

## **The Invisible Minority**

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It is sad and unfortunate that an oppressed minority has to oppress members within its own community even further. After attending "Bisexuality Unplugged" on Wednesday, a discussion on bisexuality hosted by The Toronto Bisexual Network and Bisexual Women of Toronto, I was awakened to the fact that the Bi Community is not only frowned upon, but downright shunned by the Queer community at large.

Steven who was one of the panelists at the event is a member of the Bi Network and had been a part of Toronto Bi community since the early 1990's. He related to the audience that every year at Pride there is at least one person who approaches the Bi Network's community table and asks them what right they have to be a part of the festivities. I gasped when I heard that one.

Pride Day in Toronto is labeled as an event celebrating Gays and Lesbians. Where are the Bis in that title or so many other forms of queer culture that are not defined by those two rather limiting labels? A woman attending Wednesday's event said she wanted to get a T-shirt with a Bisexual slogan on it to wear during the Dyke March on Saturday, but not one store on Church Street sold any bisexual paraphernalia. In fact, they said none of their suppliers had anything in any of their catalogues for bisexuals. Another gentleman attending the event suggested using the mail order forms in the magazine "Anything That Moves" (a bisexual magazine from the states), but many people strongly disagreed with this band aid solution. We are a part of this community! Why aren't you supporting and recognizing us too!?!

Many gays and lesbians see bisexuals as sell out that are still sleeping with the enemy. In fact many bisexuals are told they don't even exist by many members of the queer community. They are a myth that we chose not to believe. Attending the conference I realized that bis aren't figmentations of our imaginations. They breathe and they live and they don't all live the same way. There is a preconceived notion that Bis are all out having sex with anyone and everyone. Untrue. Many are in committed relationships, many have children, and many believe wholeheartedly in monogamy.

Still, a significant number of bisexuals believe and practice polyamorism. A concept that I have a hard time personally buying into. For a multi-partnered relationship to truly work, you and your first or foundation partner must be very secure, confident and mature people who can communicate openly, freely and honestly. Human social conditioning rather than genetics teaches us to find that one person to fall in love with and be with our entire lives. Bisexuals who choose a polyamorous lifestyle don't buy into that concept. They are brave people for making that leap. More than one bisexual at the conference said it took a long time to give up feelings of jealousy and ownership and still to this day they struggle with controlling those gut reactions.

Yet, sometimes it works. Panelists Ken and Carol are married and have been together for 27 years and have two children. Carol is affiliated with queer and feminist causes in the community and Ken is a proactive member of the queer community too. Ken expressed his belief that all relationships are fluid and Carol said it is only your own insecurities that keep you from embracing a polyamorous way of life. Although the two did admit that when they were most vulnerable in their relationship the multiple partners were put on hold (such as when their children were born and it was time to raise them). There needs to be a balance of power in the relationship for it to work, one partner can't be chasing tail feathers outside of the foundation relationship while the other stays home waiting for them to come back.

Still bisexuals have been given the shaft time and time again. At the conference someone related how, the 519 Community Centre at one time would accept bisexuals for counseling, but would not accept bisexuals as counselors. Biphobia exists for many reasons, not the least of which is fear. Fear of someone not fitting into an easily defined mould. Fear of someone straying from our queer uniform. As queers, we already feel like we don't fit into society, so when we join the queer community we try to find ways to fit in there instead. Fitting in is always an unhealthy concept, but it is human nature to try to belong to a group of people who are similar to yourself. Too many times this means giving up who we are to try to fit in to something that isn't really us. Bravo to bisexuals who are willing to destroy and recreate a whole new definition of sexuality.