

## Blazing Trails: What Sara Wants

By Robyn Ochs

On Saturday, November 4th, New York's LGBT Community Center honored **Sara Ramirez** with their Trailblazer Award at their 2017 Women's Event.

I include below my introduction and Sara's entire speech. What she says is important, powerful, and fits in perfectly with the theme of this issue of *Bi Women Quarterly*: "What I Want."

### My introduction:

My name is Robyn Ochs, and I have identified as bisexual for 41 years, so far. When I came into my bisexual identity, all the way back in 1976, I had NO bisexual role models. Some of us in this room tonight are old enough to remember a time when there was not a single LGBT character on television. The Internet had yet to be invented, so I had no idea how to find information, validation, *or* community. I remember feeling lost, alone, impossible. My isolation was compounded by the fact that what did exist back then was an emerging gay and lesbian community. By which they meant, very specifically, *gay and lesbian*. Not bi. Not trans. The one place that could have felt like home to me was not welcoming.



Faith Cheltenham, Sara Ramirez & Robyn Ochs

Fast forward to 2017: While we still are not where we need to be, we have made significant progress. We have the Internet. "Gay and lesbian" has blossomed to LGBT, or LGBTQ+, and sometimes, at least, the inclusive acronym is heartfelt and sincere. And we are on television!

Speaking of television: On November 19th, Tony Award winner Sara Ramirez will join CBS's hit drama, *Madam Secretary*, as a series regular playing political strategist Kat Sandoval. Earlier, for over a decade, Sara played orthopedic surgeon and out bisexual woman Dr. Callie Torres on ABC's

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## What I Want

By NekoFirefoxy

All my life I've wanted things: things of material and immaterial worth, things I could easily achieve, and things that might be impossible to fulfill. The things I've wanted have changed with each stage of my life. Ever since I started a relationship with a bisexual man, we've encountered biphobia, bi erasure, and accusations of using straight-passing privilege. These incidents only escalated when we got married. With every incident of biphobia, I've grown in my desire to change how bisexuals are viewed, both as individuals and in couples. Successfully battling biphobia and bi erasure, just like finding equality in the LGBTQ+ universe, feels like a wish that I'll never fulfill, but it is one

of my biggest aspirations. Even though what I want most might be impossible to find, it doesn't stop me from doing every little thing I can to work toward it. Still, the feeling of not doing enough is overwhelming, especially when I look at the big picture and realize how much more needs to be done. I know I can't change how people identify couples within an instant using binary standards, regardless of how much I want to, but I can make an attempt with each person crossing our path. It has been tough to accept that I often won't succeed, even when I try my hardest.

We are all different and want different things. I can't assume that the things I want and which I view as good for myself and/or my partner will have the same importance to others. To want something is always a bit selfish, even if it also

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## Editor's Note

This issue's theme is "What I Want." Readers were asked: "Have you ever taken a moment to reflect on what you want – what you really want?" On this theme, we present poetry by Casey Lawrence, Jo-Anne Carlson, Courtney Carola, Samantha Pious, Jane Barnes, and Michelle-Marie Gilkeson; and prose by NekoFirefoxy, Julie Petry, Martina Robinson, Nat Dahl, Karen Remaley, and Carlotta Lami.

In the *Around the World* column, Hilde Vossen reports back on bi activism at the ILGA Europe Conference. We also offer our usual staples: *Advice from A Rose Bi* and our *Calendar*. Why Not Both Co has provided a new comic. And there's a short piece on "Bi+ Representation in Television." Dr. Renate Baumgartner writes this issue's *Research Corner* on "Imagining Bisexual Futures."

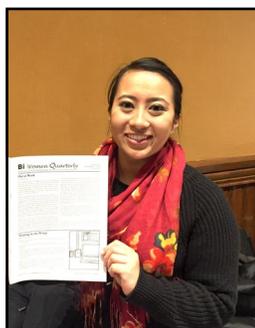
I'm in this issue far more than usual: there's the cover story, about actor Sara Ramirez winning a Trailblazer Award from NY's LGBT Community Center, which I had the honor of presenting to her. I include Sara's speech, and mine. There's also a write-up about a Community Leadership Award I received from the Bisexual Resource Center.

I'd like to recognize Gail Zacharias, Charlotte Alger, LB Klein, and all of the other folks whose volunteer work makes this publication possible.

Finally, readers: we would like to hear from you. Feel free to send in letters to the editor, or to suggest themes for upcoming issues. And please consider submitting your work!

*Robyn*

**Another fan reads 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 Spring 2018 issue: **Chosen Family**

Chosen families are groups of people who deliberately choose to play significant roles in each other's lives. Who makes up your chosen family? How did you come to find each other? What does your chosen family mean to you and your bi+ identity?

### Call for submissions Summer 2018 issue: **Bodies**

Let's talk about our bodies: Body image. Gendered bodies. Bodies and health. Changing bodies. Bodies converging and merging. Bodies and attraction. Sexuality and the body. We welcome your personal stories, poetry, artwork, or opinion pieces. *DUE BY May 1.*

Submission guidelines are online at [biwomenboston.org](http://biwomenboston.org).

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

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

BBWN is an all-volunteer organization. Want to host one of our monthly brunches, be the woman who coordinates the brunches, or 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: Squee for Team B! Putting the B in ILGA Europe's Annual Conference



By Hilde Vossen

Having a Team B in Warsaw, Poland, at the annual conference of ILGA Europe was a delight. I set up this group in September on Facebook. There, we introduced ourselves and got connected. And we met together in-person at the largest LGBTI+ gathering of ILGA Europe, the European region of the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association, 570 attendees this time. Team B included bi activists from Armenia, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Slovenia, and the UK.

Thanks to the Perspective Session on Bisexuality by ILGA Europe on November 1st, the first day of the conference, our group grew rapidly as the week progressed. Bisexual attendees from Belgium, China, Croatia, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Norway, and Poland joined our Facebook chat group. Many of us met for the first time. We learned about one another's work, made plans for future cooperation, got closer, shared anger, made fun, and became friends.

## Anger

Anger was shared because there's no LGBTI conference without bi erasure and biphobia. Alas, this one was no exception. Team B meant there were more bisexual activists at various programs. For example, while I was busy with final preparations for the workshop, *Beyond Bi Visibility – The Road to Inclusion*, I was about to facilitate with Dominic



Credit: Rina, ILGA Europe

*Soudeh Rad, running for ILGA Europe's Board*

Arnall, I read that several bi people in the Facebook chat group were angry about a panel that addressed the gay and lesbian community only. The encouragement they provided to each other made brave bi activists stand up, be vocal, and ask questions about it. They made me feel super proud!

## Fun

There was fun in quite a lot of activities, but for sure the edutainment game *Bivial Pursuit*, developed by Vera Di Santo, was a great bonding experience. It contains questions on celebrities, statistics, and stories. It's for anyone who wants to be updated with the latest buzz about bi+ celebrities, memorize statistics regarding the bi+ population, and master the history of the bi+ movement. Plans are being made to make the game accessible for regions of the world beyond Europe.

## Friends

Chatting with a queer ally from Kyrgyzstan made clear to me that they had their first ever Bi Visibility Day event in Bishkek this year. Woohoo! In Yerevan, Armenia, my bi activist friend told me they also celebrated Bi Visibility Day for the first time. For security reasons, they can't publish event information publicly. Both my 1.5-meter Bi Pride flags are now there, one in each city mentioned. Hopefully they'll live long and demonstrate Bi Pride in private or public – as long as everybody is safe!

## Call

When a call for an extra self-identified female candidate for the ILGA Europe board went out, queer feminist, bisexual



Credit: Vera Di Santo

*Fun playing Bivial Pursuit*

immigrant, activist, and researcher Soudeh Rad ran for that position, nominated by the Dutch Bisexual Network, and guess what! She is now a member of the board of ILGA Europe. Very inspiring to see a qualified and openly bisexual board member who also is connected to the bi+ community. Wishing you success with the job, Soudeh! Feel the support of Team B+++! [Editor's note: Soudeh is also co-curator of BWQ's Research Corner!]

### Warszawa

Finally, a group of us managed to meet with the organizers of Lambda, Warszawa's bi+ group. While we enjoyed the vegan lunch they prepared for us, we introduced ourselves to each other, and exchanged ideas for creative activism. This gave us energy and motivation to carry on with what we are doing for bi+ people.

To wrap it up: there were a lot of people in Poland wanting to connect with bisexual activists on a European level and beyond, to work together, get to know more about the issues bisexual people face, and act on biphobia and bi erasure. Bi+ folk at the conference certainly achieved the conference's theme: "Change! Community mobilizing, movements rising!"

See you at the ILGA Europe conference in Brussels in 2018!

### Timeline

- 9/14 setting up a secret Facebook group for Team B @ ILGA Europe 2017 by Hilde Vossen
- 11/1 Perspective Session: Bisexuality



Credit: Vera Di Santo

Hilde facilitates Beyond BiVisibility workshop



Credit: Ines Ronbours

Lambda Warszawa

- 11/1 Setting up a Facebook chat group for bisexuals and allies at the conference
- 11/2 Added bi activists who died in 2017 Sébastien Gruchet (France) and Manuel Sebastia (Spain) to Wall of Remembrance
- 11/2 Women's Caucus, roundtable discussion by Soudeh Rad and Vera Di Santo
- 11/2 Bisexuals in Italy, research presentation by Vera Di Santo
- 11/2 Presentation of the board game *Bivial Pursuit* by Vera Di Santo
- 11/3 Soudeh Rad runs for the ILGA Europe board
- 11/3 Beyond Bi Visibility – The Road to Inclusion, workshop by Dominic Arnall and Hilde Vossen
- 11/4 Soudeh Rad chosen as member of the ILGA Europe board
- 11/4 Self-organized space: playing the board game *Bivial Pursuit* by Vera Di Santo
- 11/5 Visit to bi+ group Lambda Warszawa, organized by Katarzyna and Hilde
- 2018 Annual ILGA Europe conference in Brussels
- 2019 Annual ILGA Europe conference in Prague

*Hilde Vossen: is #StillBisexual; Co-founder and Coordinator of the European Bisexual Network for Activists (EuroBiNet); Co-producer of the first and the third European Bisexual Conference (Amsterdam 2016); Alternate Bisexual Secretariat for ILGA World; Coordinator of the local LGBT + QIAP drink Queer aan Zee in The Hague, Netherlands; someone who loves to bring people together to make them as happy as they can be. Hilde's on Facebook & Twitter: @HildeVossen*

# Our Creative Future: The U.S. - Alive and On Fire!

By Julie Petry, MFA

There is oppression at the federal level and a political lack of vocal support for the arts in the United States. Art **IS** essential for developing the thinking wo/man, the reflective wo/man, and the compassionate wo/man.

We need more public figures discussing the importance of art for this country and showing its value for citizens of all ages. Art teaches us it is okay to talk about things that might be tough. Art teaches us that individual expression is valuable, and that each voice deserves this platform. Art teaches us to be accepting of differences – new sounds, shapes, colors and views. Art unites the world. Every culture has music and dance, and one does not need to speak the verbal language in any country in order to enjoy these other elements. These are precious tools that have been around since the beginning of wo/man, and serve as reflectors of human values and cultural values. Having access to arts in the public schools should be of equal importance to math, English, or science, yet the arts are always the first elements on the budget chopping block.

I teach Dance History every year at Bloomsburg University, and it is one of my favorite courses because I have students who have never been exposed to theatre or dance. Annually, I teach the story of Hitler, who during his years leading the Third Reich, wished to eliminate the expressionistic Modern Dance form entirely from Germany. He saw its potential as a tool to develop the thinking man and worried it could provide a way to unite the underdog or promote revolutions. I fear our very own government is on track for such outcomes. By eliminating the NEA – which provides government funding to the arts, artists, and free thinkers – and removing funding for K-12 arts programming, we are not far away from Hitler's path. We all must work together to keep the arts funded!

Most importantly, I teach my young artists the value of expressing themselves without fear. I have mentored students creating dance and theatre pieces on being sexually free, fighting gender norms, fighting and confronting the oppression of Black Americans, bullying, and more. I teach students that this platform of the arts is a place for them to explore their power, and confront whatever it is they see that needs addressing. I am attempting to help solve such problems in America by creating new generations of fearless artists with strong, empowered voices who can further articulate the importance of the arts and use them for social change and justice. I dream more and more educators will

take advantage of the opportunity we have to help folks re-direct their lives for the better.

I dream my work and voice will continue to further reach the national platform. I would love to collaborate on a piece that will get people continuing to think about why they are so afraid of differences. We need to continue creating platforms that show that our power as a country comes through celebrating differences. I would also love to become a well-known advocate and speaker at women's conferences, on education circuits, and perhaps do a TED Talk, or testify at the congressional level on the value of the arts.

For our future as a country and a human race, I dream of putting the 'united' feeling back in the United States. I dream the arts will thrive, be seen as the revered tool of expression that they are, and that more voices will rise up, becoming passionate, fearless sources of creative fire. May this fuel us ever forward toward becoming an empathetic and compassionate planet where all living elements thrive.

*Associate Professor of Theatre and Dance at Bloomsburg University, Julie Petry has spent her entire life in the arts, exploring the Creative Fire. She relishes each day spent with her uniquely created Family Tribe and representative mascot – the amazing Zelliecat!*



Julie Petry

# Thirsty

By Casey Lawrence

Goddamn, was I *ever* thirsty at eighteen.  
So desperate was I to stop the burning, I'd take any glass offered to me—  
Filled with vodka or rainbow-shining oil, it all felt the same dripping down my throat.

When I was nineteen, he was my first beer.  
It was a hot, hot day and I was so thirsty.  
The more I drank the more I needed him.  
Dehydration getting worse even as I drank—  
Every sip soothing, every gulp doing more damage.  
I would drink from him every chance that I got; I was addicted.  
I used up my precious resources making sure I had enough to drink.  
It wasn't foul oil or burning scotch, but my body withered anyway.  
My heart pumped wildly when I saw him, and when he offered me that cup—  
I was done for. I, who was so thirsty,  
Drank from that poisoned well for three years.

I didn't know I was drowning until I met you.  
He had offered me an innertube and promised me a lake  
But all I ever got from him was saltwater.  
I waded in his ocean, thought his world so expansive that I would find  
Something, anything to anchor me as my skin burned in the sun—  
Wouldn't you kill for a nice, cold beer?

These are metaphors. There was no desert but I wandered and wondered  
If I would ever quench the burning thirst in my throat.  
If I would ever fill the growing void in my heart.  
I just wanted to be loved. I just wanted to be wanted.  
This poem isn't a love song but a joke, and this is the punchline:  
You are a fountain.

Your hands make a cup and lift water to my lips:  
Lips cracked, sundried, feel the coolness and don't even recognize water.  
They have gone so long without.

You are my water, and that sounds incredibly boring  
But I can't think of a single taste as sweet.  
You are my water, you have become essential in so short a time  
I don't know how I survived before you  
When I was so thirsty.

It isn't about the thunder in my ears growing silent when you whisper.  
It isn't about missing you when you are out of arms' reach.  
It isn't about feeling loved in your arms, though I hugged myself for years.  
And it isn't even about sex, though I want you to fuck me—  
Now. Right now. I want you. Now and forever.  
I am never satisfied, never loved enough.



*Casey Lawrence is a 22-year-old Canadian university student completing a Master's degree in English Literature. She is the author of two bi+ YA novels, *Out of Order* (2015) and *Order in the Court* (2016), published by Harmony Ink Press. Last year she co-edited an anthology of poetry reacting to the 2016 US election, *11/9: The Fall of American Democracy*, to raise money for RAINN, the nation's largest anti-sexual violence organization, and the ACLU, the nonprofit organization defending the constitutional rights of Americans. It can be purchased on Amazon at [www.amazon.com/11-9-Fall-American-Democracy/dp/1521474060](http://www.amazon.com/11-9-Fall-American-Democracy/dp/1521474060).*

# Becoming

By Jo-Anne Carlson

I sang a song, once,  
Screaming the words:  
“Give Me Time!”  
I wanted “one day to get away”  
Time “to breathe in the sunrise”  
To remember “what it’s like to sleep at night.”

A month or so ago,  
I had no idea that  
I wanted to rediscover old notions,  
Become the butterfly of change,  
But here I am, a chrysalis.  
The bursting of my cocoon is nigh.

I will, on some tomorrow,  
Be terrified of this thing I’ve begun,  
And shiver in the sheets:  
“There’s a lion in the streets!”  
But after, I will spread my wings,  
And aspire.

All I want, then,  
Is to give my best,  
Put life to the test,  
My fears to rest, and,  
End that quest.

*Jo-Anne Carlson is a writer, artist, and musician. She loves hearing from friends, so feel free to drop her a line at [josexpressions@yahoo.com](mailto:josexpressions@yahoo.com).*



Jo-Anne Carlson

# what i want

By Courtney Carola

i want  
to be accepted  
for who i am  
to be understood  
or at least respected  
i want  
to not live in fear  
of just being me  
to not have to justify myself  
to everyone who comes near  
i want  
to see others like me  
on tv or in books  
to see others like me  
living a life so happy  
i want  
the next generation  
to have everything i didn't  
to live a life without hate  
without abuse or deprecation  
i want  
a change  
or at least for things to improve  
so that being queer  
won't be seen as so strange

*By day, Courtney Carola is a 23-year-old college student, high school librarian, and indie author. By night, she fights against bi erasure and for bi visibility.*



Courtney Carola

# Bifurcated Ballade

By Samantha Pious

I wish I were a lesbian.  
That snaky hiss, that liquid elle,  
a bee (as in, let's be as one)  
twisting letters, agile sounds:  
the name that dares to make of love  
a ringing lips- and tongue-vibration  
which makes me think of kyrielle,  
medieval, escapades, translation.

I wish I were a lesbian.  
Instead I'm only getting bi.  
Can barely stomach pan or queer,  
myself. Alas, don't qualify  
as woman-loving-only-women.  
Can't deny it — have a tooth  
for toxic masculinity!  
The tongue, though, specially reserves

a bud or two for them, for her.  
I wish I were a lesbian!  
My legs, though, they had other plans.  
Toes still curl for pretty girls  
and fingers also twitch for men  
and genderbending folks. And damn,  
the same old song is on again:  
I wish I were a lesbian

or else (oh song, my little book,  
go quick to her and speedily)  
some cunning linguist undertook  
to mint a koiné that might B  
I. Were I a lesbian —————

*Samantha Pious is the author of A Crown of Violets (Headmistress Press, 2015), a translated selection of the poetry of Renée Vivien. She still can't say the word "bisexual."*



Jane Barnes

**If you value Bi Women Quarterly, please consider making a donation to support our work. The more donations we receive, the more we can get BWQ out to women all over the world who are supported, validated, and healed through our pages. You can send a check to BBWN at our PO Box (address below), or make a donation online at [www.biwomenboston.org/donate-2](http://www.biwomenboston.org/donate-2).**

## Three poems by Jane Barnes

### What this Woman Sees

what this woman sees is a vision of open arms a warm heart justice and good pay a sweet woman a brazen man with ears who doesn't envision only men get the good stuff like me a lovely man Italian probably who cooks and is a great wit and loves wall-to-wall chatter or a woman most loyal no fool in love with the human race and an artist a leader with a conscience and a heart here and safe all immigrants LGBTQ folks honored and then the vision of being a beloved writer people in the closet suddenly burst out happily I love my democracy 51% the majority the majority and those of us who hide our hearts in a glass how to escape the trap of rape no more ICE and on my resume *more at my obit* will say by her writing women fell in love fell for all sexes each one a golden present Bill Wilson for some then stack up my poems and bills at right angles pick up this postcard blown into my New Yorker to resubscribe so how's \$40 not \$120 me a poet on social security then they take 20 stories of mine

### Vision of Visionaries

Take Joan of Arc who as a teen changed French history she got France to make up with the British born 1412 how time flies and what did she wear metal armor or a kind of prom gown and then we have Lady Liberty Made in

Paris shipped in pieces to New York she with her torch smiling at every immigrant and as to minorities like bis my Colette and Woolf two of them with golden words they're on top of a mountain of talent expressed no hubby

to take the credit no man laying a hand on a woman no more wars no Nazis no words against Jews the words of Jesus or Buddha and food and medicine for all I'm in the moment I hope in meditation in the simple present

words a tough metal covering soft skin soft words if only I weren't so defensive in my vision let me tame my devils may I aspire to befriend you the lonely live-long night do right to one more great love

### Vision in My Apartment

you can be so depressed you think you'll never escape the assisted living nightmare and then boom some non-profit shows you this divine one-bedroom with eat-in brand-new kitchen, an L in the living room for a dining room table the basic furniture easy to accessorize like my French poster from Gordon my plants who no longer go thirsty at my hand

a place where no one hogs the chat you know where everything is you reach a point where any more Things is too much like Christmas ornaments off season clothes the grocer the fashion bags the point where you imagine fewer things de-cluttering the 11 sweaters the 30 scarves the tools the toolbox the plastic bin for the paints I haven't yet used except on frames

I had this vision of an odd word execution of black frames with black and white photos so I made them but exhausted when I'm in bed below them first the two nude ladies climbing into a Model T a girl in the shallows of a beach with a net to dig for clams and four Chinese elderly ladies in a sauna gleaming with sweat then a Paris hotel with a sign *Le Hotel de Paris*

I'd be loved for my writing and college kids would bring their wrinkled copies of my two dozen novels for me to sign there I am in a pink cashmere sweater tasteful black slacks patent shoes with kitten heels and no more bad days again they will fade but no longer kill me because I want to be free no impostor like anyone else

*Jane Barnes is working on a third poetry manuscript called "Deceptive Cadence," which includes poems covering the last decade. Her previous manuscript, "The Inbetween: Poems 1982-2007," covered 25 years in 250 poems. Jane's short story, "Counterpoint," is carved on a granite pillar at Copley Place in Back Bay, Boston.*

# Present and Accounted For



By Martina Robinson

I realize I have been out for half of my life. Throughout the decades, I have met less than a dozen other non-closeted-women of color with disabilities. Of those, only one was a fellow bisexual!

Prior to meeting Anita Cameron – a fellow black, activist woman wheelchair user – at my first ADAPT action at Atlanta in 1996, I thought I was alone in the universe with my multifaceted identities! I couldn't have realized how much that week would alter the course of my destiny.

I knew something about resistance: like everyone in the Northeast U.S., I'd learned about Martin Luther King, Jr., in my elementary school class.

At 10, I'd obsessively watched the nightly news coverage of the rebellion at Gallaudet University, which is still "the world's only university designed to be barrier-free for deaf and hard of hearing students." It began when student outrage erupted over the appointment of a hearing woman who wasn't even able to communicate in American Sign Language (ASL) as the school's next president. The eight-day protest became known as "Deaf President Now" and led to the resignation of the original appointee and the selection of the first deaf president ever, I. King Jordan.

At 19, I was a classic left-leaning good girl. Until I went to Atlanta, I had never skipped a college class. Attending the action required missing *four days* of school.

I used my own low-limit credit card instead of my parents' multiple-thousand-dollar one because I had no desire to be murdered. Therefore, I arrived in Georgia with \$7 in my pocket, \$23 of remaining credit, and knowing nearly no one.

I utilized the services of one of the awesome community-based personal care assistants (PCAs) – those fiercely awesome and rare people who helped everyone who needed helping, just because they did. They didn't expect money from people who didn't have it. This pit crew dragged us out of bed, dressed us, and put us in waiting wheelchairs.

They got up earlier than we did and fell asleep after the last of us went to bed, often at some unholy hour like 3 a.m., only to start the whole cycle over again at some equally God-forsaken hour the following morning. Many a PCA would arrive Saturday, leave Thursday – and be able to count the total number of hours of sleep hours logged as a single-digit number.

Additionally, most of them spent days marching alongside

us chanting their voices hoarse and going to jail for justice, knowing that our struggle for the right to hire, fire, train, and schedule our own workers was inexorably tied to their struggle to keep jobs they loved with employers they had grown attached to and not to be told again and again and again that they needed to get "a real job."

At the same time, they needed consumers to back them up in their real battles for things such as sick leave, living wages, and respect from a bureaucratic structure that benefitted from the widespread falsehood that PCA consumer rights and PCA worker rights were mutually exclusive.

It was a great privilege to assist people (many of whom had assisted me with intimate bodily care) as they found their own voices. I have watched friends go from not being able to whisper a grammatically correct sentence to being the absolute stars of press conferences attended by hundreds!

In Atlanta, assistance users mostly supported each other by handling what basic tasks we could among ourselves. This meant that the bodies of PCAs could be reserved for things that actually required a totally able body. Think: righting a tipped wheelchair; cramming your actual body into a door to prevent a freaked-out security guard from closing and locking it in an attempt to prevent an onrush of mostly wheelchair-using activists determined to find and confront whatever program, policy, or person we could. That day, the often-chanted slogan "Just like a nursing home, you can't get out!" was about to be transformed into a rallying cry as close to their actual doors as we could get; and we would sneak onto the roof to banner drop.

I was empowered to realize I could manage for several more hours than I thought I could comfortably go between PCA shifts. As long as I had the right team assembled we could manage to get everyone's needs met. Furthermore, under this paradigm I was an active participant in caregiving with my own obligations to others, not just a care recipient. It might take a little longer than usual and lead to a few barely-made-it-as-far-as-the-bathroom moments, but we could do it.

This was mutual aid on steroids. To illustrate: I could help feed someone lunch because my hands worked. A blind person with a strong back could assist me in the bathroom. This same person could receive sighted guide assistance from another activist who is cognitively impaired or mentally ill.

This mutual-aid-on-steroids tactic is what allowed the 504-person sit-in to occur. Taking place in 1973, this 28-day

sit-in at the San Francisco federal building over the first piece of federal legislation to ever include protections for citizens with disabilities is still the longest in federal history.

Too few people today even know the event occurred. As with every other issue, the further you get from having white, able-bodied, heterosexual men as the main proponents of an issue, the more likely it is to be erased from the cultural knowledge base as a whole. My life's work is combatting this forgetting. Join me, won't you?

*Martina Robinson is a Pennsylvania native who has resided in Massachusetts since 2000. A passionate poet and activist, most of her work lately has focused on not allowing the Trump's administration to undo 17 years of positive social change.*



*Martina Robinson*

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## Representation



*Why Not Both Co is a bisexual duo consisting of AV and Amanda Wells, who create queer webcomics. Follow them on Tumblr, Facebook, and Instagram @whynotbothco.*

# To Simply Be, Exist, and Thrive

By Nat Dahl



As a bisexual woman, what do I want? If someone had asked me this when I was in high school, I would have said “marriage equality.” Same-sex marriage was legalized before I graduated, and I was thrilled. What more could I want? I could marry whomever I wanted and no one could say otherwise. I was so proud to be a bi woman. However, as soon as I went off to college, I quickly found that my bi community, particularly my bisexual sisters, were under attack. And we still are.

Bisexual women on college campuses face high rates of sexual violence. In fact, there is a study (<http://online.liebertpub.com/doi/full/10.1089/vio.2015.0030>) that reports that my chance of getting sexually assaulted while on my college campus is 14% higher than my female heterosexual peers and 27% higher than my lesbian peers. I can deduce the reasons why my risk is so much higher than straight women and lesbians. I believe a contributing factor is that bi women are often fetishized by men. Our culture teaches people to see bi women like me as sex objects or one third of a threesome instead of as human beings. This disgusting mindset leads to sexual violence against us. Another factor is that bisexual women are hypersexualized. There is this stereotype that says that because bisexual women are attracted to multiple gender identities, we must be promiscuous. It is as if people think that our sexual orientation dictates the number of

people we want to have sex with. (News flash: it doesn't.) Since they view us as promiscuous people whose purpose is to fulfill someone else's sexual desires, it makes it much easier for someone to excuse sexual violence towards bi women. Bisexual women are highly susceptible to “corrective” rape by men – raping someone in the hopes of making them straight. The idea of “making a woman straight” is part of a toxic masculinity complex that plagues far too many men. And plenty of people of all genders believe bisexuality is not a real sexuality, and, in response, force sex on bi women to prove that they can make us straight (or gay). They want us to choose one identity over the other. In reality, however, the gender of one's sexual partner(s) does not necessarily determine one's sexual orientation.

This brings me back to my starting question: as a bisexual woman, what do I want? I want bi women to stop being seen as women who are going through a phase. I want bi women to stop being sexualized and fetishized simply because we are bi. I want bi women to feel safe. I feel as if I am constantly at war with the straight and gay communities, fighting to stake my claim at my identity. I am getting tired of fighting. I am who I am and I do not require fixing, changing, or improving because there is nothing to fix, or change, or improve. I am proud to be bi, and I am proud of my fellow bi sisters who move through a world that continues to tell us that our existence is inconsequential. Despite what the world may tell me, I know that my existence is not inconsequential and no matter how tired I may get, I will never stop fighting for my right to simply be, exist, and thrive without having to constantly fight about having a right to take up space without persecution.

*Nat Dahl is a sophomore at Ramapo College of New Jersey where she is studying nursing. She works at her college's Women's Center as a Queer Peer Services Coordinator and a Diversity Peer Educator. In her free time, she writes for the politics section for FreshU, an online publication for college students. Her work has been featured in Seventeen and Teen Vogue.*

# Two Beginnings

By Michelle-Marie Gilkeson

On the day this began I stood on your apartment land-  
ing—uncovered  
exposed to July sunshine—and waited for you to appear  
from behind one of three screen doors and when you did  
I exhaled breath I hadn't known I held

At six o'clock we took your car across town to the theater  
and felt as if there were no signal lights, overpasses, inter-  
sections  
no pedestrians or cyclists, no rules, no brakes  
At rush hour we cruised at a constant speed through LA  
traffic  
and for us there was no yielding, only moving forward

And later at the restaurant during the wait for a table you  
asked why  
I felt restless and I referenced family and jobs, money and  
home  
but what I meant to say was: *I can't rest until I know you*

At the bar while others danced we sat in a booth and  
talked

You asked if I'd ever fallen in love with a woman

You said "The way I see it, unless you can fall in love with  
a woman  
you're straight."

And I said "I know."  
Or maybe I said "I agree."

You asked "How do you know you're not just another  
straight girl  
interested in experimentation?"—and if that's not exactly  
what you said  
it's what you meant

I said "I know the difference between wanting to be  
friends  
and wanting."

You laughed then, without a hint of condescension, and I  
relaxed  
back into the booth, not sure if that settled the matter  
But I wanted to say: *I could love you. I know.*

Yesterday at lunch you asked where my lips came from  
and you asked  
where my eyes came from. In the park you touched my  
neck  
and smelled my hair and kissed my head

The day before that you said "Where did you come  
from?"

What can I say about your lips and eyes and hair  
that hasn't already been said by someone to someone?  
I need to create new words to describe your laugh  
I need a new language with its own grammar

I know I'm only tired because I'm hungry  
but how can I eat when you're not around?

How can I eat when you are?

*Michelle-Marie Gilkeson is a Los Angeles-based writer and  
activist, and the founder of Slant Rhyme. She covers art, cul-  
ture, and social action in a global context on the multimedia  
website [slant-rhyme.com](http://slant-rhyme.com).*



*Michelle-Marie Gilkeson*

# Seeking Community

By Karen Remaley

What do I really want? That's a brief question with a lengthy answer. As a bisexual woman married to a man for 25 years, I want people to stop being shocked or dismissive when I say that I am bisexual. My goal is to have a community of bisexual people, especially women, with whom I can converse, laugh, dance, and simply enjoy life.

Earlier this year, it became evident to me that I needed to experience a sense of community with other local bisexuals. I searched online for local groups and found none. I discovered a national organization with local chapters but all of their US chapters are located on the opposite coast from me. The organization offers assistance in establishing local chapters. I decided to keep that information in the back of my mind but did not take action. For several months, I continued in my routine and doing what I have always done. Once again, however, the desire to be part of a bisexual community surfaced, and I felt I could no longer ignore it.

Last month, I took steps to bring those wants into reality. I was anticipating the annual celebration of Bisexual Visibility Day on September 23 and decided to peruse the website for Bivisibility Day (<http://www.bivisibilityday.com/year2017/>) to search for events in my area. I was a bit dismayed when I discovered that the closest event to me was more than two hours away. At that point I became determined to somehow celebrate Bisexual Visibility Day with others and made plans to go to Philadelphia. Although it wouldn't be the same as an event in my own community that could easily provide resources local to me, I decided that I could only help me in my efforts to be involved in community with other bisexuals.

September 23 arrived, and a part of me began to doubt if I was making the right decision to attend. I had to drive over 200 miles round trip just to attend a rally and a health fair. Was that the most efficient use of my time, money, and gas? Furthermore, I had been particularly busy in the week leading up to that day. A last-minute decision to remain home with an open schedule seemed appealing. Ultimately, my desire for personal growth and for connection to other bisexual people won out.

I arrived early for the event and sat on the periphery of the square where the rally and fair were to be held. It was a brutally hot September day, and unfortunately, the venue provided no shade. As I sat in the shade of a nearby building my inner critic began to say, "I told you to stay home."

Shortly thereafter, the health fair began, and I gathered litera-



*Karen Remaley*

ture and chatted with some of the vendors and other attendees. At one point, I spoke with two women who lead a Bi/Pan Discussion Group at a local LGBT center. I explained that I had travelled from out of state and that there was no such group or Bivisibility Day event in my area. They matter-of-factly replied that there wasn't one near them either until they formed it.

That moment confirmed for me what I already knew. As appealing as it sounds, I'm unable to relocate to Boston just so I can take full advantage of all that the Boston Bisexual Women's Network offers. I need to work to create the environment that I want right where I am.

Within weeks of Bisexual Visibility Day, I became a volunteer at my local LGBT Community Center. I am encountering a much more diverse group of people through my volunteer work there than I otherwise would, and I thoroughly enjoy that aspect of volunteering. I recently reviewed the center's requirements for starting a new group and have begun outlining a proposal for a new Bisexual+ Discussion Group. If the proposal is approved, I'd like our group to begin meeting in early 2018.

Sometimes I know what needs to be done, but I need a little prompting to get started. I am grateful for the push that travelling 200 miles to commemorate Bisexual Visibility Day provided to me.

*Karen Remaley is a freelance writer, gun violence prevention advocate, wife, and mother.*

## Which Photo Should I Choose?

By *Carlotta Lami*

Receiving an email from Robyn Ochs was quite a shock for me. At that time, I was furiously writing the dissertation for my master's degree. I had read most of this author's work and I was citing them profusely in my thesis on bisexuality and biphobia in Wales, UK. I eagerly read the email and I was pleased to be asked to write an article for *BWQ*. I was even asked to provide a photo to accompany it! Even though a million ideas popped into my head about how I could possibly structure the piece of writing, I got somewhat stuck on which photo to choose. I wanted to select a picture representing my story, but so many persons, places, and parts of my identity play roles. These parts are so different from one another that it was impossible to include all these meanings in one photo. In a way, I have always felt between two places. Between my mother and my father – something to which those who have gone through their parents' divorce as children might relate. Between Cardiff, where my mother lives and where I currently dwell, and my small hometown in Tuscany, where I was born and grew up. The differences between these places are quite striking. That is how I started thinking about my journey as a bisexual woman, up to the moment I got the chance to do a small research project on bisexuality and biphobia in Wales. This is also why I chose a photo of my parents' names on my skin: their support, acceptance, and appreciation for who I am and what I do, in their own different and separate ways, is immeasurable.

Deep down, I believe that I have always known that I was not heterosexual and that, even though I could not deny that I liked boys, I have always been fascinated by women and individuals who defy gender norms. In my mid-20s, after a turbulent year of being really confused about my sexual orientation ('I must be a lesbian' ... 'I am definitely heterosexual' ... 'I don't know anymore!'), I came to the realization that "bisexual" is, in fact, the label for me. I have never doubted that my close and extended family would be accepting and respectful, and I know that I will never be able to thank them enough for this. I have been taught to have an open mind, to be curious about the world, to look at things with a critical eye, and to be a decent human being. All this has enabled me to accept my sexual orientation with relative peace of mind. Italy is sometimes portrayed as backward in relation to LGBTQ+ issues, and it is undeniable that in terms of legislation, rights, and society's conceptions of non-heterosexual and non-binary individuals, there is still a long way to go, especially when compared to other First World countries. However, my experience has been positive and constructive, proving that people are sometimes ahead of legislation.

Following graduation, I started looking for a job in my hometown, but I could not find anything decent. After long

confabulations and exploring the solutions available to us, my partner and I concluded that the area where we were living did not offer enough job possibilities and we sorrowfully resolved to move to the UK. We, together with our beloved dog, moved to Cardiff, Wales, where my mother lives, so we had a place to stay and a lot of support! This was only a couple of months before the actual Brexit vote took place. I decided to dedicate my time in Wales to improving myself and, moved by this desire, I applied for a master's program. I chose a program on social research methods at Swansea University, which gave me freedom to choose the subject of my dissertation research. The focus on bisexual identity and biphobia was born out of my curiosity about these subjects and was shaped by my personal day-to-day experiences of being a bisexual woman. The scarcity of research available on these themes pushed me to focus specifically on the Welsh context. I enjoyed so much conducting the interviews and analyzing the data, I appreciated less the lengthy writing of the dissertation. One of the main things, I discovered, in line with previous research, is that bisexual women in Wales are largely invisible in a society that, for the most part, does not acknowledge bisexuality as a legitimate sexual orientation. Most of the women who participated in the study described events in which bisexuality was met with stereotypical and prejudiced attitudes by heterosexuals and individuals from the LGBTQ+ community. However, my assumption that rural Wales is less accepting of bisexuality compared to urban areas was not actually sustained by women's accounts which offered nuanced understanding of how rural and urban environments intersect with a bisexual orientation.

It is difficult for me to state clearly the differences between my home country and where I live now, especially because I have never formally studied sexuality or gender in Italy. Thus, the themes that follow reflect only my personal experience, and other people might have different interpretations. For instance, I would say that, in general, UK society is more inclusive and accepting of LGBTQ+ individuals, especially in regard to legislation and rights. Italy does not currently have marriage equality or allow same-sex couples to adopt children



*Carlotta, and her tattoos*

Continued on next page

Continued from previous page

or provide services for those couples wishing to conceive a child. Therefore, individuals must go abroad and spend a lot of money to start a family. This creates additional barriers to those who cannot afford to access private clinics in foreign countries. This system is unfair towards the LGBTQ+ community and I would like Italy to become a place where citizens, irrespective of their sexual orientation, have equal rights and the same level of support from their state and their society.

More specific to issues related to bisexuality, my partner and I were both surprised by the widespread association of female bisexuality with promiscuity in Wales, and in the UK in general. This stereotype also emerged in the research project, where interviewees provided lengthy accounts of how bisexual women are perceived to be less trustworthy, promiscuous, and generally confused by some members of both heterosexual and LGBTQ+ communities. Moreover, through this small research project I have discovered that identity labels play a pivotal role in the Welsh society: most of the women who took part in the study provided nuanced accounts of the various terms available and the salient differences among them. In my native country, I believe there is less emphasis on specific identity labels and this could originate from the fact that the Italian LGBTQ+ movement is mainly fighting for equal rights and society's acceptance of those individuals who are not heterosexual. It is possible that the differences within Italian LGBTQ+ communities have yet to emerge in a

salient way. As I have never studied or been formally involved with these themes in Italy, this is merely a tentative argument.

I would like to conclude this piece on a similar note to my research project. The last question that I asked the bisexual women who participated in my study was what they believed were the positive aspects of being bisexual. It was heartwarming to hear their beautiful answers about how they linked their bisexuality with being more accepting of other people, with a focus on an on-going questioning of their own assumptions and with their ability to appreciate others for who they are, no matter their gender. I could not agree with them more! Their answers could truly be used to shed light on what bisexuality is really about and reduce the level of prejudice and erasure orbiting around this sexual orientation. I hope that one day the efforts of bisexual people around the world, and those of all those who in a way or another belong to a minority, will result in communities that strive to be inclusive and appreciate difference, instead of fearing it and trying to erase it.

*As an undergraduate, Carlotta studied health and social care subjects with a focus on older people and LGBTQ+ service users. Her M.Sc. project at Swansea University included a small, exploratory research project on biphobia in Wales. Carlotta was born in Italy and now lives with her partner and their beloved dog in Cardiff, Wales.*

Boston has a thriving bi+ community. For bi+ women and our women friends we offer monthly potluck brunches hosted by members in their homes.

If you are interested in attending a brunch, check out our calendar of events (page 24 of this issue) or send an email to [biwomeneditor@gmail.com](mailto:biwomeneditor@gmail.com).

We are always looking for brunch hosts, so let us know if you'd like to offer your home.

Wondering why we do it this way instead of meeting in a restaurant? Brunches in members' homes provide quiet, comfortable, and private environments to socialize, and they are affordable as those with limited incomes can bring an inexpensive dish or beverage.

If you live in the area, we hope you'll join us!



*August 22nd Stuff & Stuff event, combined with a meet-and-greet to welcome Hamburg, Germany-based bi activist Anne Müller.*

## Advice From A. Rose Bi



An avid BWQ reader herself, A. Rose Bi proudly identifies as a bisexual woman. She currently lives in New England with her lazy spirit animal, a Siberian cat named after CJ Cregg.

In addition to being an out bi woman, A. has a degree in Cognitive Science, has completed trainings for LGBTQ+ and sexual assault survivor advocacy, and has experience answering calls for an anonymous LGBTQ+ help line. She is passionate about feminism, the bi+ community, LGBTQ+ and female representation in the media, and helping others.

A. Rose Bi's column relies on questions from readers like you! You can send any questions you might have or suspect other readers may have to the author directly at [askbwq@gmail.com](mailto:askbwq@gmail.com) or by posting on the Bi Women's Quarterly facebook group. All questions are anonymous, nothing is off-limits, and anything related to upcoming issue topics is extra-encouraged!

Dear A. Rose Bi,

I work for a large company and we have a fantastic employee resource group (ERG) for LGBTQ employees. However, the name only directly references "gay and lesbian" employees. I know the group is inclusive of all LGBTQ-identified employees and allies, but I can't help but feel lesser than as a bi woman because of the name. Am I making too big of a deal about this since they're ultimately an inclusive group? Or am I right in feeling bothered? And if so, what do I do about it?

Thanks,  
Feeling Left Out

Dear Feeling Left Out,

I'm so sorry to hear that! First, if you're feeling left out and uncomfortable about it, then I'd bet there are other people who feel the same way. Regardless, you're not overreacting. If your experience as an LGBTQ+ employee is negative, that's something that your company's LGBTQ+ ERG should be concerned about.

With that said, if you feel comfortable taking action or saying something, go for it! Here are a few things you could do:

Email the president or board of the group and let them know how you feel. If they react positively or are open to a conversation about renaming the group, great! Some words you can use in a name to be more inclusive of the whole LGBTQ+ population are "Pride," "Out," "Spectrum," and "Queer" – for example, Out@Company X or Company X Pride. If they aren't open to a discussion, consider continuing down this list of ideas.

If you know other queer, trans or bi+ people at your company, ask for their thoughts. Compile any other concerns your co-workers have about the naming of the group and present your research to the president or board of the group. You can either use this to help your case after an initial attempt to talk to them or start with this if that feels better for you.

Ask the group to put on a program focused on bisexuality. This would be a positive affirmation that they, in fact, do value their bi+ members.

Start your own group for bi, trans and/or queer employees. I'd recommend this as more of "last resort" if the existing group won't listen or engage with your concerns. Some things to consider are whether you know other employees that would be interested in participating (there are likely some that you don't know about!) and what the budgeting or resourcing process looks like for a company-sponsored employee group (if applicable).

From what you're saying, it sounds like the leadership of this group will be open to a discussion! A lot of times, the oversight is due to a lack of knowledge and education. While I wish we didn't have to educate others, especially other members of the LGBTQ+ community, about queerness and bisexuality, we often find ourselves in situations where that's the case. Hopefully your group's leadership will be responsive and you'll help other non-lesbian and non-gay queer men and women at your company feel more included!

Best of luck and lots of love,  
A. Rose Bi



*Our famous annual Book Swap Brunch,  
hosted by Ellyn and Steph.*

# Research Corner

*This column is under the capable supervision of Renate Baumgartner and Soudeh Rad. Renate Baumgartner is currently researching bisexual women and their experiences of discrimination in Vienna, Austria. She holds a PhD in natural sciences, is a bi+ activist, and offers workshops for bisexual empowerment. Soudeh Rad is an Iranian gender equality activist based in France and cofounder of Dojensgara.org, a website about bisexuality in Persian. Some columns will be written by Renate, some by Soudeh – and some by both. If there is research on bisexuality that you would like them to be aware of, please write to them at [biwomeneditor@gmail.com](mailto:biwomeneditor@gmail.com).*

## Imagining Bisexual Futures

By Renate Baumgartner, PhD

Featuring the article: Rebecca L. Jones (2011). Imagining Bisexual Futures: Positive, Non-Normative Later Life, *Journal of Bisexuality*, 11:2-3, 245-270.

Writing a research column about positive visions of bisexuals turned out to be quite a challenge.

Research about bisexuals predominantly investigates our negative experiences, like discrimination and marginalization. It is important to point out these specific challenges, to underline the importance and urgency for change and support; however, I also think it is important to show the positive side: what makes a “bisexual life” fun and exciting, or which resources we have.

The study I’ve chosen to present did not have a specifically positive focus at its beginning. However, the results it reports are affirmative and the method used could be an inspiration for activist workshops or creative alone time. The author of the study, Rebecca Jones, is conducting research at UK-based The Open University, which has a track record of inspiring research about bisexuality. Some may know that the UK has a lively bisexual community which meets yearly for an event called BiCon (coming from bisexual convention/conference). The gathering aims to provide a space to discuss topics around bisexualities. Jones hosted a workshop at BiCon that aimed to make participants think about their future. The workshop was titled, “‘When I get older’: Imagining your bisexual future,” and was developed for BiCon 2010. This one-hour program was attended by 33 people of different genders who largely identified as bisexual. Its goal was to find out how “non-heterosexual adults imagine their future life courses.” Jones provided different methods to explore the topic. She started with a discussion on “when I fear growing older, I imagine,” then gave some positive visions on old age, which included reading from the book *Growing Old Disgracefully* (The Hen Co-op, 1993). Afterwards, participants were given materials to draw a picture of their imagined later life. Attendees were also asked to provide a description of the pictures and Jones discussed the pictures with the participants while they

were drawing.

Apart from being interested in how bisexuals imagine older age, Jones also wondered if there would be any quasi-normative visions for later life. Previous studies by other researchers had shown that many people, heterosexual or homosexual, imagine futures that follow conventional heterosexual scripts, e.g., “marrying one life partner, having children and grandchildren.” The interesting outcome of this particular study is that the participants’ imaginations did not reproduce these assumptions. Many of the participants imagined a future without children. Also, pictures and descriptions of polyamorous relationships or having an active sex life at old age prevailed. Only 30% of the participants did not mention bisexuality or polyamory within this exercise and only one female participant imagined a negative future life. Thus, Jones summarizes: “Participants predominantly imagined positive later lives with highly non-normative life course features.” One similarity with other studies was that many participants imagined fulfilling sexual/romantic relationships and enjoying life in relative withdrawal from the world.

The main contribution of this study is not just that it is the first of its kind reporting how bisexual people imagine their later lives. It is also exciting in that it differs from previous studies in the non-normative and positive way the participants imagine their lives. Participants of other studies predominantly imagined (hetero)normative life courses. Jones thinks that has to do with participants being mostly younger and heterosexual, with questions posed in a more normative surrounding (universities). Another study conducted with non-heterosexual participants (mostly lesbian or gay) showed that the ability to imagine positive life courses was connected to the degree the participants imagined scripts similar to conventional heterosexual ones. Putting her research in relation to these findings, Jones is wondering what made her participants imagine non-normative and still positive futures – a question she cannot solve in the discussion of her findings. However, she points out that the workshop and study took place at a community event with its own “local normativities,” like being polyamorous and sex-positive. Also, most of the participants were childless at the time they attended the workshop. Thus, Jones concludes: “It seems likely that the

strong local normativities of BiCon, which are spelled out to all participants in the Handbook and elsewhere, played a major role in enabling the creation of positive non-normative futures.”

In my opinion this is a good example of how community not only shapes the ways we see ourselves in the present but also influences the ways we can imagine our future. I think the opening statement of the reviewed article can also be seen as inspiration to explore this topic for ourselves: “All of us have to learn how to invent our lives, make them up, imagine them [ . . . ] If we don’t, our lives get made up for us by other people.” (Le Guin, 2004, p. 208).

#### References:

The Hen Co-op. (1993). *Growing old disgracefully: New ideas for getting the most out of life*. London, UK: Piatkus.

Le Guin, U. (2004). *The wave in the mind: Talks and*

## Bi+ Representation on Television

GLAAD, a national U.S. LGBTQ+ media advocacy organization, has released its annual report, “[Where We Are on TV 2017](#).”

Of 329 regular and recurring LGBTQ characters on scripted broadcast, cable, and streaming programming, 93 (28 percent) are counted as bi+. This group is made up of 75 women and 18 men as compared to 64 women and 19 men in the previous report. Of the 86 LGBTQ characters counted on five broadcast networks, 26% (22) are bi+. Of the 173 LGBTQ characters on cable primetime scripted series, 28% (48) are bi+. Of the 70 LGBTQ characters on the big three streaming platforms, 33% (23) are bi+.

As GLAAD reminds us in the report, bi+ folks comprise “the majority of the LGBTQ community, and yet this community continues to be underrepresented in media or as characters who fall into harmful tropes. Both of these issues undermine how people understand bisexuality, and contribute to the hesitance which bisexual+ people may feel in coming out to family and friends.”

Also, showing up for the first time on television: asexual and non-binary characters.



After the fact, Ellyn presented Robyn with a Community Leadership Award in her backyard.

On September 22, the Bisexual Resource Center marked Celebrate Bisexuality Day with a well-attended event at Lir Pub. At this event, former BRC President Ellyn Ruthstrom presented Robyn Ochs (who was, unfortunately, not present) with a BRC Community Leadership Award. Said Ellyn, “She is one of the reasons why we have such a fucking vibrant community in this city, and for so long.” Ellyn listed some of the things Robyn does in public, but then turned to the things people don’t often see: She hosts people from around the world... she gives us all the profits from her books... and she donates to the BRC... she has had people who are activists around the country share her hotel room at a national conference... she offers to provide airfare or a ride, to make sure people get to spaces... wants to make sure that people are included, that people are seen, that people are present... I’ve known Robyn for 23 years. We’ve shared so many spaces, so many times, so many BBWN brunches... It is truly an honor to give Robyn the BRC community service award from her Boston community.” You can watch Ellyn’s speech at <https://youtu.be/HFDa7FykhOw>.

“While it is heartening to see the number of bisexual+ characters rise from the previous year, television has a long way to go in accurately reflecting the bisexual+ community. As more and more young people open up about being part of the LGBTQ community, TV needs a wider variety of characters represented (including pansexual, fluid, and queer people), and those characters to be truly multidimensional people, rather than shallow stereotypes,” said GLAAD’s Associate Director of Campaigns and Public Engagement and bisexual advocate, Alexandra Bolles.

GLAAD’s full report is available online at [www.glaad.org/whereweareontv17](http://www.glaad.org/whereweareontv17).



Kat, on *The Bold Type*

*Blazing Trails continued from page 1*

top-rated drama *Grey's Anatomy*. This character — it should be noted — is one of very few unproblematic representations of bisexuality on television.

For the past 4 seasons, Sara has been the voice of Queen Miranda in the Disney Channel's animated series, *Sofia The First*. She was seen on Broadway in the smash-hit Monty Python's *Spamalot* as Lady of the Lake, for which she earned both a Tony Award for Best Performance by a Featured Actress in a Musical and an Outer Critics Award for Outstanding Featured Actress in a Musical.

And she has produced three films, most recently *The Death and Life of Marsha P. Johnson*, a documentary about transgender pioneers Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera. *The Death and Life of Marsha P. Johnson* was released in theaters and on Netflix in October.

Sara's fame as a successful and Broadway actor provides her with an amplified voice. She has access to media. People listen to her.

And here's what makes Sara special: she uses that voice to advocate for LGBTQ+ people. And even better: she uses the superpower her amplified voice provides to marshal resources for those in our community who are most marginalized: youth, people of color, the trans community, and bi+ folks. Sara shows up.

Thank you, Sara. From the bottom of my heart: THANK YOU. Thank you for being an activist. Thank you for being an out proud brave bold bisexual Latinx woman. It takes COURAGE to be out as bisexual. I may be a generation older than you, and I may be as out as it is possible to be, but your unapologetic embrace of your bi identity is a beacon and a possibility model for me, and for so many others.



Sara Ramirez

It is my honor to present you with the Trailblazer Award from the NY LGBT Center for your tireless efforts raising awareness of the issues that affect our community such as LGBT youth homelessness. Your efforts to bring exposure and assist those working to end homelessness among LGBT youth is inspiring. In addition, you actively work to make sure that everyone in our community, regardless of gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation, is empowered to live out and proud.

### *Sara's remarks:*

Thank you so much. It is such a privilege to share space with you all here tonight. Thank you for inviting me here. Thank you to the NY LGBT Center, Glenda and everyone who works and volunteers. This is a beautiful recognition and it means the world to me. Robyn Ochs, Faith Cheltenham, thank you from the bottom of my heart for all that you have done to center the bisexual-plus community and our histories, our needs and our beautiful stories. No trailblazer can trailblaze without standing on the shoulders of others who fought for our visibility. I thank you and all of the hard-working bisexual-plus community leaders, activists and allies for empowering me to stand here before you tonight and receive this honor.

At the same time, I must name the painful reality that while I am being honored for who I am and what I have done, there are so many LGBTQ institutions and spaces where I don't feel seen or I don't feel recognized as a bisexual, pansexual, queer, person of color. While my platform has given me important access, and I am so blessed to have the many privileges that I do, every time bisexual-plus people are erased — every time I am erased as a bisexual-plus, queer, person of color in the movement spaces that are supposed to be my home, the pain can feel unbearable. If I'm going to be recognized, you must also recognize my communities' vulnerabilities and needs. Whether you're comfortable with labels or not, the fact is that the ability to be seen, to name our truth, to find community, and build power around who we are, is such a critical part of any political movement for true liberation.

Now, recently at a conference focused on ending youth homelessness I had an experience that exemplifies this type of pain. I was in attendance as a representative of the Board of the Directors for the organization hosting the event, as well as to listen and learn.

After one panel, I was sitting at a table when I was approached by a white, gay-identified woman who eagerly wanted to get a picture with me for her wife. I told her I wasn't doing pictures at that time. We started talking

about the gay rights and gay pride work that she does. I am a curious person so I asked questions including questions about how people of color and bisexual-plus people were integrated into the work. She seemed uncomfortable. After some more awkward exchanges, the conversation ended naturally, and we went our separate ways. But hours later this same woman tracked me down to say, “I didn’t have my glasses on earlier but now I do and you’re not who I thought you were.” And with that she walked away. “You’re not who I thought you were.” I remember the words so clearly, because this exchange is a microcosm of how I often feel as a bisexual, pansexual, queer, woman of color in LGBTQ spaces. I am desired until I am inconvenient. I am useful until I am disruptive. And this is the experience not just of celebrities or others with platforms but the entire bisexual, pansexual, fluid, non-monosexual, queer-identified community – especially those of us whose lives intersect at multiple margins – those of us who are immigrants, poor, brown, black, disabled, asylum seekers AND bisexual, pansexual, fluid, queer, trans, and/or non-binary.

When I thought about what to say here tonight, I considered asking folks in this room who identify as bisexual, pansexual, fluid, or non-monosexual to identify themselves so we could see one another, celebrate one another, and maybe feel less alone. But the anticipation of almost no one standing up with me because so many of us don’t feel safe to, was too painful for me to risk. I have felt so vulnerable so often and no matter where I turn, there are so few resources for bisexual-plus people generally, and especially bisexual-plus people of color. We are suffering because we don’t have community. We are fractured and isolated.

And this experience – of not being seen or recognized or of being outright excluded with hostility – takes a toll. It is part of why we see such negative health outcomes for bisexual-plus people. It has been reported by the CDC that bisexual, pansexual, fluid individuals [including trans-identified folks] have the highest rates of suicidality and depression among our LGBTQ community. In the most recent study published in 2016 by Heron Greenesmith, BiNet USA, Bisexual Organizing Project, Bisexual Resource Center, and MAP, it has been documented yet again that over 50% of the LGBTQ community identifies as bisexual, fluid, non-monosexual and yet we are often neglected and erased. There is rarely programming specific to our needs; rarely speakers, trainers and staff who are bi+ and can lead bi+ specific work.

But it is time for that to change – for us to see bi+ staff at large LGBTQ institutions, to see brown and black bisexual-plus people in top leadership positions, to have bi+ specific programming, to have clear easy access to cultur-

ally competent bi+ resources when going to LGBTQ orgs’ websites, to see signs up in your lobby that explicitly celebrate bi+ people, to direct funding to the bisexual-plus communities’ needs, to have leaders, whether they identify as bisexual-plus or not, name our identities and share our stories. Our needs are not identical to the needs of gay and lesbian individuals, and it’s ok. People who aren’t bisexual or pansexual or fluid will never understand what it means to be bisexual, pansexual or fluid. Respect our human dignity despite your lack of ability to understand us. Stop tokenizing bisexual-, pansexual-, fluid-identified cisgender, transgender and/or non-binary life experiences to further policies that don’t actually support our lives and experiences. Our stories and history are important and cannot be lost.

Tonight, I urge us to think about whether we have contributed to the erasure of bi+ people. Whether we have thought to ourselves, bisexual, pansexual, fluid people are really just straight or really just gay. Or any number of other insidious stereotypes. We can do so much together if we take a step back and reflect on the fears that may drive our discomfort, the assumptions that may cause us to exclude. We all do this and we can all work to change.

There is so much struggle right now but we are also at a critical juncture where movements are building – we are calling out the cultural normalization of sexual harassment, we are standing up and naming the importance of black lives and transgender lives. We are uniting on so many fronts. And we need to unite here too. We need to honor our bisexual-plus elders, fight for our bisexual-plus youth, and give space and voice to the entire bisexual-plus community.

I thank you again for this award, and I thank all of you for joining us here tonight. I know there are people in this room who don’t feel safe or comfortable to openly identify as bisexual, pansexual or fluid. I want you to know that despite this, I see you. I was you. I love you. And maybe in a couple of years, we will feel safe enough to show ourselves, and celebrate one another openly without fear. Thank you.

*Robyn Ochs is the editor of BWQ.*

*You can watch Robyn’s speech at <https://youtu.be/KG08I-jM4uU>, and Sara’s at <https://youtu.be/6VwISnX1qgs>.*



*Sara Ramirez & Robyn Ochs*

## The Boston Bisexual Women's Network's Brunches Have Achieved Comic Fame!

Three frames from the webcomic Upland, created by Team Upland (Gabby Blonder, Jen Bonardi, Kate Estrop, Michael Monroe). You can find more at [tiggyupland.com/upland](http://tiggyupland.com/upland). Note that Jen Bonardi/Tiggy has been nominated for 2018 Grand Marshal of Boston Pride for her work as a bi educator. The winner will be announced after *BWQ* has gone to press but if she is chosen, we will be sure to let you know in the next issue.



*Continues on next page*



*What I Want, continued from page 1*

small for ourselves like a pampering day at a spa or we take part in a community effort, it always feels better to go from “I want” to “I did.” I can want anything in the world, but if I never get up to do something, none of the things I want will ever start to make me happy.

To solely focus on the big things we want makes us forget how much impact our small wishes can have. No matter how honorable my big goals are, what I really want and cherish are the small things in life: to wake up every morning next to my husband and to see him smile, to be greeted by our cat when I come home, to feel safe when I can rest my head on the shoulder of my loved one, to be assured that no matter what I’m surrounded by people who love and accept me, and to know that sometimes the most minor and most random acts can make us happy. We often forget that the most common things for us can be exactly what another person wants the most – a smile, a shoulder to lean on, a friendly word, a warm hug, to stand up for someone else. These small actions don’t cost us money; they just involve shifting our focus from ourselves to others.

What I really want is to make someone else happy whether they’re someone I know or a stranger whose path I might never cross again.

And maybe each of these little actions along the way might lead toward those higher goals.



*Niko Firefoxy*

*NekoFirefoxy, 37, currently lives with her husband in Zurich, Switzerland, where she works as a back-office administrator. She identifies as bisexual and has never made a secret of it.*

## 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 Wednesdays:

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

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

#### 1st Wednesdays:

**BLiSS: Bisexual Social & Support Group.** 7pm. All genders welcome. Info: [bliss@biresource.net](mailto:bliss@biresource.net).

#### 2nd Thursdays:

**Younger BLiSS Group.** 7pm. For bi folks 20-29. Info: Kate at [youngblissboston@gmail.com](mailto:youngblissboston@gmail.com).

#### 3rd Saturdays:

**Bi Brunch.** 11:30am at The Burren, 247 Elm Street, Davis Square, Somerville.

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



# CALENDAR

## December

**2 (Saturday) 12-3pm, Stuff & Stuff Brunch + Mailing at Robyn's in Jamaica Plain.** Bring a dish or beverage to share and help with the mailing of *BWQ!* This is a great way to meet other bi and bi-friendly women in the area! Cats in home. Info/RSVP: [robyn@robynochs.com](mailto:robyn@robynochs.com).

**6 (Wednesday) 7-9pm, Bisexual Social and Support Group (BLiSS).** All bi and bi-friendly people of all genders and orientations welcome to attend. Meetings are peer-facilitated discussion groups, sometimes with a pre-selected topic or presenter. Meets 1st Wednesdays. Info/RSVP: [bliss@biresource.org](mailto:bliss@biresource.org).

**11 (Monday) 7-9pm, Straight Marriage, Still Questioning.** A peer-led support group for women in a straight marriage/relationship struggling with sexual orientation or coming out. Meets 2nd Mondays. RSVP/Info: [kate.e.flynn@gmail.com](mailto:kate.e.flynn@gmail.com).

**14 (Thursday) 7-9pm, Young Bisexual Social and Support Group, Somerville (Young BLiSS).** If you are in your 20s or mid-30s (or thereabouts) and identify somewhere along the lines of bisexual/omni/pan/fluid (or are questioning in that direction), please join us 2nd Thursdays for a few hours of laughter, discussion, activities, and/or the eating and drinking of delicious things! Info/RSVP: [youngblissboston@gmail.com](mailto:youngblissboston@gmail.com).

**16 (Saturday) 11:30am, Bi Brunch.** This mixed gender bi group brunches at The Burren on Elm St. in Davis Sq., Somerville. Meets 3rd Saturdays.

## January

**3 (Wednesday) 7-9pm, Bisexual Social and Support Group (BLiSS).** (See December 6th)

**8 (Monday) 7-9pm, Straight Marriage, Still Questioning.** (See December 11th)

**11 (Thursday) 7-9pm, Young Bisexual Social and Support Group (Young BLiSS).** (See December 14th)

**14 (Sunday) 2-4pm, Tea with Bisexual Women Partnered with Men (BWPM).** Peer-led support meetup co-hosted by BIWOC & BRC. We will discuss a wide range of issues related to attraction, sexuality, and gender in a supportive safe space for trans women, cis women & non-binary folks of all races and ethnic backgrounds. Info/RSVP: <https://www.meetup.com/Bi-Community-Activities/events/237002701>.

**20 (Saturday) 11:30am, Bi Brunch.** (See December 16th)

**21 (Sunday) 12-3pm, Bi Women's Brunch at Charlotte's in Dorchester.** Please bring a potluck item to share. This is a great way to meet other bi and bi-friendly women in the area! RSVP: [avon.alger@gmail.com](mailto:avon.alger@gmail.com).

**25 (Thursday) 7-9pm, Bi+/Trans\* Support Group.** The BRC's bi+/trans support group is a peer-facilitated, safe space where individuals can discuss many different topics. Info/RSVP: <https://www.meetup.com/Bi-Community-Activities/events/hnwxsl-ywkbkc/>.

## February

**7 (Wednesday) 7-9pm, Bisexual Social and Support Group (BLiSS).** (See December 6th)

**8 (Thursday) 7-9pm, Young Bisexual Social and Support Group, Somerville (Young BLiSS).** (See December 14th)

**12 (Monday) 7-9pm, Straight Marriage, Still Questioning.** (See December 11th)

**17 (Saturday) 11:30am, Bi Brunch.** (See December 16th)