

## Don't Be Too Sure

By Laura Berol

When Wilson Diehl recently published her essay, “Yes, I Really Am Bisexual. Deal with It,” in the “Modern Love” column of the *New York Times*, I liked it on Facebook and quickly got three responses, all from the same individual:

“What are you trying to say by putting this online?”

“Sorry, but I find this disturbing.”

“Where is the unlike button?”

At last I'd found the only person on earth for whom I'm too bisexual. It was refreshing, in a way, after being asked time and again to justify my monogamous straight marriage. After all, my friends argue, if I desire women, shouldn't I be acting on that?

Or maybe they don't always argue. Maybe some of them just ask, “What did your husband do to make you see marriage as a possibility?” Maybe they comment in a leading tone, “So you're attracted to women, but you're married to a man....” Maybe they just cock an eyebrow

and look curious. It doesn't take much to start my internal critic demanding, “How can you be bi? You're not young enough—hot enough—hip enough. You're a middle-aged housewife!” as though bisexuality were an exclusive club from which I'd been bounced.

On the face of it, it's a weird kind of self-doubt. Who should know my sexual identity better than I do? And why would I claim to be bisexual if I weren't? Certainly not for all the approval it has earned me.

But Wilson Diehl's essay showed me I wasn't alone in doubting myself this way. “Is it reasonable for me to claim queerness when I've benefited so much from heterosexual privilege...?” she writes after four years of straight marriage. And, of course, there's a cantankerous reader who can't pass up the opportunity to reply online, “Actually, it is not reasonable.”

That's the problem with self-doubt: there are always plenty of people (especially on the internet) willing to tell you that you're not a good enough bi, just as there are plenty

**Laura**, continues on page 16

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## Me v. Biphobia

By A.J. Walkley

Up until fairly recently, I had a phobia that was specific to me, targeted at me alone. While it's hard to admit, I experienced internalized biphobia from around elementary school when I felt ashamed for wanting to kiss my friend Mallory and my friend Anthony, until a little over a year ago. While I have always been completely accepting of all people of all sexualities, including other bisexuals, it's been a long road to complete acceptance of my own bisexuality.

The few dalliances I had with the same sex in school up until college were tamped down deep in my mind, buried until I was ready to deal with what they meant. Despite the leadership roles I took up in the Gay-Straight Alliance at my college from freshman year on, it took two-and-a-half years to come out to the group as bisexual – and even then, my roller coaster wasn't over. I was stuck on a fence, in many ways and to many people, and I wasn't comfortable in that position.

In the spring of 2006, I attended my first True Colors Conference at the University of Connecticut, where I attended a workshop led by Robyn Ochs. At the beginning of the workshop, I vividly recall Robyn asking the attendees what we identified as “today” – she explained that we may not have identified that way yesterday and we may not iden-

tify the same way tomorrow. On that day, I declared, “I'm a lesbian” to my workshop partner – but it didn't feel right.

Returning to my campus, I tried out that label, telling my then-roommate, “Maybe I'm a lesbian.”

She shot me down – “You're not. You're bisexual. Deal with it.” A self-proclaimed bisexual herself, she was irritated at my inability to accept myself.

There are plenty of reasons for my personal biphobia: concerns about family acceptance when entering into a relationship with a certain gender; worries that no matter whom I dated, I would always be missing out on something other genders could offer; uncertainties about how many people of any specific gender I would need to be with to be considered a “real bisexual” to greater society; and fears that all of the negative stereotypes and clichés that plague bisexuals would come down upon me in various areas of my life.

If I wasn't with at least two people of differing genders at any given time, would I be considered a “true bisexual”? If I settled down with one person of one gender, would I be considered a traitor to the bisexual community? If I ended up with a male, cisgender partner, would I be a traitor to the LGBT+ community?

I directed all of these doubts within. When I started my now four-year relationship with a cisgender male after several years of dating a variety of people across the gender

**A. J.**, continues on page 17

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## HONOR ROLL

Heather Benjamin  
Kate Estrop  
Carla Imperial  
Jemie  
Robyn Ochs  
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Ellyn Ruthstrom  
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*Bi Women* is published quarterly.

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## From Your Editor

The theme for this issue is “Bisexual Enough?” Readers were asked: “Have you ever wondered – perhaps because you do not fall dead center on the Kinsey Scale or because you’ve not had actual sexual and/or relationship experience with people of a particular gender (or even perhaps with anyone at all) – whether you are bisexual enough to call yourself bisexual? Has your legitimacy as a ‘true bisexual’ ever been challenged by others? Tell us about your experiences, your interior dialogue, your conversations, your process.”

For several weeks there was nary a peep, and I wondered if I was the only person excited about this theme. Then the submissions began pouring in. We received so many good submissions that we opted to add four extra pages to this issue!

So here’s what you’ll find: essays on this theme by Laura Berol, A.J. Walkley, Sofi D., A. Rutter, Emma Jones, Lynn and A.V. Cruz; beautiful poems by Suzanne Lauer, Francesca Bongiorno Fortunato, Brittany Bell and Jane Barnes; and a short story by Kate Estrop.

Our “Around the World” feature is back, with an interview with UK academic and bi activist Meg Barker. Lauren Beach reports on the BECAUSE and BiReConUSA Conferences and Lauren Spencer reports on her visit to the White House in June for the annual LGBT Pride Reception. Katelyn Bishop reviews Shiri Eisner’s new book, *Bi: Notes on a Bisexual Revolution* and Ellyn shares a few words about the new Netflix series *Orange is the New Black*. We introduce you to the work of visual artist Ashley Shaffer. And finally, there’s Ask Tiggy, News Briefs and a rich calendar of events.

We hope you enjoy this issue.

*Robyn*

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



## Next in *Bi Women*

The theme for the Winter’13 issue:

### The Bi\*/Trans\* Connection

Because our very existence challenges societal binaries, bi\* and trans\* folks are often misunderstood and sometimes reviled by both straight and gay communities. Bi\* women: do you feel a special personal or political connection to the trans\* community? If you identify as both bi\* and trans\*: are there special challenges or advantages of identifying as both bi\* and trans\*? And bi\* women in relationships with someone trans\*: what do you want to tell us?

**We want to hear from you.** Essays, poems, artwork and short stories are welcome.

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

**Submission guidelines are at:**

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

Send your submissions and suggestions for future topics to [biwomeneditor@gmail.com](mailto:biwomeneditor@gmail.com)

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

***Bi Women* is online at [biwomenboston.org](http://biwomenboston.org).**

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

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

# Around the World: Meg Barker

## United Kingdom

Interview by Robyn Ochs

**Robyn Ochs:** *Meg Barker, it is an honor to interview you! Please tell us about yourself.*

**Meg Barker:** I'm a senior lecturer in psychology at the Open University in the UK as well as being a writer, an activist, and a psychotherapist. In all of those areas I specialize in sexuality and relationships, and my main topics of research have been bisexuality, open non-monogamy, and BDSM.

Combining academic research, teaching, therapy, writing and activism is really important to me and I find that each of those feeds into the others, strengthening them all. I like not having terribly clear dividing lines between work and the rest of my life and most of my friends and partners have also been work colleagues, co-authors, and fellow activists.

My biggest passion is writing and blogging for a general audience, drawing on what I have learned from academic research, therapy and activism. Last year, I published my first book for a general audience, *Rewriting the Rules* ([www.rewriting-the-rules.com](http://www.rewriting-the-rules.com)) and that was one of the best moments of my life. The book is all about the taken-for-granted rules that we have about love and relationships, the ways in which those can limit us and the various alternatives that people have explored.

I've lived in the UK all my life and divide my time between the country and city. I enjoy climbing, running and foraging in the countryside and going out for meals, walking around town and socializing in the city. It's a great balance.

**RO:** *What is your main work around bisexuality?*

**MB:** In relation to bisexuality, I'm a founding member of BiUK ([www.biuk.org](http://www.biuk.org)), a UK group dedicated to research and activism around bisexuality. We run BiReCon, a biennial conference which takes place before the annual UK BiCon community events. BiReCon brings researchers, activists, community members and organizations together to hear the latest bi research and to discuss how we can improve policy and practice for bisexual people. In 2010 BiReCon was before the International Conference on Bisexuality and

we think it was the first international academic conference on bisexuality.

In 2012, BiUK produced *The Bisexuality Report*, which was similar to the San Francisco *Bisexual Invisibility* report, but focused on the UK. We've also produced guidelines for people researching and writing about bisexuality. And, of course, we do our own research on bisexuality, often using creative methods to get at different stories about people's experiences of being bi, as well as more traditional survey techniques.

**RO:** *What is your personal definition of "bisexual"? What about your own sexual and gender identity?*

**MB:** I'm generally okay with "attraction to more than one gender." I think that the "more than" part is important because

there are definitely more than two genders. Some people like the definition "attraction regardless of gender" and I like that too because it suggests that things other than gender can be equally, or more, important in who we are attracted to. I like to question why our idea of sexuality is so bound up with gender of partners. Why not encompass other aspects such as the roles we like to take sexually, or how active or passive we like to be, or what practices we enjoy? Why is our gender, and the gender of our partners, seen as such a vital part of who we are?

I personally find it difficult to identify with one gender or one sexual identity, and my preferred gender pronoun is "they." I also struggle with the distinctions that we often make between different kinds of relationships (e.g., partners and friends). I prefer to consider all the people I feel close to in my life, and all of the different aspects that connect me with them.

I think it is important to value the diversity of ways of experiencing gender, sexuality and relationships, rather than looking for any universal model that will apply to everyone.

**RO:** *Do religion or spiritual beliefs relate at all to your views on sexuality?*

**Meg, continued on next page**



Meg, continued from page 3

**MB:** Over the years I've developed an interest in Buddhism and mindfulness and I think that has informed my views on gender and sexuality as well. One of the main ideas in Buddhism is that of "non-grasping," so you try not to grab onto things too tightly when you like them, as well as trying not to hurl them away from yourself when you don't like them. I think that's a useful attitude in relation to so many things: feelings, relationships, and labels. Holding them lightly is a good way to value what they offer without demanding perfection. Buddhism also questions the idea of us being static, fixed selves, but rather uses metaphors such as that of a river for the way that we are always changing and becoming.

**RO:** *What words are used to describe lesbian, gay, bi or non-heterosexual people in the UK? Are these words equivalent to their US counterparts, or do they have a different meaning?*

**MB:** I recently examined a PhD viva [defense] about biphobia in sport, which found that bisexual members of UK sporting teams were often given nicknames like 'half-pint' or 'half-blood' suggesting that they aren't really one thing or the other, or are somehow lesser than gay or straight people. Also the stereotypes of bisexual people being greedy or unable to make their minds up still persist. One thing that was tough for those bisexual sportspeople was that receiving nicknames also meant being accepted by the team, so they felt both positively and negatively about them at the same time.

**RO:** *What rights are accorded to LGBT people in the UK/England?*

**MB:** We're currently in the process of getting equal marriage (having had civil partnerships for some years), so that is the big LGBT rights issue at the moment. Unfortunately, a lot of the debates have involved arguing whether this will open the floodgates to acceptance of 'polygamy, bestiality and pedophilia.' It disturbs me to see consensual open non-monogamy being lumped together with non-consensual activities by opponents and proponents of equal marriage alike. This suggests that we are a long way from folks in multiple relationships gaining any kind of recognition. As always there is a danger in rights activism that only the most normative people are included and others are still excluded.

That said, media representations of the diversity of genders, sexualities and relationship styles have been improving in the UK. Trans Media Watch have done some great work signing people up to guidelines regarding reasonable depictions of trans\* people, and most of the articles written about *Rewriting the Rules* presented polyamory and open relationships as reasonable alternatives to cheating rather than

sensationalizing and stigmatizing them. All of the reporting of *The Bisexuality Report* was really positive.

**RO:** *What resources are available specifically for bisexuals in the UK? Are bi folks well-integrated into the UK's sexual minority community?*

**MB:** There's a whole lot going on. BiCon has been running for nearly 30 years and there are local BiFest events in different places round the country. *Bi Community News* is a terrific magazine. The new Bis of Colour group is doing excellent work highlighting the intersections of bisexuality and race. And there's so much more.

In terms of integration, it's not so great. Many of the LG&B and LGB&T organizations claim to speak for bisexual people, but in actuality their work in this area is patchy. One of the recommendations of *The Bisexuality Report* was for all such organizations to be properly inclusive of bisexuality by having a dedicated member of staff, including visual representations of bisexual people in their materials and offices and making bisexual information available.

**RO:** *You have been involved in the transnational bi community for a long time. Do you see a value in transnational activism?*

**MB:** Transnational activism is extremely important because we can learn from what people are doing globally around bisexuality. There may well have been an idea in the past that the UK and US are somehow the "furthest ahead" on LGBT&Q and bisexual activism and that really isn't the case.

One very influential piece of work just out is Shiri Eisner's excellent book (see page 14). Shiri's ideas revolutionize bi activism, placing way more emphasis on intersectionality and power than we've seen in the past, proposing a totally different way of responding to bisexual myths and stereotypes, and drawing important links with other political movements like Palestine solidarity.

After that, Surya Monro's next book also focuses on bisexuality and compares bisexual communities in different countries rather than maintaining the US/UK focus of much of the past research. Again, expect to see plenty on intersections of power and privilege, and on how bisexual activism relates to other political struggles.

The academic\_bi list online ([groups.yahoo.com/group/academic\\_bi](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/academic_bi)) is a great place for discussions of bisexuality research and activism globally.

**Note:** Meg keynoted the first US BiReCon. See page 11 for coverage

# Introducing Ashley Shaffer & De'VIA

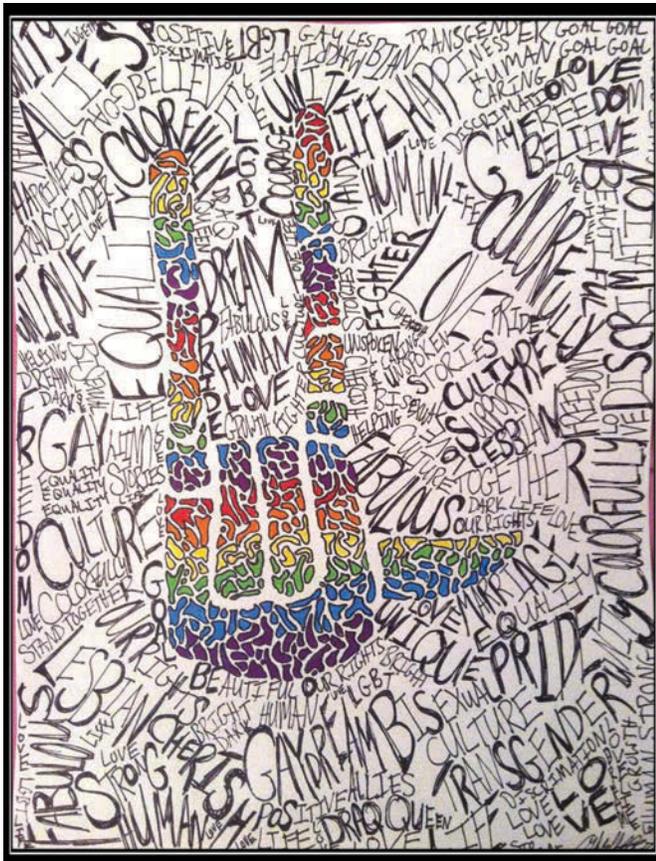
My name is Ashley Shaffer. I am Deaf. I am a woman. I am bisexual. I am a De'VIA artist. De'VIA stands for Deaf View/Image Art, a form of art in which the artist intends to express Deaf experience through visual art. I was born and raised in Baltimore, Maryland. I am proud of being all of these things!

Art has grown in my heart since I was four or five years old. It is a huge part of my life. It is who I am and it is what I love to do. I use different types of mixed media, among them Sharpie markers, prismacolor markers and paints. I express my feelings by creating powerful messages through my artwork to make people think.

Expressing myself through art is like putting a seed in the ground that will grow beautiful and unstoppable. This is one of many reasons why I draw. I love to inspire people and make their lives colorful!



Included here are "LGBT" (below) and "The Roots of Love" (upper right). You can find more of Ashley's artwork online at [Facebook.com/AshleyShaffer.Art](https://www.facebook.com/AshleyShaffer.Art) or read about De'VIA at [http://www.deafart.org/Deaf\\_Art/Deaf\\_art\\_.html](http://www.deafart.org/Deaf_Art/Deaf_art_.html).



## Prayers

By Suzanne Lauer

My prayers went unanswered  
so long  
They grew stale  
buried in the folds of time  
so long  
Never to meet my female love  
so long  
I looked,  
so long I prayed and hoped.  
Now you flutter so gently  
down to sip my sweetness  
embracing all of me,  
I stare up at you  
amazed  
at your love  
And my petals open  
to bloom  
only for you  
after  
so very long.

*Suzanne has an MS in Public and Urban Affairs, has lived abroad and is currently enjoying nature photography, gardening and each new day.*

# Am I Bi (Sexual) Enough for(What?)

*By Francesca Bongiorno Fortunato*

Am I  
bi  
sexual enough  
to strut my stuff  
with the Queer Choir?  
Or even (SIGH)  
aspire higher?  
Would you dismiss  
me if I kiss this Miss  
but not that Mister?  
Shall I qualify  
as Thy  
bi sister?  
When I was married to a man  
they ran  
me out of the sorority,  
without a by-your-leave.  
‘Though it did grieve  
me to achieve  
invisibility.  
Now, in stability,  
with one fine lady wife,  
this life  
seems more conducive  
to the formerly elusive  
in-ness with the Out Crowd.  
Out and proud  
since Day One  
I have only just begun  
to highlight  
my Bi Light  
in a way that can be seen  
beyond the see-and-be-scene  
of Pride Sunday.  
Maybe one day  
I might be  
bisexual enough to free  
the one, multiplicitous  
blithely monogamous  
not-quite nefarious  
yet-ever-various  
half-intellectual  
wholly bisexual  
me.

*The Rev. Francesca Bongiorno Fortunato is a minister, writer/poet, performing artist and Extreme Cat Person. She lives in Brooklyn, NY with her wife, Lynn and their feline employers, Alice and Gracie.*

# Bisexual and Proud

*By Sofi D.*

Being bi carries a social stigma. People think it's a phase, that you're just confused, slutty, or just getting into the college experience. Insisting only makes it worse. Your parents don't believe you either, saying that you've just never met the right person. How can who you are be just a phase? How can people say that since you're bi, your relationships have meant nothing?

It's not fair that just because men and women are beautiful in their own ways to me, I am criticized. I'm judged the second the words "I'm bisexual" pour out of my mouth. My past relationships have mostly been with women, so automatically my friends think that I'm a lesbian using bisexual identity as a stepping stool. But as a wise person recently told me: "It's an i-dentity, not a you-dentity." This is everything I am: I am bisexual. I've known since fourth grade. I came out in seventh, and I've been judged since I had my first girlfriend in high school.

"Didn't you used to date that girl? And now you're with... that guy?" "To be honest, I always thought you were a lesbian." There comes a time when you seriously start to get angry. But also, I've doubted myself. I've thought that I wasn't rightfully bi because I've never had a healthy relationship with a guy. Guys are extremely attractive to me, and so are girls, but relationships with girls have always been better for me: more open to communication, to ideas, and to admitting love when it hits her.

My one and only boyfriend (we lasted about five months) cheated on me the first night we went out. After he spent 15 minutes trying to get me into bed with him, I left. It turns out that he found someone else to be with that night, and she told me later because she thought it was funny. However, girls don't always make for the best relationships either. A girlfriend stopped talking to me for a month and a half, and when I finally confronted her, she said she didn't love me anymore. I was her experiment. You really never know what you are getting into.

I'm also the best party favor ever. Truth or Dare? You can bet someone is going to be dared to kiss me, or vice versa. I am always asked if I've been able to orgasm more with a guy or a girl. I am always asked the most personal questions, and it's embarrassing. Why aren't heterosexual people asked the same questions? Why do I have to kiss someone I am not attracted to? Because as soon as our lips touch, I am playing into every guy's fantasy.

I feel so angry writing this. I feel like everything has been building up inside of me and I am releasing these words calmly. I am not indecisive. I am not in a phase. And I am certainly not any other derogatory phrase that anyone decides to throw out at me. I am bisexual and proud.

*Sofi, 20, studies Communications at William Paterson University.*

# Hand in Your Punch Card

By A. Rutter

Though I have identified as bisexual for ten years, I still find myself sitting and wondering if I'm not actually heterosexual after all. I sit and I think in my room, or on the train, or in a long shower, "What if I'm just keeping this label because I've had it so long, and not because it actually applies anymore?" After all, I've only ever dated one woman seriously. "But my anxiety disorder makes it difficult to approach other ladies even for friendship, let alone asking if they're interested romantically in women," I reason. Yes, but. There's always some "but" lingering. There's always a small amount of doubt festering in the back of my mind that sometimes surfaces in uncomfortable ways. Especially since there are many in the community who don't want different-gender bisexual couples to be included in safe spaces, or who categorize those relationships as "heterosexual" despite one or both individuals identifying as bisexual.

So it feels as though if I am allowed in the community, I must be dating women; otherwise, I'm a traitor for dating men, or I'm not "allowed" to utilize the label for myself, and will be exiled from the community for the duration of my undesirable different-gender relationship. The complex nature of bisexual relationships is sometimes overlooked by others in the wider LGBT\* community, and certainly by those outside of it. I see arguments that it's inappropriate to label bisexuals as either "straight" or "gay" depending on their current relationship – as though it's Schrödinger's sexuality – but still there is that discomfort at allowing someone whose relationship appears straight to come to an LGBT\* event or venue, because it is flaunting a passing privilege (or coercive closeting, in some opinions) over those who have no interest in pairing outside of their own gender, which would make them feel unsafe in what should be a safe space.

"Is this right? Do I have to take into account the fact that I might be privileged over bisexual women in same-sex relationships because I'm dating a man?" I ask myself. Well, in some ways, yes, but I need to remind myself that this attitude turns my relationships into political battlefields that I have no interest in navigating. I don't choose my partners based on how political it makes me seem; I choose them based on mutual attraction, shared interests, and availability. I don't want to date women only because I want to be revolutionary enough for the bisexual community, or visibly queer to the rest of the LGBT\* groups. It puts just as much emphasis on what I am doing romantically (and especially sexually) with any partner I choose as the bigoted heterosexuals who home in on our activities in the bedroom to demonize the LGBT\* community as a whole.

Thus, I am constantly re-evaluating my sexual history, my fantasies, judging how interested I am in pinups featuring women versus fashion shoots of shirtless men in increments of whatever unit arousal is measured in, and weighing the consequences of exactly what everything means. Was it just a phase? I wonder. Is this just some cliché high school and college experimentation? I cling onto examples of homo- and biphobia I have faced as an anchor, proving to myself and to others that I deserve to use this label, and that I have felt the stomach-clenching horror of facing those judgments from friends, family, and strangers alike. However, I convince myself that feeling – that tight, icy punch to the gut – at hearing some casual biphobic comment means that my claim to this sexuality is real and valid, I still struggle with accepting that it doesn't matter who I have slept with or who I haven't; there's no punch card to give my partners as proof: once you get ten stamps, you get a free admission to the Queer Club. But even if that were true, if I looked at a man within that safe space, would I be kicked out and have my membership revoked? Would I have to stick with women, even if there's a guy over there I'm really interested in more than any of the women in the place?

It feels sometimes like I must calculate my partnerships to create a performance, to please both heterosexual skeptics and members of my own community equally. My sexuality is not performance art; it's not political because I choose not to make it so – except for when I do. At times it seems like it would just be simpler to adopt celibacy or shuck off the label and all of its connotations altogether.

Despite all of this, however, "bisexual" is my label; it describes my affinity for genders same and other, regardless of how loudly others may gnash their teeth and try to strip it from me. It's mine, and however I sculpt it to suit me through the doubts and the pressures, it's staying.

*A. Rutter is a recent graduate from Temple University with a degree in English. She plans to spend her adulthood singing pop songs to her cats and writing novels.*

# Open Bar

By *Kate Estrop*

For the past ten minutes, Nell had been staring at the tiny bar in the corner of the reception hall. It wasn't the bartender she watched, as he was not really her type: bearded, balding, yet sporting a sandy blond ponytail down the back of his black vest. She instead kept an eye on the glass fishbowl on the bar. Each guest deposited some amount of money, though from the seat at the table where she and Karen had been assigned, Nell couldn't tell how much. Was it a tip, or did the bartender forgo a cashbox? Picturing the wrinkled five dollar bill in her wallet, Nell didn't have the energy to navigate the logistics. Of course, a drink would have made it easier.

Nell felt the seat next to her shift, and Karen set down a plate of hors d'oeuvres on the table. Karen eased back in the plastic folding chair and crunched on a piece of celery. "Getting a drink?"

Nell turned to her, shrugging, and picked a carrot off the plate. "Think her family sprang for an open bar?"

"If they did, that's where they spent the money they should have spent on fresher food," Karen said, examining the other half of her celery stalk.

Rolling her eyes, Nell stood. "You want anything?"

"White wine."

Nell approached the bartender carefully, trying to act confident that she knew how to work things. "Two white wines, please."

The bartender, who seemed younger up close, smiled and looked Nell straight-on as he responded, "You got it." The crinkles in the corners of his eyes (seriously ice-blue) were kind, and Nell found herself smiling back.

"Nice ceremony?" he asked, uncorking a new bottle.

"Great venue."

"One of the best," he said, pouring.

Flushed, she avoided his gaze and realized she now had an unencumbered view of the fishbowl, which was full of ones. Nell fished her wallet out of her jacket. "Do you have change?"

He shrugged, pointing at the bowl with his corkscrew, "No cash. Just that."

Ears now burning, she deposited the bill in the bowl, muttering that it wasn't a problem, and took the wine glasses from him.

"Carry it over for next time," he said, and she nodded, relieved, returning to the table as fast as she could without spilling.

"Did you have cash?" Karen asked before Nell had even settled back in her seat.

"Obviously." She set the glasses down a little too roughly and wine slopped over the side.

"Well, you never carry cash. I just wanted to make sure."

They sat in silence for a moment, Nell a little embar-

assed for snapping, dabbing up the spill. Upon noticing that the clump of guests around the hors d'oeuvres table had started to thin, Nell got up to get herself something. But Karen stopped her, a hand on her arm.

"Can you sit with me for a minute? I don't know a soul here."

Nell decided it wasn't in the best interest of their relationship to point out that it had been Karen who insisted they come watch Nell's ex-husband get re-married, and wasn't it so sweet for him to include her on the invitation too? Instead, Nell settled back in her chair, reaching for something else from Karen's plate.

"It was a nice ceremony," Nell said, trying to find the carrot with the least vegetable dip.

"How did it compare?"

"It didn't. We got married in the courthouse."

"How did I not know that?"

"I don't know. I told you."

The wine felt warm going down, and Nell gulped a little too much with each drink. Her gaze drifted back to the bartender with the nice smile, and she thought she could just barely make out the five in the fishbowl, waiting to be spent.

"You think they're scandalized you're here with a woman?" Karen asked, pushing a mini-quiche around the plate with a carrot stick.

Though Nell had been on the lookout all evening for whispers behind cupped hands and quick glances away, she knew no one was surprised. She had left Troy on the pretense that she was only attracted to women now, something that seemed much easier to explain than her interest in everyone but him. It had gone well – so well, in fact, that there were whole nights Nell lay on the pullout couch in the living room, forced awake by the guilt created by how nice everyone was being, but mostly angry at herself for jumping from one extreme to the next, never feeling she could own up to wanting both.

So she hadn't been surprised in the slightest, three years and a half-dozen lesbian relationships later, to receive the wedding invitation including Karen. Those who hadn't already been keeping tabs on her via social media would have been filled in by Troy's family. Besides, any gossip surrounding her was probably aimed instead at the fact that she'd actually been with someone for over six months.

"Troy wanted something big, but my folks couldn't afford it. We had a cookout afterwards, a potluck-type thing."

"It sounds boring."

"It was nice. Simple." Nell didn't remember much else from that day, other than a whirlwind of eating, drinking, well-wishing, regret.

"Well now you're on our team," Karen said, tipping back the rest of her wine, "and unless we're the first couple to tie the knot after it becomes legal, I won't be so satisfied with a courthouse."

*Kate, continued on next page*

**Kate**, continued from previous page

Though Nell knew Karen was mostly kidding, she had to force a grin. She finished the rest of her wine in a gulp, then held out a hand for Karen's glass. "I'll get you a refill."

On the way to the bar, Nell looked around for Troy and his new wife, but was relieved to remember that they were off taking pictures somewhere. Their reunion, after three years, could wait until she'd had a few more drinks.

The bartender brightened at Nell's return. "Cashing in?"

She handed him their empty glasses and, as he poured, she noticed a strand of hair had escaped from his ponytail and fallen over his eyes. She wanted to reach out and tuck it behind his ear, but tightened her arms to her sides instead. "You like this job?"

"It's not bad. I get a plate of food, there's all these well-dressed people. Some nights are more entertaining than others."

In no rush to return to Karen, who seemed to be socializing with a couple who had just arrived at their table, Nell leaned against the bar. "Oh yeah? What was your most memorable reception? Has anyone gotten just absolutely wasted?"

He set the full glasses down and retrieved some beer for a man who had come up behind Nell. "Mostly drunk uncles, drunk brothers. One time there was a woman, though, mother of the groom, who was so drunk she tried to dance on the bar."

"This bar?" Nell laughed, trying to picture it. The tip bowl took up almost half of its surface.

"This very one. She fell and broke her arm. Have to say, that was the only ambulance I've seen at one of these."

Nell suddenly wanted to get up on the bar herself, to leap over and grab this man with the smiling eyes and kiss him. The urge washed over her, caused the hairs on the back of her neck to stand up straight. She steadied herself on the bar and instead said, "Sometimes you're bored though, right?"

He nodded, wiping a spill. "More times than not." He filled an inch of a small plastic cup with clear liqueur and slid it across to Nell. "Have a shot before you have to sit down again."

"You sure?" Nell looked into the cup and sniffed it, and anise hit her nose.

"Hey, it's already on your tab," he said, indicating the bowl.

She tipped her head back, the rich scent wafting into her sinuses as the shot slid down her throat. She set the cup down and wiped her mouth on the back of her hand. "Thank you."

"You know what's frustrating about this job, though," he said, handing her a cocktail napkin and leaning towards her. "It's either all action or boring as hell. It's never both at once."

His sudden close presence and the slight buzz brought on by the shot caused Nell to back away a little, knowing she had to return to the table. She thanked him again and

wound her way through the clumps of other guests, stopping to say hello to Troy's mother, apologizing for not being able to chat long. She promised to come back and talk later in the evening, but knew she wouldn't.

"Run into people?" Karen asked.

"The bar was busy."

"The bartender looked into you. Too bad you're not straight."

"Too bad," Nell said. They were called to dinner, and she followed Karen through the serving line, hungry.

*Kate Estrop is a Boston-area professor, writer and editor. She is on the board of the Bisexual Resource Center and organizes Young BLiSS.*

## Validation

*By Brittany Bell*

My love life  
Is not a crime scene  
Where upon evaluation  
Of incriminating evidence  
A jury decides  
"She's one of us."  
The tally marks are uneven  
But my convictions are not.  
I have loved women  
Far too fondly to be straight  
And men  
Far too many in number  
For my Sapphic sisters.  
My sisters, and brothers  
Who call me greedy?  
Or dirty, or in denial  
For daring to love who I love  
Without borders.  
"Oh, just pick a side."  
But tell me  
Even if you only crave chocolate  
Or favor the familiar warmth of vanilla  
Don't some prefer the swirl?

*Brittany is a 24-year-old bisexual woman from Worcester, MA who is working in the human services field.*

# Not Like the Others

By Emma Jones

“You’re a lesbian. Damn, just call yourself a lesbian.”

I frowned. “No,” I said slowly. “I’m not a lesbian. I just...don’t like *those* guys.”

My friend crossed her arms and scowled at me. “You liked them before you went out with them. They did nothing wrong on the dates, right? Two guys in a row, you just go out, and instantly feel the need to dump them? You don’t like guys. There’s nothing wrong with being gay, just come out about it and stop the lying.”

It was hard to argue with her logic. Maybe that was how lesbians felt – maybe all lesbians liked guys the way I did, but couldn’t stand to go out with them. That did make sense. The longest relationship I ever had was with another girl.

But I couldn’t let it go. I had crushes on boys. I was sixteen and felt like I should have that all figured out already. The rest of my friends had no doubt they were straight – it was so easy for them.

Maybe I just expected myself to like boys, because they did. Maybe I wanted a boyfriend because they had boyfriends.

But if that were the case, wouldn’t I also be trying to hide my attraction to girls?

“Your girlfriend said you didn’t like dicks.”

I winced. I had told her that in confidence. I was cuddling with her boyfriend just after giving him a blowjob, and that she told him private things about me was not something I wanted to hear. Especially when those things were embarrassing as hell. I was nineteen and almost had myself figured out.

“Well,” I muttered, “I don’t.”

“Then why’d you suck me off?”

“That wasn’t about liking *dicks*,” I snapped. “I like you.”

He was quiet for a moment. “Have you considered that you might be a lesbian?”

“I don’t like being around guys who want to date me.”

“I think that means you’re a lesbian, dear.”

I shifted uncomfortably in my seat. I was 22 and I was talking to my other girlfriend. “No,” I said slowly. “I’m not a lesbian.”

“You just don’t like guys who like women. You only like gay guys, pretty much.”

“No – ”

“I think you just like the *idea* of being bi and poly, but if you don’t want to date guys, doesn’t that defeat the point?”

“It’s not that!” I said quickly. “I want to date guys. It’s when they want to date me before getting to know me, it

just creeps me out. Why can’t they want to be friends first? Why does it always have to go from being strangers to dating? Gay guys at least want to talk to me, they actually want to be my friends – ”

“If you’re holding out for a guy who is attracted to you, but doesn’t want to date you right off the bat, you’re never going to find a guy. That’s not how guys work. I’m sorry, I see what you’re saying, but since you’re not going to find a guy who meets that criteria, you might as well call yourself a lesbian.”

But calling myself a lesbian would be a lie, I just knew it. Why did I have to find a guy to be bi? Why did my identity depend on whether other people were good enough for me, rather than how I felt?

The first time I saw the word “asexual” being used as a sexual orientation label, I was intrigued. People who experience sexual attraction to no one. They could feel romantic attraction and aesthetic attraction, but no sexual attraction.

That sounded very similar to my attraction to men, but not quite on the nose. I was sometimes sexually attracted to men – my girlfriend’s boyfriend, for example – but we had to be close first. Friends. I wasn’t sexually attracted to strangers.

Now that I thought about it, I realized I wasn’t sexually attracted to strangers of any gender. I’d had girlfriends, but we’d been friends first, and they were the only ones I felt sexual attraction for. Because of them, my attraction to women had never been challenged. Was there a term for...attracted to friends regardless of gender?

I did more research and found the word *demisexual*. It describes sexual attraction that only occurs after an emotional connection is made.

I wasn’t so weird after all. There was even a word for it. And I wasn’t a lesbian.

I still felt bisexual. Despite everything other people told me, bisexual made sense to me. I saw other demisexual people identify as other labels – demi and gay, demi and straight, and (YES) demi and bi.

I am bisexual. That does not depend on my dating experience or my attraction specifications. It is not affected by my dislike for genitals (of any shape). All it describes is how gender affects attraction for me: it doesn’t. I am attracted to people regardless of gender, and I am bisexual.

*Emma Jones is a polyamorous bisexual cis woman who writes (unpublished) queer novels.*

# 2013 BECAUSE Conference Builds Bi\* Community, Highlights Synergy between Academia and Activism

By Lauren Beach

The Bisexual Organizing Project's (BOP) **B**isexual **E**mpowerment Conference, **A** Uniting Supportive Experience (**BECAUSE**), is the largest and longest running conference on bisexuality in the United States. Since 1992, BECAUSE has annually created an inclusive community by and for bisexual and other non-monosexually identified individuals and their families, partners, friends and allies. The 2013 conference was held June 7-9, 2013, at Augsburg College in Minneapolis, MN. This year's theme, "BECAUSE: You Matter," reflects BECAUSE's values-based commitment to intersectionality, inclusion and diversity.

For the first time, BECAUSE also featured a day-long academic research conference on bisexuality, BiReConUSA, generously sponsored by the American Institute of Bisexuality. Together, BiReConUSA and BECAUSE featured an exciting and diverse array of 41 workshops by 37 presenters from 10 states and the UK that inspired, educated and empowered 150+ conference attendees.

The inspiration for this academic/community conference cooperation, and even the BiReConUSA name itself, reflects BECAUSE's partnership with another longstanding bisexual conference, the United Kingdom's BiCon. BiCon, "the UK national get-together for bisexuals, allies and friends," held BiReCon academic conference programs in conjunction with the 2008, 2010 and 2012 BiCon conferences. Excitingly, event organizers for both BiCon, BECAUSE and BiReCon have agreed to work to alternate hosting BiReCon every other year between BECAUSE in the USA and BiCon in the UK.

UK BiReCon organizer Dr. Meg Barker (see p. 3) personified much of this collaboration between academia and activism in a combined BECAUSE and BiReConUSA keynote address focusing on the connections between mental health, self-care, compassion and resistance. The Twin Cities-based cable television show on bisexuality, *Bi Cities*, filmed Dr. Barker's keynote, which will be available online at [blip.tv/bicities](http://blip.tv/bicities) later this year. In addition to Dr. Barker, the conference boasted three other accomplished keynote speakers: Allen Rosenthal, Natalie Clark and Bill Burluson.

Rosenthal's BiReConUSA keynote address presented an overview of his PhD work in progress on the sexual arousal patterns, behaviors, attractions and identities of bisexuality in men. Results from Rosenthal's ongoing studies, published in 2011 in *Biological Psychology*, scientifically proved that bi-



sexual arousal patterns do exist in men, contradicting earlier results published by the same group.

Changing focus, Saturday's BECAUSE community keynote speaker Bill Burluson dedicated his remarks to launching BOP's Minnesota Bisexual Needs Assessment, which he authored. The report is available for free electronic download at [www.bisexualorganizingproject.org](http://www.bisexualorganizingproject.org) and for purchase in hard copy on Amazon.com.

In a high-energy, positive Sunday BECAUSE community keynote address, Natalie Clark discussed ways that bisexuals and other non-monosexual activists can find solidarity in the diverse labels used to describe themselves and organize their communities and gave valuable advice about successfully organizing rural LGBT communities in the Midwest.

In recognition of the conference's deep commitment to showcasing artwork reflective of bi and other non-monosexual communities, BECAUSE featured a screening of the film *Angels of Sex*; showings of the web TV series *Rose By Any Other Name*; selected excerpts from Kyle Schickner's "Bi Weekly Show"; and the BECAUSE: You Matter Cabaret.

In addition, on June 9<sup>th</sup>, BOP also sponsored the World Premiere of *QUEER!* by Gadfly Theatre at BECAUSE. A pioneering theatrical work revolutionary in its inclusivity, *QUEER!* confronts the marginalization LGBTQQIAA people face not only from the world at large, but even from within the queer community. *QUEER!*, which contains bisexual, pansexual, sexually fluid, transgender, genderqueer, asexual, polyamorous, gay, lesbian, POC and youth/elder voices, was written in house by Gadfly Theatre Founders and Co-Artistic Directors Immanuel Elliott and Cassandra Snow. The content of the show's many diverse monologues and short scenes was motivated by a series of personal interviews and responses to calls for direct submissions. *QUEER!* had a deep and often inspirational emotional impact on BECAUSE attendees. As BECAUSE Conference Organizer Jessi Hiemer tweeted, "*QUEER!* made me laugh, cry and think about my own story. It makes me want to be a better community builder."

In many ways Hiemer's reaction to *QUEER!* captures the essence of the entire conference. BiReConUSA and BECAUSE 2013 provided the support, inspired the activism, curated the creativity, disseminated the research and touched the hearts necessary to build a better bisexual community. BOP looks forward to continuing to build bisexual movements at BECAUSE 2014. You can find more about BECAUSE at [www.becauseconference.org](http://www.becauseconference.org).

# Painting the White House Lavender

By Lauren Spencer

Growing up in a queer family and having been out myself for several years, I am no stranger to celebrating pride. From the 1993 March on Washington, to the pride parade during which my younger sister Megan and I charmed drag queens into letting us upgrade from a wagon ride to their float, to the many subsequent parades, festivals, rallies and conferences, I have celebrated Pride Month and the LGBT community for the better part of my 26 years. This year's celebration, however, far surpassed the rest; I was chosen to attend and bring bi visibility and representation to the 2013 White House Pride Month reception! It's not often that I get mail from the White House stating that the President of the United States requests the pleasure of my company, and my partner Allyson and I were thrilled to oblige our Commander in Chief.

After accepting the invitation, we were invited to an LGBT Pride Month briefing during the morning of the event. As a policy nerd, I welcomed the opportunity to hear White House officials discuss issues including immigration reform, domestic violence, health care and more through an LGBT perspective. The highlights for me from the briefing were:

1- Listening to Lynn Rosenthal, the White House advisor on Domestic Violence and my new hero, talk about the expansion to the Violence Against Women Act to include LGBT people.

2- Learning about the presidential appointment process, which sounded far more accessible than I had ever imagined.

3- Hearing Michael Botticelli, the Deputy Director of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, while discussing safety and health for LGBT youth, proclaim: "Substance abuse is not a criminal justice issue; it's a public health issue." (*PREACH!*)

While I was pleased with the variety of topics covered in the briefing, as I sat in the room with about 175 other attendees, most of whom were white and male (I saw only one other [identifiably] Black woman), I found myself disappointed that race and issues for LGBTQ people of color were not discussed, except briefly in reference to disparities in new HIV/AIDS infections. Additionally, I was taken aback by the insensitive and xenophobic comments of one of the presenters who referred to the United States as a "moral authority," labeled foreign insurgents with the racially-charged term "thugs" and jokingly called a country whose name he'd forgotten "one of the 'stans. Maybe Kyrgyzstan?" Overall, however, I found the briefing and most of the speakers to be intelligent, informative and intriguing.

After a quick lunch, nap and wardrobe change, it was time for the main event. Ally and I arrived at the Southeast Gate of the White House where several hundred other guests had lined up to go through the multiple Secret Service security checkpoints. We had been hearing about the storms

sweeping the nation and as we waited in the relatively quickly moving line, the bright blue sky swiftly darkened. Close to the front of the line where Secret Service was checking IDs under a tent, we huddled under shared umbrellas with new friends and finally got to the front. The Secret Service agent informed us that there was a tornado watch in effect and he was unable to let any more people through. "You mean there could be a tornado and you're telling us you want us to wait outside instead of being in the White House?" I asked incredulously. "Come on," Ally pleaded. "What's two more?" Amused, he conceded and we sprinted through the downpour to the next security checkpoint and finally into the White House.

Even the torrential downpour couldn't put a damper on our excitement (although this femme was incredibly relieved she hadn't pressed her hair for the occasion!). When we got inside, we explored the lavish parlors filled with artifacts like plates that presidents had eaten from during important dinners, books, portraits of First Ladies and much more. I excitedly had my picture taken with the portrait of Eleanor Roosevelt, another bisexual woman. I later learned this had been a tradition for other bi attendees and I was grateful to be able to add my picture to the collection.

After exploring the parlors, Ally and I headed upstairs where the reception was being held and President Obama's was to deliver his speech. As we rounded the corner at the top of the stairs, a Marine Corps band played and I sipped some bubbly from one of the three open bars at the event. Ally and I ate, mingled with other attendees and made our way to the room where President Obama would address us.

In the back of the room, several members of the press stood on chairs filming and photographing the event. After a short wait, nine-year-old twin girls with two moms who'd written the president seeking his support for same-sex marriage took the stage to introduce President Obama.

As I peered through the hundreds of people and raised camera phones ahead of me, President Obama began his speech. He talked about the progress that has been made for the LGBT community, including the passing of the hate crimes bill, lifting of the HIV entry ban and strengthening of the Violence Against Women Act. He talked about the LGBT provisions in the Affordable Care Act and Medicaid and Medicare and the overturning of Don't Ask, Don't Tell. As he closed, he talked about the work we have left to do, focusing primarily on workplace discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Although he didn't, as I'd been hoping, announce an executive order for the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, he did voice his support for the bipartisan bill in the Senate that would end workplace discrimination for LGBT people.

**White House**, continued on next page

**White House**, continued from previous page

I knew the names of some of the other bi attendees and when the crowd dissipated after the speech, Aud, Charles, Bill and I found one another. We chatted for a bit and snapped a bi pride picture and I got a bi pin to wear since I had regretfully forgotten mine in a last minute purse switch. The difficulty in finding each other and recognizing other attendees as bi gave me a lot to think about in terms of bi recognition and visibility. There'd been a few instances that day where "gay" or "gay and lesbian" were used as opposed to LGBT and I reflected on language and how it affects visibility.

I have long gravitated to the word queer, rather than bisexual. But since the event, I have found myself being much more out as bisexual. Though I've been out for many years, because my sexual orientation might most succinctly be described as bisexual/homoromantic and because I feel a stronger connection to the LGBT community, particularly LGBTQ people of color, rather than to specifically bi/pan/fluid communities, While I still like the term "queer" and what it represents for me, I returned home from DC acutely aware of its shortcomings in telling my story. Rev. Dr. Jamie Washington, one of my favorite activists and scholars, wisely said, "When you show up authentic, you make room for others to do the same." This idea has served as a guiding force in my life and has encouraged me to strive to be out in as many ways as I can, be it as a queer person, a person of color, a survivor of sexual violence, or a person living with a mental illness. Now, more than ever, I look forward to being increasingly and specifically out as bisexual and helping to create space for other bi/pan/fluid people to do the same.

*Lauren Spencer is a proud mixed-race, queer, bisexual woman. She will be a first-year student at Michigan State University College of Law this fall and she plans to use her degree to serve the LGBTQ community.*



*Lauren & Ally's White House kiss*



*BBWN "Drinks & Desserts" gathering at Ellyn's*

## Why I'm Bi

*By Lynn*

Am I bi enough? I asked myself that question frequently when I first came out in my early 20s. I'd had limited relationships with men but no romantic relationships with women. I wondered if I could be considered truly bisexual if I hadn't actually acted on my attractions to women. Eventually, I did start dating women, and then the bisexual label felt like it clearly fit.

Fast-forward 20 years, and now I find myself asking that question again, though usually only when I go to a BBWN event or start dating someone new. Those are the primary times when I identify myself to others as bisexual. Otherwise, this identity does not play a big part in my life. I am currently single and have dated only men for the last ten or more years. I don't usually feel sexually attracted to most women, so am I still bi?

One reason I identify as bi is to honor the past sexual relationships I have had with women, which were important and are part of who I am. On the other hand, I could just say, "I was bisexual when I was younger, but now I'm straight." And maybe I will do that some day. But not now.

I think the main reason I still identify as bisexual is because I *like* this label. I like feeling connected to a community (particularly of bi feminist women) that is open-minded and tends to view people in a more fluid and open way than do many others in society. I like the way this identity places me out of the mainstream and allies me with bisexual and lesbian women – because I don't feel like I fit in with the mainstream.

I am still looking for a life partner, and am actively seeking a man for a monogamous relationship. However, I like leaving open the possibility that I could meet a woman instead, who might re-ignite my sexual desire for women.

A this point in my life, I probably *am* more straight than bi, but I'm not ready to leave the bi label behind.

*Lynn is a health educator in the Boston area and likes to sing, dance and meditate.*

# REVIEWS

## Shiri Eisner's *Bi: Notes for a Bisexual Revolution*

Reviewed by Katelynn Bishop

I had a brief exchange several years ago, which bothered me at the time, but for reasons I didn't fully piece together until reading Shiri Eisner's book.

I was in Boston, and I was explaining to a co-worker my experience of the bi community in the city. I explained that bi identity was defined broadly and inclusively within the community, and that the definition allowed for the potential shifting of individuals' desires over the course of their lives. Of course, this is just one possible way to describe bisexuality, but it's a conception that seemed to hold in my experience of the community, and one which was powerful to me. The man I was speaking to, who had seemed confused at first by the very concept of a bisexual community, widened his eyes in recognition. "Oh!" he said. "You're talking about queer identity."

While this was an interesting reaction for many reasons, it was most importantly an erasure. He took what I described as bisexuality, and, while appreciating it, placed it in another framework. *Oh, that sounds cool, but you can't mean bisexuality.* It is precisely this type of erasure that Eisner is unfaltering in uncovering.

All of this is to say that what I appreciate most about *Bi: Notes for a Bisexual Revolution* is that Eisner is deliberate and unapologetic about writing a book about bisexuality. She doesn't rewrite bisexuality as queer identity, or pansexuality, and she bravely takes on the "bi is binary" argument.

The unapologetic focus on bisexuality runs through the book as Eisner covers the gamut of issues affecting bi people and communities. She provides a well-researched reference guide to where bisexual politics and communities have been, and urges readers to move in a more radical direction. I found her argument that bi politics should embrace the radical potential contained in common stereotypes of bisexuals, rather than framing a reactionary politics around refuting these stereotypes, provocative

and convincing. And this discussion is just one part of a broader theoretical exploration of the radical potential of bi politics, which also includes well-thought-out explanations of the potential for strong alliances with transgender and anti-racist politics, combined with a clear-



Shiri Eisner

headed assessment of what bi communities have done well and what could be done better on these fronts. She blends theoretical discussions with concrete examples throughout the book, from detailed analyses of representations of bisexuality in porn, to the content of media campaigns produced by bisexual groups, to discussions of specific events within bi communities, such as BiCon.

Shiri Eisner is also extremely thorough in her explanations. She includes a glossary at the end and places text boxes with definitions of key concepts throughout the book, and she carefully elaborates the basic concepts on which many of her arguments are based, such as male privilege, racialization, etc. In doing so, she practices the politics she preaches, which are politics that never "speaks over" anyone's head. And she writes with compassion for readers, including trigger warnings throughout the book.

It is difficult to criticize Eisner for leaving anything out, given the vast array of issues she takes on. But I do hope this book sparks a broader discussion about how radical bi politics might relate to the various definitions of queer politics, and how "queer," while intended to loosen the grip of identity categories, may at times stand in for "gay and (sometimes) lesbian" and leave bi and trans people out. She speaks more directly to the experiences of bi people in LGBT (or "GGGG" ["GayGayGayGay"]) and straight contexts, though she touches on how bisexuality is treated by queer theory. But the question of the relationship of the radical politics she proposes to queer politics was in the back of my mind as I read, given how compellingly she argues for the potential of bisexuality to threaten dominant ways of understanding and disrupt normative categories.

I'd highly recommend this book to anyone interested in bisexuality in any form. While I've tried to cover the highlights as best I can, there is much more to the book than I've been able to discuss. For more information, check out Eisner's chapter-by-chapter description of the book on her blog: <http://radicalbi.wordpress.com/2013/02/25/what-my-book-is-about/>.

*Katelynn Bishop is a graduate student in Sociology at the University of California, Santa Barbara, with research interests in gender, sexuality, and mental health. She enjoys living on the West Coast but misses living in Boston.*

## *Orange is the New Black* Now on Netflix

By Ellyn Ruthstrom

Where can you find a new series that focuses on the serious lives of a bunch of fascinating women, many of them queer? That would be on Netflix, where *Orange is the New Black* is heating up TVs and laptops across the country. Oh, did I tell you they are all in prison? The series is based on a memoir of the same name by Piper Kerman, a Smith College graduate who spent time in prison for having laundered drug money for her girlfriend years earlier and was separated from her male fiancé while she paid her debt to society in a low-security institution.

Bisexual Piper (played by Taylor Schilling) is supposed to be the center of the show, but with a Russian cook played by Kate Mulgrew, a transgender hairdresser played by transgender actress Laverne Cox, a butch softie played by Lea Delaria (who else?), and the amazing Natasha Lyonne continually taking the limelight off the privileged white girl, it is definitely NOT her show. And the girlfriend for whom she laundered drug money—did I mention she's in the same prison? You get the picture. Must-see TV moves to Netflix. Stay tuned to *Bi Women* for a longer review next issue.

*Ellyn Ruthstrom is President of the Bisexual Resource Center and a past Editor of Bi Women.*

## Back the Other Way, or Kiss at the Rix

By Jane Barnes

On Thursday Laura bumped into of all people Andrea who had saved her life she the one who brought her out friends before and after and here they were at the Rix in the candy aisle a quick hello then each moved away to shop. Ready to leave Laura picked up her bag from the stack of candy canes, and swung it over her shoulder, and ran into her at the counter so remembering lesbian tradition, Laura bent over to give Andrea a kiss good-bye. Perversely, Laura leaned forward a little slowly, and Andrea had to offer her lips a little more than she might have otherwise. Or was Andrea really hesitating, because now Laura was in love with a man? Or was it Laura's bright pink lipstick? Or was it Laura holding back because Andrea seemed to like it? Or did Andrea like it more than she thought she would? Their lips met. They kissed a little one. To Laura it was a little good-bye kiss to them all. Then the women parted and each went her own way. She'd get Dan suspenders for Christmas, thought Laura. That's what she'd do.

Jane Barnes has published poetry in *Getting Bi*, *Bi Women*, *Wormwood Review*, *River Styx*, and *Massachusetts Review*. Her stories have been published in a dozen magazines and collections and received three literary prizes. "The tribeweaver," a collection of Jane's poetry over 25 years, is in manuscript.

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

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

And now this bi **must-have** is available as an e-book for only \$9.99. Visit [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com) today and order yours.



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

*Laura, continued from page 1*

willing to tell you that you're not a good enough queer by virtue of being bi instead of lesbian or gay. Yet I've found that many discerning essays about being bi include a rhetorical question along those lines—which makes me wonder why we bis question ourselves so much.

One possible answer I've been turning over in my head is that being a self-aware bisexual in our society requires a capacity for self-doubt. I don't mean that bi's are more angst-ridden than the general population: on the contrary, it's among bisexuals that I've found the most striking examples of inner peace in the face of social disapproval. But since most of us grew up with the assumption that we'd be attracted exclusively to one sex, the path to a bi identity involved questioning who we thought ourselves to be.

Not only that, but being bi means continuing to doubt that our current erotic attachments will endure. Few partnered people I meet appear willing to do this. They rewrite history in a way that lets them believe they never really wanted anyone else, to comfort themselves with the certainty of never wanting someone else in the future. That fantasy takes more work when your objects of desire are of different sexes. So what if she has the most perfect breasts you've ever seen, or if he has the most gorgeous cock? Maybe you'll fall for someone who doesn't have breasts, or who doesn't have a cock. Generalizing is treacherous business, but I'll take the risk of asserting that, as things stand now, bis have to accept greater disjunctions among our past, present and future selves than most other people do.

All this uncertainty makes me oddly hopeful. My thinking has been influenced by two feminists, Jacqueline Rose and Judith Butler, whose writings explore connections between certainty and violence. We attack others because we're certain that we're in the right and that we know who our enemies are. But, of course, if those we attack weren't already our

enemies beforehand, they most likely will be afterward. And our insistence that we're right may veil a deep-seated suspicion that we're partly in the wrong. So the ability to tolerate self-doubt can make room for nonviolent ways to negotiate our differences with others. I hope bisexuals can lead the way in accepting uncertainty for the sake of human connection.

Yet living with uncertainty isn't easy, especially when the uncertainty concerns your very existence. The state of Israel is a case in point. Rose and Butler have both criticized Israel's inhumane treatment of Palestinians, but they recognize that the uncertainty of survival has prompted Israel to violence. Bisexuals, too, are threatened, both by physical attacks and by the currents in public opinion that would erase our identity by reducing us to confused gays, lesbians or straights. When we're under assault, we want to close ranks: draw the boundaries clearly, define who's on our side, and fight for all we're worth. This response strengthens the group with a sense of unity, but at the expense of sacrificing people on the margins.

I don't know how to deal with the conflicts surrounding bi identity except by maintaining connections as much as possible. After a long silence from the FB friend who found my taste in essays disturbing, I phoned her one Saturday morning. She explained that homosexuality (as she put it) was Satan's strategy to trap me. I told her I was sorry I'd upset her but not sorry to be who I am. It was like we were holding a conversation with earplugs in, or speaking two different languages. Not only did we fail to persuade each other, we barely made contact. Still, that doesn't make her my enemy. She's just a person with a very different idea of what makes for a good life—which is what I am to anyone who thinks I'm not bisexual enough.

*Laura lives, loves and writes in Falls Church, Virginia.*

## Maybe It's Time

*By A.V. Cruz*

Some individuals are born knowing who they are. Some of us forgot on the way here. I fall in the latter category.

My bisexuality hasn't always been a fact of life. This discovery dawned on me in college while attending True Colors, a conference focused on the needs of sexual and gender minority youth, roughly four years ago. I was on a quest to learn as much as I could about sexual orientation and gender politics because my cousin had recently come out as a lesbian to our family. Some family members hadn't taken the news kindly and I wanted to do everything I could to support her. Throughout the conference I learned about different issues affecting the LGBT community and learned to

ask myself questions I'd never contemplated before. I took some time to self-reflect and the following year attended New York's LGBT pride Parade for the first time. The beautiful colors, the smiling faces and the amazing outfits made me feel at home.

Still I ask myself – am I bisexual enough? Perhaps I am struggling with the fact I never came out to anyone as a woman. Or maybe it's because I never came out as Puerto Rican. These parts of me are made physically obvious by my dress, demeanor, complexion and my fluent Spanish. For this reason it never felt necessary to express this identity to others.

Many people believe – and rightly so – that our families need to know who we are. I have only come out to some

*A.V., continues on next page*

A.V., *continued from previous page*

family members, but not others – mainly my parents – because I believe they will demand proof of my sexual orientation. I don't need to prove anything to anyone. I'm saddened by the few times people laughed at me when I told them I was bisexual, or worse, told me I could never be bisexual until I was with a woman, or worse, asked if they could watch me be with a woman – all in quick succession.

That is the crux of my problem. How much of myself do I have to put out there to be accepted? How many dirty details do I have to divulge before people take me at my word? Do I have to announce it to the

world via Twitter, Facebook, YouTube or during a family gathering so that everyone knows I'm being honest? If I do come out, does this mean I have to come out about every single discovery I make about myself?

Maybe it's time I finally come out as a woman, Puerto Rican and bisexual.

*A.V. Cruz is a millennial with a Master's degree in English.*

A. J., *continued from page 1*

spectrum, many of those doubts escalated. At the time, I was trying to become more active in the bisexual community and was terrified that if anyone knew I was in a seemingly heterosexual relationship, it would negatively affect the way people viewed me.

As a result, I never spoke about my boyfriend.

At the events I went to in order to promote my books and speak up for bisexuals, I never spoke about him; I never let anyone know about my dating life at all. If anything, I wanted to come across as single. Even when I spoke at the True Colors Conference myself in 2010 with him sitting in the room, I barely acknowledged his presence – attendees either thought he was a friend or my assistant.

I truly believed that I would lose respect among my own community if they knew.

It took another bisexual activist – Lauren Michelle Kinsey – to approach me with the idea for a co-blog on *The Huffington Post* to change my mode of thinking on the subject. Lauren is in a long-term relationship with a woman and she noticed on my personal Facebook profile that I was in a relationship with a man. She wanted to use our bisexuality and our relationships as the jumping off points to frame our discussions on the news site. I felt like she was giving me permission to proclaim and celebrate not only my bisexuality, but my relationship, publicly.

In that context, I found a way to bring my internal biphobia to the surface in order to squash it for good.

Looking back now, it seems a bit silly. Who would understand me and my relationship **better** than my own community? If anything, the vast majority of the external biphobia I've experienced has come from the LGs of the LGBT+ community – which is upsetting. The clichés that we have all heard on countless occasions, which seem to be hiding around every corner, seem all the louder within the very umbrella community under which bisexuals should feel at home. If the LGBT+ community is spouting out negativ-

ity at us, is it difficult to understand why I and others like me might alter the direction of those insults and come to believe them about ourselves in some way?

I doubt I am alone in my experience with internalized biphobia. Despite the work of bisexual activists, many of the negative stereotypes persist, regardless of their fallacies. How am I supposed to feel if society believes me to be incapable of monogamy? What kind of effect would you expect when a bisexual teen hears, "I never date bisexuals. They're cheaters and they have more STDs than everyone else"? Would you readily proclaim your current partner when you hear someone say, "Bisexuals can't be with one person at a time," or "You're either straight, gay or lying."?

The road can be rough for a bisexual – all the more so when the damaging myths and misconceptions about bisexuality arrive at your door. If I had had even a portion of the bisexual community to reach out to in the years of my past when biphobia started rooting itself in my mind, I highly doubt it would have taken me as long as it has to be able to readily proclaim my sexual identity and my partner's gender, without apology.

Nevertheless, I am proud of how far I've come and I am happy to say I no longer harbor those same fears or phobias about myself. I understand them, though, and hope speaking out about them now and moving forward will help others with similar worries.

One day, I hope all bisexuals feel comfortable and safe enough to stand up and proclaim, "I'm here and I'm bisexual. This is me."

*A.J. Walkley is the author of such titles as Choice and Queer Greer. Based in Arizona, she currently blogs for The Huffington Post. Her third novel, Vuto, was published in Summer 2013.*

# News Briefs

By Robyn Ochs



Because we've been making so much progress so quickly, here is a summary of the past few months' victories:

In the UK, the Queen has given her Royal Assent to same-sex marriage in England and Wales.

Delaware enacts the Gender Identity Nondiscrimination Act.

And ... oh YES! ... the US Supreme Court struck down Section 3 of the "Defense of Marriage Act" and Proposition 8 in California, which means that the Federal Government is no longer prohibited from recognizing same-sex marriages and same-sex couples can now marry in California.

For those who are having trouble keeping track, marriage equality is now the law of the land in 12 states: CA, CT, DE, IA, MA, MD, ME, MN, NH, NY, RI, VT, WA, plus Washington, DC. Because several of these states have large populations, this means that almost one third of Americans now live in places that have marriage equality.

On the gender identity front, the Delaware Legislature passed the Gender Identity Non-Discrimination Act in June, making Delaware the 17th US state to protect transgender and gender-nonconforming individuals from discrimination under the law.

Dear BBWN,

I am writing to let you know that at the end of August/beginning of September I will be moving to Philadelphia (as my wife, Gina, has landed a job at Bryn Mawr College), and to express my gratitude to the bi people of Boston who welcomed me here when I landed in 2002 and have and continued to support all that I believe in, and all that I am. I love our community and feel so much gratitude for every opportunity I have had to tell my story, and to hear yours.

With love,



## Ask Tiggy

Dear Tiggy,

*For a couple years now, I've known that I'm not straight and I think I'm bisexual, but I want to know for sure whether I'm bisexual or gay. My confusion lies in the fact that I'm attracted to both men and women but I seem to find more women attractive. I do still find some men attractive, though. See where I'm confused? Is it possible to be bisexual but prefer women?*

-Taylor

In a word, yes. Sexuality runs along a spectrum, and very few people are precisely pinpointed in the middle. In fact, it's even more complicated than that: some bisexuals feel more romantic toward some genders and more sexually attracted toward others. Keep in mind, too, that gender identity itself runs along a non-linear spectrum that includes agender, genderqueer, trans, and intersex. You'll also recognize, too, folks who differ in their gender expression – that is, they present as some level of masculine or feminine.

So who perfectly balances their attraction to all different incarnations of gender? Right, virtually no one.

Listen: there is no litmus test for bisexuality. You do not have to be "this tall" to ride our ride. There is no bean counting. No one is inspecting your papers at the checkpoint. Bisexuality is simply the capability of loving more than one gender of people. Only you can decide if that accurately encompasses your feelings.

If you want to identify as bisexual, please do. You're enough, you, just as you are.



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

## The "Bi Office"

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

### Ongoing Events

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

#### 2nd Mondays:

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

#### 2nd Mondays:

**Straight Marriage, Still Questioning.** 7pm. Email [kate.e.flynn@gmail.com](mailto:kate.e.flynn@gmail.com) for more info.

#### 1st Wednesdays:

**BLiSS: Bisexual Social & Support Group.** See calendar for dates/times.

#### 2nd Thursdays:

**Young BLiSS.** For bi folks in their 20s and 30s. 7pm. Info: Kate at [youngblissboston@gmail.com](mailto:youngblissboston@gmail.com).

#### 3rd Saturdays:

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

#### Boston-area women:

Keep up with local events. Sign up for our email list! Send an email to: [biwomenboston-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:biwomenboston-subscribe@yahoogroups.com).



# CALENDAR

## September

### Tuesday, 9/3, 6-8pm, Straight Marriage, Still Questioning Western Massachusetts:

A peer-led support group for women in a straight marriage/relationship struggling with sexual orientation or coming out. Meets on the first Tuesday of each month. Info: [appleday621@yahoo.com](mailto:appleday621@yahoo.com).

### Wednesday, 9/4, 7-9pm, Bisexual Social and Support Group (BLiSS) meets on the 1st Wednesday of each month.

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

### Sunday, 9/8, noon, BBWN Annual Potluck Brunch & Book Swap at Steph's in Arlington.

The book swap has become one of the highlights of the BBWN brunch circuit as women come to socialize and take home a few good books. Long-time host, Elyn, has moved and can't host in her home, but she teaming up with Steph to keep this much-loved tradition going. Along with bringing a dish/drink to share for the potluck, feel free to bring a few books that you'd like to swap

with others. Adults only. RSVP by 9/7 Elyn: [elruthstrom@comcast.net](mailto:elruthstrom@comcast.net).

### Monday, 9/9, 7pm, Straight Marriage, Still Questioning, Boston Area.

A peer-led support group for women in a straight marriage/relationship struggling with sexual orientation or coming out. Info/RSVP: [kate.e.flynn@gmail.com](mailto:kate.e.flynn@gmail.com). The group meets on the second Monday of each month.

### Thursday, 9/12, 7-9pm, Young Bisexual Social and Support Group (BLiSS).

If you are in your 20s or mid-30s (or thereabouts) and identify somewhere along the lines of bisexual/omni/pan/fluid or questioning, please join us for a few hours of socializing and support. We meet on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of each month at Eastern Bank, Davis Sq., Somerville, on the Red Line. All genders welcome! Info/RSVP to Kate: [youngblissboston@gmail.com](mailto:youngblissboston@gmail.com).

### Saturday, 9/14, 11:30am, Bi Brunch.

This mixed gender bi group is now always the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of the month at Johnny D's on Holland St. in Davis Sq., Somerville. The Davis stop on the Red Line is just across the street.

Calendar, *continues next page*

## Bi Women wants you!!!



### SUBSCRIPTION RATE for Bi Women (sliding scale)

\_\_\_\$0-20: pay what you can

\_\_\_\$20-39: suggested

\_\_\_\$30-\$99: Supporter

\_\_\_\$100 on up: Goddess

\_\_\_\_\_ Renewal      \_\_\_\_\_ New Subscriber

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

Please send my **Bi Women** \_\_\_by email; \_\_\_by postal mail; \_\_\_both ways

BBWN, P.O. BOX 301727, Jamaica Plain,, MA 02130 or online [www.biwomenboston.org](http://www.biwomenboston.org)

## Calendar, *continued from previous page*

**Friday, 9/27, The 14<sup>th</sup> Celebrate Bi Pride Day with the Boston bi community at the Lir Pub at 903 Boylston St, Boston. Celebrate the wonderfulness of being bi. This year we will socialize, award local Unsung Heroes as well as national Bi Allies, and generally have a fun night OUT! Suggested donation at the door \$5. RSVP to [brc@biresource.net](mailto:brc@biresource.net) or just drop on by.**

## October

**Tuesday, 10/1, 6-8pm, Straight Marriage, Still Questioning Western Massachusetts.** (See September 3<sup>rd</sup>)

**Wednesday, 10/2, 7-9pm, Bisexual Social and Support Group (BLiSS).** (See September 4th)

**Monday, 10/4, 7pm, Straight Marriage, Still Questioning.** (See September 9<sup>th</sup>)

**Monday, 10/7, 6-8pm, Open Forum: How Women Become Political.** Presented by Simmons College and the Grimke Event Committee. Speakers/panelists include Gloria Steinem, Elizabeth Warren, Ayanna Pressley, Kerry Healey, and Ambassador Swanee Hunt. Free. Info/RSVP at [womenbecomepolitical.eventbrite.com](http://womenbecomepolitical.eventbrite.com)

**Saturday, 10/9, 11:30am, Saturday Bi Brunch.** (See September 14<sup>th</sup>)

**Thursday, 10/10, 7-9pm, Young Bisexual Social and Support Group (BLiSS).** (See September 12<sup>th</sup>)

**Sunday, 10/20, noon, at Jennifer's in Jamaica Plain.** Bring a potluck dish to share. A great opportunity to meet other bi and bi-friendly women in the Boston area. Info/RSVP [lsis.jenn@gmail.com](mailto:lsis.jenn@gmail.com) or 857-205-6778.

## November

**Tuesday, 11/5, 6-8pm, Straight Marriage, Still Questioning Western Massachusetts.** (See September 3<sup>rd</sup>)

**Wednesday, 11/6, 7-9pm, Bisexual Social and Support Group (BLiSS).** (See September 4th)

**Friday, 11/8 and Saturday, 11/9, Bilicious Boston.** This year there will be another great selection of bi performers to celebrate our community's creative spirit—comedy, music,

poetry and more! Now with two chances to watch! Keep an eye on [www.biliciousproductions.com](http://www.biliciousproductions.com) for up-to-date event info including time, tickets, location, and performers!

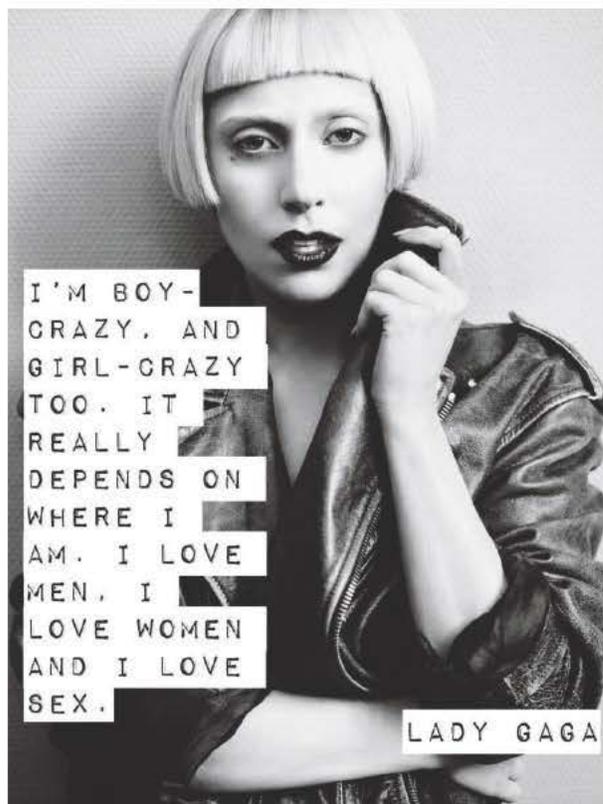
**Monday, 11/11, 7pm, Straight Marriage, Still Questioning.** (See September 9<sup>th</sup>)

**Thursday, 11/14, 7-9pm, Young Bisexual Social and Support Group (BLiSS).** (See September 12<sup>th</sup>)

**Saturday, 11/16, 11:30am, Saturday Bi Brunch.** (See September 14<sup>th</sup>)

**Sunday, 11/17, noon, BBWN Brunch in Medford at Loren's.** The theme will be gratitude. Please bring stories of gratitude as well as a potluck dish and/or drinks to share. Email Loren at [loren.gomez@comcast.net](mailto:loren.gomez@comcast.net) to RSVP/get directions. A great opportunity to meet other bi and bi-friendly women in the Boston area.

**Sunday, 11/24, 11am-2pm, Stuff & Stuff Brunch.** Come help mail the Winter issue of *Bi Women*. At Robyn's house in JP. RSVP/directions: [robyn@robynocho.com](mailto:robyn@robynocho.com).



Graphic by Shiri Eisner