

Bisexuals are gay, too

BY TANIA TREPANIER

"Some folks say that bisexuals are not oppressed because at least we are accepted by mainstream society when we are involved with members of the opposite sex. Agreed, society may like us when we show that piece of who we are. But conditional acceptance is not really acceptance at all. When we show our other side, our gay side, we suffer the same discrimination as other gay men and lesbians. We don't lose only half our children in custody battles. When homophobia hits, we don't get just half-fired from our jobs (put on half-time, perhaps?). We don't get just half-gaybashed when we are out with our same-sex lovers. ("Oh please, only hit me on my left side. You see, I'm bisexual!"). We, too, get discriminated against because we are gay."

— Robyn Ochs

Since I came out as a bisexual woman a number of years ago, I have been the recipient of "confessions" over and over. Straight, gay and lesbian friends and acquaintances have shared their feelings, fantasies, and experiences with me, saying, "Oh, there was this time..." and "Well, I did have this incredible attraction..." This leads me to think that the categories gay, lesbian and straight are not as rigid as they appear.

Bisexuality has often been in-

visible as a sexuality. Until very recently, bisexuality has been even less visible as a sexual identity. Often times, those who embrace bisexuality as an identity have sparked suspicion and distrust in both the queer and straight communities.

Perhaps one of the most misunderstood sexual identities, bisexuality is difficult to define. Some say that we are all bisexual, or that we all have "bisexual potential". Others say that bisexuality does not really exist, because at any moment in time, one is either homosexual or heterosexual. Stereotypes abound: bisexuals are promiscuous, non-monogamous, fence-sitters, going through a phase, carriers of AIDS, or confused.

On top of experiencing heterosexism, bisexuals also may experience monosexism, that is the discrimination by those who love one gender against those who love both. Although in recent years many gay organizations have included bisexuals in their names, there is still a great deal of pressure for bisexuals to be "one or the other". Bisexuals, like gays and lesbians, are often considered "freaks" by many straight people, as in, "Let's go to Reflections so we can see them up close."

What being bisexual means to me is that I have had and continue to have attractions and relationships with people regardless of their gender. When it comes to love, there are so many other things that are more important

to me than gender. I can't imagine living or experiencing attraction or desire any other way.

But it would be naive to say that gender doesn't matter. In the context of a homophobic and sexist world it does matter. When I am with my same sex partner, homophobia is just as real. When I am with my opposite sex partner, I cannot forget my friends, my ex-lovers and future lovers and pretend to be straight. That would negate my lived past and my possible future.

Someone said to me the other day, "How can you do it? You are so courageous. I am so glad I'm heterosexual because I don't know if I could deal with it." Can you imagine someone saying, "I'm so glad I'm a man and not a woman." Or saying, "I'm so glad I'm white and not black or brown. How can you do it, how can you be so courageous?"

There is a point at which the experiences of homophobia and biphobia add up and take me beyond courage. It's about outrage and pain. People in our society ridicule, beat up on, neglect, discriminate, hate and fear people who love people of the same gender. Whether my lover, partner, or date is a man or a woman, I cannot forget this reality and I continue to be part of the struggle to end this kind, and other kinds, of discrimination.

When I let others know about my capacity to love both women and men, I have been perceived as going through a phase, vying for attention, being part of a fad, or undertaking an intellectual exercise. But what I'm doing is describing my desires, my politics, my life. And I, along with thousands of other queer people, want respect. And I want it now.

OUT AT THE NEWSSTAND

by Sunil Sarwal

It was called *Anything that Moves*, a magazine for and by the bisexual community. My kind of thing. I hid in my coat while I quickly thumbed through the Gay and Lesbian section in a local magazine store. "Don't let anyone see me... don't let anyone see me... don't let anyone see me..."

The mantra of the closeted queer. I couldn't find it. Maybe I had better (gulp) ask.

"Umm, ahh, umm... do-do you have," I leaned forward so my whisper wouldn't carry, "Anything that Moves?"

"What section?" "Gay and Lesbian." I mouthed the words and wished I had learned sign language.

So she thumbed through the G&L section again while I vowed to get a coat with a higher collar. She didn't find it either and, relieved, I turned to go. "Hey Bruce!" Oh god, she's yelling. Please don't yell.

A man at the other end of the suddenly very crowded store looked our way. "Yeah?"

"Do we have, Anything that Moves?" the too helpful clerk called out.

The store became very quiet. "What section?" he called back. "Gay and Lesbian!"

The rest of the words were drowned out by the sound of me turning red. Guess I'm out now. Good thing I didn't ask for the other magazine on my list: *Slippery When Wet*.

RULES

We need rules in society. Yes, I agree with that. We need order, or we would be uncivilized. Without rules we would Lie, steal, murder or harm someone else. Hey check out this rule... One man should not love another man. This is 'Homophobia'. Let's ponder the greatness of this rule.

It destroys individuals. It rips apart families. It tears at the fabric of society.

Homophobia belongs to a set of rules that makes boys rough, and girls soft. Homophobia causes a father To beat his five year old son when his Granny paints his nails A boy who paints his nails would be... An unruly boy. 14 year old Joseph's black eye is the result of homophobia We have to set Joseph straight. Violence will break our bones, but keep our rules intact.

Homophobia causes marriages of convenience It forces a woman to marry a man she doesn't love. And lie about who she loves. And hide in fear. It makes him join the Priesthood For the wrong reasons. Homophobia makes men beat men Because they hate their own sexuality. Yes, homophobic abusers are victims of homophobia.

It causes the sexually oriented to become sexually disoriented Disguised, disgraced, disowned. It steals people's lives away from them. Homophobia murders guests on the Jenny Jones show (and gets away with it).

Homophobia brainwashes... It convinces people that being gay is worse than being dead And that being a father of a gay son is worse than being dead. "I could deal with my son if he had a terminal illness... I can't deal with him being gay"

Homophobia tells us to unlove Untrust, unlive, undo. Fight, but don't love. Throw things around the room Pull the damn phone out of the wall Scream and yell But don't love. Murdering would be better than loving Why? Love between the same sex is uncivilized It will lead to the demise of society That's why we must lie, steal, murder, Now...before it's too late.

Homophobia victimizes all of us It brainwashes, makes us grieve, kills our souls. It steals, murders and lets us harm one another Thank God for rules. Thank God for Homophobia Without it, we would be uncivilized.

— Someone you know.

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