather belt. I matched it with a two-toned gray-blue denim vest.

Beyond that, Madonna's raw sexual energy went against what I had been told about getting ahead with my mind, not my body. My feminist politics aligned more with Cyndi Lauper's videos of girl-positive empowerment.

I'd "gone" with a boy for the first time at sleep-away camp the summer before. We hadn't kissed, but being asked and having the status gave me bragging rights.

The next year during sleepovers with my best friend, we feigned innocence as our hands "accidentally" brushed against each other's privates over our nightgowns.

After Madonna's controversial MTV Video Music Awards performance and her *Like a Virgin* video premiered, I called her a "slut." My father used the term to describe women who flaunted their sex appeal.

I adopted my mother's classic, masculine style, inspired by Diane Keaton: the oversized blazer, tailored slacks, and button-

down shirts. With my long feet, I often borrowed her size nine and a half beige suede Oxford loafers. I brushed my dark brown hair which had just changed textures with puberty into a frizz.

Nonetheless, my cassette tape collection included all of Madonna's albums.

I couldn't understand why the artist sang about keeping an unexpected pregnancy in the *Papa Don't Preach* video. It seemed counter-intuitive.

In 1987 Connie Chung interviewed me for a TV special called "Scared Sexless." My long dark hair had been diffused into curls. I attested to being a virgin (a word that came into my vocabulary thanks to the artist herself), given my fear of contracting HIV or getting pregnant.

A female friend and I formed an intense connection. We professed our affection for one another in written exchanges and drew hearts and flowers on the edges of every sheet. I wasn't physically attracted to her. Reading her letters filled me with immense joy, and I longed to find them in the mail. The next school year she pulled away. It seemed like the closeness had scared her.

Madonna's *Express Yourself* video was a game-changer. When her nakedness wasn't hidden behind satin sheets, the gender-bending icon was dressed in slinky, skin-hugging dresses or a pin-striped suit...albeit with a bra underneath. She grabbed her crotch defiantly as men did.

Paparazzi captured her with Sandra Bernhard. Were they involved romantically? Although Madonna had always had gay male admirers, now her sexual orientation (which was called sexuality then) was up for speculation.

If Madonna was man enough to own her same-sex desires, I could be too. In my senior year of high school, I confessed to my therapist that I feared I was gay. The psychologist wrote off my preschool oral/manual genital explorations and elementary school fondling with girls as experimentation; still, in the pit of my stomach, I sensed she was wrong. That summer I came out in front of other teenagers at a social justice training.

Now a thick, black belt held up my oversized denim blue jeans. I pulled them down a couple of inches, so they sagged. I tucked one of my father's white V-neck undershirts under a rectangular, metal belt buckle. I wanted to have the same power...that same privilege boys possessed. Mind you, I interspersed these clothes with short, fashionable baby-doll dresses. I sported hoop earrings no matter my attire.

As I vlogged at clubs, I wore trousers with a black sports-bra-like top that emphasized my cleavage. Revlon's Blackberry lipstick colored my lips. I filled in my already thick eyebrows with black eye pencil. At my university's Gay-Lesbian-Bisexual Association parties, I tore off my shirt to move to the beat in just a bra. I wrapped my long hair into a knot behind my head as I sweat.

Then Madonna's *Justify My Love* videos opened the floodgates. I was open to men and also to women, and I danced close with both.

Once the *Erotica* video aired, I had come into my own around my sexuality. No longer did I need Madonna to feel comfortable with my attraction to women. I knew I was bisexual, and she helped me be unapologetic about it. While I was still male-leaning, I also dated women.

No one was going to tell me with whom to have relationships based on gender or race, but the latter is another chapter.



Tanya in 1990, with a friend

Tanya Anne Bassie Bowers (she, her) lives in eastern Washington, U.S., with her husband and their son. She attended Wesleyan University as an undergraduate and Antioch University Los Angeles for graduate school. Subscribe to her substack: <https://substack.com/@tanyabowers>.

Learning the Grammar of Love from a Hot Queer Teen TV Show

By Becky Karush

In May 2022, a week after the queer teen rom-com series *Heartstopper* debuted, I went for a walk.

I went to the meadow near my house in southwestern New Hampshire. It's not a remarkable meadow. About 100 feet across, it rolls down to a swamp at the far end that smells of defiant wet raccoon. On the south side, a birch tree grows sideways. The land has been forest and pasture, and now it's hayed for horses, but it's never seen a bulldozer, a septic tank, or a double carport that covers a broken four-burner grill. The bright, steady grammar of the meadow separates it from the rest of the beat-up, built-up, and crumbled-down land of my everyday New England neighborhood. In this one small place, the whole is old and vital. It belongs.

I try to listen to the birds when I'm here. Off goes the podcast. Out pop the earbuds. "Listen to the crows," I command myself. "Listen to the cardinals. If you listen to the birds, everything will make sense!"

Ridiculous hope packs into that promise. "Listen to the birds, and the planet will be okay. You'll figure out what to do about all the plastic. About white boys with machine guns in schools. You'll see that applying for a home equity line of credit to fix the rotting floor under the tub is a privilege, not the death of youth and art."

On the day of my walk, I left the earbuds in. I turned the

volume up on the lonely song that ends the second episode of *Heartstopper*—Orla Gartland's "Why Am I Like This?" I knew the song by heart because, a week earlier, I'd read a gushing review of the show, decided to check it out, and stayed up until 3 a.m. to watch all the episodes under the blankets in my bed on my phone. Then I did it again, seven nights in a row.

Skinless without sleep, I listened to the song in the meadow and saw the scene: Nick Nelson, a popular 16-year-old straight boy, realizes he has an astonishing crush on Charlie Spring, the one gay kid at their English grammar school.

I played the song again, louder. The earbud cords twisted like waterfalls down the front of my blue shirt. I wept. The birch rattled against itself. The chickadees in the little alders chirruped. I felt crazy. Happy. In agony. I didn't know why, only that something in me changed.

I also knew I wasn't alone in my zealous sobs. The story of Nick and Charlie has an enormous, passionate global audience, like a queer Harry Potter with less wandwork and better kissing. Originally a series of super best-selling young adult graphic novels, *Heartstopper* immediately hit the top of Netflix's charts, getting a two-season renewal weeks after its debut.

Back in 2022, most reviews and fans celebrated the show's uniquely joyful queer love story. Nick and Charlie fall in love beneath magic British snow. They flirt over a bubblegum-

flavored milkshake. Nick comes out as bisexual to a goddess-level hug from Olivia Colman, playing his mom. The first season did balance the sweet with sour, but *Heartstopper* sticks to happy landings. Here, pain isn't destiny. It's part of the show, but not the point. Nick and Charlie's true love wins.

In the meadow, I pulled a small bottle of DEET from the pocket of my shorts and sprayed myself to annoy the ticks. I sank and lay back, knees bent, and the cool grasses pricked my neck. I blushed, embarrassed to be myself, a 46-year-old woman collapsed over a show. What was happening to me? It couldn't be this one teen show. That couldn't explain the world's reaction to *Heartstopper*, or my own.

Why am I like this? I put my hands over my eyes.

On the dark screen there, I see Nick ask Charlie a question. The camera in this scene is light and unsteady, close-up on their faces.

Nick moves his lips. "Would you like to go to Harry's party," he says, the camera at his nervous half-smile, "with me?"

My breath slows. More scenes play on the insides of my eyelids. Charlie's nervous, awed smile as he breathes back his answer. "Okay." Charlie holding Nick while he cries, the boys awkwardly perched on the edge of Charlie's bed. Nick running into the ocean surf, arms raised, shouting, "I'm your boyfriend! You're my boyfriend! We're boyfriends!" In all of them, the camera is soft and intimate. It rocks along with the gentle feeling.

And then I remembered, having spent 27 recent hours watching the show, that each time the camera came close, it also pulled back and showed the broad sturdiness holding the boys.

Here is Nick's tender, breathy invitation, and there is the plain classroom table on which they rest their arms. Here is Charlie's quivering smile, and there are the towering rectangular windows. Here is Nick crying, and there is the unchangingly messy bedroom. Here is Nick's declaration of love, and there is the authority of the blue-green sea, moving on its own.

In the meadow, not asleep and not awake, I moved inside the show, scene after scene. Many weeks later, when my rapture quieted, I found words for the two-part rhythm I felt, rocking from creative, erotic unsteadiness to loving, beautiful stability, and back again. It was a grammar of change that held its queer characters in such caring safety they could fall in love, discover themselves, and be new.

It was as if the lush, jubilant triumph of *Heartstopper* rode on the back of a turtle, and that turtle was a chosen world—a crafted, stable, tended world—where love was each of ours to give and find.

This visual grammar is a radical achievement. Yes, *Heartstopper* is a boffo Netflix hit. Yes, the uniquely happy depiction of

young queer love is important and liberating for the young queer people who love the show. The show is liberating for middle-aged people, too. For me.

A week or so after my swoon, I told a patient friend what was obvious all along. "I am like this because... I'm queer, too! I'm bisexual! Me! Me, too! That's me! I'm a bisexual woman!" The revelation took a while because in my hardest times, I couldn't comprehend how, in a world of eight billion people and the stars, it feels irrepressibly vital to be a "me," to be an "I," vital not just to the "me" but to the health and glow of creation. I believe it for other people. When I'm not weeping to Orla Gartland songs, I'm a writing teacher. I see how the kaleidoscope turns for universal good when someone hears their voice, sees their language, at last, on the page.

The first season of *Heartstopper* did this for me. Held safely, I saw me, heard me, and while I can't say with empirical confidence that my self-actualization as bisexual is a boon for humanity, my life has since been far more courageous and generous, far funnier and freer, than fearful, cruel, or dull.

Yet it was never only Nick and Charlie's love story that changed me. It was the nurturing visual language of transformation within stable, loving beauty. This is the language *Heartstopper's* proudly, publicly queer creators made for us to learn ourselves.

It's a controlled world they created, as small as any classroom. But if *Heartstopper* was never meant to make whole cloth sense of existence, I still read it as a teacher of hope, daring us to believe we have a future where we are marvelous, where we belong, if we give each other what is kind, beautiful, and true in every part of our lives. We can be like this. Such hope may be why so many of us, now inside so many violent extinctions, keep rising up in earnest ecstasy for one television show. What a lesson! What a language to figure out how to live! True queer love can win!

Back in the meadow, the grass itched my neck. I turned and opened my eyes to a tick on a swath of white violets next to me. I stood up and stepped back. I pulled the earbuds away.

Birds sang. Baby cattails rustled. Stopped. Rustled. From the edge of a mucky vernal pool with a plastic bag in its middle, a squat green and black thing crept into the sun. A turtle. Tiny yellow spots starred its shell. Its underbelly was red as a bonfire. The turtle trundled a few inches and stopped. It lifted its head in a tiny arch, and with red and black eyes surveyed as much of the field as it could see. The turtle stood like that for a long time. At last, it stepped forward on thick legs, as if carrying something precious on its back, something heavy and new, to where it knew it belonged.

Becky Karush lives in New Hampshire, U.S., and is a writer and a developmental editor.

Come Out, Come Out, Wherever You Are...

By Delphine RL

Like anyone, I've been inspired by various people who helped me find my own self, sometimes in a good way and sometimes in a bad way; but, hey, in any case, it's still something to build upon. Some of these people had an influence on me consciously and others unconsciously.

I remember a special teacher at the university where I studied Archaeology and History of Arts: Mr. Alexandre F., whose specialty was Ancient Greek ceramics. This man could make a course so fun that it would be impossible for anyone to forget what he taught during the session, especially when he explained how Ancient Greek ceramics were made while talking about the "Pintade au chou" recipe (guinea fowl with cabbage)! This man was amazingly talented in his area of research, skilled in pedagogy, and he was also always available for advice or explanations.

He was instrumental in helping me understand I could do good things, so much so that he actually helped me to feel confident for the first time about my way of thinking, of considering life: "Oh my God, my logic and thoughts are valid? Yay!" My blood pumped from the intensity of enthusiasm and joy I had found there.

Then, I encountered several teachers whose behavior was not alright at all:

One didn't ethically respect body boundaries with students: one-to-one sessions were extremely uncomfortable, but he was my advisor;

Another stole my materials and connections to start field work without me—I had hoped to work with him or in his department when I met him, memoir in hand, to show him how I worked in my field and the people I had met;

A last one, in Fine Arts, traumatized me so much with their critiques of my choices and drawings that I spent one year without touching a pencil, so convinced that I could only make shit art if I chose to draw.

It was now time for darkness to run through my veins into my heart and brain, and slow down the pulse of joy and enthusiasm.

These men made me lose most of the confidence I had acquired with the genius Alexandre F., and I thought: *if these people act like that, it must be my fault and my inability to perceive people.* As a result of that poor judgment about myself, I couldn't trust anyone institutional for years....

Until I crossed the path of a truly great person. I could say she was a true Lady, because of the nobility of both her heart and her deep sense of ethics, as well as her ability to laugh and find the humor in life: Barb Kobe, *the* mentor you'd want to learn from.

Through her Healing Doll Way process, I learnt that I was worthy of existence, worthy of utility. Thanks to this artistic method, those involved in this process of imagining, feeling, and creating dolls can dive deeply into themselves and become more aware of their true identity, overcome traumas, and be able to take the next step in their lives. Each doll is a story told and a story told is a wound on the way to healing. For me, a Doll Maker is a Storyteller, and a Storyteller is a person who chooses life, who chooses to reconnect, who chooses to live connected to the world again.

It took me three years with Barb teaching to be able to start to accept myself and my creativity as valuable. I became a Doll Maker and a Storyteller at the same time due to the reconciliation she helped create inside of me. For me, to be a Doll Maker and a Storyteller is to imagine stories so that they can be expressed through the making of art. Each doll and each story tells who I am and who I want to be; by sharing my dolls and my stories, I allow myself to be part of this world, proudly, fiercely, and according to my heart, body, and soul.

I am not sure that Barb Kobe knew how powerful her presence, spirit, and artistic perspective as the second milestone I needed to rebuild myself: her humility being what it was, she could say "You found your inner resources." True, but still... And with her way of being inspired by everything around her, without any cultural or social judgment, she planted seeds of true awareness in me, without my conscious knowledge, as a part of my mind was secretly tiptoeing on my true path, totally unaware.

It was at the end of 2018—and these seeds would only sprout in 2023—after I went back on making dolls and writing stories, after a double crack in my life, during which two things happened:

First, I was forced to move out suddenly from my perfect house close to the woods to the omnipresence of concrete in a city, a kind of prison for me. Second was the bloody mess that COVID had initiated, as I could no longer be alone to create and had to stand by my family to go through this crisis together.

Five years and a lot to learn. But sometimes I'm a bad learner and I resist opportunities to grow....

That is why I had to meet two other wonderful mentors, equally humble and skilled as Barb Kobe—Lewis Mehl-Madrona and Barbara Mainguy—who taught me how to use stories and arts to process and heal.

From my perspective, I received the thought that the wonderful power of traditional or contemporary tales and stories is within every moment of our lives: with an open mind to self, fun, people and nature connections, many of our resources, answers, and guidance are reachable, and you can find a shortcut if you combine it with artistic expression. Simple.

Let's do that and... be patient. This is not my strong suit, I must say!

But it was indeed a perfect match with my inner Dollmaker, who was stamping inside my heart and mind at the same time, ready to express herself again. All I had to do was to accept both—because it was so accurate for me—and then leave room for what could emerge from this association.

All these magnificent people built strength within me, stone after stone, letting my structure breathe during the process until I could build the rest alone, because I could allow myself to feel what was just and vital to my existence: the last piece to possibly feeling whole.

It's at this moment that I remembered another mentor I had all along, tiptoeing in my heart and mind.

His name was Lestat de Lioncourt. This character was born from Anne Rice's imagination at the end of the '70s book series, *The Vampire Chronicles*. I was lucky to find a very good translation and her words caught me immediately, as a 14-year-old teenager who had a few experiences with girls and boys before a social auto-oblivion...

Yes, I know: a fictional vampire ? LOL, you could say.

But, he was so free! He went through deep stuff and rose anyway, enjoying everything he could in his path. He never gave up, he "lived" what he could and always stayed enthusiastic about everything and everyone, without shame or judgment. He was the only bisexual example I had and he was strong, fierce, joyful, curious, ambitious, sometimes naïve, sometimes unfair, but at every moment of his second life, he stayed true to himself no matter what. I even sometimes forget he is a he, because to me, he knows nothing about gender barriers, stereotyping limitations; he just feels what he must and goes where he must, and I always admired him for that. I still do.

Today, I wonder if this character was in fact working for me in the background, to prepare me to remember one day, when I was ready, that it was OK to be myself—he never let go of this

task. But at some point, I find myself thinking that Lestat may have had to find some help, putting Barb, Lewis, and Barbara on my path, so I'll learn to unveil all the scenes that were intertwined before my eyes for so long.

When I think of it, that is a hell of a team! But I was blessed we ran into each other, saying to darkness to go f... itself and to welcome good, tasty blood to flow at its own convenience. ;)

Delphine RL—Imagination worker, Dollmaker, and Storyteller. She loves to find her stories by meeting people and being immersed in nature, especially by the ocean, in Brittany, France, where she lives.



Being Visible for My Students

By Chelsea Bock

For most of my life, I've been either a student or an educator, and sometimes the two simultaneously. My resume is a sequence of jobs in public school teaching, private school marketing, enrollment services management, and even an unexpected turn in international education. The "Education" section of my resume also demonstrates that I really, genuinely like school and feel most energized learning something new. The trope that educators are lifelong learners themselves is something I've unintentionally embodied for nearly two decades.

But before I became an educator—when I was seated at the desk, not standing behind the podium—my lifelong learning included learning about my sexual orientation. This wasn't something formally covered in schools in the 1990s and early 2000s, especially not in the more socially conservative area in which I grew up. To my recollection, none of our classroom materials mentioned characters or historical figures who were queer or transgender. Our Family Life courses taught us about sexual dimorphism, puberty, pregnancy, and sexually transmitted infections with no mention of orientations other than heterosexuality or of variations in gender identity. And as far as I knew, all my teachers were straight, with the exception

of the occasional gym teacher and two female faculty rumored to be living together. Any understanding of my bisexuality at that time came from other queer friends, a few soap opera television characters, and eventually the Gay-Straight Alliance on my liberal arts college campus.

But just as I was understanding and accepting myself, the door slammed shut again. When I took a position at a Christian school after college, I learned that different denominations and institutions vary in their interpretation of “Love your neighbor as yourself.” There were a lot of things I pretended to be while working at that school, and heterosexual was one of them. I planned on blending in and getting by until I finished my first master’s degree, and could start teaching in a public school and enjoy some breathing room. The hardest part was carrying the knowledge that some students, statistically speaking, had to be questioning their identities with nowhere to go for help or advice, knowing that we all had to fit the same uncomfortable mold.

Once I moved on and started teaching at a public community college, I realized that I had the freedom to design a more inclusive curriculum. I began to include all the things that were missing during a lot of my own education: anecdotes with same-sex couples, speeches and essays from LGBTQ+ celebrities, references to LGBTQ+ issues and history in units on possible research topics, and examinations of queer subtext in classic literature. Students were generally either unfazed or supportive aside from a few instances of pushback, which often turned into teachable moments.

Unfortunately, I wasn’t privy to every negative response. One afternoon after the students filtered out of our classroom, I looked up from my stack of papers and noticed a solitary girl in the back row who had stayed behind. The class was Public Speaking and we had just discussed audience adaptation, which included the importance of using gender-neutral terms like “they,” “you all,” and “spouse” or “partner” so as not to assume that everyone is cisgender or heterosexual.

“Is everything all right?” I asked my student, taking a seat next to her.

“The people in my row didn’t like the gender-neutral terms too much,” she said. “They were talking about how they shouldn’t have to include gay people when they speak; they don’t agree with it.”

“I’m sorry I didn’t catch that. Sometimes it’s hard to hear chatter from this far in the back, especially if I’m lecturing at the same time. Are you okay?”

“I mean, I just want to come to class without hearing that anyone who isn’t straight is going to hell. I’m gay, and that hurts me.”

I nodded. “We’re not going to have that kind of talk in our classroom. It’s unacceptable. I’ll pay more attention in the future and if it happens again and I don’t catch it, do you feel

comfortable letting me know?”

Her face brightened. “I do. Thank you for letting me tell you about it.”

“Anytime.” And I almost left it at that, but one vulnerable moment deserved another. “I’m bisexual,” I said, “so I understand how much that talk hurts.”

My student widened her eyes. “Wow, really? That’s so cool. I’ve never had a gay or bisexual teacher before.” She gathered up her books. “See you Thursday.”

That was the first time I came out to one of my students. Rainbow confetti didn’t fall from the ceiling and Lady Gaga’s “Born This Way” didn’t blast out of the speakers. It was quiet, sincere, and most of all, it was something I hadn’t experienced by the time I was her age. From that point forward, the dynamic between us shifted. It became one of trust.

Eventually, I went on to teach at other colleges. The passage of time, along with more resources and events for LGBTQ+ students, staff, and faculty on campus, made visibility easier. I’m proud to be a part of our college’s Rainbow Network of designated safe persons, particularly during such a period of anti-LGBTQ+ backlash across the U.S.. Sometimes it’s painful to hear the outrage from angry parents at school board meetings, convinced that educators like me are “indoctrinating” their children just by including all kinds of humans and human relationships in our classrooms. But then I think about the first student who ever trusted me enough to come out to me, and how being that figure for any student who feels lost or alone is some of the best work I can do. I remain committed to being the kind of teacher I needed growing up. And I remain hopeful that through lifelong learning even the most disparaging among us can realize that we are all stronger when everyone can freely be true to themselves.

Chelsea Bock is a community college educator currently working on her Ed.D. at Rockhurst University. She lives with her husband and their cat, Lucy, in Annapolis, Maryland, in the U.S.



Strongly Agree / Agree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree— A Mentor Evaluation Form

By Nicole Miyashiro

MY MENTOR IS ACCESSIBLE.

I shoot an email to a stranger, asking about the lesbian meet-up posted online, and then hang there in the void, exposed and vulnerable...

MY MENTOR IS ACCESSIBLE AND AVAILABLE.

I'm waiting without knowing I've been waiting for her: her reply. She encourages me to join their lunch. I'm married, too, Rachel said, in our first meeting over coffee. Just come.

MY MENTOR DEMONSTRATES A REASONABLE INTEREST IN AND CONCERN FOR ME.

At a table among new faces, an attendee, Lori, has listened to me share my story for the first time publicly (i.e. in a group of more than one) and insists, "You'll be divorced in a year!" My whole sense of self simmers into a blushing anger-panic. Not necessarily, Rachel counters. Look at me.

WHAT DO YOU GAIN FROM THE MENTORING PROCESS?

Possibility and courage by her example.

MY MENTOR COMMUNICATES WITH ME REGULARLY.

In these early days, I often say No to attending sapphic gatherings (while screaming YES! inside) and Rachel continues inviting me; she continues to invite me.

HOW OFTEN DO YOU MEET WITH YOUR MENTOR?

I stumble over words, trying to find the right ones to explain and name the fears and wants and desires and needs. Over coffee, over brunch. Along lengthy, leaf-littered walks. And she gets it, she's listening.

WHAT ACTIVITIES/GOALS DOES YOUR MENTOR ASSIST YOU WITH?

Over lunch, Rachel and I giggle in awe and joy at the bliss and full heart I'm experiencing as I grow closer and closer with a fun and thoughtful woman who has entered my life.

DOES YOUR MENTOR PROVIDE CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK?

Jitters plague me on discovering discrepancies in what the woman I adore has told me, and we're planning to meet soon, I'm elated to be meeting her in person soon...! Follow your heart, Rachel guides. And be cautious.

WHAT (IF ANYTHING) ARE YOU DOING DIFFERENTLY AS A RESULT OF YOUR MENTORING EXPERIENCE?

I'm astonished by how centered I'm becoming. How bold and vocal. How realized, yet new. How me...

WHAT CHALLENGES DOES YOUR MENTOR HELP YOU OVERCOME?

I'm crying and crying, crushed, as things deteriorate—slowly—between me and this first woman I've ever felt connected to on so many intimate levels. This is the reality of these types of relationships, Rachel texts. It's hard and there is a lot of pull in different directions. Then she comes over to sit with my mess of tears and holds my heartache in a hug.

MY MENTOR SUPPORTS MY GROWTH TOWARDS INCREASED INDEPENDENCE.

Feeling both shy and alive, I quiet fears of judgment and enjoy a warm meal with my new community at Rachel's dinner party. In good spirit, I turn to Lori and jab, "You were wrong! I'm still married and in love with him!" Triumphant laughter erupts all around.

MY MENTOR IS ABLE TO LEAD ME TO THE CORRECT RESOURCES.

I almost miss the cues, almost miss the moment to share my number, almost miss treasured time with a poet who will teach me about the seeds of female Ginko trees and who will share a



platonic romance with me that ends up healing and holding us both—Oh yes. Rachel beams her full-cheeked smile, punctuating it with a wink. She is DEFINITELY flirting with you!

WHAT LIFE LESSONS DO YOU LEARN FROM YOUR MENTOR?

Looking out at the crowd as I read new writing with nerves and zest, with immediate family feeling so far and my devoted spouse at home caring for our son to make it possible for me to be here, to do this, be me, and to share this work: I see Rachel in the audience. Smiling. With flowers. She shows up; she fortifies my commitment to showing up— to coffee with those confused and questioning. To meals with bi+ and partnered friends. To PRIDE. To community. To life as no one less than who I am.

OVERALL (11 YEARS AND COUNTING), MY MENTOR IS A ROLE MODEL AND TRAINS ME IN THE SKILLS NEEDED TO MENTOR OTHERS.

Strongly agree.

Aliases are used in this essay to protect privacy.

Nicole Miyashiro is a biracial, cis femme, bi and married mama and adoptee living in central Pennsylvania, U.S. Her work appears in BWQ, CALYX, The Hudson Review, Nasty Women Poets: An Unapologetic Anthology of Subversive Verse (Lost Horse Press), and elsewhere.



γλυκύμαλον *

By Danielle Wallace

Concealed in a corner,
Another translation of ‘The Great Sappho’s Fragments’
(2023).

Her oval eyes dead-center her oval face.
Pupils staring silently; I admit I do not know her.
Yet, when I think of what they did to her...
Flicking fragments 32, 129, 191...
-Certainly, no man ever can.

Puppet on the cliff face,
and thrust downwards to the foam-topped, erect boulders
below.
Blank spaces filled with matrimonial slush.
Histories erased; passions extinguished: the birth of their
poetESS.
Sappho, O Sappho. *Their* Sappho.
In these moments,
She burns and cries deep inside me.

The girl behind the desk
holds out her hand, and I place the poet between her fingers.
- I swear it –
The corner of her mouth curls just for me
and she pushes back her heavy lids.
She sees that I see it,
and we both feel *her*.
-Certainly, no man ever can.

Danielle Wallace is an aspiring writer and artist, a Ph.D. student at the University of Birmingham, U.K. She is currently researching the presence and significance of Sappho in Modernist poetry.

* ‘γλυκύμαλον’ is a phrase from Sappho’s fragment 105a and roughly translates to “sweet apple.”



AJ Dolman Believes This Too Shall Pass—But Not Without a Fight: A Review of *Crazy/Mad*

Reviewed by Brianna Lopez

AJ Dolman (she/they) was tired of being voiceless. So they wrote *Crazy/Mad* (Gordon Hill Press, 2024), a poetry collection about the act of grappling with being silenced—because of mental illness, sexual orientation, and a myriad of ill-composed labels placed on us by a society desperate to categorize us, to determine our worth. Organized into three sections focusing on excitability, stress, and depression, and with each poem title reflecting a symptom one might experience in each of these states, the Ottawa-based writer's book is arranged in a precise manner. Yet the collection's lack of punctuation and abrupt end to many of its sentences convey a constant continuation, a desperation to get these words out, a reclaiming of the author's voice.

The collection is a mere 70 pages of actual poetry, but there is no shortcutting through this reading. Dolman's diction is explicit, elegant, and poignant. They signal our political climate by writing lines like, "Sunset bleeding orange," in "Critical race theorist," a poem that mentions Michael Brown, the Black teenager shot and killed in Ferguson, Missouri in 2014. They use run-on sentences in the poem "Hyperverbal" to mimic the symptom being described, a symptom the whole book is dedicated to. In this collection, Dolman finds her voice, not by telling us what that sounds like, but by forcing the reader to do the work to figure it out. Being playful with formatting and spacing, Dolman's work requires that the reader pay attention and return back to each poem to reread and gain a deeper understanding of why Dolman made the craft choices she did. *Crazy/Mad* is a journey toward grasping the complexities of mental health—a journey reflective of the symptoms we endure when faced with mental illness.

When I read the first poem in the collection, "Overthinking" (the only one that exists beyond the confines of the three sections), I was struck by its final lines: "but, boy are we without / language for this shit." In my annotations, I wrote, The author starts the book by saying this but will prove it wrong, if the book is good. This book is a story of how and why we persevere, a story of resistance, a story of toughness; if Dolman begins the collection without the language to describe the tale she's telling, she certainly finds that language as she progresses through each section.

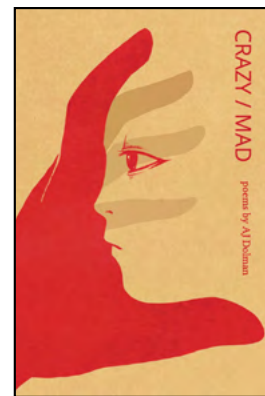
The first part of the collection is "Hysteria," and it is filled with poems that echo this sentiment—the narrator is on a spiral, is manic, is all over the place, and yet somehow we still get a clear idea of what is on their mind. Here, Dolman presents themselves as a strong advocate for womanhood, femininity, and the troubles women face. The line "Husband, know thine enemy," in the poem "Female rage," spoke to me, the words a warning—not only from woman to man, but from author to reader. Dolman lets us know that she will be censored no longer.

Depression as a specific plight of women comes up in this section as well. Take "Women's troubles," for example, where the author writes, "I forget the deep plummet, / snort blue water in surprise," signaling the ease with which women can fall into depressive states. They invite the reader to understand the complexities of depression as mental illness by invoking an interpretation of seasonal depression in the story—"I heard of one mother... froze / herself in the creek." There is a darkness to Dolman's writing, a need to take a big gulp and swallow, to take a second to breathe. I see this more in what seems to be the narrator's very clear opinions on childbearing. About the act of growing a baby in one's womb, the poem "Egomania" bluntly states, "hers was smokier, accented by war, / rage, more childbirth, a torn / canal before cells multiplied / to choke her from inside." "Perinatal panic disorder" describes children as "a choice you can't undo" and paints a mother's guilt: "you hear me dragging us / through rough waters."

And yet some of the most beautiful lines in the collection sit amid the first section, in "Gynephelia." The lines read, "her name stills / in my mouth / as it burns." As a queer woman in a relationship with a woman, this line made me want to call out to my partner, if only to feel the fire that burns between us. It is a timely desire, as the first allusion to queerness comes just pages earlier, in "Egomania," when Dolman portrays the perseverance required of non-heterosexual people to remain strong in our identities: "My voice...trembles with the wire hum of gendered fragilities, / will never, ever break." Womanhood, as Dolman tells it, is wrought with deep emotional sensibilities, the foremost one being undeniable strength.

"Neurosis"—the second section in Dolman's work—invites the reader to find drama in the most mundane of moments, much like we do when we are in a neurotic state. "Self-harm" illuminates the experience of talking to the cashier at your local deli or grocery store while highlighting the age-old adage: "misery loves company." Dolman assures us that it is okay to find solace in the people who are suffering as much as we are.

Further, in this section, the author tackles a key symptom of neurosis—hypochondria, specifically as it relates to our current political context. "Circumstantial hypochondria" discusses the COVID-19 pandemic, following a group of people who are waiting in line for a COVID test for hours, an experience all too familiar. It includes the following line in its last stanza, "Who is considered expendable hinges on who gets to decide." This short, curt line speaks to the recasting of our society during the pandemic, the basic premise of the poem going beyond being circumstantial and into a challenging the overall system in which we all are viewed as pawns.



This reality is even harder to grasp for those with mental health issues, as Dolman creates a sense of spiraling that mentally ill people know intimately. This is exemplified in the aptly titled “Slippery slope thinking,” where Dolman ends with the feeling of spiraling in your own mind, of falling, “going all the way down, unsealable” while the rest of the world goes on: “a magpie pecking / at another bird’s nest / outside the sliding door.” With the last line of that poem, the reader is left to sit and spiral on our own, much like most people did throughout the pandemic—a clear innuendo to the fact that art does, in fact, mimic life.

Dolman does one thing particularly right in this collection: writing a last line that can pack a punch. In some poems, the story is clear, and in others, Dolman really makes you work for it, and their last lines are where many of these poems are most understood. It makes sense, then, that her last section, “Melancholia” asks the reader to slow down and sit with the beauty of the sadness she presents to us.

“Despondence” ends with a realization that those suffering from depression cannot get out of their own heads: “You could have been / someone, but if you were, I / probably wouldn’t have noticed.” Another poem in this section, “Dissociation” paints a heartbreakingly gorgeous picture of defeat: “Windspun whorls of crystalized dirt scrape / at my tears until I’m empty, and

the ground / here has everything it wanted.” Broken into four sections representing the seasons, this poem roots the reader in nature, de-stigmatizing mental health as something unnatural, forcing us to see it instead as a cycle, as the way things are always going to be. And maybe that should be scary to some people, but not to Dolman. AJ Dolman is a fighter. A resister. The experimental nature of their form and the abruptness of their language makes *Crazy/Mad* no easy feat for the reader, and that’s because AJ Dolman wants us all to have a taste of what a mental health journey is really like—and she is done sugarcoating it.

Dolman ends their collection by letting the reader down gently. The poem titled “Photo #3: The printer’s case” bears the following final lines: “Here are things you could / have done something with, if something could still have been done.” Perhaps here, Dolman is inviting us to take action. Perhaps these poems are items with which we can still do something, ways to comprehend the intricacies of the issues she is presenting to us. Perhaps something can still be done. *Crazy/Mad* incites a prayer that this is true.

Brianna Lopez is a nonfiction writer born and raised in New York City in the U.S. She currently works full-time in book publishing and is pursuing an MFA in nonfiction at The New School.

Second Chances in New Port Stephen, by T.J. Alexander

Reviewed by Janie Kang

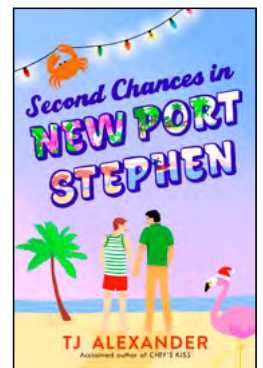
From the first page, *Second Chances in New Port Stephen* by T.J. Alexander draws you in, boldly and unapologetically, holding you in a lover’s deep embrace. More than your run-of-the-mill romance, it’s not afraid to explore important issues while also pulling you through the laughter, tears, and hope of rekindled love. T.J. Alexander’s craft of allowing the characters’ lives to unfold into a tapestry of story is nothing short of amazing. It’s as if the author peered into our lives and is simply illustrating our friends, family, and ourselves (how did you know I had an in-law like that?)

We get to meet Eli, a trans man visiting his family for the holidays in Florida. He’s a writer/comedian down on his luck. He runs into his first love, Nick, and the story unfolds from there, leading us through the rocky (and often hilarious) journey of reconciling the past while embracing an uncertain future. However, don’t let this light romp of queer love fool you. The book also has the intensity of a serious lover. The location of this story is intentional as it draws out the all-too-real contrasts between the triumphs and struggles for queer—particularly trans—rights while allowing ourselves to fall in love with the characters. The intersectionality of diversity was done in a nuanced and loving way. There were tender moments that made me choke up, moments when I wanted to smack certain characters in the face, then hilarious ones that made me laugh as if

sharing an inside joke with a best friend. And of course, the steamy scenes were done in a fun, hot way that made me blush and melted my heart. I couldn’t ask for a better romance with authenticity, wit, and tenderness. I found myself purposefully slowing down my reading pace because I didn’t want the story to end. That being said, there were moments I wished certain loose ends were tied up, but then, isn’t life ambiguous like that? It did make me wish for a sequel. Well played, T.J. Alexander, well played (I may or may not be reading two more books by this author simultaneously).

Second Chances has a little bit of everything. It’s a story about rebirth, growth, letting go, as well as rediscovering what still matters. This book is a soothing balm, yet also dares you to fight for truth and happiness despite an uncertain world. Isn’t that a message we all need right now? So, what are you waiting for? Indulge and grab a copy. You won’t regret it.

Janie Kang (she/her pronouns) lives in the beautiful Pacific Northwest of the U.S. She loves reading and writing stories in a kaleidoscope of genres.



Akhavan's Memoir Is Anything But Embarrassing

Reviewed by Jen Bonardi

It's likely that you've never heard of erstwhile actress, occasional screenwriter, and award-winning director Desiree Akhavan, and that's a crying shame. Akhavan is a bicon (bi+ icon) who has been hiding in plain sight for almost 15 years, fearlessly blazing a trail of telling bi+ women's stories. Surely this remarkable Iranian-born American deserves more from us than a vague recollection of her brief role in *Girls*.

At long last, this bi+ hero gives us a chance to get to know her: in mid-August, Akhavan released a memoir of essays entitled *You're Embarrassing Yourself*. In addition to offering anecdotes on her personal hardships and triumphs, the book divulges how she created films like *Appropriate Behavior*, about a Persian-American bisexual woman navigating relationships; her Netflix series, *The Bisexual*; and the conversion camp drama, *The Miseducation of Cameron Post*.

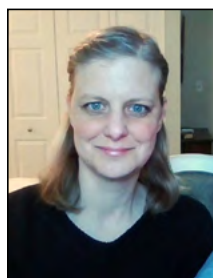
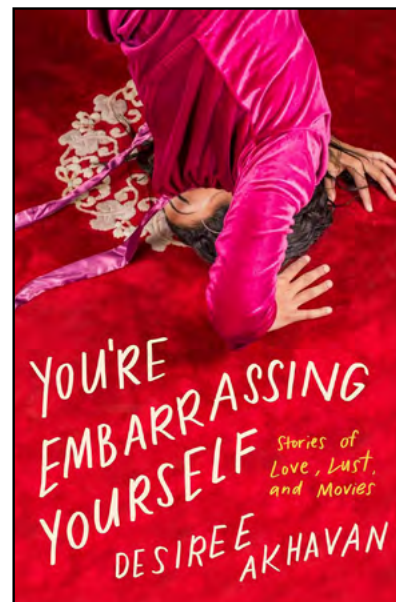
My introduction to Akhavan's work was through *The Slope*, a hilarious and relatable web series on a bi+ woman and her lesbian girlfriend living in an urban queer enclave. I was hooked from the very first webisode when her girlfriend implies that Desiree is "less gay" than she, to which Desiree whines, "How much gayer can I get, having a huge public fight in the park with my super-gay girlfriend?!" For me, the book's biggest reveal is that *The Slope*, a shining diamond in the rough of Vimeo.com (a video-sharing platform), was merely the author's film school assignment. Pretty impressive homework, if you ask me.

Akhavan doesn't use the word "bisexual" much in the book, but not because she wants to distance herself from the community; quite the reverse, in fact. In simply living her life, she hits all of the bi+ hallmarks. Like many of us, Akhavan makes her own goalposts for "how gay [she is]" and whether she is a virgin. She embodies the maxim, "Don't talk about it; be about it." It's refreshing that she never has an internal struggle over whether she is accepted in the wider queer community. Akhavan's here, she's bi, she assumes you'll get used to it.

Despite being an ugly duckling, Akhavan had plenty of sex and romantic relationships after college. Her experience as a late bloomer is heartening, as is her unabashed choice to make a friendship the most important relationship in her life. Reminiscent of Mindy Kaling's second memoir, *Why Not Me?*, Akhavan wants more from life than directorial success, and presently struggles with prioritizing her career.

You're Embarrassing Yourself might not be revolutionary, but it entertains and has moments of deep insight. Her anecdotes demonstrate how being friendless freed her from self-consciousness, and how love led her to trust her own artistic voice. They illustrate how her connection to Iranian culture has evolved, and how her relationship with her parents was strengthened by surviving the trials of an eating disorder.

And in the end, all of the stories of Akhavan's life comprise her artistic creations as a director. She explains, "...The story is KING. It is your responsibility to protect it. You don't make the film...you are the film."



Jen Bonardi lives on the North Shore of Massachusetts, in the U.S. She is a long-time BWQ writer, and she loves bi+ culture.

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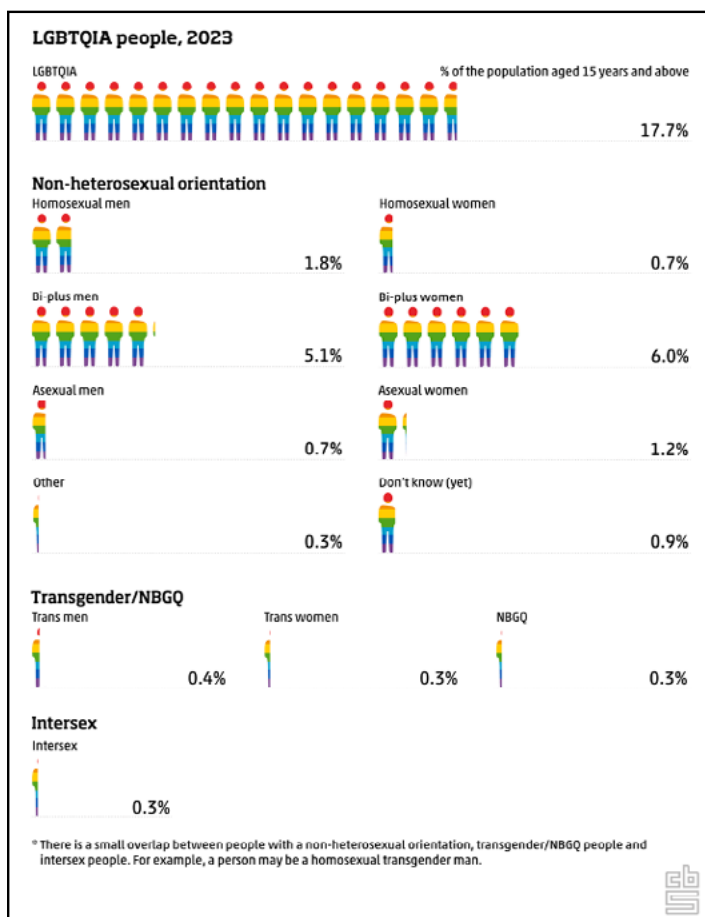
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The Netherlands is VERY Queer

By Robyn Ochs

The Netherlands is VERY queer. A 182,000-person study called Safety Monitor 2023, conducted by CBS, found that 17.7% of folks in the Netherlands age 15 or older identify as LGBTQIA+. Bi+ men comprise 5.1% of the country's population; bi+ women comprise 6%. Consistent with findings globally, bi+ people comprise—by far—the largest segment of the LGBTQIA+ population.

The study also found that LGBTQIA+ people tend to be younger than average; are more likely to live in urban areas and to have been born outside the Netherlands; and they have less financial wealth than their heterosexual counterparts.



Source: CBS News

<https://www.cbs.nl/en-gb/news/2024/41/the-netherlands-has-2-7-million-lgbtqia-people>

Robyn Ochs is a global speaker, writer, and editor of BWQ.

“We’ve come a long way, baby!”

By Sheri, aka Zoom Goddess

The American Psychological Association has a long and troubled history with the queer and gender diverse community. For many years, it accepted the American Psychiatric Association's classification of homosexuality as a mental health disorder. It also drives academic research on sexual orientation and gender diversity. In the past year, the APA published two tools that will help us move forward toward equity for queer and gender diverse people:

Following an iterative multi-community-driven process and extensive validation, the Gender Self-Report was released in *American Psychologist* 2023, (Vol 78, no 7, 886-900) <https://doi.org/10.1037/amp000111>. This is the first multidimensional gender characterization tool, accessible to youth and adults, neurotypical and neurodivergent people, and gender-diverse and cisgender individuals. This 30-question self-report measure is accessible to folks with or without access to sophisticated gender terminology.

Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity 2024 (Vol 11, no 3, 365-396) <https://doi.org/10.1037/sgd0000722> released a thoughtful and reflective guide for how to conduct and write about research on sexual orientation and gender diversity.

These two publications represent amazing strides forward in how queer, gender diverse and neurodiverse folks can be recognized and counted. The guide is not light weekend reading, but the questionnaire is worth a look.

Sheri (shelher) lives in Seattle, WA, U.S., with her life-partner Tim. She loves to spend time in her garden and hanging out with the crows, Stellar's jays, and Anna's hummingbirds on her back deck. She supports the BWQ community as Zoom Goddess, organizing our monthly “digital brunches.” She has been a member of the American Psychological Association for over two decades.

Please tell your friends, co-workers, neighbors, and random strangers about *Bi Women Quarterly*.

BiWomenQuarterly.com

RESEARCH CORNER: Redefining Education and Mentorship: A Revolution for the Bisexual Community

By Jenise Justice

Education and mentorship have always been central pillars in the development of individuals and communities. Yet, for bisexual people, these essential tools often fall short of addressing the unique challenges and opportunities that come with embracing a multidimensional identity. Drawing inspiration from Black thinkers and activists like bell hooks, who emphasized education as a practice of freedom, and Pauli Murray, a trailblazer for intersectional justice, we can revolutionize our approach to learning and guidance. This essay explores how reimagining the roles of teachers and mentors can transform the bisexual community, creating spaces of liberation, belonging, and empowerment that ripple outward to benefit society.

The Current Educational Landscape and Bisexual Erasure

Despite progress in LGBTQ+ rights, bisexual individuals remain one of the most misunderstood and underrepresented groups, both socially and in educational settings (see HRC study below).

When educators and mentors overlook or fail to address the complexities of bisexual identities, they perpetuate a cycle of erasure and isolation. Traditional educational frameworks, grounded in binary thinking, do not reflect the fluidity and spectrum of human sexuality. This creates a gap in understanding and support, leaving bisexual students and mentees without role models or resources that resonate with their lived experiences.

The revolution we need in education and mentorship must prioritize intersectionality, an approach bell hooks championed as the cornerstone of transformative learning and that Pauli Murray pioneered.

Bisexual individuals often experience compounded discrimination based on race, gender, and socioeconomic status, requiring teachers and mentors to adopt a holistic understanding of identity.

For instance, bisexual Black women face unique forms of marginalization compared to their white counterparts. Therefore, mentorship programs and educational curricula need to be designed with an awareness of these intersecting factors.

A practical approach could involve integrating intersectionality into teacher training and curriculum development. For example, schools could implement modules on bisexual history and contributions, making visible figures like Pauli Murray and bell hooks. Statistically, educational environments that include LGBTQ+ content see a 23% decrease in reported bullying and harassment.

Mentorship: Beyond Traditional Models

Mentorship is another critical area ripe for redefinition. Conventional mentorship models often prioritize hierarchical relationships where the mentor imparts wisdom to the mentee. While there is value in this structure, it overlooks the collaborative and reciprocal nature of mentorship that is essential for bisexual individuals. One revolutionary model is what I call “co-mentorship,” where both parties learn and grow together. This approach acknowledges that mentors also have gaps in knowledge and can learn from their mentees’ experiences, particularly around evolving understandings of identity and sexuality. Imagine a mentorship program in which a young bisexual professional mentors an older straight ally in LGBTQ+ issues while also receiving career advice in return.

Similarly, the Bisexual Resource Center’s educational workshops have trained thousands of educators on how to better support bisexual students, leading to more inclusive school policies and practices.

These examples highlight a key truth: when bisexual individuals see themselves represented and respected in educational and mentorship settings, they are more likely to thrive. This echoes bell hooks’s assertion that education be a practice of freedom—a space where people learn not only how to succeed academically, but also how to be fully human in the face of a society that often marginalizes them.

To truly revolutionize education and mentorship for bisexuals, we must commit to several key principles. First, we need to increase visibility by integrating bisexual history, literature, and role models into curricula and mentorship programs. Schools and organizations could create safe spaces where bisexual individuals can discuss their experiences openly and without judgment. Second, we must prioritize intersectionality in all educational and mentorship efforts, understanding that no one lives a single-issue life. Finally, we could promote co-mentorship models that value the wisdom of lived experience, empowering both mentors and mentees to grow together.

This broader approach not only benefits bisexual individuals, but also lays the groundwork for a more inclusive society. When education and mentorship embrace fluidity, collaboration, and intersectionality, we unlock the potential for collective liberation. The revolution begins with each of us: educators, mentors, allies, and community members committed to creating a world where every identity is seen, valued, and celebrated.

Sources:

Human Rights Campaign. "2018 LGBTQ Youth Report."

[Link Bored Teachers](#)

GLSEN. "2019 National School Climate Survey." [Link Word](#)

[In Black](#)

Pew Research Center. "A Survey of LGBT Americans: Attitudes, Experiences, and Values in Changing Times." [Link Out Magazine](#)

Bisexual Resource Center. "Programs and Initiatives." [Link Madame Noire](#)

Jenise Justice resides on the East Coast of the U.S. She is the author of Down Low Sister On Top: Celebrating the African American Bisexual Woman.



News Briefs

Compiled by Dylan Fee

In September, **Thailand** became the first country in Southeast Asia and the third Asian country to legalize same-sex unions after their king signed a marriage equality law. The other two countries in Asia with marriage equality are Taiwan & Nepal.

Disney has slowly been making strides in recent years to diversify the characters within their programs. In the past, characters that identify as bi+ have ranged from guest star to side character. However, *The Owl House*, a show that ran from 2020 to 2023, had the first-ever bisexual main character in a Disney series. Luz Noceda, the 14-year-old girl-turned-witch, may contain the magic to inspire future bi+ leads.

Bisexual athlete **Sha'Carri Richardson** became a gold-medalist for the 4x100-meter relay at the summer 2024 Olympic games. The Texas-born, 5'2" track star was raised by her aunt and grandmother and is known for racing with vibrant hair and nails. She is one of the fastest women of all time with a 100-meter time of 10.65 seconds. (*USA Today*)

October is **LGBT History Month**. Every day during the month of October, lgbthistorymonth.com picks an LGBT icon to feature, posting a video and short written biography about them. This past October, they featured athletes, politicians, entertainers, and activists, including our very own *BWQ* Editor, Robyn Ochs. Other bi+ icons featured this year included philanthropist and activist Ron Ansin, and social justice activist Robt Martin Seda-Schreiber. A full list of featured icons can be found here: lgbthistorymonth.com/category/icon-tags/bisexual

Shawn Mendez, the popular singer-songwriter of songs such as "Stitches" and "Mercy," talked about his sexuality at a recent

concert. He said "sexuality is such a beautifully complex thing, and it's so hard to just put into boxes...I'm just figuring it out like everyone." He emphasized the constant pressure that surrounds people when it comes to labeling themselves and his hopes for overcoming it. (*Pink News*)

Marielle Franco was a Brazilian politician and human rights activist. Franco served as a city councilor of the Municipal Chamber of Rio de Janeiro for the Socialism and Liberty Party up until her assassination on March 14, 2018. After a long six years the two perpetrators were finally caught, tried, and convicted, leaving them with over decade-long prison sentences. The Associated Press reports, "The verdict, although expected, comes as a measure of solace to the many who saw the martyrdom of the Black, bisexual woman as an attack on democracy, and worried that the crime would go unpunished."

The Trevor Project conducted a study that found that **anti-transgender laws** "cause up to 72% increase in suicide attempts among transgender and nonbinary youth." There have been 48 anti-transgender laws enacted in the U.S. from 2018 to 2022. Dr. Ronita Nath, Vice President of Research at The Trevor Project, said, "This groundbreaking study offers robust and indisputable evidence to support what we have already known: the recent wave of anti-transgender laws in the United States is quite literally risking the lives of young people across the country."

Dylan Fee is a bisexual junior at Tufts University in Medford, MA, U.S., majoring in Math and Latin. She also writes for her student publication: The Tufts Daily.

Source links can be found in the online version of this article at BiWomenQuarterly.com.

Bi+ Visibility at the White House

By Nicole Holmes

On Monday September 23, bi+ advocates and educators Dr. Lauren Beach, Nicole Holmes, Kierra Johnson, and Robyn Ochs attended a Celebrate Bi Visibility Day event at the White House.

There were approximately 25 people in attendance at this round-table discussion representing the government and the community.

Community advocates included representatives from organizations such as the National LGBTQ Task Force, the National Women's Law Center, and S.E.A.T, a youth-based advocacy in Texas.

Representatives from the U.S. Government, including Admiral Rachel Levine, Assistant Secretary for Health at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Adrian Shanker, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Health Policy at HHS, and Kenny Sandoval-Bushur of the White House Office of Public Engagement spoke to us about the Biden administration's efforts to advance health, wellbeing, and quality of life for LGBTQ+ Americans.

In turn, bi+ advocates provided guidance to the White House/HHS staff on topics such as developing a specific definition for bi+ people, the importance of disaggregating data about bi+ people from LGBTQ+ data sets when conducting research, and the need to fund and support bi+-specific research in order to understand and address disparate health outcomes amongst bi+ people.

This wide range of expertise allowed for a richer conversation about prioritizing the needs of bi+ people and was an opportunity to bridge a gap between local and federal changemakers and discuss shared efforts towards the same goals.

During the uncertainty facing queer communities given the results of the 2024 presidential election, let us hold in our mind the spirit of those present in the room as a reminder that we are stronger as a collective working towards the greater good.

Nicole Holmes (she/they), MPH, is a public health professional with over seven years of experience in health equity, HIV/sexual health, and LGBTQ+ health. Nicole co-authored a manuscript for the Journal of Bisexuality about bi+ people's utilization of health services. Nicole has been featured in USA Today, Vice, and The Consent Guidebook by Erin Tillman.



Books!

Every September, the Boston Bisexual Women's Network (a.k.a. Bi Women Boston) hosts a book swap brunch. We bring books to give away, and we also share book recommendations. Here are recommendations from this year's event:

Shakespeare: The Man Who Pays the Rent, by Judi Dench

The Heaven and Earth Grocery Store, by James McBride

My Beloved Monster: Masha, the Half-wild Rescue Cat Who Rescued Me, by Caleb Carr



She Matters: A Life in Friendships, by Susanna Sonnenberg

The Black Bird Oracle, by Deborah Harkness

The Priory of the Orange Tree and Day of Fallen Night, by Samantha Shannon

A Sense of Shifting: Queer Artist Reshaping Dance, by Yael Malka and Coco Romack

Light from Uncommon Stars, by Ryka Aoki

Other reading resources:

Bipanlibrary.com: The Bi Pan Library is a physical archive and online directory of media created by and about bi, pan, and m-spec people.

If you're looking for alternatives to Amazon for purchasing books, <https://bookshop.org> is an online independent bookseller.

Also, check out the Bi Pan Library at <https://bipanlibrary.com>.

Maggi Rubenstein, a Pioneering Bi Advocate

By Liz Highleyman



Maggi Rubenstein isn't as well-known as some other bisexual activists, but she played a key role in the early bi movement, co-founding numerous organizations and mentoring many younger activists.

"Maggi was a bi+ leader and a trailblazer starting in the 1970s wave of activism," according to longtime bi activist Robyn Ochs. "I think about what courage she must have had. I remember how hard it was when I came out to myself in the 1970s and how it took me five years to share this information with anyone else. It felt nearly impossible to be publicly bisexual. And yet Maggi was one of the brave people out there doing just that."

Maggi, who died in August 2024 at the age of 93, came out as bisexual amid the cultural upheaval of the late 1960s. Born and raised in the San Francisco Bay Area, she initially trained as a nurse. In the early 1970s, she worked with Glide Memorial Church's National Sex Forum and served on the board of the Council on Religion and the Homosexual, likely the first organization to enlist religious leaders in the fight for LGBT rights.

The National Sex Forum gave rise to the Institute for Advanced Study of Human Sexuality, where Maggi was a faculty member and dean. Working with lesbian pioneer Phyllis Lyons and others, she helped develop training standards for sexologists. In 1972, Maggi—dubbed the Godmother of Sex Ed—was one of the co-founders of San Francisco Sex Information, which ran a volunteer hotline and developed in-depth trainings covering

all aspects of sexuality. Recognizing the importance of safer sex in the early years of the HIV epidemic, she and her colleagues held workshops and did outreach at bars and sex clubs.

In 1976, Maggi co-founded the San Francisco Bisexual Center, which offered counseling, discussion groups, social events, a newsletter, and a speakers' bureau. In 1983, she helped start BiPOL, the first bisexual political action group (preceding Boston's BiCEP—the Bisexual Committee Engaging in Politics), followed by the Bay Area Bisexual Network (now the Bay Area Bi+ and Pan Network) in 1987. Over the years, she was a proponent of numerous causes beyond the bi movement, including women's rights and sex workers' rights.

"In 1980, when I came out as bisexual from within the San Francisco lesbian community, Maggi had already been an out and outspoken feminist and bi activist for more than a decade," said Lani Ka'ahumanu, also a co-founder of BiPOL and the Bay Area Bisexual Network. "Whether she was welcomed or not, she spoke up."

Indeed, Maggi became notorious for interjecting, "...and bisexual!" at public forums and organizational meetings when speakers mentioned "L" and "G" but left out the "B."

Maggi remained involved in the bi+ community as it expanded and evolved over the decades, becoming a mentor to successive generations of bisexual, pansexual, transgender, and gender diverse advocates.

A veteran of the early struggles between gay men and lesbians and between lesbians and bisexual women, Maggi recognized that more inclusion meant greater strength for the queer community. "There is sexual fascism in this country, and we all have to get past the dichotomies and struggle together against people who want to kill us," she once said.

Liz Highleyman is a health journalist who lives in San Francisco with her partner and beagles. She was a member of the Boston Bisexual Women's Network in the 1980s and is a co-founder of BiCEP.



CALENDAR



May 2024 Digital Brunch

A special invitation to our readers **EVERYWHERE:**

Please join the Boston Bisexual Women's Network at one (or all) of our digital brunches. We are proud of our community of women (trans and cis) and nonbinary folks, and we would love to make connections across the country and globe. Grab your coffee or tea and some food while we chat about bi+ issues and other fun topics.

Digital brunches will be held on the following dates starting at 1 p.m. EST:

Sun., Dec 8	Sun., Apr 6
Sat., Jan 5	Sat., May 3
Sun., Feb 2	Sun., June 8
Sat., March 1	

Please join us! Info/RSVP: BWQEvents@gmail.com.

(Note: Dates are subject to change. Check BiWomenBoston.org to confirm date.)

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

Bi+ World Meetup 31 January

Join us at the 14th Bi+ World Meetup on January 31 at 4 p.m. EST/ 10 p.m. CEST. Bi+ people everywhere are invited to join us on Zoom. We'll use breakout rooms to give folks an opportunity to join each other in a friendly and free setting. The meeting is in English and is facilitated by Barbara Oud (the Netherlands) and Robyn Ochs (U.S.). Pre-registration is required.

Register at <https://biplus.nl/biplus-world-meetup>.

Metro-Boston Bi+ Women and Nonbinary folks: Keep up with local events. Subscribe to our Google group: <https://groups.google.com/g/biwomenboston>

Check out BiWomenBoston.org for info about upcoming **in-person** events for women with bi+ (bi, pan, fluid, and other nonbinary) sexualities sponsored by the Boston Bisexual Women's Network.

Consider: Pride flags, shoelaces, earrings, or pins from **BiProducts** as stocking stuffers.

What a lovely way to show your LGBTQ+ loved ones that you support them!

Bonus: All proceeds support *Bi Women Quarterly*.

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