

Note: This is my first published article. It appeared in Plexus, a monthly San Francisco Bay Area Women's [read lesbian] Newspaper. They received two other unsolicited articles and decided to do a feature on bisexuality. We, including the publisher, thought there would be a strong community reaction and a much needed discussion on the subject. There wasn't one letter sent to the editor nor was there any discussion in the community. It was as if the bisexual issue never happened. Plexus was shocked. So were we. The language I use in this article is typical of the time (i.e. bisexual lifestyle); I would never use that now.

## **PLEXUS San Francisco Bay Area Women's Newspaper June, 1982**

### **BIPHOBIC *some of my best friends are...***

One of the biggest "jokes" of the lesbian/gay parade every year was observing the bisexual contingent. As far as I was concerned they were a bunch of closet cases, not deserving of serious consideration. As a lesbian, I felt superior in some ways and was embarrassed for them. How naïve to take the bisexual "stage" seriously. I was sure they would get over it and "come out" when they let go of the very real heterosexual privilege they were obviously clinging to. Why else would anyone say they were bisexual?

This deep-rooted contempt and ignorance of bisexuality is common in the lesbian community. It is these attitudes that kept me closeted. Whether in the "hetero" or "homo" community, hiding feelings the same, in that it perpetuates the experience of isolation, fear of discovery/loss, alienation, self-doubt – the list goes on and is all too familiar to those closeted. It is important for me as a lesbian-identified bisexual woman, who is politically dedicated to and active in the Women's Movement, to discuss bisexuality as a valid lifestyle, and to challenge the prejudices. I know I am not having an isolated experience. I have triggered many "lesbians" to blurt in whispered confidence, "I have a man in the closet. You are very brave to be so open." I don't think it's bravery that pushes me to explore. I'm a survivor, being outside the acceptable behavior of my community is not new to me.

Since enforced heterosexuality affects us in ways we are still discovering/recovering from, I want to discuss the validity of the idea of stages, and the fact that for my sexuality, lesbianism was a stage. Now this could be taken as a rather shocking, politically incorrect and unsisterly statement. It is not meant as such. I am not denying lesbian existence by expressing my sexual attraction for certain women and men. It doesn't make me wishy-washy, confused, untrustworthy, or more sexually liberated. It makes me a bisexual.

The polarized heterosexist "norm" and, to a lesser degree, the homosexist "norm" sees bisexuality exclusively as a "phase" from one to the other and perhaps back again, invalidating it as a way to be, a chosen sexuality per se. However, if we take a closer look, we see that in our lives we have exploratory periods. Many lesbians and gay men had heterosexual and/or bisexual stages before they clarified their homosexual feelings. It is in this way that exclusive heterosexuality and homosexuality are often transitional for bisexuals. So what is important here, is that no matter where your sexual preference ends up, it is the use of the words "stage" or "phase" as a one-up attitude that hurts every one of us.

The categories, stereotypes, labels, etc., within the women's community, are part and parcel of the patriarchal mind-set that puts us in boxes and keeps us in our places. It is this mind-set that glaringly denies my woman-loving-woman experiences as a bisexual, and the political reality of bisexuality is non-existent. When we make some people invisible, and make others more politically correct, we are forming new or maintaining the old hierarchies. This is a path studded with old patterns in new drag. I think the political community is going to politically correct itself to death. There is no politically correct sexual preference. As we recover from the post Freud mind/binds, we have to see the sexual revolution in feminist terms. We are in the early stages of establishing feminist theory for female sexuality. If there were a pre-existing feminist foundation, our differences wouldn't divide us so profoundly.

I came to lesbianism long before my sexuality was clear to me. I lived an open lesbian lifestyle for four years. I cannot deny the importance of this experience, nor do I want to. For me lesbian identity is more than, and/or in addition to, sexuality; it is a political awareness which bisexuality doesn't alter or detract from. Seven and a half years ago when I left my husband and the full-time role of motherhood, it didn't make me less conscious of what being a mother means. In fact, it gave me a deeper understanding. I am still a mother. That experience cannot be taken away from me. In much the same way, my lesbian awareness isn't lost now that I claim my bisexuality. When I realized my woman-loving-woman feelings, and came out as a lesbian, I had no heterosexual privilege, yet there were important males in my life, including a son. I'm getting in touch with my bisexuality because it's real for me, not in order to acquire or flaunt the privilege that is inherent in being with men. I enjoy and honor women-only space. And I don't attend lesbian events since I am not a lesbian. My political consciousness is lesbian but my lifestyle is bisexual.

I have been trashed by some lesbians for this lifestyle. I arouse anger, disappointment and embarrassment because bisexuality feeds the myth that lesbians don't exist. It's as if I'm betraying the cause by going "back" to men. It has been very scary and sometimes painful to come out as bisexual. I know from the experience of leaving my young daughter and son what it's like being the target of trashing. It isn't easy to be the center of gossip, to feel it thick in the air when attending a party; everyone knows no one asks, but the unconscious or calculated rudeness speaks for itself. I have shocked and unnerved many friends. Unfortunately, I lost some of them. Through all this I have learned to trust myself and do what is necessary. We have to deal with women's oppression of other women in a constructive way or we will be factionalized forever. We have to see the whole and the part we play in it. All men are not the enemy, just as all women are not my allies. Forming family communities with people who share your sexual identity is important, but trashing is non-productive. The sexual choices we make are equally valid for our individual experiences. I understand the significance and the necessity for separatism as a way to be, and I don't have to agree with it or live it out in order to respect it. I trust that we are all doing what we need to do.

In this short article, it is impossible to cover all that needs to be discussed and clarified about the role/context of bisexuality in the women's community. Other issues must be addressed, including bisexual women who choose to relate to women only, bisexuality and monogamy/nonmonogamy, bisexual myths, cultural, race and class differences, bisexual chauvinism, and the joys of bisexuality to name a few.

I can only hope that this will be one voice in the beginning of an ongoing exploration to create a broader based feminist sexual theory. I urge bisexual women to take a political stand, and to become a visible/viable energy force in the Women's Movement. It is important to open this dialogue in the community. Nobody belongs in the closet. We need to hear from all women.

The Bisexual Center holds rap groups for women and men. Reach them at \_\_\_\_\_ Hayes St  
SF 415-XXX-XXXX

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Other articles in same issue

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