

## A Braided Stream: The Life of a Rural Radical Bi Transcestor

By Mary Jo Klinker

On May 20, 2021, JamieAnn Meyers, one of my dearest friends and a rural radical bi transcestor, passed away. It was an honor to witness and learn from her gorgeous openness, her gifts of knowledge, and her unbridled queer eccentricity. She was a bi troublemaker. At the start of the pandemic, she learned of her ALS diagnosis. We sat down and started recording her life. Trans and queer liberation were her life praxis. Some of these lessons I felt were critical to archive for this Bi+ History discussion.

She was covered in geological-themed tattoos of her life journeys. When we met in 2013, she was a retired professor of geology, and she was the first faculty member to transition (and very likely the first out Bi+ faculty member). During her time teaching, she fought to make so much possible for future LGBTQIA+ faculty, staff, and students. This was her ethic of care. In Hil Malatino's 2020 *Trans Care*, he examines the importance of such collective care ethics in ensuring liberation, stating: "This is about a certain kind of faithfulness and certain kind of obligation: about what we owe each other... a commitment to showing up for all of those folks engaged in the necessary and integral care work that supports trans lives." (Malatino 72) Some of these stories only brush the surface of how she committed to that care as a bi transcestor.

Our first presentation together was in 2015 for the BECAUSE Conference hosted by the Bisexual Organizing Project, a presentation we called "Out in the Corn" about building bi-inclusive and pleasure-affirming rural queer community. We bemoaned how hard it was to find other bi+ femmes and offered space for intergenerational storytelling. JamieAnn WAS my rural queer community. We published our conference discussion in the *Bi Women Quarterly*. That discussion turned into our shared pas-



*Exist*, by Shady Kimzey and TJ Mundy. See page 11 and 20 for more of their artwork and artists' statement.

sion to use our platforms to teach social change. We built two classes together at the university for senior community members on LGBTQIA+ identities. JamieAnn's aims were clear the first day of every class: she wanted to make sure that elders in our community could protect LGBTQIA+ youth fiercely, so they could survive and thrive in ways her generation had been denied.

JamieAnn saved so many lives with trans care and by being authentically herself. For instance, her solo performance of "First Person: A Life in Transition" in 2016 in our rural town made LGBTQIA+ students feel safe to share their stories and met an elder doing art for social change. She also dedicated much of her retirement to building bridges in faith communities, by offering personal stories and inviting conversation to create safer spaces. All of these are examples of her promise to building bi and trans safety.

In documenting these life stories, I asked her, if, like gender and sexuality (which she always described as a spectrum), she appreciated the spectrum of her life experiences. She responded by explaining a queer scientific metaphor: "I've talked about braided streams and I have struggled understanding the water itself, it's one water but it flows in different channels. They join and they separate. They join and they separate." She went on to explain that fusing "together all of the rivers that run through my mind



From the archives of Lani Ka'ahumanu: a sticker from a bi subgroup of Queer Nation in San Francisco that called themselves UBIQUITOUS.

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## Dear Reader,

I really wasn't sure how people would respond to the topic of Bi+ History, but I'm so happy that we've got contributions from across the U.S. as well as from bi+ communities in Australia and Germany! This issue has a wide variety of articles and interviews noting significant developments within the bi+ community as well as insightful ruminations about people's own personal histories. Plus, gorgeous artwork and poetry that complements the theme.

Sprinkled throughout are historic moments from the 1983 Democratic Convention in San Francisco, to the first bisexual contingent marching in Boston's Pride in 1984 (and BBWN's founding in 1983), from the erasure of bisexuals at the 1990 Northampton Pride, to the first queer contingent in Boston's St. Patrick's Day Parade in 1992 (which included bisexual leadership). And other tidbits.

Bi erasure is strong. Often the things our community has accomplished do not get recognized, honored, or commemorated by the greater LGBTQ+ community. Our own bi+ activism has gone through phases of growth spurts and visibility, followed by silence and regrouping. So often we feel we should be farther along, and then it's effing amazing that we've done what we've done with so few resources!

Angel Gravelly's words on page 11 truly resonate for me, "Even as the scars from bi-negativity sting me, I can withstand the hurt because I know our identities are not contingent on who monosexism claims us to be. I know who I am and who we are as bi+ people because bi+ history tells me the truth." If we can hold tightly to what we know to be true about our bi+ community, then we can nurture ourselves and others around us who need our bi+ supportive spaces.

*Dear Reader, continued on p. 26*

**Jordyn, Grace, & Maggie  
read *BWQ*. Send a picture  
of yourself reading *BWQ* to  
[biwomeneditor@gmail.com](mailto:biwomeneditor@gmail.com).  
Be creative!**



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

### Fall 2023: Bi+ Joy

What experiences make you feel euphoric and affirmed in your bi+ identity? How has community belonging (or the struggle to find belonging) influenced your journey? How does your bi+ joy intersect with your other identities? Review books, shows, and other media that have wooed you. Share your poetry, essays, artwork, and other sparks of bi+ joy. Submit by **August 1, 2023**.

### Winter 2024: Bi+ World Wide Web

The internet can be a place of community and love, as well as potential danger and fear. We invite your thoughts, reflections, experiences, and dreams related to the internet in bi+ people's lives. How has the internet, including social media, been a place of discovery and communion? How has it provided escape from the "offline" world? How has it been lacking as a place of safety and support? What potential changes would make it a positive and useful space for all bi+ people? Submit by **November 1, 2023**.

Submission guidelines are online at [biwomenquarterly.com](http://biwomenquarterly.com). Send your submissions and suggestions for future themes to [biwomeneditor@gmail.com](mailto:biwomeneditor@gmail.com).

Note: You are welcome to use a pseudonym, if you prefer.

We are an all-volunteer organization (though we do pay our interns!). Want to proofread, edit submissions, host one of our monthly brunches, help us with social media, fundraising, our Etsy shop (BiProducts.Etsy.com), or our website? If you're a student, consider an internship. If you'd like to help out, please send an email to Robyn at [biwomeneditor@gmail.com](mailto:biwomeneditor@gmail.com).

*Bi Women Quarterly* 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: Senator Janet Rice, Melbourne, Australia

Interviewed by Sally Goldner

Senator Janet Rice and community activist Sally Goldner sat down together in Melbourne, Australia, for this conversation on March 24, 2023.

**Sally Goldner:** I'm speaking with bi-con (bi icon) Senator Janet Rice, a loyal supporter of bi+ and LGBTIQ+ people, on the lands of Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation here on this big island that is now called Australia. Janet, tell us how you've gotten to this point, where you are now, and where you would like our communities to be in the future.

**Janet Rice:** I grew up in Altona, a working-class and multicultural suburb to the west of Melbourne. My mother was a teacher, my father an engineer. I'm the middle of five kids, and I had a bit of a niche in the family of being the "responsible, good one," something I got lots of positive feedback for. Both of my parents were actively involved in community activities, and I had a very supportive and loving home environment.

I went to uni, studying science. I learned about climate change in 1980, when I was 20, and thought: "This is bloody serious. The world needs to take action about this." I decided then that after graduating, rather than becoming a climate scientist, I was going to be a campaigner and activist. A significant event during my university years was the [Franklin River blockade](#), a massive environmental campaign that we won. Understanding the problems that the world was facing and participating in a successful campaign gave me a sense of agency: if large numbers of people work together and run a good, strategic campaign, we can make progress.

When I decided that I wanted to be a campaigner, I looked for work as a climate activist, but those jobs didn't exist yet in the environmental movement. I found myself working to protect the forests of far eastern Victoria. They are among the most wonderful in the world: huge, magnificent, and still underrecognized. We succeeded in getting some of them protected as national parks, but there was still ongoing logging of the other forests. Then, basically, I got fed up with lobbying the big parties in Australia: the Liberal and Labor parties. This was when Bob Brown and Christine Milne had just formed the Greens in Tasmania. I decided we needed the Greens in Victoria, so I threw myself into being one of the founders of the Greens 31 years ago, in 1992. My focus shifted to building the party. We started off in Victoria with—I think it was seventeen members—and it's been a big journey ever since.

**SG:** You're a political campaigner, but of course you're a whole person.



**JR:** Yes. My two kids were born in the early 1990s, and Penny, my wife, had a massive career as a climate scientist. We were juggling activism, work, kids, community. I was working mostly as a consultant at that stage. I decided, with the Greens growing and my kids getting older, that I would throw my hat in the ring to be an elected representative. I

stood for Council here in Maribyrnong. The first time in 1997 was very much a trial. And then I ran a pretty serious campaign in 2000 and lost by 26 votes. I was elected to Council in 2003—20 years ago this month.

I was on Council for six years, which is about as long as you can do it. It takes a lot of time and entails huge financial sacrifices. I was fortunate that Penny was earning a good income as a climate scientist, so I was able to work part time and be a Councillor pretty much full time. Then I decided to stand at both state and federal levels. I threw my hat in the ring for a senate seat in 2007 and in 2010. I was preselected for the Greens, then elected in 2013, and took my seat in the Senate in 2014.

**SG:** That's the political journey, but let's catch up on something of huge relevance: the wonderful Penny and her journey, and how that has affected your journey as a whole person.

**JR:** As I said, I married Penny in 1986 when I was 26, a very long time ago. We were the classic white-bread, middle class, not quite white-picket-fence family with two kids. As Penny's career took off, she was doing more overseas travel and her gender issues—which she had done her best to stick in a box and say "no" to—kept jumping out. Penny realized that her gender issues were not going to go away. On her overseas trips she was buying and wearing clothes and wigs and then, before returning home, throwing them away and feeling guilty about the wasted expense. She also felt bad that she had this huge secret that she hadn't shared with me. Our relationship was such that she and I shared *everything*, but there was this big thing I didn't know about her. One night, a couple of days before she was about to go off on another overseas trip, she handed me a letter when we were lying in bed, and we talked all night.

**SG: What was it like for you to read that letter?**

**JR:** It was overwhelming. The biggest thing was the shock. She described herself as a crossdresser at that stage, and there was a sense that this sort of thing doesn't happen to normal people. But for me, the biggest thing was that there was this enormous thing in Penny's life she had kept secret from me. I remember being asked, "Do you feel betrayed?" No, I didn't feel betrayed. I just felt so sad and upset for her that she'd had this huge secret. She had talked to nobody before that night about her gender. I think this was in 1998, about five years before she transitioned. She was 40. Penny did her best to repress it and lived, basically, in her head. She hated her physical body and did her best to disassociate herself from it, which is not a healthy way to live.

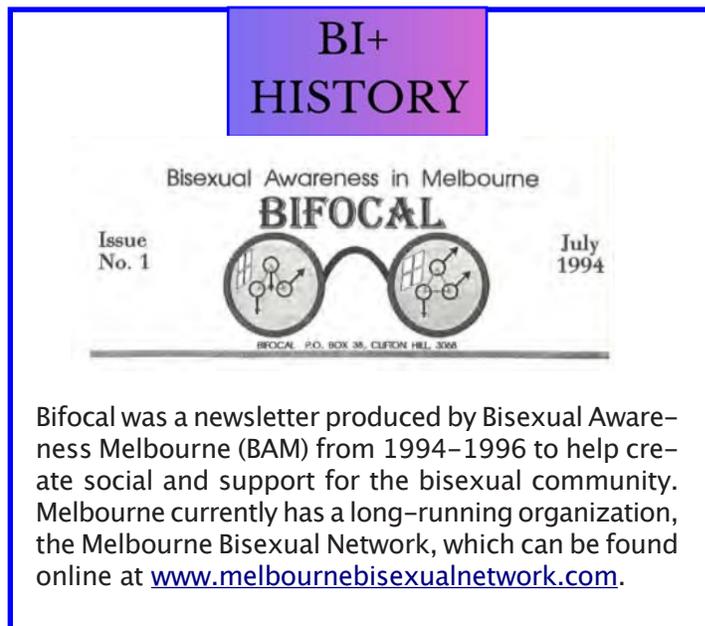
The next day, we went out and bought her some clothes and sent her off on her trip with women's clothes in her suitcase. That was near the time when you first met Penny. She joined Seahorse (a social and support group for the trans and gender diverse communities) and met you and other people like her, but she was still feeling she didn't want to go further with her transition, saying she was happy to keep it in the box, to "just" be a crossdresser if it was going to affect our relationship and if it was going to impact our love for each other.

There was a turning point when we went out dancing together. Penny was in girl mode, and I looked at her and I thought, "Oh, I find her really attractive," and I told her that I can love Penny like I'd loved her previously. That was a huge lid-off-the-box volcano moment for her because of all those feelings that she'd kept repressed because it was going to impact her relationship with me was freed. Suddenly it was okay to go forward.

**SG: And for you, was there a realization that you weren't just a heterosexual woman only attracted to men, but rather you were attracted to people regardless of gender?**

**JR:** One of the things about heteronormativity is that I had assumed I was heterosexual because even if you were attracted to both, if you were attracted to blokes you were heterosexual and repressed anything else. That's what you were. At various times, I'd found myself thinking that women are attractive as well. But then, I was in a long-term loving monogamous relationship and so that's irrelevant, you know? So, it was a realization to find Penny attractive as a woman, as a person. I did find her attractive and her gender didn't matter.

**SG: So, you and Penny were, in terms of your relationship, flying higher, so to speak. Your political career was rolling and then Penny affirms her new gender identity and you're being more authentic in your own sense of self. How did that all go when you put it all together? How did people respond?**



Bifocal was a newsletter produced by Bisexual Awareness Melbourne (BAM) from 1994–1996 to help create social and support for the bisexual community. Melbourne currently has a long-running organization, the Melbourne Bisexual Network, which can be found online at [www.melbournebisexualnetwork.com](http://www.melbournebisexualnetwork.com).

**JR:** We're now in the early 2000s. As somebody who is aware of the connection between the personal and the political, and someone who'd been a political campaigner on a range of other issues, I realized gender and sexuality was another really needed area that I could throw myself into as a campaigner. Looking back, it wasn't something that I had felt strongly connected with at first. There was this gradual realization that these issues were very personal to me as well as being a political injustice that needed to be tackled.

**SG: You've given so many great speeches as part of the long campaign for marriage equality, for marriage to be between two legally consenting adults, regardless of gender identity, sexual orientation, or sex characteristics. I remember one on Celebrate Bisexuality Day with you and a bisexual flag in Parliament, and then your speech in November 2017, when the bill was finally passed after being approved by a postal referendum by 61.6%. I remember I was outside the State Library on November 15, 2017.**

**JR:** It was my youngest kid's birthday. I was in Canberra so I didn't get to be at the huge celebrations outside the State Library. Relief was the overwhelming emotion. In the final year of the campaign, Penny had realized that she had a role to play. Penny was a private person, much happier with me being up on the stage, and not that keen on talking about herself, yet we joined together and were a very prominent couple campaigning for marriage equality. We were very invested in it, which is why, when the results came through, it was a huge sense of relief. Things were going to change.

**SG: You and Penny spoke out about the fact that marriage equality was needed to stop forced divorce for trans and gender diverse people, and some people of intersex experience. It**

was just that extra factor that heightened the ludicrousness of the situation. It was just so stupid.

*JR:* Exactly. Penny could get a passport with her female gender and female name. But if she had tried to change her birth certificate, we would have had to divorce. So ludicrous!

***SG:* I'm trying my hardest to be an objective interviewer, I'm BI-ased, so I have to say I loved that speech [in Parliament, November 2017] because you put bi and trans people up at the start, and that was just so important.**

*JR:* Yes, there was the realization that mainstream campaigning had very much focused on gay and lesbian people. It was an implicit attitude of "We don't want to talk about trans people or bi people, essentially because they haven't got much support in the community, and it might muddy the waters and erode support for us," which was just discriminatory and hurtful and harmful. We were all already being harmed by having to have a public debate about our rights, yet some of the campaigners weren't acknowledging the rights of trans or bi people.

***SG:* Absolutely, which brings us to the next question: What's been your experience of being an out bi+ legislator in our national Parliament? What are the pros, the cons? What superpowers does it bring being a bi+ legislator?**

*JR:* I don't know about superpowers, but there's certainly the sense of being there as a prominent person and actually saying that bi+ people exist and that things aren't black-and-white binary. I find it extraordinary that there are a dozen or so out gay or lesbian legislators, but I am the only out bi+ legislator in the Australian Parliament. I know that there are others—there *must* be others—but the prejudice against bi+ people means that they don't feel that it's something that they can be out about. Being visible is a big thing that I can do.

***SG:* It absolutely is needed. It's harder for bi+ people to be out. In the past, sadly, bi+ people haven't always had the support of cisgender gay and lesbian people. Mardi Gras in Sydney (their Pride celebration) had a policy up until 2000 of calling bi people before a panel and saying, "Are you going**

*World, continued on p. 6*

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## Making Connections at Australia's Better Together Conference

*By Lou and Isabelle*

**LOU:** I have no idea how I heard about Better Together, Australia's LGBTIQ+ Conference, but I know that the moment I heard about it, I needed to attend. I'm Lou and I'm a palliative care nurse in Australia. I believe that the work we do is important and meaningful, heart-centered and holistic. I also believe that many of the processes and methods of engagement that we employ lack nuance due to the conservative, heteronormative model within which we practice. I'm also a 42-year-old cis woman—ticking the heteronormative boxes of husband and two children—who discovered less than two years ago that I was not, in fact, straight.

Relatively speaking, I'm still a "Baby Bi+." After coming out to my husband and a small group of online friends at the time of my "Bisexual Awakening," I experienced an initial surge of joy and belonging. I didn't have a queer community on the ground though. As far as I knew, all of my friends were straight, and as I adored my husband and our marriage, I didn't feel that my newly discovered sexual identity had any practical relevance in my life. I wrote at the time, "On one hand, it's been a mere two and a half weeks. On the other hand, it's been over two decades. Depending on how I look at it, my bisexual awakening has had very little impact on my life. Depending on how I look at it, it has been a life-changing discovery."

As the months ticked by, so too did my labels change. In a constant state of flux and self-exploration, I've gathered nuance and micro-labels along the way, and these days if pressed, I identify somewhere in the demi/panromantic realm. Mostly I just tell people I'm queer.

At the same time, I've also started to doubt myself. In quiet mo-

ments when the voice in my head steals the mic, I've wondered if I just made it all up. I wonder if I decided I was bi because all the cool kids were; if I was experiencing FOMO as the only straight in the (online) village and so grabbed the closest label off the shelf and ran with it. The voice shouts "being queer online doesn't count, it's what you do in real life that matters." It tells me I'm not Queer Enough. Not Out Enough. It tells me that demi/panromantic is basically just the same as wanting to sit on the couch and cuddle your best friends and if that isn't straight girl behavior then what is?

I volunteered at Better Together to connect with my community, to expand my knowledge of the health needs and experiences of the LGBTIQ+ humans with whom I work, and to grow my understanding of the complex, gut-wrenching, and heart-soaring ways in which we intersect as dynamic, complicated, messy, beautiful humans. If I'm honest with myself, I also volunteered because I didn't think I was queer enough to justify the cost of the ticket, and volunteering gave me a robust philanthropic justification for being there. Regardless of the why, I made it, and I was not disappointed.

Better Together is presented by The Equality Project – an Australian LGBTIQ+ charity that brings LGBTIQ+ people and allies together to promote a better, more just, and fairer society for all Australians. This year's conference saw 848 people meeting by Karrawirra Parri (River Torrens) on Kaurana Country (Adelaide) for two days, to hear 139 speakers over 93 sessions.

*Lou and Isabelle, continued on p. 27*

to sabotage our organization?” and then, still—even after a logical case was made by the bi+ person—denying them membership. It’s something they still have not apologized for. It’s something that doesn’t seem to be well known. I suppose my question from all of that is how do you feel about Mardi Gras and—this year—World Pride, when it still seems like LGBTQ+ organizations are gay men with a bit of lesbian and some letters added on? And, what can Rainbow communities do to start doing better internally?

**JR:** Probably because of my standing and status and the respect that people have for me, I feel included—and probably also because I hang out a lot with bi+ and trans people, including at Mardi Gras. At this last Mardi Gras, which I went to, I joined Dykes on Bikes for the first time, which was so exciting. And lots of trans women were there as part of Dykes on Bikes. There was that sense of solidarity. Other times, I have marched with the bi+ float. I’ve sought out the parts of the Mardi Gras celebrations that I feel supported and included in. I hadn’t realized that history of Mardi Gras, which is just awful. I think things have shifted and are shifting, in terms of breaking down those binaries, trying to make people fit in this box or that box. There is greater acceptance of our fluidity—that gender and sexuality are on a spectrum.

**SG:** There is obviously still a distance to travel. Even as we’re having this chat, it’s only been hours since World Athletics excluded trans and intersex women, and there have been anti-trans protests here in Australia. And of course, we’re seeing anti-trans, anti-drag-queen types of laws pile up in various states in the U.S., in differing degrees in parts of the United Kingdom, and extremism in places like Poland, Hungary, and Uganda. How do we push forward?

**JR:** We’ve got to keep calling it out. We need better vilification [hate speech] laws as well so that when the transphobic protests across Australia in the last week—which have been completely outnumbered and drowned out by pro-trans rallies—the vitriolic and hate-filled vilification that has been allowed through those rallies cannot be allowed to continue because it really pollutes the public discourse and does such damage. This isn’t free speech; this is vilification. And we need to continue to be outspoken and to campaign, and for our allies to step up as well. Trans and gender diverse people are under attack now and, as an ally, I feel a strong responsibility to speak out every time I possibly can, speaking up for trans and gender diverse people, and to recognize the huge impact that this transphobic hate speech is having.

**SG:** Thank you for your allyship. Another way cisgender

people can support transgender people is to talk to more cisgender people and say, “Look, this is what’s going on, some of the stuff you’re hearing is just lies.” And you can write to your local legislators.

**JR:** These are small things but big things. I’m now in a new relationship with a wonderful woman in Canberra and she was telling me about seeing all the stuff in Canberra this week. She works for the ACT Department of Health, and she just made sure she picked up the phone and spoke to one of the directors there and said, we need to have something that goes out from the Department expressing support for trans and gender diverse people. So, their weekly newsletter that went out recognized the impact of the horrible anti-trans stuff that’s going on and said, “We support you.”

**SG:** Janet, I want to say that after the very difficult scenario of Penny’s death in 2019, I’m glad you’ve found a new happiness. Is there anything else, while you’ve got the “microphone,” you’d like to add?

**JR:** The main thing is I just really want to say that my love goes out to all bi+ people around the world. Just know that I’m there in the Australian Parliament. I really want you to know that you’ve got me in your corner, and I will keep on fighting for you. I’ve learned from my activism over the last 45 years that it is so important to be looking after yourself, pulling back when necessary to recharge your own batteries, and to have a sense of being connected with good people across the world who are doing stuff. It’s not all about what I can do—it’s what we, as a movement can do. I know at some point I’ll be passing the baton on to somebody else. Knowing that your work is just part of a movement of people working together gives you strength and the ability to realize if you need to step back for your own well-being, that’s okay.

*Sally Goldner is an LGBTQ+ diversity educator, speaker, life coach, and consultant. Her 20-plus year involvement in Victoria’s LGBTQ+ communities include being a founding member of Transgender Victoria, co-facilitating Transfamily, presenting three CR Community Radio’s “Out of the Pan” shows, and Bisexual Alliance Victoria Treasurer.*



# How To Make a Bisexual Talk Show Last 20 Years

By Emerson Rice

Starting your very own talk show can be a daunting task, but with the right people, passion, and message, you can create a successful show that lasts a generation. Just follow these simple steps, as proven by *Bi Cities!*, a talk show by, for, and about the bi+ community and its friends and allies that has lasted over 20 years. Along the way, it has garnered awards and accolades including Producer of the Year Award from the Saint Paul Neighborhood Network, and Community Organization Community Recognition Award from the Bisexual Organizing Project.

Most recently, Lisa Vecoli, the interim director of the Jean-Nickolaus Tretter Collection in Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Studies (the largest LGBTQ-specific archival repository in the upper Midwest, housed at the University of Minnesota) approached *BiCities!* with a grant to digitize all its episodes for their collection. On Valentine's Day 2022, over 300 episodes became a part of the Tretter Collection, making it the largest repository of archival bi video material in the world.

## 1. Find the Right Host

Finding the right host is crucial for the success of any talk show. For Bill Bursleson, author of *BAmerica: Myths, Truths, and Struggles of an Invisible Community*, finding the hosts was a pretty simple feat. He wanted to connect with the Bi+ community by taking advantage of cable television and brought the concept to Dr. Marge Charmoli, a local bisexual activist and psychologist. Marge suggested, "Maybe we should just do an interview show."

Meanwhile, Kathy Shane was pitching the show to Dr. Anita Kozan, a member of the Bisexual Organizing Project board. Anita and Marge were life partners at the time and, upon learning that both had been approached about doing the show, they decided it would be fun to host it together.

So, *Bi Cities!*, a show to increase bi visibility and educate the community about bi issues was born. Its name was Anita's brainchild (a play on bisexuality and its location in the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota).

## 2. Assemble a Crew

Assembling an awesome crew helps episodes run smoothly. *Bi Cities* began with a small team of volunteers: Bill as director, Anita and Marge as hosts, Tom Lysfjord as lighting and floor manager, and Jim Wright on cameras. Their first filming took place in September 2002 at Minneapolis Telecommunications Network, and they hit the ground running.

Within a year or so others followed, including Paul Craven as the sound engineer and Gregg Lind, Charlie Copper, and musician Future Lisa on cameras.

The early crew of *Bi Cities* was hardworking and welcoming. They were always willing to teach anyone how to use a camera and were open to new people joining the team. They had a deep understanding of the issues facing the bi community and had a lot of fun working together in the booth, calling it "play time for adults."

Marge and Anita's personal relationship ended, and they began hosting the show separately in 2005. In 2007, Bill moved on to other endeavors. Faced with a decision, Anita and Marge be-



Marge Charmoli interviewing Neal Aasve, organizer for *The Visibility Impact Fund*, for a *Bi Cities!* episode.

lieved that the show must go on and became co-producers. They resumed co-hosting the show under the direction of Erica Rogers who had been working on cameras up until then. They moved the filming location to the Saint Paul Neighborhood Network (SPNN) studios in St. Paul. Throughout the next few years, second generation crew members including Kathleen Culhane, Rosemary K, Robin Kinney, and 12-year-old Daniel Thomas-Commins came on board. They remained at that

location until 2015 when they went on hiatus while SPNN's new building was under construction. During that time Erica and Robin left the show. The search for a new director began and would take a few years.

In 2018, *Bi Cities* moved into the new SPNN building, kicking off its third generation of crew members including Sally Corbet from the Bisexual Organizing Project, AJ and Mark Demulling, and Emerson Rice. This period of production was cut short due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and it seemed the show would not continue.

Sadly, Tom Lysfjord, the longest-tenured crew member of *Bi Cities!*, died unexpectedly in April 2022. At a memorial luncheon for Tom with crew members and alumni, attendees decided to get the show running again, kicking off its current iteration. Erica and Robin rejoined, with Erica resuming her role as director. Jillian LaCombe, Jennifer Cox, and Annie Zemble joined in the fall and *Bi Cities!* resumed filming on site at the BECAUSE conference in October 2022. Every episode going forward includes a memorial to Tom, who was an integral and beloved part of the crew and the reason the show is still running today.

*Emerson, continued on p. 8*

### 3. Interview Impactful People

Finding people with a strong message and story is imperative in making a great talk show. In the Bi+ community, it's easy, as there are plenty of stories that have yet to be told. The crew began finding guests through their personal networks and attending events in the community. Tom brought Bi Cities! business cards wherever he went to publicize the show. Eventually, prospective guests began to contact Marge and Anita to be interviewed.

The hosts aimed to find bi pioneers, luminaries, and allies who had compelling stories. From the beginning, they made a point



Editor's Note: I asked Lani Ka'ahumanu to give me a caption for this photo from 1984 and she gave me this wonderful story with insider details of early bi+ activism.

During the 1984 National Democratic Convention in San Francisco there were two protest stages across the street from the Moscone Convention Center. BiPOL's Alan Rockway, long-time bi activist, secured a stage permit and it was decided that Lani would run for Vice President to get more visibility with the media. Bi-anne Feinstein imitated the mayor (Diane) and welcomed the group and presented Lani with the key to the city. On the stage is Dannielle Raymond, Lani's daughter, speaking about the right of teenagers to have information about sex, sexuality, and birth control. She was one of 18 speakers addressing various issues including lack of HIV funding/research, queer families, the ERA, employment, housing, etc. plus performers.

The first Gay and Lesbian March on a Democratic Convention was held the same day. The bi group had originally reached out to the GL group to see if they could work together but the GL group said they didn't need the bisexuals' help. The bi group planners had arranged for a water/soda booth for its own contingent, hoping it would be larger than it turned out to be, but the GL group had not planned well, so when their marchers arrived at the convention center, they were all thirsty and ended up buying all the rest of the drinks from the bi booth. Lani said it was their most successful fundraiser ever!

of highlighting diversity, intersectionality, and inclusivity. While the focus remained on increasing bi visibility, they brought in guests of all sexual orientations, gender identities, racial backgrounds, and ability statuses. They interviewed activists, educators, politicians, radio personalities, religious leaders, atheists, actors, writers, musicians, magazine editors, athletic directors, experts in human sexuality, health care providers, parents, kids, partners/spouses, and community leaders. Some notable guests included Dr. Fritz Klein, psychiatrist, a founding father of the bi movement and author of *The Bisexual Option* (1978); Robyn Ochs, international bi+ activist, speaker, and author; local bi pioneers Scott Bartell, Gary Lingen, and Lou Hoffman; Jean-Nikolaus Tretter, historian who amassed an archival collection of books, letters, and memorabilia that became the aforementioned University of Minnesota's Tretter Collection; and Andrea Jenkins, the first openly transgender Black woman elected to public office in the U.S.

They are among the ranks of many LGBTQIA+ individuals and allies who have found their voices and been heard telling their stories and concerns in *Bi Cities!* interviews.

### 4. Change People's Lives

By putting new and important stories out into the world, you can change lives. Erica, the show's director, did just that when she took *Bi Cities!* from broadcasting exclusively on cable access television to being available on the internet via Blip TV, which allowed people from all over the world to access the show. It was 2010 and the *Bi Cities!* crew was out to eat when Erica pulled out her laptop and showed the crew a *Bi Cities!* episode on Blip TV. The first interview uploaded discussed the upcoming BECAUSE Conference in the Twin Cities.

Two months later, the crew was at the BECAUSE Conference and Tom, always reaching out to help people feel welcome, spoke to a woman from India who was standing alone. Tom asked, "How'd you hear about BECAUSE?" and she said, "I was looking online and found a video (*Bi Cities!* episode) about it. In India, no one is openly bisexual. You can get killed for that. My husband is the only person who knows that I am bi and we have never met other bi people. I traveled for three days to get here to meet other bi people."

On another occasion, Tom was at a local marketplace when a young trans man walked up to him and asked, "Are you part of that show *Bi Cities!*?" Tom said yes. The man said, "You saved my life. I was watching television one night with a gun to my head trying to decide if I should pull the trigger. Your show came on and I saw someone like me and I knew I wasn't alone."

"Who sees *Bi Cities!*? We don't know," say Marge and Anita. Reruns of *Bi Cities!* appear on SPNN at various times during the day and are also online. Through the power of representation and accessibility, *Bi Cities!* has been able to change people's lives for the better. This is an important aspect to consider when creating a successful talk show. By making sure your content is

inclusive and easily accessible, you can have a significant impact on your audience.

## 5. Change Your Own Lives

After working with a crew of hardworking people, interviewing amazing people, and changing people's lives for 20 years, you might just notice that you have a successful talk show. More importantly, though, you'll realize that your own life has changed.

Not only has the *Bi Cities!* crew had the opportunity to bring important and impactful conversations to the bi+ community and its allies, but they've also formed a unique and intergenerational family through the show, spanning from Gen Z to the Baby Boomers. They've heard stories that have changed them and developed relationships that made them whole.

As they continue to produce episodes and share them on the internet, they're excited to see how *Bi Cities!* can continue to reach and educate new audiences. "Twenty years later, and we're back on track," said Anita when asked about what's next for

*Bi Cities!* Marge added, "We're going to continue to increase bi visibility and educate people about who we are and what it means to be a glorious part of this community." *Bi Cities!* is grateful to acknowledge the many contributions of Bonnie Schumacher, Associate Director/Director of Programs, and the staff at St. Paul Neighborhood Network for their years of instruction, accommodations, encouragement, and recognition of the importance of *Bi Cities!* to their community programs. New *Bi Cities!* episodes began airing on SPNN in February 2023. They will soon become available online.

Starting a talk show may seem daunting, but with the right hosts, crew, and guests, the impact can be life changing.

For more information and to watch *Bi Cities!*, visit our Link Tree: <https://linktr.ee/BiCities>.

*Emerson Rice is a videographer and crew member on Bi Cities!*

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## A Prayer Beyond Binaries

By Rev. Lindasusan V. Ulrich

For those who choose "and" in a world that insists on "or"  
For those who struggle against invisibility  
Even when it means sprinkling your own head with ashes  
For those who will not accept dismissal and diminishment of your pain  
Instead naming it with precision as callous disregard  
For those who bring your whole self to the work of liberation  
Whether or not it fits conveniently into checkboxes  
Or someone else's definition  
For those who relentlessly widen the circle for others  
Including those who would shut you out

This is a prayer praising your beautiful spirit and your courage  
This is a prayer honoring your fierceness and your heartache  
You've carried the trauma for generations  
Still too frequently on your own  
But we're building something new—  
Something that can only be shaped in the liminal spaces  
Where imagination cannot be fenced in  
This is a prayer giving thanks for language broken open  
Because the only duality you still hold on to  
Is to love and to love some more  
There's a reason the collective noun for bisexuals is blessing

May this day of celebration seep joy into your bones  
May this day of acknowledgment reflect back to you your worth  
May this day of action illuminate your gifts  
May this day, and every day, remind you that you are loved beyond all bounds  
Simply because you exist.



*Rev. Lindasusan V. Ulrich (they/them) is a minister, writer, musician, and activist dedicated to radical inclusion, deep collaboration, and courageous kindness. Lindasusan has served congregations in Connecticut, Michigan, and Minnesota; is a certified spiritual director; and identifies as a genderdynamic bisexual person of color. Lindasusan was the primary author on the groundbreaking report "Bisexual Invisibility: Impacts and Recommendations" released by the San Francisco Human Rights Commission in 2011.*

# Bisexual+ History is my Biphobia Shield

By Angélique “Angel” Gravely

The first time bisexual+ history saves me, I don't understand the significance of what's happening. I'm sitting in my first day of my first human sexuality class of my master's program, struggling to hear my professor over the anger pounding in my chest. Incredulous that even here, with an out queer professor, biphobia has ambushed me once again.

I don't want to start an argument when my professor misdefines bisexuality. I don't want to be the angry Black woman picking fights on the first day of class. But I am so angry I cannot do as I once did, clenching my jaw and hurting myself instead of calling out what I know is wrong. I am too tired of hearing straight and gay people tell me that because I am bisexual I am not trustworthy, inclusive, necessary, or enough. I am fed up with letting monosexism have the last word.

Still, I am calm and articulate when I correct my professor. I am even calm the first time a classmate decides they must back our professor up. It's only when the classmate implies I don't know my own community well enough to understand how we describe ourselves that I become less polite, and an argument ensues.

No one backs me up when the argument escalates. Not my professor. Not the other bi students I'll learn later are in the class. No one comes to my aid except bisexual+ history.

I haven't memorized much of it yet. But I know enough to paraphrase the Bisexual Manifesto (see below) and its charge not to view us through a binary lens. I know enough to mention Lani Ka'ahumanu's speech at the 1993 March on Washington for Lesbian, Gay, and Bi Equal Rights & Liberation, where she uplifted the link between bi and trans movements and our similar potential to disrupt oppressive systems. I know enough to understand that even when my professor doesn't admit her mistake and my classmates don't change their minds, bisexual+ history is on my side.

That experience helps me survive my remaining years in graduate school because it teaches me that bi+ history can protect me when professors don't value bisexuality enough to educate themselves on it, when classes reference the bi+ community only as a footnote, or at my insistence. Bisexual+ history shields me from the messages that invalidation sends. Because it's hard to

The Bisexual Manifesto is the title used for a statement that was published in the premier issue of *Anything That Moves* in 1990. It's a political statement that spoke to the experiences of the bi community of that era, and it holds up as one that can be shared proudly today. At the 2015 Bi+ Caucus at the Creating Change Conference in Denver, I asked folks who were assembled to do a shared reading of the manifesto, and it was a powerful moment of recognition for the younger activists to feel connected to those earlier bisexual activists. We are sharing the manifesto in that format here to encourage others to present at their own bi+ gatherings. *By Ellyn Ruthstrom*

## The Bisexual Manifesto:

We are tired of being analyzed, defined and represented by people other than ourselves, or worse yet, not considered at all.

We are frustrated by the imposed isolation and invisibility that comes from being told or expected to choose either a homosexual or heterosexual identity.

Monosexuality is a heterosexist dictate used to oppress homosexuals and to negate the validity of bisexuality. Bisexuality is a whole, fluid identity.

Do not assume that bisexuality is binary or duogamous in nature: that we have “two” sides or that we must be involved simultaneously with both genders to be fulfilled human beings.

In fact, don't assume that there are only two genders.

Do not mistake our fluidity for confusion, irresponsibility, or an inability to commit.

Do not equate promiscuity, infidelity, or unsafe sexual behavior with bisexuality.

Those are human traits that cross all sexual orientations.

Nothing should be assumed about anyone's sexuality, including your own.

We are angered by those who refuse to accept our existence, our issues, our contributions, our alliances, our voice.

It is time for the bisexual voice to be heard.

accept that bi+ people are inconsequential to the LGBTQ+ movement overall when bi+ history teaches that from the homophile movement to the modern LGBTQ+ movement, from the first LGBTQ+ college student group to the first national \*SGL/ LGBTQ Black organization, we have been present, not just as participants but as leaders.

By realizing I am part of a long lineage of bi+ educators in schools, bathhouses, and wherever else we have been needed to create resources and education from our unique vantage points and multidimensional perspectives, I refuse to give into the isolation monosexism fosters. It's hard to get stuck begging people to value us, when I know there are bi+ leaders who wanted so much better for us that they created an entire bisexual holiday (Celebrate Bisexuality Day on September 23) so we could rest in the certainty that we deserve celebration and joy no matter whether others validate us or not.

Knowing bi+ history saved me from succumbing to monosexism while I was in graduate school and it continues to save me to this day. Even as the scars from bi-negativity sting me, I can withstand the hurt because I know our identities are not

contingent on who monosexism claims us to be. I know who I am and who we are as bi+ people because bi+ history tells me the truth. As long as I have bi+ history on my side, I will never again settle for believing anything else.

\*SGL: same-gender-loving

*Angélique “Angel” Gravely is a Philadelphia-based LGBTQ+ educator and the author of Finding the B in LGBTQ+ History: Tips and Tools for Learning Bisexual+ History. Find more of her work at [angelgravely.com](http://angelgravely.com).*



*Mary Jo, continued from p. 1*



*JamieAnn and Mary Jo in Cape Disappointment, WA, 2019.*

(and body)” never felt possible because of people who think in rigid boundaries and binaries. She shared photo albums of her geological research days, and through this metaphor, she taught me about the Snake River in Grand Teton National Park and the story that shifting rocks told her about the changes in our environmental world. Changes that she said offered her ways to reflect on her life, claiming pride in herself and community. When we talked about the end of life, she approached it with such wisdom. She shared, “Heaven to me is being remembered as a good teacher, and maybe as the first trans person someone met, that made it possible for them to accept us.”

Near the end, we went on journeys to drink lattes covered in rainbow sprinkles. She would tell the young baristas, “I need the drink to look really queer!” And at the end of her last autumn,

we wept in the car when we saw the last of the great blue herons on the Mississippi River.

In the fall of 2021, a group of us in our rural town hosted our first Drag Story Hour. JamieAnn was one of the first donors to make it happen and never lived to see it. In many ways, the event was in honor of her labors for queer community and safety. She provided for bi+ and trans community endlessly; she would want us to use all this history to protect trans and bi+ youth and to fight hard as fuck for this world. She certainly did.

Work Cited: Malatino, Hil. *Trans Care*. University of Minnesota Press, 2020.

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



*We Are Not Going Anywhere, by Shady Kimzey and TJ Mundy. See page 1 and 20 for more of their artwork and artists’ statement.*

# The History of a Kiss

By Erika Grumet

As a teenager, I spent several summers at a creative and performing arts camp. The weeks I spent at camp were a respite from trying to fit in during the school year. Camp was a place where my awkwardness didn't make me stand out, but was embraced as a part of me.

The camp's rules and routines were unique. Rather than all being scheduled as a unit, we picked our own activities. So, we built friendships not just based on who happened to be in our age group, but on who we met in our chosen activities. One of my favorite places to spend time was the Pub (Publications) Shop where aspiring writers worked on creative writing.

Sprawled in a chair in front of the shop, working on an article, I began talking with a girl I'd noticed before—Rosalyn's abundant curls made her hard to miss. But now I was close enough to notice the brightness in her eyes and smile as we chatted. Close enough that, as I looked at her, I felt all-too-familiar feelings. Feelings I denied with a well-rehearsed script: *It isn't okay to feel this way. I shouldn't be thinking these thoughts about girls. Focus on something else.* I felt blood rush to my face as I tried to bury my feelings under shame.

Camp rules state: "Camp is for community and not for pair-bonding and exclusionary relationships. Campers cannot pursue physical relationships, nor are they permitted to have platonic, physical contact without consent." We often joked that the counselors carried around six-inch rulers to make sure campers stayed far enough apart, and teased each other that, rather than a traditional camp anthem, we could call out to each other: "It's not that kind of camp!"

Adolescents will find ways to pair-bond, whether it's permitted or not. There were plenty of trips to hidden make-out spots, even as the patrolling counselors wandered around with flashlights to find canoodling couples.

Rosalyn and I talked and worked and talked some more. The gong rang to signal snack time, and we paused for juice and cookies. I admired the skirt she was wearing. We discovered a shared affinity for *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* and the Indigo Girls.

We began to spend time together in and out of the Pub Shop. We'd sit on a secluded rehearsal stage with friends and a tape

recorder, telling stories, taking turns, then making everyone a copy of the tape. On movie night, our separate groups of friends sat near each other, but did not share blankets. And one seemingly ordinary day we were hanging out in her bunk, sitting on her bed and talking.

*She kissed me.*

We were sitting on her bed, doing the things teenage girls do: complaining about our hair, talking about music, eating snacks from the care packages sent from home.

*She kissed me. I liked it.*

She leaned in, her lips on mine, her hand on mine. Her tongue pushed gently against my mouth, and I let it in. It wasn't my first kiss, but no kiss I'd ever received made me feel like that. There was a softness to her face as our mouths came together. Her kiss made me feel like lightning was shooting through my toes; or made me lose my stomach in the riding-a-great-rollercoaster sort of way. Her kiss excited the secrets inside me.

I didn't want it to stop. Nor did I know how to keep it going. Did kissing girls come with the same expectations as kissing boys? I

had no idea how long to wait before reaching out to touch her, or how to be sure that I was sending the right signals myself. And I definitely did not understand how to navigate the shaky adolescent understanding of consent with another girl.

I sat in the shadowy corner of her bunk wanting more. Excited. Frightened by how much I liked this feeling. Confused. Ashamed.

I kept returning her kisses.

Soon, the squeak of the door caused us to spring back from each other. The "no dating" rule might be in writing, but there was another, unwritten rule that we were breaking. Violating that rule was a far bigger deal: getting discovered by friends in our own bunk would be uncomfortable. Embarrassing. Shameful.

And what if we got caught by adults? Exactly how far would the consequences go? Would they call home? Out us to our parents? Kick us out? I could only imagine catastrophic scenarios. The idea that it might be treated the same way as making out with a boy was inconceivable. Fortunately, I never found out because we were never discovered.

Meanwhile, not being found out was its own kind of bad. When you're excited about a new relationship, you want to talk about it. Especially when that relationship comes with the extra adrenaline-rush of rule-breaking. When you're in a place



where pair-bonding is forbidden, telling a few close friends is part of the thrill. And your closest friends cover for you if you get caught sneaking out for a late-night tryst. That's what friends do. That's what summer camp romance is about. Ironically, the success of our pair-bondings usually depended on the support of our "community." Camp life means relationships happen on fast-forward. That's true for friends and for pair-bonding.

This kiss, this relationship, broke too many rules to tell my friends. Even my best friend: someone I'd known since we were three. Someone who had introduced me to this utopian summer camp where, up until that kiss, I'd felt like I fit in.

One kiss changed everything about my world. One kiss meant I could no longer deny the feelings I'd been having: that kissing boys was nice, but kissing a girl felt like filling in a missing piece. How could I leave camp to go back to a world where I *already* felt like an outsider and carry this with me? I no longer felt like I belonged at camp and I would feel even more awkward at home and now that I'd discovered how good this felt, how could I stop?

With a few more weeks of camp left, we found as many ways as we could to spend time together without arousing suspicion. We found ways to encourage our separate groups of friends to sit near each other during movie night so we could hold hands. We claimed the Adirondack chairs next to each other at the Pub Shop so that we could be close. Somehow, we kept a facade of separation, seemingly convincing people that we were just friends while still finding excuses and opportunities to discover each other.

The last event of the summer was called Festival. A huge day of performances and art displays open to families of the campers. Rosalyn and I had auditioned for, and been cast in, a show called *The Romance Project*. Under the guidance of the director, we created the show ourselves. Our work began with a viewing of *Wuthering Heights*. The two of us sat in the back. Cuddled together in the dark, we even snuck in a few kisses. Another assignment was to write love letters to celebrities. Clutching pictures torn from magazines, I was assigned Arnold Schwarzenegger. The idea of being in love with the Terminator was ridiculous, but writing that letter wasn't difficult when I had these fresh experiences to draw on.

When summer ended, we went our separate ways. Not really a breakup; just an ending. Whatever we shared couldn't last beyond the boundaries of camp. We didn't live far from each other, but somehow we knew that going back to our school-year routines while maintaining that kind of a relationship was out of the question.

And through it all, I had no one I could talk to. No one I could trust. I had no one with whom to share the thrill of being in love, or the pain of the loss. No one to answer my questions about what that summer romance meant *about me*.

It would take three more years for me to begin to unpack what that kiss really meant. Three years of keeping people at a distance because I didn't want to answer their questions. Three years of hiding my feelings, and of trying to make sure that I didn't arouse

any suspicion by looking a little too long, or hugging a little too tight. What I learned in those three years led me to be more involved in queer culture and activism, and led me to meet and work with and, yes, sleep with, some of the significant figures in Bi networks in the '90s. All because I was looking for a place that was as inclusive as that summer camp promised to be—and would keep its promise to be so. It was a scary and lonely three years. All because a girl kissed me and I liked it.

*A version of this piece was published on the website 2RulesOfWriting.com under the title "Kissing Rosalyn."*

*Erika Grumet (shelthey) was born in New York, but currently lives outside of Orlando. She has 2 kids and 2 cats. Erika's essays and poetry can be found on the website 2RulesOfWriting.com, which she co-founded with Adam Katz. She was also recently selected as a member of Lilith Magazine's 2023 "The New 40" cohort.*



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## Awakening

By Susan White

She leaned against the bar,  
brown eyes meeting my green in  
a mirror behind the taps. Chin  
tilted towards me, shoulders angled  
just so, we rested our weight  
on our elbows and waited for our  
cold pints, dripping condensation  
in the feverish milieu. Rival  
fiddles swelled and a cascading din  
battered against our heat. She  
hadn't touched me but I could  
feel her need in the space  
between us, a chasm  
across which we both  
ached to leap.

I didn't dare

but I awoke.

*Susan White is a communications professional and emerging writer from St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador. She is currently studying creative writing at Memorial University.*

# The Invisible History of Bisexuality

By *VeronicaOfOsea*

Bisexual individuals are no strangers when it comes to being invisible and facing erasure from our queer peers. And sadly, our recognition in queer history is no exception. Whenever one looks at the bisexual influence on queer history, one thing is strikingly clear: erasure. Many LGTQIA+ persons will struggle to name a historical bisexual figure, mainly because they thought of them as straight, gay, or lesbian. Even within books, movies, or TV shows focusing on LGTQIA+ history in general or specific milestones in the shared history of our community, the depiction of influential bisexual voices is scarce.

It took several years after coming out as bisexual for me to learn about influential bisexual voices. Weirdly enough, it was over an article in a queer publication that focused on arguments of biphobia. In the comments section I found a broad discourse with some people doubling down on their biphobia and its arguments while arguing that bisexuals didn't really belong in the queer community and didn't contribute much to achievements for LGTQIA+ individuals. To my surprise, I found people debating them and it was the first time I heard about the groundbreaking work of bisexual activists and how bisexual people as a group played a role in achieving significant developments for our community. As glad as I was to have finally found some positive role models and learn more about bisexual history, I was still a bit disappointed that this knowledge came to me in the form of defense-battling biphobia.

But there's a quite recent experience I want to mention which made me wonder why bisexuals are so often overlooked in queer history or in the representation of it. I'm fairly certain that literally every queer person has at least once in their lives heard about Tony Kushner's "Angels in America," or seen the TV show, the play, or the 2004 opera by Peter Eötvös. Having lost a family member to AIDS myself, this is a piece of queer media that I thought of as exceptionally significant. I've seen various versions of the play and I was glad to learn a few months back that our local theater decided to show the opera. Before attending an open rehearsal in March, I got back into the source material by Kushner, reading the play again and several analyses of it. I was once again confronted with a reality that had plagued me every single time I watched or read pieces focusing on the AIDS epidemic. It was the lack of acknowledging the impact the epidemic had on the bisexual community, which appears a bit odd since it's a common misconception or negative bias, call it whatever you like, that it was bisexual individuals who were responsible for spreading sexually transmitted diseases due to their "loose lifestyle choices."

Giving Tony Kushner the benefit of the doubt that he wasn't intentionally excluding bisexuals from the otherwise carefully crafted characters, I decided to take a deeper dive into statistics and coverage of the AIDS crisis. What became quite obvious

was the screamingly loud absence of the word "bisexual." Some articles awkwardly danced around the "ghastly b word" with the euphemism of "men sleeping with other men." Ever since coming out as bisexual, every revisit of the play, I wondered if the character of Joe Pitt could have been bisexual instead of being widely portrayed as a closeted gay man trapped in a straight marriage. Very few analyses examined that particular point and I found myself thinking that maybe exploring this possibility would add an interesting and additional layer of conflict, especially in terms of the character's religious affiliation with the Mormons and being involved workwise with the raging queerphobe Roy Cohn. Imagine my not-so-surprised disappointment when I witnessed a scene during which Joe calls his mother and says, "I'm a homosexual." With that one small sentence, once again my hopes were shattered that an important piece of queer media—rightfully considered a monolith in queer culture and history—would shed the slightest spotlight on the struggles of a community they tend to overlook but also love to point the finger at.

In the Q&A after the performance, I felt the need to address my concerns and the answer didn't provide much satisfaction. It was the old tale of "people weren't really bisexual then or just didn't identify/weren't out as such" followed by "just because he's married to a woman doesn't necessarily mean he's bisexual." I could have gone into a whole debate that people were no less bisexual in the 1980s but probably refrained from being out as such based on negative prejudices and assumptions about them from straight and queer people alike. And I decided to swallow my argument that the character's sexual and/or romantic same-sex attraction doesn't necessarily mean that he's just a closeted gay. I didn't expect a definitive "yes" on the character being bisexual, but it was the rejection of the sheer possibility that struck me in that moment. In hindsight, I wish I would have said it because these views are the effects of bi history and bi influences being so invisible and silent when we observe or talk about queer history. It was history repeating itself, or more precisely repeating its absence.

With all the advances we have made in regard to technology and medicine, the arguments and biases haven't changed much. We have remained silent instead of demanding our rightful place in queer history. The question somehow remains as to why bisexual people and their history often seem to be excluded from queer history in general. Did biphobia and bi erasure contribute to our invisibility? Did it silence us and discourage us from telling our history or asking questions about it? It often occurs to me that whenever we talk about bisexual history and the more or less prominent figures of it, it sounds defensive as if we still would have to justify our spot in the middle of the acronym. Why does it appear too easy for others to talk about their prominent figures, icons, or historical events without having to face scrutiny or at least a disapproving side eye? Or maybe that is solely my impression on how bi history is being perceived by both straight and queer peers.

*Veronica, continued on p. 17*

## Remembering the Bi+ Elders Who Inspired Me

By *KimtheBwordpoet*

Bi Pride Season 2022 allowed me to experience one of the greatest highlights of moving through the world as a bi+ community organizer. In October, Los Angeles Bi+ Task Force hosted “Listen to Your Bi+ Elders,” a panel of OG bi+ activists. Robyn Ochs, Lani Ka’ahumanu, ABilly Jones-Hennin, Lorraine Hutchins, and the panel was led by Mike Szymanski. Wendy Curry and Dr. Mimi Hoang were special guest attendees as well.

If one is not a bi+ activist or bi+ community organizer, then most likely only Robyn Ochs’ name will stand out to you due to the well-known definition of bisexuality that bi+ individuals and organizations repost a lot. But for those of us that have actively worked to create spaces for the bi+ community in our respective corners of the country, all the panel members as well as the panel leader Mike Szymanski should stand out. It was truly extraordinary to be in the presence of people I have been inspired by for so long. I felt like Dorothy: she was there, and she was there, and he was there! It was amazing that they all knew one another, like KNEW one another! They were all great friends! I guess it should not have surprised me that great minds that think alike should travel together in life too.

When I embraced my bi identity in 2001, and became a baby bi+ organizer in 2004, the national bi+ scene was booming. Bisexuality was already on the minds of the queer community masses thanks to panel member Lani Ka’ahumanu’s speech at the 1993 LGB March on Washington. Panel special guest Wendy

Curry and Michael Page had co-founded National Bisexuality Day in 1999 (along with Gigi Raven Wilbur), Michael Page had also designed the bi flag and created BiCafe—a social media site just for bisexuals. Not only had panel members Lani Ka’ahumanu and Lorraine Hutchins co-edited the *Bi Any Other Name* anthology, but they had co-founded the first national bi organization called BiNet USA in 1990; Karla Rossi had been running *Anything That Moves* magazine since 1990, and Cheryl Dobinson started *The Fence* magazine in 2002. Lauren Beach’s amazing work in Minneapolis with the Bisexual Organizing Project and the BECAUSE conference greatly inspired me as a Midwest organizer.

Of course, panel member Robyn Ochs was well-known in the national bi scene because of helping found the Boston Bisexual Women’s Network in 1983, and the Bisexual Resource Center in 1985. She was also the editor of *The Bisexual Resource Guide* from 1990 to 2002, a VERY good resource that I wish was still around. I was personally inspired by Robyn because she was married to a lesbian, which was the future I always wanted but did not know I could have because of my biness. Panelist ABilly Jones-Hennin launched the first national gay and lesbian black advocacy group in 1978: the National Coalition of Black Gays. Who knew Black bi people could make such a mark on queer history in general?? I did not till I learned about him. Then

*KimtheBwordpoet, continued on p. 26*

### BI+ HISTORY

## Northampton Pride, 1990



The first Pride I ever attended was Northampton Pride in 1990. I was a newly-out, just-divorced bi woman, who had moved out from Boston for a change of scenery and was falling in love with my first serious girlfriend. She had to work that day so I walked down to the center of town for the parade and gathering in Pulaski Park. Being new to the city, I didn’t know that a group of lesbians had successfully lobbied to remove the word “bisexual” from the event’s name that had been added the previous year. What a shock I had as I sat and listened to lesbians speaking from the podium about how harmful bisexuals were for the gay and lesbian community. The assembled crowd included a vocal group of Queer Nation members who were pro-bi inclusion and they reacted loudly to the hatefulness that was spewed from some of the speakers. It was a painful chapter for the Noho community and I believe that facing what biphobia looked like is what helped them to vote for inclusion the next year. Happily, I was also in Northampton in 2011 when Robyn Ochs was the bi representative chosen as a grand marshal and we had a fabulous group of BBWN members marching along with her! These black and white photos are from the Bisexual Resource Center archive and show a woman crying from the painful speeches, and a protester asserting her bi pride in the crowd. *By Ellyn Ruthstrom*

# A Brief History of German Bi+ Activism

By Paula Balov & Samuelle Striewski

## Community Building During the AIDS Crisis

In the autumn of 2022, Paula was working as a journalist on a short documentary about bi+ history in Berlin. She was very excited because the project was funded by the city of Berlin, an opportunity that would not come again anytime soon. The first problem was choosing the topics, because there is simply too much to say and too much that cannot be covered in a 15-minute film.

Sitting down with her girlfriend over a glass of wine to brainstorm, she surmised that the '90s would likely be an important decade for the film.

"Why the '90s?" her girlfriend asked.

"Well, because *BiNe* (short for *Bisexual Network*), the oldest organization in Germany specifically for bi+ people, was founded in 1992, exactly 30 years ago," Paula answered.

"That's curious. I wonder what the AIDS crisis had to do with it."

This comment came as a surprise, because Paula had never heard of a connection between the bi+ community and the AIDS crisis before.

A few weeks later, while conducting an interview with Vivian Wagner, one of *BiNe*'s oldest members, Paula realized that her girlfriend was onto something.

"*BiNe* wouldn't exist without the German AIDS service organization," Vivian said, referring to one of the most important organizations in Germany advocating for people living with HIV/AIDS (*Deutsche Aidshilfe*, German abbreviation: *DAH*).

In the late 1980s, Vivian attended a support group for bi+ people organized by the *DAH*. One of the goals of this group was to create a safe space primarily for bi men who would not go to a support group for gay men. In addition to issues such as safer sex and HIV prevention, the support group also helped them navigate the stigma that bi+ men in particular experienced, namely being portrayed as the ones bringing the virus into the "safe" straight world. However, Vivian also noted during the interview that this prejudice existed among women as well, simply the other way around: the stereotype was that of the promiscuous bi+ woman having sex with a lot of men and transmitting STIs to the lesbian community.

During the meeting in the '80s, Vivian learned that there were similar bi+ support groups all over Germany. In collaboration with the *DAH*, the idea came up to organize a meeting where people from all support groups could come together and share information. The gathering gave birth to *BiNe*. "We thought we could start an organization to support each other, to exchange information so that people don't have to start from scratch," Vivian explained. "We also wanted to make sure that if advice is given [to bi+ people], it's the correct advice."

Over the years, *BiNe* grew and developed into the organization that bi+ people in Germany know today: it helps people to found local bi+ groups and organizes nationwide bi+ meetings. Moreover, *BiNe* engages in educational work, offers counseling, and advocates for bi+ rights within LGBTQIA organizations and before political authorities. One of *BiNe*'s milestones was the 4th *International Bisexual Symposium* in Berlin, held in 1996 under the motto "The Many Faces of Bisexuality: Diversity of Bisexual Relationships."

Fortunately, the issue of AIDS became less and less pressing, making space for bi+ activism-centered empowerment and relentless commitment against common bi+ specific concerns such as bisexual erasure, biphobia, or the violence against bi+ women. After years of AIDS saturation, bi+ activists, according to Vivian, got tired of getting (exclusively) associated with the pandemic. That's one reason why there is no mention of AIDS on the official homepage of *BiNe* nor in any of their flyers or info materials.

Respecting this desire to distance oneself from the trauma and suffering of that period, we feel that it remains of major importance to understand and make visible this part of the history of our own community. If we don't learn about our genealogies from each other, who else will remember the pioneers of bi+ activism? Think about the mother of Pride, Brenda Howard, who was not only bi+ but also an active part of the BDSM community. The BDSM and leather community were crucial in raising money and caring for people suffering from HIV. Furthermore, it is a community that celebrates fluid sexualities and creates spaces for non-normative desire (contributing to one or another bi+ awakening). In remembering how solidarity was created in the intersection and exchange of these (and many other) communities, we can find strength for our future bi+ activism.

## Proliferation of Bi+ Activism Until Today

Beyond the foundation of *BiNe*, several local bi+ groups formed in the '80s. One of the oldest support and discussion groups for bi+ people is in Cologne. Starting in 1986, they were one of the groups participating in the foundation of *BiNe* six years later. In 1997, they changed their name to *Uferlos*. To understand this wonderful wording, one must consider that the German expression "vom anderen Ufer sein" (literally: to be from the other shore/bank) is synonymous with "being gay/lesbian"—"uferlos" roughly translates to "without any particular affiliation to any shore" or slightly freer to "living beyond the binary system of boundaries/shores."

From their first days, the *Uferlos* association engaged in making non-monosexual identities visible in *Cologne Pride*, which has become Europe's biggest march for queer people, and continues to actively spread the good bi+ news. In Munich, bi+ people

have been meeting since the '90s more informally for a monthly "Stammtisch" (regular table), a common format that exists in many cities all over Germany. In Berlin, these meetings happened for many years until they resulted in the foundation of *BiBerlin*, the association that we, Paula and Samu/elle, are both part of.

A special year for Bi+ activism in Berlin was 2022. Beyond the aforementioned film about bisexual history, in which Paula was involved, historian Karl-Heinz Steinle researched the recent bi+ history in Berlin in collaboration with *BiBerlin*. In addition, the *Magnus Hirschfeld Society*, a research center on the history of sexology, did a project on the "Self and Body Experiences in the Early Bisexual Movement in Berlin."

Since 2002, *Bi+ Hamburg* has been present at prides with booths to increase bi+ visibility in the north of Germany. In Göttingen, another local bi+ group has formed and documents their activities via a very appealing online presence since September 2020. "Liebe-Leben-Leute" (*love-life-people*) is a project that uses the internet not only as a means of advertisement but takes it to the next level by continuing the tradition of *BiNe* to connect bi+ people from all over Germany. Their focus is to create a strong community and to leave no one behind.

Another pillar of German bi+ activism that aims for community-building and bi+ visibility is *Bi+Pride*. In 2020, bi+ activist Frank Thies assembled a group of other activists to start planning an event modelled on the first bi+ march in West Hollywood in 2018. In September 2021, the first German *Bi+Pride* took place as a three-part event including a march, a week of workshops, and bi+ flag raisings all over the country. Samu/elle joined the organizing team for the *Bi+Pride 2023* and edits and writes for the *BiJou*, another project coordinated by Frank since 2006. Funded by *BiNe* and first published in 1994 (under the name *Bix*), it became the *Bisexuelles Journal (BiJou)* in 1995 and is about to publish its 40th issue this year. The *BiJou* is the written voice of Germany's bi+ community and treats everything from political and theoretical topics (e.g., gender studies) to activism all over Germany and around the globe. Of course, it also reports from Germany's various local Bi+ groups and from *BiNe* meetings, interviews members of the bi+ communities, and publishes creative work and reviews.

Two more recent projects that are worth mentioning in this brief historical account of German bi+ activism were both done by two powerful bi+ women. Julia Koschler's three-part zine "Bi All Means" was published between 2022 and 2023, and, Julia Shaw's long-awaited book, *Bi*, was published just before pride season in summer 2022. There are many more bi+ people that engage in ways to create bi+ visibility and to form a notion of communal belonging between bi+ human beings, but due to lack of space we must thank all these activists without naming them.

Finally, a word on current bi+ politics. The new German government has adopted a nation-wide action program called "Queer leben" (*Living queer*) and has invited 70 queer activist groups to represent Germany's queer community, among them Frank

and Christoph, from the board of *BiNe*. They will participate in the different working groups of the action plan and thus help to consult with the government to make Germany a more bi+ friendly space. In other words, bi+ activism is worth its while and sometimes we are full of hope that change is going to happen!

*The documentary film "Bi+ You – die Geschichte der Bisexualität" ("Bi+ You – The history of bisexuality"), produced by the queer organization PINK.LIFE, is available with English subtitles at: <https://biberlin.de/kurzdok-bi-you-ueber-bisexuelle-geschichte/>*

*Paula Balov is a Berlin-based bi+ activist, journalist and an editor for the queer Berlin city magazine Siegessäule. Her focus of interest lies in bi+ politics, LGBTIQ+ rights in the Balkans and postmigrant perspectives in/on Germany. She organizes the subsection on diversity and inclusion for BiBerlin.*



*Samulelle Striewski is a scholar, queer activist and drag performer based in Berlin.*

*They regularly publish and give conference talks about feminism, queer recognition, and drag, and are part of the editorial team of BiJou and organizing team of Bi+Pride in Hamburg.*



*Veronica, continued from p. 14*

As we slowly learn to stand our ground and demand our space to talk about our specific issues, the same should count for our history, even if it has been a long history of invalidation, invisibility, and erasure. For me, that tells a lot about our resilience and ability to survive among hostile points of view. A part of our history has already been written, but to have it told just as anyone else's we need to be seen and heard, so that we can continue to write our community's history out in the open just like our other queer peers out there.

*VeronicaOfOsea is a bisexual woman, using she/her and they/them pronouns living in Northern Germany in a monogamous bi relationship, and battling the clichés against m/f presenting bi couples.*



# Living Bi History: Interview with Bisexual Leatherwoman Jill Carter

By Lisa Kivok

**Lisa Kivok: When and where were you born?**

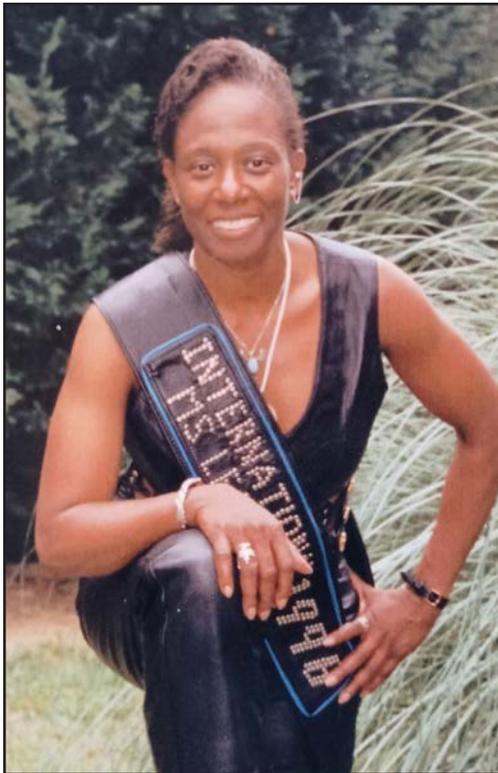
**Jill Carter:** I was born in the fifties in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, but grew up in a wealthy Quaker town in southern New Jersey.

**LK: When and how did you realize you were bisexual?**

**JC:** Now coming up, I was what would be described as a “tomboy.” Being a tomboy felt so natural for me. There were no girls my age to play with in my neighborhood, so I ended up playing with the boys. I had a terrible time being bullied, because I was small, so I found myself having to physically defend myself. Still, while I didn’t like to do the things that girls were typically expected to do, I liked being a girl. Looking back, being forced to act like a girl, as well as being berated for doing things that boys did, or for doing them better than boys did, created internal turmoil for me. I would be mistaken for a boy no matter how I was dressed, and so I developed my own insecurities around gender. I didn’t know enough yet to separate out gender from sexuality, so in an effort to express that I wasn’t a boy, I began making decisions to prove that I was not gay. It wasn’t until I met Viola Johnson in 1973 that I began to embrace and accept who I was. This led me down a path that would ultimately show me that I was, in fact, bisexual.

When I went off to college, I felt a sense of freedom. A freedom to make my own decisions. I was quiet, stayed to myself, and was somewhat of a loner. My creative abilities, however, drew people to me. I was always viewed as mysterious by those who met me. As one of my high school teachers described me, I was “a small pebble that made big waves”—that is how I learned to fight injustice. Soon I was rallying Black students across the campus towards major causes without drawing direct attention to myself. A lot of the injustices we fought fell upon dorm students and were the ploys of the housing department. While they could not point a finger at me, they suspected that I was behind them being placed on the hot seat time and time again. The housing department hired Viola Johnson, who herself was an enigma.

About the time Ms. Johnson came on board in the summer of 1972 (I graduated from college with a BA and teaching degree in 3 years), I was on my way to flunking out of college because I was too busy trying to learn what life was all about outside of college. I had met an older woman who was in her forties,



who became my best friend, and we partied. I ditched my studies and straight “A” average to learn about street life. At about the same time I was doing that I was not fulfilling my obligations to my job as Residence Assistant reporting to Ms. Johnson.

One night while Ms. J and I were out driving, I got up the courage to confess to her that I was in love with her. To my surprise, she confessed she felt the same about me. I asked her where we go from here. She said, back to her room. That night, I made love to my first woman and never looked back. I did confess to her that if we have sinned, then may God forgive us, because it was what I wanted. Just call me an angel. That morning I awakened to go to class. I stroked her cheek and kissed her goodbye. That morning she awakened to a song I had not heard, but one she was familiar with, “Just Call Me Angel of The Morning.”

When I heard it for the first time, you would have sworn I was quoting that record that night.

Ms. J took me to my first gay club. A small place on a dark side street in New York called Casablanca. When I walked into that club and saw women freely and publicly dancing, holding hands, and kissing, I thought I had found heaven on earth. I also discovered my roving eye and so did Ms. J.

**LK: When and how did you realize you were/wanted to be a leatherwoman?**

**JC:** For me, being a leatherwoman was just a name change. Instead of being referred to as a Mistress or a player in the scene, I was now being referred to as a leatherwoman. I ran for one title in my life and won and that was International Ms. Leather 1996. I became the first African-American woman to win that title.

**LK: When did you come out as bisexual in general?**

**JC:** Just to place a timeline on this, we are talking 1973. The leather community of today did not exist then. Everything was underground. It was a time when you had to be careful about non-heterosexual behaviors. Towards the late ‘70s and early ‘80s sexual behaviors became a little more open and for us that ushered in clubs like Studio 54 and multiple partners and threesomes or more, regardless of gender identity.

I did not accept myself as bisexual until my extended Little Sister (Viola) and I got into an argument, because after we had

moved to Oklahoma from California, she now wanted to return to Oregon because she had fallen in love with some woman who was running for a newly formed contest called International Ms. Leather (IMsL). She felt that Oklahoma didn't have enough gay women for her. We had stumbled upon the gay men's community while Vi and she were out buying boots. She shouted at me "You don't understand, you're not gay, Jill, you're bisexual!" That was 1989 and it finally sunk into my head that I was bisexual and have always been.

**LK: When did you come out as bisexual in the leather community?**

**JC:** Back in my day you didn't necessarily have to come out as bisexual, because you played with whomever you wanted to play with. I predominately played with men until the lesbian community found its way into the BDSM community. That's when I began to play with women.

Vi and I began our journey in the heterosexual community and because we were united in our kink, they didn't seem to notice that we were a Black, lesbian couple. We weren't viewed that way. We were viewed by how we carried ourselves as Mistress and slave in our closed circles.

**LK: What has changed about being openly bisexual in the leather community since you came out in it?**

**JC:** Notions of gender and sexuality have evolved so much over



the decades. As with so many things that used to exist on a binary, it took time for everyone to be okay with out bisexuals. And sometimes that made us take time being ok with ourselves. Nowadays we have moved beyond even that binary and have other people who identify as pansexual. Another piece that helped alongside Leather was the hippie moment which made it easier to be bisexual, because the free love movement was about embracing your sexuality

and freedom to love or engage in sex with whomever, whenever.

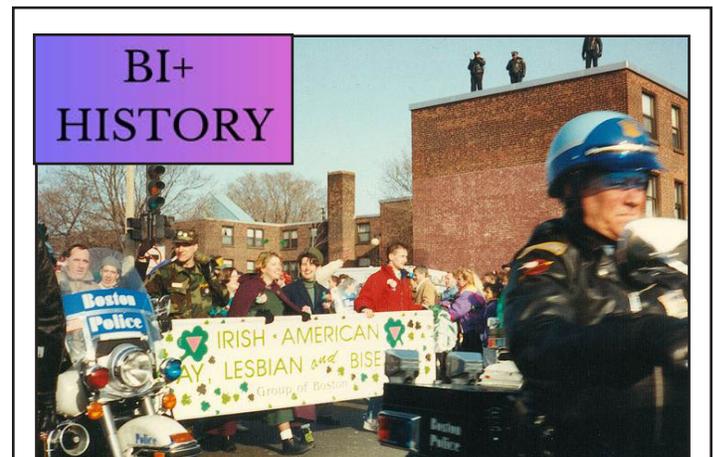
**LK: What is the most significant part of bisexual history you have been involved in?**

**JC:** "Each One, Teach One" became a motto that I passed onto this community because it was entrusted to Vi and I to pass

the knowledge that we received from our leather Daddies, Tom and Jerry, the two leather men who took us under their wings and taught us so much about the Leather community in 1976. I received my cover on Christopher Street, when Tom took off his cover and placed it on my head (a ritual within the leather community). That day, I had the look of a leatherperson. I say leatherperson, again, because if you didn't know me when you look at the pictures, you can't tell if you are looking at a leatherman or woman. Since then, "Each One, Teach One" has been used to share the knowledge that we have all gained within the community.

**LK: Is there anything you want to say that I did not ask you?**

**JC:** I feel that our community need not be afraid to fight back by any means necessary. I was a radical when I was younger and now, I am just an old radical with even more radical views. Silence is deadly. Leatherwomen need to be at the forefront of the fight that lies ahead for the Leather community. This country has always needed to demonize a race or culture. It is a country that is driven by creating an enemy and we cannot afford to do their work for them by creating enemies among ourselves. We are all outcasts and as such we must stand together, or divided we will fall as a leather community.



On March 15, 1992, 25 members of Gay, Lesbian & Bisexual Irish Group of Boston (GLIB) marched in the Saint Patrick's Day Parade in South Boston. This was the first time a queer group was allowed to march in the parade, and was only allowed due to a court order by Suffolk Superior Court Judge, Hiller Zobel. This brave group marched under police protection through a hate-filled crowd for five miles. Carrying the banner are (L-R): Michael Corrigan; Cliff Arnesen, bisexual activist and President of the New England GLB Veterans; Barbra Kay, Co-Chair of GLIB; Ren Jender; and Brian Callahan. (Not pictured is Cathleen Finn, the other Co-Chair and BBWN member.) For a more comprehensive chronology of LGBTQ+ exclusion and inclusion in the parade check out [Wikipedia](#).

# A Decade in the Making: My Rollercoaster Ride Through the Queer Publishing World

By Casey Lawrence

In 2023, I'll be rereleasing my former-Dreamspinner Press novels with JMS Books. This news is a long time coming and involves some rather sordid business in the LGBTQ+ publishing industry. My first novel, *Out of Order*, was published with Harmony Ink, Dreamspinner's Young Adult imprint, in 2015. It was a NaNo-WriMo\* novel, written in just one month—November 2012. It's hard to believe that was over ten years ago now. I was 17 years old.

As an awkward teen who mostly wrote fanfiction, I felt like I had hit the jackpot when I signed a contract with Dreamspinner to publish my first novel. Getting paid to write queer stories was *the dream*, and I was living it.

Although I put on a brave face at the time, I was pretty disappointed with my first publishing experience. In hindsight, I've realized that I often felt like my editor and cover artist at Dreamspinner had no idea what to do with my "weird little thriller" of a debut novel. I poured my heart and soul into it—and got absolutely nothing back from them.

*A Young Adult murder mystery with a biracial, bisexual teenage girl protagonist? they seemed to ask at every step of the process. How do we market that?*

Rather than figure out how to meet my needs, it was as if they clocked out the moment I signed the contract. They didn't even put an Asian model on the cover, which was my firmest request. Instead, they went with *feet* of all things—imagery which they continued with the second book in the series, although it made even less sense for Book 2.

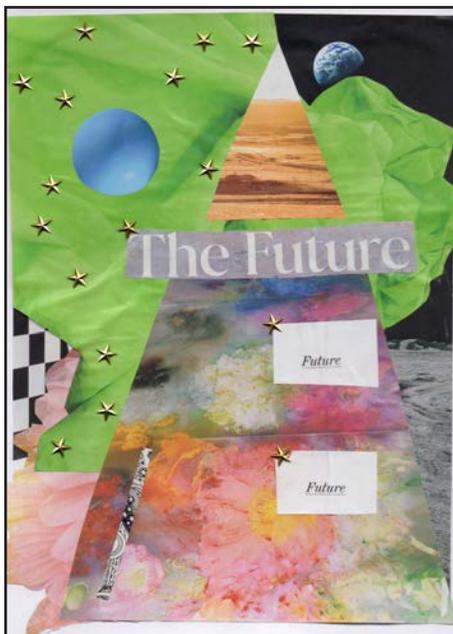
*"The cover does not do this book justice,"* reads one Amazon review. *"Sure, it captures an important part of the story, but it's not the kind of cover that sells this book properly."*

I've come to realize that Dreamspinner was desperate for "bisexual teen" stories; their YA imprint needed diversity, and my books fit the bill. The company didn't put a whole lot of energy into marketing my books or working with me once they were released. My books existed just so they could have a "bisexual" section on the YA website.

Despite having next to no promotion, *Out of Order* did surprisingly well. It did well enough, in fact, that it was shortlisted at the 2016 Bisexual Book Awards in two categories, Mystery and Teen/YA Fiction. Dreamspinner liked that. I was immediately asked to write a sequel—YA series were the "hot thing" in 2015. *Order in the Court* released in 2016 and it, too, was shortlisted for two Bisexual Book Awards.

I've never doubted the quality of the books themselves, in part because of these nominations, and in part because of the wonderful reviews from real readers, some of which appeared in *Bi Women Quarterly*. The support of the community meant everything, since I was getting so little attention from my publisher.

Shortly after I began working on my third book, Dreamspinner Press got into some financial trouble. After fully redesigning its website and restructuring the company, Dreamspinner fell heinously in arrears paying author royalties in late 2019 and



*The Future*, by Shady Kimzey and TJ Mundy.

## By Shady Kimzey and TJ Mundy

**Artists' statement:** These three pieces (see pages 1 and 11 for other pieces) are in direct reaction to anti-trans, anti-drag, anti-gay legislature and cultural attitudes being pushed forward. It feels like an intimidation tactic to make our bodies, art, and identities illegal. We made these pieces with a sense of urgency with the materials we had on hand. Pillows we slept on and clothes we wore as trans and queer people. It is meant to be intimate. "We are not going anywhere" refers to the fact that LGBTQ+ people are here to stay and our country is not progressing on LGBTQ+ inclusion. "We have always existed" and "We will always exist" speak to the past and future of the LGBTQ+ people. Together, the three pieces represent the past, present, and future of queer people in America.

Shady Kimzey is a queer, non-binary artist based in Efland, NC. Their work often depicts themes of intuition, feminism, symbolism, witchcraft, society, and the natural world. They enjoy thinking about pop culture and the future. Shady enjoys surrealism, absurdism, abstract art, and art that deals with culture and society. TJ Mundy is a Black-biracial, trans non-binary, queer artist originally from Virginia, now residing in NC. They are firmly anti-disciplinarian. In their practice they use vibrant colors, weighted lines, and intuitive movements to express themselves. When you see their art, you are seeing their internal processing.

then fully stopped paying anyone in 2020. The long and short of it is that author royalties—meant to be held in escrow for quarterly payouts—were used to fund the redesign, and the following quarter’s profits weren’t enough to cover the deficit.

Once a leading indie publishing house in LGBTQ+ romance, Dreamspinner suddenly lost all credibility and began hemorrhaging authors. When my five-year contract for *Order in the Court* came to an end in 2021, I joined the exodus and pulled my titles from their virtual shelves, glad I hadn’t published the third book with them after all.

They did not fight to keep my books with their company. There was no personal response at all when I sent my notice—not even from the editor whom I had worked with for over two years. I was hurt by their silence after spending years championing and promoting the company. Upon getting my rights reverted, I dis-

covered that Dreamspinner hadn’t even been selling my paperbacks for quite some time. There had been absolutely no communication from them that they had stopped production and the books were no longer physically available, in clear breach of my contract. They had continued selling my eBooks throughout the crisis, but I didn’t get a single payment after the last quarter of 2018.

Dreamspinner Press has been blacklisted from both the Bisexual Book Awards and the Romance Writers of America (RWA)’s Vivian Awards. In spite of everything, they remain operational, although the Harmony Ink imprint appears to have merged back into Dreamspinner Press. They still owe back royalties to many small creators without the resources to hire legal representation.

But Dreamspinner isn’t the only company that’s had its share of controversy in the last few years. For example, Riptide Publishing

*Casey, continued on p. 25*

## BBWN Founding: Memories from Jean Kropper

BI+  
HISTORY

It was 1983 and I had recently moved back to Boston after college. I was working full time and living in Cambridge with my parents. I saw a note in the paper about a meeting for bisexual women. I’d been in a lesbian feminist discussion group at college that was 99% radical lesbians; I was the only bisexual and got a lot of flak for it. It was stressful being in the minority. I showed up at the first public BBWN meeting at the Cambridge Women’s Center, rather nervous, rather self-conscious and very excited. I found about 30 women. The group immediately took off. It was wonderful to meet other people who had a similar outlook on the world. We were all very different in how we chose to live our lives, but we had something in common. I volunteered to be newsletter editor and worked closely with Robyn and everyone else on the committee for the next two and a half years. The group grew from 30 to 800. It was a pivotal time. We had fabulous intellectual discussions on relationships, sexuality, and politics. We also had fabulous weekend retreats and a conference and it was a real energetic coming together.

The community was different then, much more segregated from straight society; that gave it an intensity that is gone now. Back then, you had to look like a dyke to get into bars. HIV and AIDS were spreading, untreatable, and feared. People could still be thrown out of their apartments or jobs for being gay or bi. There was a lot more prejudice then. We were all so glad to have found each other and to have a safe space to explore together. That first summer there was an Annie Lennox concert on the Common. I remember dancing exuberantly up at the front and realizing that many people from BBWN were there all around me. That was magic.

## 1984: First Bi Group in Boston Pride: Memories from Robyn Ochs

In June 1984, ours was first-ever bi contingent in Boston Pride. Our banner, which said “Bisexual Pride. Gay Liberation is Our Liberation. Boston Bisexual Women’s Network,” was sewn by the mom of one of our members. Our bi T-shirts were designed by BBWN member Sylvia Sukop. As we marched in the parade, we were greeted mostly by blank stares, a moderate amount of applause and cheering, and an occasional “boo”—not nearly as enthusiastic a reception as in current times. There was a funny moment after the parade, when Kate, Sylvia, Char-nan and I were standing on the Boston common, all wearing our bi T-shirts. A woman approached us and said, “Oh, you work for Beth Israel Hospital, how wonderful.” It was a reminder that words do not have universal meaning.



# Twelve Things I Wished My Old Bi-Activist Self Would Have Told My Young Bi-Activist Self

By Mike Szymanski

Hey you, yeah you, aging hippie. Now you're 62 and you're back in the activism world since you're retired and don't have as much to do. You almost look the same as you did when you were 26—growing the hair out long as a protest. First coming out as gay, then bi. You went through the phase of wearing suits and ties and short-cropped hair to impress bosses. But you're back to your protest look, only older, grayer, and a bit pudgier. After two decades of taking a hiatus from activism, you're back. And, maybe, if you had it all to do over again, you would have done things differently. No regrets of course, but gosh I wished my old bi-activist self would have told my young bi-activist self a few things along the way. I came up with at least a dozen.

## 1. Don't Wait to Be Asked

I circled the ads for bi groups in the gay rags for years before I had the guts to attend a meeting. Shy as I was, I finally realized that other people were like me. I wrote about coming out as gay, then sneaking around with a woman and "My Second Coming Out" story in *Genre Magazine* got me on *The Phil Donahue Show*. There, I met friends-for-life including bi legends Lani Ka'ahumanu and Robyn Ochs. They are the ones who roped me into bi activism and I never regretted a moment of it. However, you may not be lucky enough to have people like that say: "Join us." So, do it yourself.

## 2. Avoid Stressing About Things You Can't Change

In our twenties, we think we can change the world rather quickly. We can stomp out biphobia. We can be accepted in the wider G&L communities. We can be accepted for being the majority that we know we are. Guess what? The very same issues that permeated the movement early on in the 1980s are exactly the same issues we are facing now. There's some improvement. We have more data; we are starting to be counted in surveys and medical studies, and we are even getting positive portrayals in the media. But, as we know, a lot still needs to be changed, so don't stress about changing the world right away. Just know you are helping with the little steps.

## 3. Don't Feel Guilty About Not Doing Enough

One of my biggest problems in my activism was that I joined all these great groups with tireless and fantastic activists, yet I never felt I was pulling my share. When I heard what my fellow super-leaders were doing, I felt frustrated that I dropped the ball on something, or I didn't have time to do this or that because I was working or taking care of the boys or simply collapsed because I was too tired. Do what you can. Know your limitations. Don't over-volunteer (a true sign of a newbie activist who will burn out quickly like a meteor). And, don't feel guilty about not doing enough, for gosh sakes. Face it, there's a lot to do. You will never be able to do enough.

## 4. Concentrate on Self-care

Think about yourself while helping others. Don't overdo it, know your limitations, and ask for help. Don't feel guilty about saying no. In the middle of my activism years in 2000, I got diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis. I realized that's why I tire so easily, can't walk as much, sometimes slur my words even if I'm not drunk, and more. I looked around at my super-activist super-heroes and saw how they kept going despite their physical limitations. I met those who were sensitive to smells, who were mobile in wheelchairs, or fought AIDS or cancer diagnoses. Loraine Hutchins and ABilly Jones were mentors, but I was also in awe of what they accomplished with their own physical challenges. At the time I first met them, facing a chronic health issue wasn't in my thoughts. As my illness now has become more progressive, they are important models for me as I navigate my renewed activism.

## 5. Be More of a Slut

I'd like to think I was a bit of a slut in my earlier days. And, there wasn't a more beautiful group of activists on the planet than the bi folk I met. But, I didn't take full advantage of it, and that I do regret. I was shy, and there was this new thing called Gay Cancer, later AIDS. I wasn't sure about telling the girls I liked boys and vice-versa. I had no idea there was anything else in between, but was soon to find out.

Some people become activists to get laid. Not an ideal reason to become one, but it is an incentive. I don't want to perpetuate a stereotype, but there was a lot of "liaisoning" (wink, wink) going on among the bisexuals, and I often was too nervous and uptight to participate. Through the bi community, I met a partner I had for more than two decades. I fell in love with people from all spectrums in the community, and still love them today. But hey, this is the most open community ever. Don't be afraid to dive in, don't be afraid to try something new, don't be afraid of odd numbers. You may find a life partner, or not, but you'll have fun looking.

## 6. Think Big

Too many times the organizers I was working with had such a myopic outlook. As a dreamer all my life, I kept throwing in the "What if?" And, perhaps, I wasn't loud enough many times in the past. What if we got more than 100 people to this Bi Conference? What if we got celebrities to show up? What if I can co-write a book that could win the first Bisexual Award that is given out by the Lambda Literary Awards? That all happened. If you think big, you may be disappointed, but it's better than never trying.

## 7. Embrace the "Other"

As much as the bi community had a fantastic diversity of

humans, there were many that I would never have normally had the chance to meet. I had to get used to that. I didn't embrace some of the stranger members of the bi community at first. Believe it or not, I was scared of people with purple or green, or blue hair, or tattoos or rings poked in parts of their body that I never knew could get pierced. I never knew about kink or polyamory and I learned quickly to be more open-minded and flexible. I discovered you could be conservative and bi, too. Because it's such a vast umbrella, bisexuals have more "others" than any other community. Embrace that.

## 8. Expand Your Vocabulary

Avoid being judgmental about people who use their own micro-identifying definitions. I used to joke about "pans" being people who loved cookware. Of course, that's not appropriate anymore. I used to joke about how there were as many bi-themed sexual identities as there were versions of coffees at Starbucks. Now, I think there are more. Don't be afraid to understand and accept new terminologies. We all used to hate the word "bisexual" because it had "sex" in it and that turned many people off. We had discussions about other ways to label ourselves. I remember an hours-long conversation at a BiNet USA meeting in San Francisco where a faction insisted on calling us "The Rainbow People." (I personally am glad that didn't stick.)

## 9. Fear Not Technology

Here I was the media coordinator for BiNet USA and didn't have an email until Robyn Ochs told me I must get one. You have to understand that we were organizing throughout the country in the infancy of the Internet, without cellphones, with cameras that used film, and we were having conferences in places where what we did in the bedroom was against the law. I did not take on technology well, and I still don't. But, I'm now having Zoom chats with activists I've not seen in person for decades, and learning how to take pictures with my phone. If you don't stay on top of things, your organization, and you as an individual will not grow.

## 10. Don't Take a Break from Activism

I dropped out of Bi Activism for about two decades, and I'm sorry I did. I had plenty of excuses. I've got more work commitments. I've got to pick the kids up from school. I'm slowing down because of my illness. I need to walk the dogs. The reality is, I could have looked for all sorts of legitimate excuses to not be involved, but sometimes I felt like I didn't have much to contribute anymore. The same old problems were being discussed and we still didn't have enough money to do the things we wanted to do. I felt too old to be around some

of the younger activists who wanted to do things differently and in ways that felt foreign to me.

The reality is, I'm getting old. You are too. There's no way to stop that. Once you are an activist, you are an activist for life. Take a break, but don't step away.

## 11. Respect the Elders

I always loved listening to old people. I was very close to my two grandmothers growing up—a Polish one who barely spoke English, and a Dutch one who yodeled in the dunes. Old people have stories to tell, advice for us to listen to, and history for us to study. I entered bi activism when some of the founding elders of the bi movement were ready to step away and let a new generation take over. I found out I was part of that new generation. But, undoubtedly, we always turned to the elders to remind us not to re-invent the wheel. And we learn from their mistakes—and most especially from their successes.

## 12. Keep in Touch

It's not difficult today to stay in touch with people with emails and cellphones, but imagine the day when we had to shuffle through a Rolodex or find the person's card to call them? What's so amazing about the bi community is that it's made up of a selfless group of people who aren't striving

to compete, or jockeying for a prestigious position. We all have the same goals: to let everyone know we are here, creating our own culture, and squashing the myths. Sharing is important, and connecting is necessary. And, what's amazing is that it can be a decade or so since you've not seen this activist, but it's like no time has passed (except for a few new wrinkles).

So, my Young Bi-Activist Self, it's far too late for me to bestow my wisdom on you, but perhaps my Old Bi-Activist Self has a few words of advice that will help this next generation. Good luck, and let's stay in touch.

*Mike Szymanski took a two-decade break from his activism in the late '80s and 2000s and is now on the board of the Los Angeles Bi+ Task Force. He served as media coordinator while on the board of BiNet USA in the past and co-authored The Bisexual's Guide to the Universe with Nicole Kristal. He can be reached at MikeTheLaBiGuy@aol.com.*

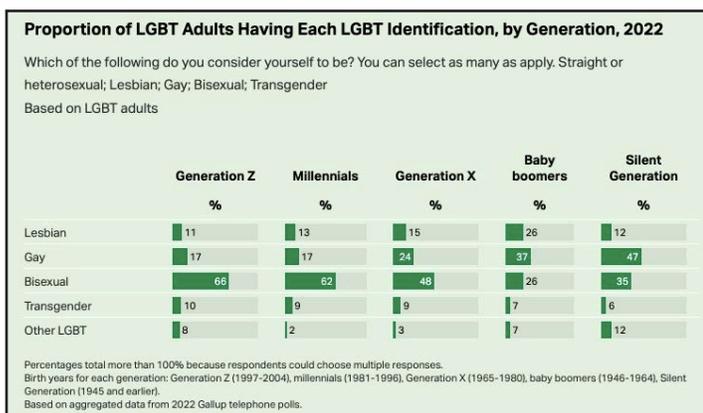


## RESEARCH CORNER: Bi the Numbers

By Nicola Koper and Robyn Ochs

Following along with this issue's theme, here is a brief summation of the recent history of bi+ identification and research in the United States:

Gallup's 2022 poll question on LGBT identity shows increases over the past decade in the number of people and proportion of all LGBT folks who identify as bisexual<sup>1</sup>. Now, well over half (58%) of LGBT people in the USA identify as "bisexual." This increase in bi identities over time is even more clear when we compare younger and older generations: a full two-thirds of LGBT Gen Z folks (born 1997-2004) identify as bi, while only a quarter of LGBT Baby Boomers (born 1946-1964) do.



What has led to this blossoming of bi (and bi+) self-identity? One important reason has been our increasing familiarity with these words. The term bisexual has changed substantially in recent decades in its cultural use and meaning. Kinsey noted as early as 1948 that sexualities are not binaries but instead are continuous. However, this concept was not adopted widely for many decades. In "The evolution of the word 'bisexual' — and why it's still misunderstood" (nbcnews.com), Alex Berg interviewed several people who identify as bi, but recall that word being rarely used prior to the 1980s. Most recently, in 2020, the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* expanded its definition of bisexuality to include attraction to one's own and other gender identities, reflecting small but still substantial recent increases in the acceptance in Eurocentric societies (such as Canada and USA) that gender and other identities are best understood across a spectrum. At the same time, we queer folks are exploring our own ways of identifying and describing ourselves in this new context, and we are using a diversity of different words (like bi, bi+, omni, and pan) to do so. So, it isn't surprising that as use and meaning of the word bisexual has changed over time, there have also been substantial changes in how many people are using this word to describe themselves.

As our use of the term *bisexual* has increased, so has the amount of research on bisexuality, which seems to have exploded in the early 1990s. We found only 654 academic papers that mentioned bisexuality published between 1900 and 1993<sup>2</sup> (over more than

nine decades!). In the following decade, though, there was a 21-fold increase in the number of papers published (controlling for total number of academic papers published in this same period<sup>2</sup>). The relative number of papers on bisexuality increased again by 24% between 2003 and 2013, and then by another 77% between 2013 and 2023. Social familiarity with bisexuality, and the interest in doing research on this topic, reflect each other, so we can expect more research to emerge as our societies become more comfortable with nonbinary identities.

Despite these improvements, there is still much less research done on bisexual issues than on those of gay and lesbian people. In the last decade, there was three times as much research done on topics related to gay or lesbian issues than on bisexuality, suggesting only modest improvements relative to the previous two decades (four times and five times as much research on gay and lesbian topics, respectively<sup>2</sup>).

Having said that, we find the research that's being done on bisexual+ issues to be really exciting. For example, Dr. Brian Feinstein, at Northwestern University, is studying the dating challenges and pressures faced by bi+ folks, while Dr. Lauren Beach, at the same university, is looking at the impacts of social and medical signals on bi+ folks who are living with chronic medical conditions<sup>3</sup>. The research that is being done has high potential for supporting all of us—as we learn more about bisexuality, we can get better at understanding and resolving the many emotional, health, and discrimination disparities and challenges faced by our community.

We're optimistic that our societies' increasing familiarity with bi+ identities, and especially with continuous rather than categorical ideas about genders and sexual identities, will help decrease discrimination against bi+ folks, decrease internalized biphobia that many of us experience, and increase research on bisexuality. But this will be a long process. While we take the time to absorb, reflect on, and share these deep societal changes, there are a few specific steps we can take to improve things in the short term, too. For example, when collecting sensitive information, we should allow folks to self-identify their sexuality, sex and gender using their own words, without prompts (such as providing a blank box to fill in for "sexuality," rather than using a drop-down menu of options)<sup>4</sup>. And when we're answering survey questions ourselves, we can choose to select "another identity not listed above" and provide a written response when we aren't happy with the identity options made available—the more people do this, the more quickly institutions will adopt diverse and inclusive language.

<sup>1</sup> In this essay we use the terms "LGBT" and "bisexual" to mirror those used by the Gallup poll and much of the academic literature. We recognize that these terms do not include all people with same or multigender attraction. [U.S. LGBT Identification Steady at 7.2% \(gallup.com\)](https://www.gallup.com).

Research, continued on p. 27

## 2023 Lambda Literary Awards

The Lambda Literary Awards ceremony is Friday, June 9 at the Edison Ballroom in NYC and online. Here are the finalists in the three bisexual categories: Bisexual Fiction, Bisexual Nonfiction, and Bisexual Poetry. You can find more information about other categories here: <https://lambdaliterary.org/awards/>.

### Bisexual Fiction



**Meet Us by the Roaring Sea** by Akil Kumarasamy, *Farrar, Straus and Giroux*

**Mother Ocean Father Nation** by Nishant Batsha, *Ecco, HarperCollins*

**Reluctant Immortals** by Gwendolyn Kiste, *S&S / Saga Press*

**Roses, In the Mouth of a Lion: A Novel** by Bushra Rehman, *Flatiron Books*

**Stories No One Hopes Are about Them** by A.J. Bermudez, *The University of Iowa Press*

### Bisexual Nonfiction



**Appropriate Behavior** by Maria San Filippo, *McGill-Queen's University Press*

**Carrying It Forward: Essays from Kistahpinanihk** by John Brady McDonald, *Wolsak and Wynn Publishers*

**Never Simple: A Memoir** by Liz Scheier, *Henry Holt / Macmillan*

**Open: An Uncensored Memoir of Love, Liberation, and Non-Monogamy** by Rachel Krantz, *Harmony Books, Penguin Random House*

**The Crane Wife** by CJ Hauser, *Knopf/Doubleday Publishing Group*

### Bisexual Poetry



**50 Things Kate Bush Taught Me About the Multiverse** by Karyna McGlynn, *Sarabande Books*

**Dereliction** by Gabrielle Octavia Rucker, *The Song Cave*

**Indecent Hours** by James Fujinami Moore, *Four Way Books*

**Meat Lovers** by Rebecca Hawkes, *Auckland University Press*

**Real Phonies and Genuine Fakes** by Nicky Beer, *Milkweed Editions*

*Casey, continued from p. 21*

faced accusations of racism and other misconduct in 2018 and 2019. After a Riptide editor made waves by saying books with POC on the cover don't sell (and therefore weren't welcome at Riptide), many authors left that company. Another scandal involved a married hetero couple posing as a bisexual single father with liver cancer (and profiting from donations for "his" healthcare) who published M/M romance.

Even controversy-free publishers haven't all fared well these last few years. Despite having won Publisher of the Year at the Bisexual Book Awards four times, Less Than Three Press had to close its doors in 2019. There have been no accusations of misconduct at LT3, but many queer authors—and particularly bisexual authors—were cast adrift by the closure. Queer and otherwise marginal writers are often the first to suffer when the industry takes a turn.

I feel incredibly lucky to have been able to "rehome" my series with JMS Books, a small queer press that weathered the storm. Other authors in my situation went the self-publishing route or left the book world entirely. And I definitely considered those options. But during my short time working with JM Snyder, I've felt like part of a team that is excited to put out a product they're proud of. When I look at the new book cover, I see Corey—a character I've had in my head for a decade now—and I'm proud of her and of the 17-year-old girl who first told her story.

I'm not that girl anymore. Today, I have the confidence to do right by her "weird little thriller" debut, which is why I am so happy to rerelease my first novel, *Out of Order*, with JMS Books LLC.

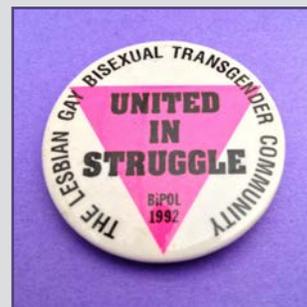
\*National Novel Writing Month, a yearly event supported by the organization and online community at [Nanowrimo.org](http://Nanowrimo.org).

Casey Lawrence just completed her doctorate in English Literature. While at university, she has written three YA novels with a bisexual protagonist. Originally from Canada, Casey currently lives in Denmark with her partner of six years.



BI+  
HISTORY

This 1992 BiPol button was emblematic of the vision of the bisexual movement of that time to combine forces with the transgender community to make the entire LGBT movement stronger.



*KimtheBwordpoet, continued from p. 15*

there's the panel host Michael Szymanski who I learned about through his writings in the *National Bisexuality Examiner* and BiMagazine.org. He also co-authored *The Bisexual's Guide to the Universe* in 2006; the first book to win in the Bisexual Category at the Lambda Literary Awards.

It was hard to not be bitten by the bi+ organizing bug once I learned of all these amazing people that had blazed the trail before me. I did not know what impact I could make in the bi+ world, I just knew I wanted to be like them one day and make my own unique mark on the movement. As the 2000s flew by, I learned of even more bi+ history makers such as panel special guest Dr. Mimi Hoang who founded and runs the Los Angeles Bi+ Task Force plus two other bi+ non-profits, and went to the 2013 White House Bisexual Community Roundtable to present on bi+ mental health; and Sheela Lambert who started Bi Writers Association in 2006 plus the Bisexual Book Awards since 2013.

As the evolution of the bi+ movement takes the queer community in new exciting directions, I hope to be one of the ones who advance to the honor of being a bi elder in the future. Being remembered for my many contributions to *Bi Women Quarterly*, *Gay People's Chronicle*, *The Letter Online*, and *The Fence* magazine; my organization Bisexual+ Initiative of Ohio; and the Bi+ themed poetry and short stories I am working towards publishing one day.

It will also be great to be on a similar panel with other bi+ activists who I currently have the honor to live in the same era as. Nicole Kristal who co-authored *Bisexual's Guide to the Universe* and who I know from her work running Still Bisexual; Bren Frederick who I know from running the Bi/Pan Library; R.J. Aguiar who I know from the TheNotAdam YouTube channel and his many pieces in BuzzFeed, Huffington Post, *Out magazine*, and *The Advocate*; Shiri Eisner who I know from her book *Bi: Notes for a Bisexual Revolution* and her Twitter activism; and Jayne B Shea who I know from the amazing Bi Pride gear she creates. We also cannot forget to include newly established historic bi+ organizations such as the Bisexual Queer Alliance Chicago (BQAC) and the Visibility Impact Fund. Hopefully everyone who attended that event researches more of those who came before, and listens to the stories of their history-creating projects.

*KimtheBwordpoet is a bi poet and writer from Cleveland, Ohio. She runs Bisexual+ Initiative of Ohio, an up-and-coming organization for Bisexual and Pansexual Ohioans; a member of Alpha Zeta Gamma Sorority, a Bisexual Women's Non-Collegiate Sorority; and the former Storytelling Coordinator for Still Bisexual, an organization dedicated to sharing the stories of Bisexual people everywhere.*



## Give OUT to BWQ in June!

During Pride Month, make a gift to the *Bi Women Quarterly* through the **Give OUT Day** campaign. Hundreds of LGBTQ+ organizations raise funds through Give OUT Day, and very few are bi-specific organizations. As the longest-running bi+ publication in the U.S.—we are over 40 years old!—this is a great opportunity to support a nonprofit that works to amplify bi+ voices from around the world on so many different topics. Your gift during this June campaign helps to keep our quarterly free and accessible to a global audience! Make your gift at [bit.ly/BWQGiveOUTDay](https://bit.ly/BWQGiveOUTDay).

Make a gift to **BWQ** during the June campaign!

GIVE **OUT** DAY  
06.28.2023

bi women quarterly

*Dear Reader, continued from p. 2*

Our movement owes so much to the activists of the 1990s who worked tirelessly to add the B to the LGBTQ+ movement that we know today. And the T as well. Remember that if someone suggests to you that the bi identity is innately transphobic. When you know that “The Bisexual Manifesto” in 1990 (see page 10) included “Don’t assume that there are only two genders,” you know that the bi+ community was way out front on understanding how sexual orientation and gender identity intersect. I think of those activists who fought for the B when some people try to reduce the movement to a pithy “queer and trans” identity. When you know how hard those early organizers fought to claim our space, our letter, our voices within the larger movement, it is painful to see it erased. In this issue, we honor those who have created and continue to create our beautiful community!

**Guest Editor, Ellyn Ruthstrom**

Three hundred and twenty-one participants attended on a full or partial scholarship. It was a celebration of hope, a sharing of grief, a melting pot of ideas and a strengthening of connections. It was bold and loud; it was intimate and soulful. Better Together embraced and elevated all letters of the rainbow acronym and felt wonderfully bi+ inclusive with several sessions and speakers representing the bi+ spectrum. I have never felt so affirmed in my life.

Hands down my favorite session of the weekend was the one that I almost missed. One of the brilliant disappointments of conferences like Better Together is that you simply cannot attend every session, and sometimes you have to flip a coin to choose which path you follow. The session I chose was shorter than I thought, and so it was on a whim that I wandered 30 minutes late into Robyn Ochs' session "Beyond the Binary."

**ISABELLE:** It's in this space where I appear, not knowing Lou at all, or anyone else in the room, for that matter. But I was about to share with her, and the rest of the room, truths I'd never even known how to articulate. Let's backtrack a little. I'm Isabelle, a queer non-binary climate scientist, activist, and lover of puns and op shops (second-hand stores run by charities). Depending on the day you catch me, I'm either shit-scared, worried, or hopeful about humanity's response to the climate crisis. I know that the struggle for climate justice is inextricably tied with the rights of First Nations people, women's rights, and queer rights. I try to feel like I'm doing enough in the face of all these crises.

Like Lou, I've had my own journey with labels and doubts. I wonder at how queer I'd be if I was born in another era, without the visibility our community has carved out for ourselves. I wonder if I'm actually pan/ace/non-binary or if I'm just a chronic overthinker. I recognize my privilege as a white, well-educated, female-passing person. I feel incredibly grateful for an affirming, welcoming, community that has constantly soothed these doubts and inspired me to both love and fight harder.

And it was in this context that I landed, with Lou and perhaps a hundred others, in Robyn's session. We started with a simple premise: labels are, sometimes, useful tools. However, labels are inherently binary—you either "are" or "aren't" any given label. As a result, labels are, inherently, limited. And it was these limitations that we explored.

Imagine a spectrum, where "one" represents exclusive attraction to genders different from your own and "seven" represents attraction to genders similar to your own. If someone described themselves as gay, what number would you imagine them to be? Seven, perhaps? We tested this—dozens of people making a physical number line, and found self-described gays at every single number. The same thing happened when we explored gender identity and sexual/romantic attraction. There were no rules. It makes you look at people's labels differently, doesn't it? Just as we choose carefully how we describe our lives outside of the queer community, we also choose our labels carefully within the community—simplifying the complex, messy, truth that is our identities.

It's this thought that has followed me since the workshop; this



Robyn Ochs presenting her *Beyond Binaries* workshop at the Better Together Conference.

idea that our identities are too diverse, too fluid, too real to be neatly tied down by one—or even two or three—binary labels. I don't think I'm alone in this perspective shift; I could almost hear everyone having their "What even are labels?!" moment as the session progressed, epitomized by one attendee revealing they were no longer convinced of their own heterosexuality. In the end, labels have utility for sharing and communicating. But whatever words you use, you are valid and welcome and real.

*Lou (left) loves her family, creative writing and palliative care nursing. She collects notebooks, lip balms, and later-in-life labels, and specializes in overthinking, courting burnout, and thriving under pressure.*

*Isabelle (right) is a queer non-binary climate scientist, activist, and avid collector of random facts based on Bidigal Country (Sydney, Australia).*



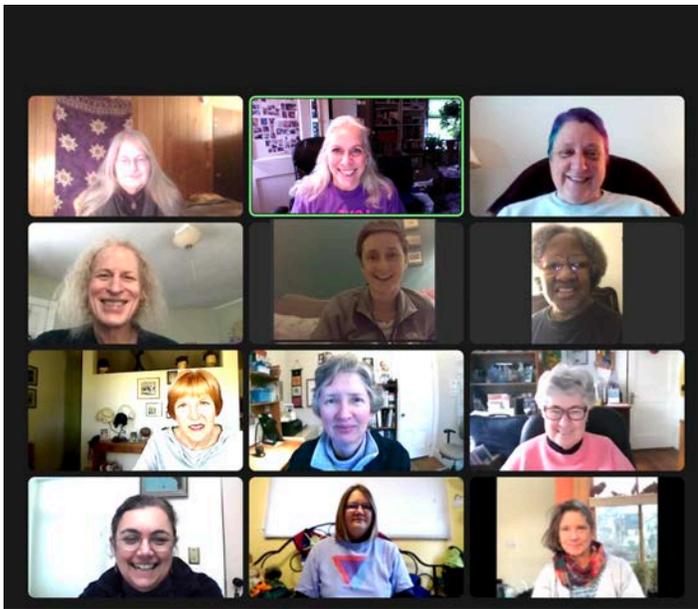
Research, continued from p. 24

<sup>2</sup> Searches using Web of Science Core Collection, April 12 2023. Papers that include the term "bisexual": 1900-1993 =654 papers (out of 64,396,187 total archived by Web of Science for this time period); 1993-2003 = 2,185 (10,025,113); 2003-2013 = 4,870 (17,990,152); 2013-2023 = 13,696 (28,599,565).

<sup>3</sup> Research Spotlight: Drs. Brian Feinstein and Lauren Beach – Bisexual Resource Center ([biresource.org](https://biresource.org)).

<sup>4</sup> Appendix C: Best practices checklist | Ontario Human Rights Commission ([ohrc.on.ca](https://ohrc.on.ca)), Ontario Human Rights Commission Policy on preventing discrimination because of gender identity and gender expression.

# CALENDAR



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 1pm EST:**

Sun., June 4  
Sat., July 8  
Sun., Aug 6  
Sat., Sept 9

Info/RSVP:  
BWQEvents@gmail.com.

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

**Please join us!**

*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.)*

## FREE Bi+ Global Events: July 14 & 15

Join us at the 10th World Bi+ Meetup! To accommodate people in various time zones, we will have TWO meetups each time: Meetup #10 will be July 14, 4 p.m. EDT/10 p.m. CEST & July 15, 4 a.m. EDT/10 a.m. CEST. Bi+ people everywhere are invited to join either or both meetups on Zoom. We'll be using breakout rooms to give folks an opportunity to meet each other in a friendly and free setting. The meeting is in English and is organized by Barbara Oud (the Netherlands) and Robyn Ochs (U.S.). Pre-registration is required. Register at <https://biplus.nl/biplus-world-meetup>.

### Metro-Boston Women & Nonbinary folks:

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

We offer FREE digital subscriptions to BWQ to people of all genders and all orientations everywhere. Subscribe at [BiWomenQuarterly.com](http://BiWomenQuarterly.com).

## Happy Pride Month!

Not every community celebrates Pride in June, but the vast majority of U.S. cities and towns hold their parades, marches, and festivals this month. Visit the website for the International LGBTQ Travel Association to search for Pride celebrations in your area and around the world. <https://www.iglta.org/events/pride-calendar/>

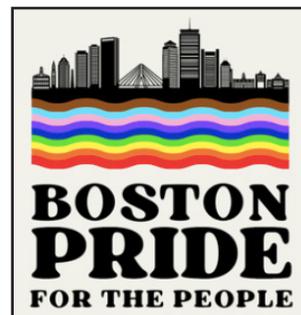
### Friday, June 9th, 6:30pm

Join a diverse queer crowd at the Parkman Bandstand on Boston Common for the annual Dyke March. March through the city or enjoy speeches and entertainment to get you revved up for the weekend!



### Saturday, June 10th

Boston's Pride Parade starts at Noon along Boylston Street, loops through the South End, and ends on Boston Common. Community tabling, vendors, and entertainment will be on both the Common and Government Center.



**Bi Women Quarterly**

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