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A THEME STUDY OF LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL,
TRANSGENDER, and QUEER HISTORY

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INCLUSIVE STORIES



Although scholars of LGBTQ history have generally been inclusive of women, the working classes, and gender-nonconforming people, the narrative that is found in mainstream media and that many people think of when they think of LGBTQ history is overwhelmingly white, middle-class, male, and has been focused on urban communities. While these are important histories, they do not present a full picture of LGBTQ history. To include other communities, we asked the authors to look beyond the more well-known stories. Inclusion within each chapter, however, isn't enough to describe the geographic, economic, legal, and other cultural factors that shaped these diverse histories. Therefore, we commissioned chapters providing broad historical contexts for two spirit, transgender, Latino/a, African American Pacific Islander, and bisexual communities. These chapters, read in concert with the chapter on intersectionality, serve as examples of rich, multi-faceted narrative within a fuller history of the United States.

MAKING BISEXUALS VISIBLE

Lorraine Hutchins

Introduction

Everyone is not *either gay or straight*. This mistaken assumption lies behind most ordinary daily conversations about who and how people create their families, identities, and love lives, but it is often not the whole truth. Bisexual people's experiences are hidden in plain view, perhaps not visible, sometimes revealed.

This chapter is about that paradox: how we see what has been unseen, become more conscious of those who love others of more than one gender, until we recognize that these relationships and realities are more common than is usually acknowledged and have always been a part of history, visible or not.

If they think about it, most English teachers are aware, for instance, that the writing of Walt Whitman, the well-loved US civil war nurse who changed the form of poetry from rhyming verse to lush free-form praise songs, celebrated the beauty of both women and men in his works, as did poet Edna St. Vincent Millay.¹ Students, however, are rarely taught these

¹ Walt Whitman nursed injured Civil War soldiers at the Old Patent Office Building at F and Seventh Streets NW, Washington, DC. Now home to the National Portrait Gallery, this building was listed on the

parts of their biographies.² When studying nineteenth-century US political history, many pupils discover the story of social justice organizer Emma Goldman, but only a few textbooks record her significant relationships with both women and men during her lifetime or the fact that she was a very outspoken advocate for gay and lesbian rights.³ It is now pretty well established that First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt had a long-term relationship with journalist Lorena Hickok, who even had a special guest room at the White House.⁴ People now know that CNN anchor Anderson Cooper is gay, because he's spoken openly about it over the past few years. But what he and his mother, Gloria Vanderbilt, are only now revealing publically is that her mother, his grandmother, had at least one relationship with a woman, back in the 1920s.⁵ Similar stories circulate about other US public figures like famous musician Leonard Bernstein.⁶ Contemporary artists such as Margaret Cho and Alan Cumming, usually described as gay OR straight (but not both), insist that their lives are just not that simple.⁷ "Some days I feel like I have a foot in both worlds, yet never really belonging to either,"

NRHP on October 15, 1966 and designated an NHL on January 12, 1965. Whitman spent the last years of his life at his home, 330 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard (formerly Mickle Street), Camden, New Jersey (listed on the NRHP on October 15, 1966; designated an NHL on December 29, 1962). It was here that, just before his death, he finished his final edits to *Leaves of Grass*. In 1923, Edna St. Vincent Millay was the first woman to win the Pulitzer Prize for poetry. In 1924, she and a group of friends founded the Cherry Lane Theatre, 38 Commerce Street, New York City. While the original group disbanded in 1926, Cherry Lane is the longest continuously-operating off-Broadway theater in New York City, and has a long history of producing LGBTQ-themed plays. Millay's home, Steepletop, in Austerlitz, New York was listed on the NRHP and designated an NHL on November 11, 1971. She lived in the house from 1925 through 1950.

² "The discussion of Whitman's sexual orientation will probably continue in spite of whatever evidence emerges." See Jerome Loving, *Walt Whitman: The Song of Himself* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 19. Millay had relationships with both women and men. In 1923, she married Eugen Boissevain. Married for twenty-six years, Millay and Boissevain had an open marriage and "acted like two bachelors." See "Edna St. Vincent Millay," Academy of American Poets website, <https://www.poets.org/poet/edna-st-vincent-millay>.

³ Michael Bronski, *A Queer History of the United States*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 2011), 146.

⁴ Bronski, *Ibid*, 150.

⁵ Hank Stuever, "Gloria Vanderbilt and Anderson Cooper: Sorting Through Family Hurt and History," *Washington Post*, April 8, 2016.

⁶ "That Bernstein was bisexual was no secret in his later years, and he has been outed (snarkily, awkwardly, gleefully) since his death. Here he outs himself, through frank exchanges with his new wife, Felicia Montalegre, with whom he formed an unspoken covenant: He could have affairs with men, he could lead his 'double life,' as long as he was reasonably discreet." From John Rockwell, "Maestro: The Leonard Bernstein Letters," *New York Times Sunday Book Review*, December 13, 2013.

⁷ Margaret Cho, "Queer," *Huffpost Queer Voices*, October 3, 2011, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/margaret-cho/queer_b_984123.html; Adam Sandel, "Alan Cumming Is Bisexual – And You Might Be Too," *Advocate*, March 30, 2015, <http://www.advocate.com/bisexuality/2015/03/30/alan-cumming-bisexual-and-you-might-be-too>.

says Oregon Governor Kate Brown, the country's first out bisexual governor, speaking openly about how hard it is being a public bisexual role model, in government or anywhere.⁸ Hundreds of these stories wait to be uncovered or have been uncovered and then covered up again. An organized US bisexual rights and liberation movement keeps bringing stories like these to light, insisting on the importance of bisexual role models for everyone (Figure 1).



Figure 1: Some of the bisexual contingents at the 2009 National Equality March, Washington, DC. Photo by BlueFireIceEyes.⁹

The acronym LGBTQ—lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer—encompasses an inclusive, diverse coalition of sexual orientations and gender identities, and out bisexual people, whatever name they have called themselves or been called, have been a key part of making these changes happen from the start. However, when we open the book on the modern gay liberation movement in this country, its bisexual roots are often ignored. Though Sylvia Rivera, one of the key mobilizers of the

⁸ “She wrote in ‘Out and Elected in the USA,’ an online collection of essays by LGBTQ elected officials, that some of her gay friends called her ‘half-queer.’ Straight friends were convinced she couldn’t make up her mind.” See Associated Press, “Gov. Kate Brown veers from typical graduation speech to talk about her sexuality,” *Oregonian*, May 20, 2016, http://www.oregonlive.com/politics/index.ssf/2016/05/gov_kate_brown_veers_from_typi.html.

⁹ License: CC BY-SA 3.0. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bis_at_NEM.jpg

resistance against the police crackdown at the Stonewall bar in New York City in June 1969, for instance, is often claimed as a gay and/or transgender person, what is not as widely acknowledged is that Rivera openly related intimately to more than one gender and was open about loving women as well as men.¹⁰ So why not say that and teach that? Why keep part of Rivera's, and all these others' identities, silent? The list of famous US bisexuals is long, and growing, but as we reconstruct the history, where do we find the places they lived and loved? ¹¹ Where do we find the big events that mark accomplishments for bisexual rights and liberation in the United States during the past fifty years? That is what this chapter brings to light.

Though much has been said about the limits of the binary (either/or) view of assuming everyone is gay OR straight, much has yet to be uncovered and understood. A great many people of all ages have the capacity to be bisexual. Many may know privately that they are. Many still are not open about it, for various reasons. However, there is a huge change in visibility that has been building over the past fifty years. New studies show that the majority of teens, in the United States and in some other Western countries, now recognize themselves as non-heterosexual.¹² They are comfortable being openly attracted to more than one gender, whether they act on it or not. This is a huge shift that US culture is still adjusting to, to say the least.

This chapter is dedicated to this next generation, and to everyone older who wants to better understand that bisexuality is not a "new" identity at all, by whatever names it goes by. Bisexualities and other, nonbinary ways

¹⁰ Sylvia Rivera was assigned male at birth and claimed her female identity at age ten, when she changed her name from Ray to Sylvia. Sylvia Rivera, "Queens in Exile, The Forgotten Ones," in *Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries: Survival, Revolt, and Queer Antagonist Struggle* (Untorelli Press, 2013).

¹¹ Nicole Kristal and Mike Szymanski, *The Bisexuals Guide to the Universe: Quips, Tips, and Lists for Those Who Go Both Ways* (New York: Alyson Publications, 2006) has a list of famous bisexuals, as do a number of websites like the October LGBT History Month site at <http://www.lgbthistorymonth.com>.

¹² Matthew Rodriguez, "Queer Teens Are Now the Majority, Goodbye Straight People," *Mic*, March 12, 2016, citing a report from the J. Walter Thompson Innovation Group that found only 48 percent of teens identify as completely heterosexual on the Kinsey scale, a smaller percentage than any previous generations surveyed, see <http://mic.com/articles/137713/queer-teens-are-now-the-majority-goodbye-straight-people>.

of viewing attraction are merely coming out more into the open. It behooves us to be more informed about how this is happening. Chronological timelines of bisexual US history are available elsewhere.¹³ This chapter offers a selection of the emblematic stories, the people, and places where important bisexual events have happened in the United States, particularly over the past half-century. First some basic definitions and historic research background for those interested.

i) Defining Bi Identity, the History of Being Bi

Bisexuality is simply the capacity to be attracted to and love more than one gender. Alfred Kinsey, the father of sexuality research in the United States was himself someone who had relations with men as well as women. In the 1930s through 1950s when US sexuality research was mostly nonexistent, Kinsey and his team surveyed thousands of people about their sexual experiences.¹⁴ Out of this work he developed the Kinsey Scale, which charted a range of sexual orientations or attractions, all the way from exclusively attracted to a different sex than oneself (usually marked as zero) to exclusively attracted to one's own sex (marked as six), with five gradations or degrees in between.¹⁵ Kinsey didn't label people or ask them how they identified, he merely cataloged their behaviors and experiences. What he found was that a lot of people who would regard themselves, and be regarded, as heterosexual (near the zero end of the scale), in fact had significant same-sex experience, and that a number of people who were primarily attracted to their own sex (toward the six end of

¹³ For bisexual history timelines, see for example: "Timeline: The Bisexual Health Movement in the US," BiNet USA website, <http://binetusa.org/bihealth.html>; "A Brief History of the Bisexual Movement," BiNet USA website, <http://www.binetusa.org/bi-history>; and "The Bisexual History of HIV/AIDS, In Photos," LGBT HealthLink website, <https://blog.lgbthealthlink.org/2015/01/29/the-bisexual-history-of-hiv-aids-in-photos>.

¹⁴ From 1927 through 1956, Alfred Kinsey and his family lived in a home he designed in a neighborhood just south of the University of Indiana. It is a contributing element to the Vinegar Hill Historic District, listed on the NRHP on June 17, 2005. The Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender, and Reproduction is currently located in Morrison Hall, University of Indiana, Bloomington. See Alfred C. Kinsey, Wardell B. Pomeroy, and Clyde E. Martin, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders Co., 1948), 651, Table 147. Also see Ron J. Suresha, ed., *Bisexual Perspectives on the Life and Work of Alfred C. Kinsey* (London: Routledge, 2010).

¹⁵ Kinsey also recognized that some individuals were asexual, or not sexually attracted to other people, regardless of gender. He placed these individuals in a category he labeled "X" that was separate from the Kinsey scale.

the scale) had also sometimes had significant relations with a sex different than their own. But the human mind tends to sort things into easy binaries; black/white, hot/cold, up/down. And so the categories gay and straight oversimplify and distort the natural range of people's attractions, causing the vast and populated middle grounds to be minimized, and disappear.

To complicate things even further, a lot of the post-Kinsey researchers tended to lump lesbians, gays, and bisexuals together when doing studies about non-heterosexual people so it was difficult, for a long time, to get good information on how many people have attractions for and relationships with more than one gender, i.e. how many people are



Figure 2: Peg Preble and Robyn Ochs, pronounced married by Town Clerk Pat Ward in the Town Clerk's Office, Brookline, Massachusetts. They were the first same-sex marriage ever in Brookline that morning of Monday, May 17, 2004, the day same-sex marriage became legal in Massachusetts. Often misrepresented in the media as a lesbian couple, Robyn identifies as bisexual and has been a long-time bisexual activist, as well as instrumental in the same-sex marriage equality movement. Photo by Kate Flock/Brookline Tab, courtesy of Robyn Ochs.

bisexual in the broadest sense.¹⁶ And even when studies did try to collect that kind of data there were/are often discrepancies between which study counts only people who openly identify with the label, “bisexual,” (which is still a fairly small group, partly due to the stigma of being labeled such), versus the much larger group of people who have had sexual experiences with more than one gender/sex but don’t identify openly as members of a community or movement for bisexual rights and liberation (or a gay or lesbian rights movement either, for that matter). Still, as mentioned about the teens surveyed above, things have changed a lot in the past several decades, with more people now identifying as other than straight—and even other than homosexual. Marriage equality has changed things tremendously (Figure 2). Even while conservative backlash aims to limit and roll back the rights of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender, and queer people as well as of other sexual minorities, there also continues to be forward motion and inclusionary measures building toward making our society more accepting of a diversity of sexualities and sexual identities.

ii) Erasure’s Roots in Research (& Organizing)

It is no exaggeration to say that bisexuality’s existence, prevalence, and significance in United States history has been erased and discounted, made repeatedly invisible even after it has surfaced, again and again and again. The reasons for this have been explored by some authors, but generally go beyond the scope of this chapter.¹⁷ To briefly summarize the phenomena here, it is important to say that the foundational concepts of sexuality research, over the past century and a half of its existence, have tended far too much to frame human behaviors in a binary way that dismisses and/or eclipses attraction to any one sex/gender in favor of

¹⁶ See Lani Ka’ahumanu and Loraine Hutchins, eds., *Bi Any Other Name: Bisexual People Speak Out*, 25th anniversary edition (New York: Riverdale Avenue Books, [1991] 2015), 38-47, psychology overview section.

¹⁷ The interested reader is referred to texts such as sociologist Paula Rust’s works; legal scholars Ruth Colker and Kenji Yoshino’s classic studies on bisexual labeling, politics and erasure; historians Stephen Angelides’ and Clare Hemmings’ books; and Lindasusan Ulrich’s groundbreaking report to the San Francisco Human Rights Commission. All of these are cited in the author’s chapter in the new Routledge anthology on LGBTQ histories; “Let’s Not Bijack Another Century,” in *The Routledge History of Queer America*, ed. Don Romesburg (London: Routledge, 2017).

ignoring or discounting the other(s).¹⁸ Beginning with sexuality researchers in nineteenth-century Europe, the same assumptions that have stigmatized homosexuality as a lesser-than-and-inferior orientation have also re-enforced the heterosexual/homosexual binary-only frame. In other words, the nineteenth-century white European males who were the first sexologists based their research on key binary assumptions that heterosexuality was the “opposite” of being attracted to one’s own sex, and that it was also superior to same-sex attractions. Underlying these assumptions was the belief that people are *either* heterosexual or homosexual, and that being bisexual and attracted to more than one gender is neither legitimate nor real.¹⁹ Of course this framework was invented by heterosexuals to differentiate themselves from homosexuals, neither of which category really exists outside the human mind. As Kate Millet wrote, “homosexuality was invented by a straight world dealing with its own bisexuality.”²⁰

During the first few decades of LGBTQ Studies, bisexual erasure was, and still is, common.²¹ The “B” has been included mostly in name only and often events and organizations that are labeled with the inclusive acronym are not really inclusive in the processes of reporting and pedagogy that play out. For example, while English departments, psychology departments, sociology departments, history departments, and others have opened up to including positive examples of gay and lesbian life and accomplishments and formalizing them via scholarly journals, textbooks, academic conferences, and curricula at undergraduate and graduate levels, the stories that follow here in this chapter were almost never included as part of these narratives. They still, for the most part, are not.

¹⁸ Other(s) is stated as plural rather than singular since there are many who now argue there are more than two genders, that gender is not inherently binary, that binary, either/or male/female genders are a culturally-specific phenomena and an oversimplification of the vastly more complex reality of how humans understand and express themselves.

¹⁹ Stephen Angelides, *A History of Bisexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

²⁰ Kate Millet, *Flying* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 97.

²¹ The first decades of LGBTQ studies are considered here to be the mid-1970s to the mid-1990s, beginning with the release of the first edition of Jonathan Ned Katz’s groundbreaking work, *Gay American History: Lesbians and Gay Men in the U.S.A.* (New York: Avon Books, 1978).

You will read two examples under the Resistance and Protest heading, and more under other headings below.

Continuing to assert one's bisexuality in the face of this denial, dismissal, and erasure takes tremendous strength of will and sometimes just sheer cussedness or stubbornness—attributes that are often seen to be anathema to those who want to fit in and be well liked by others. And yet, bisexuals have been a part of many social movements, including what is now called the LGBTQ one. This activism has not been without cost, nor without almost constant censorship, even from within and without the bisexual movement. This biphobia, both internalized and from external sources has resulted in the achievements and events related to bisexual identities being erased or excluded from the record. Repeated efforts are needed to put bisexuality and bisexual history back in, over and over again.

iii) Important Events and Places in US Bisexual History

Although there were individual bisexual support groups in various cities during the 1970s and 1980s—including BiPOL, the first bisexual political organization that formed in San Francisco in 1983—it took until the late 1980s for a national bisexual networking capacity to form.²² During the mid-1980s, US bisexual social groups and political action groups, not only on both coasts, but also in the Midwest, the Northwest, and the Southeast, began to communicate with each other. The official start of the US bisexual movement and the launch of BiNET USA is often marked as the day in Washington, DC, in October 1987 when about eighty bisexual activists from around the country who had come for the second national March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights gathered to form the first ever bisexual contingent at a national march. But years of preparation and cross-country organizing went into making that contingent possible. People brought homemade bisexual pride signs. Some wore T-shirts

²² BiPOL was founded in San Francisco by Autumn Courtney, Lani Ka'ahumanu, Arlene Krantz, David Lourea, Bill Mack, Alan Rockway, and Maggi Rubenstein. See Lani Ka'ahumanu, "Timeline: The Bisexual Health Movement in the US," BiNet USA website, <http://www.binetusa.org/bihealth.html>; Alan Soble, ed., *Sex from Plato to Paglia: A Philosophical Encyclopedia* (New York: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2006), 115.

bearing a bisexual symbol of overlapping pink and blue triangles making a purple triangle in the middle. Everyone marveled to see each other, finally, assembled in a suite at the Mayflower Hotel, a few blocks north of the White House.²³ Before they joined the line of the march farther south, they distributed copies of a flyer to give out to others along the route. The flyer, “Are We Ready For A National Bisexual Network?” included BiPOL’s address that people could write to in order to keep in touch with national organizing efforts.²⁴ Some of these same bisexual leaders had been active with the March on Washington’s national organizing committee during the previous year, including San Francisco BiPOL organizer, Lani Ka’ahumanu. Her piece in the march’s civil disobedience handbook, “The Bisexual Movement, Are We Visible Yet?” was a first of its kind in national gay/lesbian publications of the day.²⁵ While the 1987 March weekend marks the beginning of national bisexual organizing, bisexual activists have been involved in the LGBTQ movement from its very beginnings.

For those interested, a number of bi history timelines chronicling important meetings and occurrences from the 1960s on are available online.²⁶ These helpful resources—particularly on health, and political organizing topics—provide useful touchstones. What follows are examples of bisexual history being reclaimed. A number of archives concentrating on bisexual history are now also available, most notably the Bisexual Resource Center’s collection in Boston; the University of Minnesota’s Tretter Collection; the collection at the James C. Hormel LGBTQIA Center at

²³ The Mayflower Hotel, 1127 Connecticut Avenue NW, Washington, DC, was listed on the NRHP on November 14, 1983.

²⁴ The address given for BiPOL was 584 Castro Street, San Francisco, California.

²⁵ The Civil Disobedience Handbook guided people through a day of nonviolent protest at the United States Supreme Court, in response to the Bowers v. Hardwick decision upholding Georgia’s sodomy law criminalizing oral and anal sex in private between consenting same-sex adults. This decision was later overturned by the court’s Lawrence v. Texas decision. The civil disobedience actions accompanying the 1987 march weekend occurred the day after the long march down Pennsylvania Avenue to the US Capitol Building.

²⁶ For bisexual history timelines, see websites included in note 12.

the San Francisco Public Library; and the bisexual materials that are part of the San Francisco GLBT Historic Society Archives.²⁷

Sites of Resistance and Protest

Were bisexuals at Stonewall? Yes, of course. Those attracted to more than one gender, like Sylvia Rivera, one of the first transgender activists, and Brenda Howard, a multi-issue social justice activist, were part of organized response to police violence directed against sexual minorities during the days of the Stonewall uprising in New York City in June 1969 and a part of the one-year anniversary commemorative event, later recognized as Pride Day.²⁸ Howard, now known as “The Mother of Pride” for her work coordinating the first rally the year after Stonewall, was an antiwar activist who chaired the Gay Activists Alliance Speakers Bureau and was one of the first members of the Gay Liberation Front in New York City.²⁹ She helped steer the city’s gay rights law through the city council in 1986, worked with ACT UP, Queer Nation, and helped found the New York Area Bisexual Network, along with its Bisexual Political Action Campaign (BiPAC) and many other groups. She served as a regional representative in the national organizing that mobilized the 1993 March on Washington for Lesbian, Gay and Bi Equal Rights and Liberation in Washington, DC, and served in 1994 as female co-chair of the leather contingent of the Stonewall 25 march held June 26, 1994 in New York City. She was also

²⁷ The Bisexual Resource Center’s collection is housed at Northeastern University’s Snell Library, 360 Huntington Avenue, Boston, Massachusetts. The Jean-Nickolaus Tretter Collection in Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Studies is at the University of Minnesota’s Andersen Library, 222 Twenty-First Avenue South, Minneapolis, Minnesota. The James C. Hormel LGBTQIA Center (formerly the James C. Hormel Gay and Lesbian Center) is located at the San Francisco Public Library, 100 Larkin Street, San Francisco (part of the Civic Center Historic District, added to the NRHP on October 10, 1978 and designated an NHL on February 27, 1987). The GLBT Historical Society Archives are at 989 Market Street, San Francisco, California.

²⁸ “Brenda Howard,” LGBT History Month website, <http://lgbthistorymonth.com/brenda-howard?tab=biography>; Jade Salazar, “LGBTQ History #18: Sylvia Rivera: Transgender Activist and Stonewall Legend,” *Tagg Magazine*, October 29, 2014, <http://taggmagazine.com/community/sylvia-rivera-transgender-activist-stonewall-legend>; Stonewall, 51-53 Christopher Street, New York City, New York was listed on the NRHP on June 28, 1999; designated an NHL on February 16, 2000; and declared Stonewall National Monument (an NPS unit) on June 24, 2016.

²⁹ Eliel Cruz, “Remembering Brenda: An Ode to the ‘Mother of Pride,’” *Advocate*, June 17, 2014, <http://www.advocate.com/bisexuality/2014/06/17/remembering-brenda-ode-%E2%80%98mother-pride%E2%80%99>.

instrumental in organizing the Third International Bisexual Conference held on June 25th, the day before Stonewall 25, at Bayard Rustin High School.³⁰

Though often described as gay in historic accounts, Alan Rockway, one of the key organizers of the Florida orange juice boycott against Save Our Children's Anita Bryant, was an out bisexual psychologist.³¹ He went on to do bisexual political organizing with BiPOL in San Francisco, including helping organize the first Bisexual Rights Rally and protest during the 1984 Democratic Convention because the gay and lesbian delegates were not including bisexuals in the process (Figure 3).³² Rockway created and taught the first college-level course on bisexuality, "Psychological Views of Bisexual Behavior," offered at Sonoma State College.³³ By 1977, Rockway had founded the Miami Transperience Center, a mental health services company providing counseling to the GLBTQ community.³⁴

³⁰ The Bayard Rustin High School, named after the famous gay civil rights leader who was chief architect of the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, is now called the Bayard Rustin Educational Complex. It is located at 351 West 18th Street, New York City, New York.

³¹ This early homophobic campaign, the precursor of today's anti-LGBT initiatives, was called "Save Our Children." It started in Florida in the 1970s and spread to other cities and states, and was championed by singer and Florida Citrus Commission spokesperson Anita Bryant. See "Foes of Anita Bryant Successful in Getting New Gay Law on Ballot," *Akron Beacon Journal* (Akron, Ohio), October 5, 1978, 37.

³² The 1984 Democratic Party Convention was held July 16-19 in the Moscone Center, San Francisco's convention center, built in 1981, in the South of Market area. It was named after San Francisco Mayor George Moscone who had been assassinated, along with Supervisor Harvey Milk, in 1978. The Moscone Center currently consists of Moscone North, Moscone South, and Moscone West; Moscone South is the original structure, built in 1981. Rockway worked with San Francisco bisexual activist Lani Ka'ahumanu and others in BiPOL, a political action group, to create bisexual visibility actions around the convention, including securing a permit from the city for a protest stage for the first Bisexual Rights Rally in a parking lot across from the Moscone Center. The parking lot at 730 Howard Street is now occupied by Moscone Center North. Bisexuals had been explicitly told by organizers that they were not welcome in the National March for Lesbian and Gay Rights that took place from Castro and Market Streets to the Moscone Center during the convention.

³³ In some historic records, Susan Carlton's 1990 course on bisexuality, at the University of California, Berkeley is listed as the first college-level course taught on bisexuality. In fact, Rockway originated the first course a decade and a half earlier. Others have followed suit in various LGBTQ university programs, but stand-alone courses that focus solely on bisexual issues are still rare, forty years later. Sonoma State College (since 1978, Sonoma State University) is located at 1801 East Cotati Avenue, Rhonert Park, California. The Rockway Institute, founded in 2007, is a center for LGBTQ research and public policy at the California School of Professional Psychology, Alliant International University, One Beach Street, San Francisco, California. It is named in honor of Alan Rockway. See <http://www.alliant.edu/cspp/about-cspp/cspp-research-institutes/rockway-institute/index.php>

³⁴ "Nation's Press," *Panama City News-Herald* (Panama City, Florida), December 16, 1977, 36.



Figure 3: The first Bisexual Rights Rally in the United States at 730 Howard Street, San Francisco, California. Explicitly excluded from the lesbian and gay protests at the 1984 Democratic Party Convention held across the street at the Moscone Center, bisexual activists Alan Rockway, Lani Ka'ahumanu, and others in BiPOL arranged their own protest. Photo courtesy of Lani Ka'ahumanu.

Bisexuals are resilient, surviving in a world that repeatedly erases and elides their existence. They resist erasure over and over again. Left out of the names of organizations and marches, excluded from studies and efforts purporting to represent all same-sex loving people, they persist, and continue to assert who they are.

In 1991, Princeton and Rutgers universities cohosted the fifth annual Lesbian and Gay Studies Conference at the Rutgers campus in New Brunswick, New Jersey. Although organizers at the 1990 conference held at Harvard University had added bi into the title the year before, the word “bisexual” was taken back out of the name of the conference when it was held in New Jersey. Likewise, although a number of papers on bisexuality were presented at the 1991 New Jersey conference, the resulting anthology, *Negotiating Lesbian and Gay Subjects*, contained none of

them.³⁵ No conference was held during 1992 or 1993 but this foundational effort in LGBTQ studies resulted in one last November 1994 conference at the University of Iowa, Iowa City. As a result of bisexual advocacy and resistance over being “written in and out” of earlier gatherings, the 1994 conference was dubbed “InQueery/InTheory/InDeed: The Sixth North American Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Studies Conference.” The Iowa City conference included programming on bisexual and transgender issues as well as gay and lesbian ones and produced a book based on conference proceedings.³⁶ The public parks and town square of Northampton, Massachusetts became a parallel site of resistance in response to this exclusionary “Now You See Us, Now You Don’t” mentality. As has been partially related in Hemmings’ *Bisexual Spaces: A Geography of Sexuality and Gender*, this small western Massachusetts town used a bi-inclusive title for its annual Pride celebration one year, and then erased the bisexual part of the name the next.³⁷

Is resistance “futile,” as the Star Trek Borg would tell us, or is it “fertile,” as indomitable resisters of all types assert? Many bisexuals long known for refusing-to-choose (sides in a war not of their making) answer “it’s both/and.” Both “futile” in the sense of being monumentally discouraging to continually insist on one’s right to belong and exist, and inspirationally “fertile” in the sense that hope beyond simplistic binaries springs eternal in non-gendered human breasts.

Many, many small towns and big city communities around the country have their own specific tales of bi inclusion/exclusion, instances where bisexuals were included in groups’ titles, marches and other events, and then excluded again—sometimes over and over again, even up to this day

³⁵ Brett Beemyn and Michele Eliason, eds., *Queer Studies: A Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Anthology* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 1-2; Monica Dorenkamp and Richard Henke, eds., *Negotiating Lesbian and Gay Subjects* (London: Routledge, 1994.)

³⁶ Beemyn and Eliason, eds., *Queer Studies*.

³⁷ Clare Hemmings, *Bisexual Spaces: A Geography of Sexuality and Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2002). See pages 62-75 for photo reproductions of posters used for various years of the marches in Northampton, illustrating bi inclusion and exclusion. Since at least the late 1970s/early 1980s, Northampton, Massachusetts has been recognized as home to a large number of lesbians; in the early 1990s, it was dubbed “Lesbianville, USA” by the mainstream media. See Julia Penelope, “Lesbianville, U.S.A.?” *Off Our Backs* 23, no. 9 (October 1993): 8, 16-17.

in time. There have been bisexual grand marshals who were honored and helped lead Pride parades, and also many times when they could/should have been, and were not. For example, in 1986, when BiPOL's Autumn Courtney was elected co-chair of San Francisco's Lesbian Gay Freedom Day Pride Parade Committee, it was the first time an openly bisexual person was chosen to hold this sort of position in the United States.³⁸

Another kind of protest occurred when people did, and do, individual and small group actions, sometimes involving civil disobedience, to try and draw attention to their cause. One such example was the action of Dr. Elias Farajajé-Jones, an African American bisexual Howard University School of Divinity professor, who staged a sit-in at the Washington, DC Mayor's office in 1991 to protest inaction of the DC government regarding the release of HIV/AIDS funding.³⁹ The exact date of this protest has been lost and Farajajé himself died in early 2016. This protest is particularly poignant as his own lover was dying of AIDS in Washington, DC's Veterans Administration Hospital at the time.

As the above stories show, there is a lot of hidden history about the dynamics of coalition organizing—what gets put in a group's platform or a campaign's demands or a march's platform, and what gets left out or voted down.⁴⁰ It is always informative to ask your local college or place of worship or activist group what kind of naming battles went on, and/or are still going on, and what people think it means, what kinds of messages are sent, by the ways we use language: who is represented and who is not,

³⁸ For more of these kinds of bisexual historic political facts, see "A Brief History of the Bisexual Movement," BiNet USA website, <http://www.binetusa.org/bihistory2.html>.

³⁹ The Office of the Mayor is located at 1350 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington, DC. Howard University, an historically black university, has its divinity school at 2900 Van Ness Street NW, Washington, DC. Dr. Farajajé-Jones became a Sufi scholar who later changed his name to Ibrahim Farajajé. He developed a department of Islam Studies at Starr King School for the Ministry in Berkeley, California, where he served as provost for many years before his death in February 2016. Starr King School for the Ministry is located at 2441 Le Conte Avenue, Berkeley, California.

⁴⁰ See, for example, the updated introduction, "Still About Naming After All These Years," in Ka'ahumanu and Hutchins, *Bi Any Other Name*.

present absences, absent presences, whose lives matter, here, there, anywhere.⁴¹

Building Bisexual Communities – Local, Global, and Everything in Between

The first thing to understand about the concept of bisexual communities is that they do not stand alone, apart from other demographic groups. That's not how bisexuality works. Bisexuals partner and have children with those who are not bisexual, and work within and among and apart from and alongside many different kinds of interest groups. Bisexual leaders and activists in the past were well known for saying "there is no point in organizing a separate bisexual political movement" because the issues of loving more than one gender are woven into more than one community, so the point is to organize cross-communities and among them, not apart from them. Like others, bisexual activists do not work only to build bisexual-specific organizations or for bisexual rights, but work as out bisexuals in many movements that, ideally, network with each other. It means there are bisexually-identified people organizing within electoral politics and political parties, within LGBTQ organizations, within the labor movement, the civil rights movement, the women's movement, the environmental movement, and more; making the intersectional connections between bisexual issues and other issues whenever platforms, campaigns, and protest demands are formulated.

Still, when trying to trace more precisely the beginnings of bisexual-focused community efforts, we often start by looking back at the "firsts" in LGBTQ history, those that have been commemorated in the LGBTQ history books and textbooks, and those that also have sometimes been left out. Recognized as the first homophile organization in the United States, the Society for Human Rights was founded by Henry Gerber and others,

⁴¹ For example, regarding organizations on college campuses, see Brett Beemyn, "The Silence is Broken: A History of the First Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual College Student Groups," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 12, no. 2 (April 2003), 205-223.

including an African American clergyman named John T. Graves (who is listed as president on the incorporation papers), in Chicago, Illinois in 1924. The group, which operated out of Gerber's flat in a rooming house, limited membership to gay men only (explicitly excluding bisexuals). Unknown to the organizers, the society's vice president, Al Weininger, was married. His wife reported the organization to a social worker in 1925, resulting in a police raid of Gerber's quarters. The organization's records and typewriter were seized, and not returned, effectively ending the society's existence.⁴²

Using "gay" in the most expansive, inclusive sense possible, there have been lasting gay support and social groups on college campuses and in individual communities for over sixty years.⁴³ Some histories tell the story about how students in the late 1980s and early 1990s agitated to change the names of their groups to be more inclusive, often adding "lesbian" and "bisexual," and then "transgender" and "queer" to their names. But what isn't generally known, taught, or told, is that the very first US gay student group was started by a bisexual man.

The Student Homophile League at Columbia University was started in 1966, several years before Stonewall.⁴⁴ The founder was student Stephen Donaldson (birth name Robert Martin), perhaps better known as Donny the Punk. Donny led a short illustrious life, having affairs with famous gay and lesbian political leaders and organizing for bisexual rights among everyone from nonviolent Quakers to convicted felons. He was one of the very first anti-prison-rape activists and died of AIDS much too young. Today, meetings of the Columbia Queer Alliance are held in a special room

⁴² The Henry Gerber Residence in the Old Town Triangle neighborhood of Chicago, Illinois was designated an NHL on June 19, 2015. Vern L. Bullough, *Before Stonewall: Activists for Gay and Lesbian Rights in Historical Context* (New York: Harrington Park Press, 2002), 27; John Loughery, *The Other Side of Science – Men's Lives and Gay Identities: A Twentieth-Century History* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1998), 54.

⁴³ The Mattachine Society was founded in Los Angeles, California in 1950; the Daughters of Bilitis formed in 1955 in San Francisco, California. Both of these homophile organizations lasted in various forms for many years.

⁴⁴ Brett Beemyn, "Bisexuality, Bisexuals and Bisexual Movements," in *Encyclopedia of LGBT History in America*, vol. 1, ed. Marc Stein (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2003).



Figure 4: The Columbia Queer Alliance lounge, Furnald Hall, Columbia University, 2016. The lounge is dedicated to the memory of bisexual activist Stephen Donaldson, the Columbia University student who founded the first LGBTQ student group in the United States. Photo courtesy of Kaixi Wu, 2015.

dedicated to Donaldson's memory (Figures 4 and 5). With Donaldson's support, activists on other campuses formed similar groups, laying the groundwork for what became the gay liberation movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s.⁴⁵

This is but one example of what historian Genny Beemyn has characterized as the pattern of many LGBTQ groups being started by, and continuing to be run by bisexual people, whether they are out and recognized as bisexual, or not. Other LGBTQ youth groups have also been started by bisexuals. In Miami in 1977, Alexei Guren, a young Cuban American bisexual activist, organized the Gay Teen Task Force, an LGBTQ youth group that met monthly at the offices of *The Weekly News*. In 1982,

⁴⁵ Meetings are held in the basement of Columbia University's Furnald Hall, Broadway and 116th Street, New York City, New York.

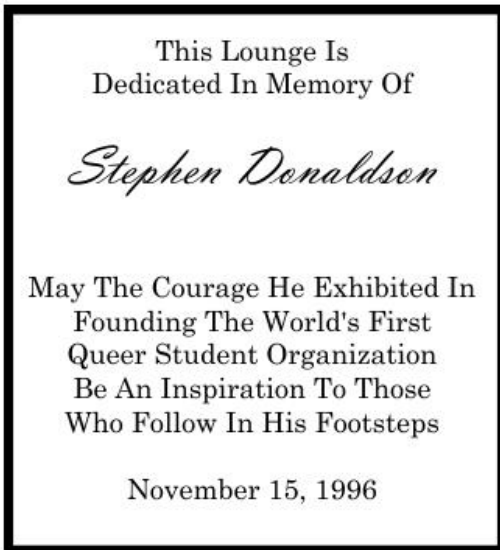


Figure 5: Text of the plaque outside the Columbia Queer Alliance lounge at Fernald Hall, Columbia University commemorating Stephen Donaldson. From an image courtesy of Kaixi Wu, 2015.

it moved to the Institute of Sexism and Sexuality at Miami Dade College, where it often hosted up to fifty LGBTQ youth at the meetings. In 1996, the group incorporated and renamed itself Pridelines; it continues to provide a number of programs and services for the LGBTQ youth of Miami.⁴⁶ In 1975, Carol Queen—a young woman growing up in rural Oregon—cofounded Growing Alternative Youth (GAYouth) in Eugene, Oregon. When founded, it was only the third

LGBTQ youth support/social group in the nation. It later affiliated itself with the Metropolitan Community Church of Eugene.

Grassroots bisexual social and support groups were the pre-internet basis of organizing the bisexual community and movement. There are hundreds unmentioned here. They continue, with the assistance of social media, to foster community ties and to serve as entry points for helping people identify openly as bi, to find resources, and for those interested in getting involved with activist and advocacy work on behalf of LGBTQ issues as well as those specific to bisexuality. Some long-lasting examples include BiFriendly in San Francisco, Biversity in Boston, and the many bi brunches and munches that spring up and die down and spring up again in communities across the country.

⁴⁶ Offices of *The Weekly News* were located at 901 NE Seventy-Ninth Street, Miami, Florida. The Institute of Sexism and Sexuality is located at the Wolfson Campus of Miami Dade College, 300 NE Second Avenue, Miami, Florida. Pridelines Youth Services currently has offices at 9526 NE Second Avenue, Miami, Florida.

Leisure

What is *leisure* to a community under oppression? Then again, leisure is all the more necessary and life-giving to people in crisis and under stress. During the 1980s and 1990s (and often still today) bisexuals were vilified as being the disease vectors who “spread AIDS to the general population,” as if they themselves were not part of society.⁴⁷ In reality, bisexual health workers and activists designed and developed some of the first city, county, state, and federally-supported safer sex protocols now in use around the country. In San Francisco, bisexual activists David Lourea and Cynthia Slater worked to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS before they, themselves, died of the disease. As early as 1981, they were providing safer-sex education in the city’s bathhouses and BDSM clubs, and by 1983, Lourea had been appointed to San Francisco Mayor Dianne Feinstein’s AIDS Education Advisory Committee. In 1984, he convinced the city’s public health department to include bisexual men in its weekly “New AIDS Cases and Mortality Statistics” reports, a model later adopted by other public health departments across the country. Slater started the first Women’s HIV/AIDS Information Switchboard in San Francisco in 1985.⁴⁸ Other bisexuals have made important contributions to HIV/AIDS prevention, including Rob Yaeger at the Minneapolis AIDS Project and Alexei Guren, who as well as founding Pridelines, was involved with the 1983 founding of the Health Crisis Network in Miami, Florida which did outreach and advocacy for Latino married men who have sex with men. From 1992 to 1994, Lani Ka’ahumanu was project coordinator at Lyon-Martin Women’s Health Services in San Francisco for an American Foundation for AIDS research grant—the first grant in the United States

⁴⁷ See, for example, Martin S. Weinberg, Colin J. Williams, and Douglas W. Pryor, *Dual Attraction: Understanding Bisexuality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 205.

⁴⁸ Lourea also worked professionally with LGBTQ and HIV/AIDS communities, and published articles including “HIV Prevention: A Dramaturgical Analysis and Practical Guide to Creating Safer Sex Interventions,” (with Clark L. Taylor), in *Bisexualities: Theory and Research*, eds. Dr. Fritz Klein and Timothy J. Wolf (New York: Haworth Press, 1985). Lourea died in 1992; Slater in 1989.

targeting young high-risk lesbian and bisexual women for HIV/AIDS prevention and education research.⁴⁹

Safer sex education is a topic of science and organizing, not a topic of leisure. But it relates to leisure because in the time of HIV/AIDS, the prevention of sexually-transmitted diseases became a matter of life or death. These safer sex protocols were most efficiently, effectively, and popularly taught at public baths, at leather bars and sex parties, and at workshops during conferences where explicit demonstrations and conversations could be had without fear of condemnation or retribution. These often transient places can never be fully cataloged.



Figure 6: The Center for Sex and Culture hosts a World AIDS Day show in 2014 featuring posters from the collection of safer sex activist Buzz Bense. Photo courtesy of Robert Morgan Lawrence, EdD.

⁴⁹ In 1998, Heath Crisis Network merged with the Community Research Initiative to form Care Resource, South Florida's oldest and largest HIV/AIDS service organization. They currently have four locations in Miami, Fort Lauderdale, and Miami Beach, Florida, see "About," Care Resource website, <http://www.careresource.org/about>. For more information on bisexual involvement in health, see "Timeline: The Bisexual Health Movement in the US," BiNet USA website, <http://www.binetusa.org/bihealth.html>; see also Batza (this volume) and Capó (this volume). The Minneapolis AIDS Project is located at 1400 Park Avenue, Minneapolis, Minnesota; Lyon-Martin Women's Health Services is at 1748 Market Street, San Francisco, California.

One of the modern-day inheritors of these traditions is the Center for Sex and Culture founded in 2000 by bisexual activists Carol Queen (who also co-founded GAYouth, described above) and Robert Lawrence.⁵⁰ The Center for Sex and Culture hosts many bisexual and bi-friendly events for the larger San Francisco community and maintains an archives of sexuality research (Figure 6). In New England, long-time bisexual activist and author Wayne Bryant founded Bi Camp, a popular summertime leisure activity that ran from 1994-2009.⁵¹ Each winter, announcements and flyers were mailed out encouraging people to get their camping gear together, to start thinking about potluck campfire recipes, and to make packing lists of musical instruments, games, and sports equipment to bring along. Bi Camp started at a campground in Vermont's Green Mountain National Forest, and moved after five years to Indian Hollow Campground owned by the Army Corps of Engineers in Chesterfield, Massachusetts.⁵² The camp hosted anywhere from 25-80 campers each year, including bisexual people, their families, and friends. It inspired a video Bryant made, and a sing-along, multi-versed song by Philadelphia Moss Stern, called "Bi Camp."

Organizing Every Which Way

Bisexuals have helped organize the first national marches for the rights of sexual minorities in the United States, as well as similarly-oriented local community events, and have been part of Pride parades since the beginning (Figure 7). They have helped organize LGBTQ events as well as bisexual-specific ones, locally, nationally, and globally for many years, recognized or not.

⁵⁰ The Center for Sex and Culture is located at 1349 Mission Street, San Francisco, California. They strive to promote creativity, information, and healthy sexual knowledge, see "Mission and Vision," Center for Sex and Culture website, <http://www.sexandculture.org/mission>.

⁵¹ Bryant was the author of the first book ever to critique films from a bisexual point of view, *Bisexual Characters in Film: From Anais to Zee*, Haworth Gay & Lesbian Studies (New York: Haworth Press, 1997). He served on the board of the Bisexual Resource Center, 29 Stanhope Street, Boston, Massachusetts and was an organizer of the Fifth International Conference on Bisexuality that drew nine hundred attendees to Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts from April 3-5, 1998.

⁵² Green Mountain National Forest is located near Rutland, Vermont. Part of the US Forest Service, it was established on April 25, 1932.



Figure 7: BiRequest/NYC Bisexuality Rocks contingent in the June 2012 Pride march in New York City. Holding the banner are long-time bisexual activists and leaders Estraven (L) and Matt LeGrant (R). BiRequest is a bisexual social and support group in Manhattan. Photo courtesy of Efrain Gonzalez.

Bill Beasley, a bisexual man who was also involved in the black civil rights movement, helped lead the first Los Angeles Pride parade down Hollywood Boulevard in 1970, and went on to serve on the board of San Francisco Pride, as well as being active with the Bay Area Bisexual Network.⁵³ A. Billy S. Jones (now Jones-Hennin), an African American activist and author, served as operations coordinator for the first National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay rights on October 14, 1979.⁵⁴ The event featured a march down Washington DC's Pennsylvania Avenue to the National Mall, where a program of speeches and musical entertainment occurred. Illustrating the kind of bicoastal organizing of the time, Jones had been active in San Francisco's Bisexual Center before

⁵³ The Bay Area Bisexual Network met at the San Francisco LGBT Community Center, 1800 Market Street, San Francisco, California.

⁵⁴ Wanting more support as a bisexual man with a wife and family and not finding it in existing groups, in 1978 Jones founded the Gay Married Men Association (GAMMA) of Washington, DC, which has been meeting continuously ever since. They currently meet at Saint Thomas' Parish Episcopal Church, 1772 Church Street NW, Washington, DC. There are now several GAMMA groups meeting across the country. See GAMMA-DC website, <http://www.gammaindc.org>.

moving to the Washington, DC, area.⁵⁵ During the weekend of the 1979 march, Jones also served as one of the key conveners of the Third World Lesbian Gay Conference held at the Harambee House Hotel.⁵⁶ It was at this conference that ties among many black and other people of color LGBTQ communities were strengthened. Audre Lorde, who was just beginning to come out as a lesbian poet and leader, spoke at that conference, as did many others. In the year following that conference, Jones and the National Coalition of Black Lesbians and Gays, brought the first ever people of color delegation to meet with President Carter's White House staff. This delegation was organized because an all-white gay delegation had arranged a meeting with the White House a year earlier. Thirty-three years later, on a cool 2013 September morning, Jones and many other bisexual activists and leaders returned to the White House to talk with administration officials about bisexual policy issues for the first time.⁵⁷

The bisexual movement in the United States has been built on conferences that knit and weave and sew the experiences of local communities together and make joint actions across state, and even national borders, possible. One of the earliest recorded meetings on bisexuality took place at a gathering of Quakers (Friends) in upstate New York in the early 1970s. Bisexual activist Stephen Donaldson—the same

⁵⁵ The San Francisco Bisexual Center was located on Hayes Street just north of the Golden Gate Park panhandle, in the bottom flat of a two-flat building that is now a residence. The San Francisco Bisexual Center was founded by Maggi Rubenstein and Harriet Levi. Before it closed in 1984, it provided a newsletter, support groups, counseling, social activities, a presence in Pride marches, and was internationally renowned.

⁵⁶ The Harambee House Hotel was located on the 2200 block of Georgia Avenue NW, Washington, DC, near the Howard University campus. It opened in 1978. In 1981, Howard University purchased the Harambee House Hotel from the federal Economic Development Administration. Profitable in the 1980s, Howard University operated the hotel until 1995, when they closed it after continued financial losses. See Ronald Roach, "The Promise and the Peril – African American Colleges and Universities' Hotel and Conference Center Ownership," *Diverse: Issues in Higher Education*, July 5, 2007, <http://diverseeducation.com/article/8075>.

⁵⁷ Bisexual leaders have met twice with Obama Administration officials for roundtable consultations focused on the specific needs of bisexual people regarding health, education, employment, and immigration, among others. See Amy Andre, "Obama Administration Invites Bisexual Leaders to the White House," *Huffpost Queer Voices*, August 27, 2013, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/amy-andre/obama-bisexual-leaders_b_3819857.html; Faith Cheltenham, "BiNet USA in the White House Photo Blast #whatbilooklike," *BiNet USA's Blog*, September 4, 2014, <http://binetusa.blogspot.com/2014/09/binet-usa-in-white-house-photo-blast.html>.

man who founded the first gay student group in the United States—told *The Advocate* that he had organized an impromptu workshop on bisexuality at the 1972 Friends General Conference in Ithaca, New York.⁵⁸ Donaldson, whose birth name was Robert Martin, said the workshop involved over one hundred participants and overflowed into several different meeting rooms over two days, resulting in what has become known as The Ithaca Statement on Bisexuality, which may have been the first public statement on bisexuality by a religious or political group.

From the 1970s, one bisexual man, Dr. Fritz Klein, has helped perhaps more than anyone else to facilitate bisexual networking and conferences. Dr. Klein was a psychiatrist who did early research and publishing on bisexuality. He also traveled widely, especially in the 1980s and 1990s, connecting bisexual communities around the world with each other, and helping to start international bisexual conferences in London, Amsterdam, Toronto, and Vancouver. Klein himself was bicoastal, living for a long time in New York City and then moving to San Diego. He started the first peer-reviewed scholarly journal on bisexuality, *The Journal of Bisexuality*. Klein founded the American Institute of Bisexuality in 1998 to encourage research and education about bisexuality. He served as Chairman of the Board until his death in 2006.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ While efforts to find records of this meeting in Friends' archives have been unsuccessful, there are mentions of it in the August 8, 1972 *Advocate* article, and in a number of anthologies chronicling bisexual history. Stephen Donaldson, "The Bisexual Movement's Beginnings in the '70s: A Personal Retrospective," in *Bisexual Politics: Theories, Queries, & Visions*, ed. Naomi Tucker (New York: Harrington Park Press, 1995), 31-45; Robert Martin, "Quakers 'Come Out' at Conference," *Advocate*, August 2, 1972, 8. The Friends General Conference took place in June 1972 at Ithaca College, 953 Danby Road, Ithaca, New York.

⁵⁹ The American Institute of Bisexuality was located at 8265 West Sunset Boulevard, West Hollywood, California. Fritz Klein also developed a variation of the Kinsey Scale called the Klein Sexual Orientation Grid which built upon Kinsey's zero to six scale. His book, *The Bisexual Option*, was one of the first studies that did not pathologize bisexuality, and that gave the identity legitimacy. See "About Fritz Klein," American Institute of Bisexuality website, <http://www.americaninstituteofbisexuality.org/fritz-klein>. Klein lived with his partner, Tom Reise, in the Emerald Hills neighborhood of San Diego, California from 1995 until his death in 2006.



Figure 8: Participants of the first ever National Conference on Bisexuality sit on the steps of the Mission High School, San Francisco, California, June 1990. Photo courtesy of Efrain Gonzalez.

One of the most catalyzing and foundational conferences of the US bisexual movement took place in June 1990 at San Francisco's Mission High School (Figure 8).⁶⁰ The conference was the result of outreach done during the 1987 March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights mentioned earlier, and drew over 450 people from twenty US states and five countries. The school is located directly across from Dolores Park in the Mission District, and in the beautiful weather that weekend, many conference goers took their conversations out onto the grass across the street and created impromptu workshops on the balconies and in the courtyard of the old school. It was at this conference that BiNet USA, the oldest national bisexual organization in the United States, was inaugurated.⁶¹

⁶⁰ The Mission High School is located at 3750 Eighteenth Street, San Francisco, California.

⁶¹ BiNet USA facilitates communication and networking among bisexual communities, promotes bisexual visibility, and distributes educational information about bisexuality, see BiNet USA website, <http://www.binetusa.org>.

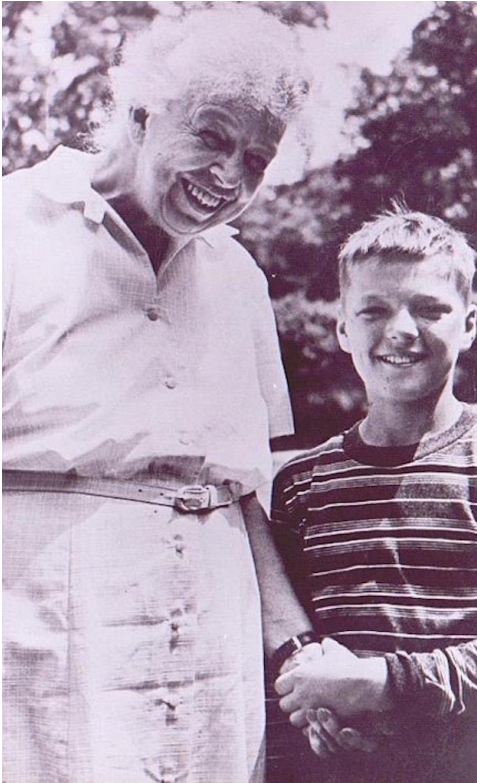


Figure 9: Cliff Arnesen (age 12) and Wiltwyck School for Boys Chairman, Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt at her estate in Val-Kill, Hyde Park, New York, July 1959. Photo taken during Mrs. Roosevelt's Annual Picnic for the 100 boys of the predominantly African-American Wiltwyck School for Boys, Esopus, New York. Photo courtesy of Clifton Francis Arnesen, Jr.⁶³

Other regional bisexual organizing conferences have been held, including Washington, DC's Embracing Diversities Conference in fall 1991; the BECAUSE Conference that has been an annual convening in the Midwest since 1992; and the Transcending Boundaries Conference created to bring the bisexual and transgender communities together that has taken place since 2001 around New England.⁶²

Much has changed in the way municipal, state, and federal laws deal with same-sex relationships over the years, yet in some ways, much remains to be done. Years before bisexual people, along with their lesbian, gay, and queer siblings, became active in marriage equality efforts,

bisexuals were also active in organizing for veterans' rights and for the rights of those in the military. One of the most prominent was Cliff Arnesen, who was dishonorably discharged from the military for being bisexual (Figure 9). Afterwards, he went on to become an activist for all LGBTQ people in the military and was the first LGBTQ veteran to testify before a

⁶² *Embracing Diversities* was sponsored by AMBi, Washington DC's bisexual political action group at the time, and was held at St. Thomas' Parish Episcopal Church, 1772 Church Street NW, Washington, DC. The *BECAUSE* conference is usually held on the University of Minnesota campus in Minneapolis.

⁶³ Val-Kill is part of the Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site in Hyde Park, New York. The NPS unit was established on May 27, 1977. Val-Kill was added to the NRHP on March 20, 1980 and designated an NHL on May 27, 1977.

congressional subcommittee about the health needs and rights of his fellow service members.⁶⁴

In 2013, a group of activists at the Lavender Law Conference, hosted by the National LGBT Bar Association, formed BiLaw, the first national organization of bisexual-identified lawyers, law professors, law students, and their allies.⁶⁵ In 2015, the Lavender Law Conference programmed its first panel on issues of bisexual jurisprudence, bisexuality, and the law.

Protesting Amongst Our Own

As mentioned earlier, a lot of the hard work of bisexual organizing occurs within non-bisexual organizations. These may not be openly welcoming to people with bisexual identities but may include many closeted bisexuals among them, whether passing as heterosexual, lesbian/gay, or both. More explicitly, the work of dismantling bisexual erasure and invisibility is constant. It takes place not only in the energizing bisexual conferences and meetings held around the country, but is also alive within professional organizations like the National LGBT Bar Association (mentioned above) and professional organizations such as the American Library Association, the American Psychological Association, the National Association of Social Workers, the National Women's Studies Association, the American Historical Association, and more. When LGBTQ caucuses are formed within these groups and gay/lesbian specific presentations and panels are scheduled at annual conferences, bisexual topics are often left out. This, alas, is almost as likely to occur within gay and lesbian oriented organizations as it is within those more in the mainstream. For example, in 1989, the Hetrick-Martin Institute, a nonprofit organization serving the needs of LGBTQ youth, advertised a workshop to be held at their Harvey Milk High School.⁶⁶ The workshop was

⁶⁴ *Bi Any Other Name*

⁶⁵ The Lavender Law Conference that year was held at the San Francisco Marriott Marquis Hotel, 55 Fourth Street, San Francisco, California.

⁶⁶ Harvey Milk High School was founded in 1985 by the Hetrick-Martin Institute to provide a safe place for LGBTQ youth to get an education (threats and instances of violence, bullying, and harassment affect the ability of many LGBTQ youth from succeeding in school). It is located at 2-10 Astor Place,

called, “Bisexual Men: Fact or Fiction?” In response to the workshop title, which challenged the very existence of bisexual men, BiPAC New York, a bisexual political action group, protested. In response, institute staff agreed to withdraw the workshop from their curriculum. This is but one example of instances like it around the country.

On a national basis, many national LGBTQ gatherings have been sites of protests focused on bisexual rights. Two historic examples from the early 1990s concern bisexual activists and the National LGBTQ Task Force—then known as the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.⁶⁷ The Task Force began its historic annual Creating Change conferences in Washington, DC, in 1988, the year after the 1987 March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights. Since then, Creating Change has become the largest annual gathering of LGBTQ activists and leaders in the United States and bisexuals have been there from the beginning, often fighting for recognition and space on the program, sometimes recognized and sometimes not. In November 1991, Creating Change drew almost one thousand participants to Alexandria, Virginia.⁶⁸ For the first time at Creating Change, bisexual activists held a workshop for gay and lesbian leaders to talk with bisexual activists about tensions between the groups.

Creating Change returned to the DC area again in November 1996, when two thousand people again convened in Alexandria, Virginia.⁶⁹ In the intervening years, the bisexual community had continued to hold separate women’s and men’s dialogues across orientation lines at each annual Creating Change, initiating and fostering difficult communication between

New York City, New York. The Hetrick-Martin Institute operated the school until 2002, when it became a fully accredited public school under the jurisdiction of the New York City Department of Education.

⁶⁷ The National LGBTQ Task Force was founded in 1973 as the National Gay Task Force; they changed their name to the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force in 1985, and to the current name that includes bisexuals, transgender people, and queer/questioning people in October 2014. Lani Ka’ahumanu was the first openly bisexual person to serve on the board of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, completing her term in 2000. The National LGBTQ Task Force headquarters are located at 1325 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC.

⁶⁸ The 1991 Creating Change Conference was held at the Best Western Old Colony Inn, 1101 North Washington Street, Alexandria, Virginia.

⁶⁹ The 1996 Creating Change Conference was held at the Radisson Plaza Hotel at Mark Center, 5000 Seminary Road, near the Crystal City neighborhood of Alexandria, Virginia. In 1999, Hilton Hotels and Resorts bought the hotel; it is now the Hilton Alexandria Mark Center.

those who identified as gay or lesbian and those who identified as bisexual. Things came to a head at the 1996 conference when the number of discriminatory acts and remarks against bisexuals and transgender people reached such a peak that a Bi/Trans Action at the main plenary on Saturday morning was planned. Before the keynote speeches began, activists took to the stage recounting examples of biphobic and transphobic offenses committed against them during that weekend conference. They asked everyone in the room who identified as bi and/or transgender, and/or who was an ally, to stand up and be counted and to vow to confront biphobic and transphobic actions and attitudes in the future. Although the Bi/Trans Action was not included in the Gay and Lesbian Task Force press release following the conference, they did note that the first significant conversation between bisexual and transgender activists and members of the administration had occurred that weekend:

...Representatives of the bisexual and transgender community held a first-ever meeting at the Conference with a White House representative to discuss discrimination, violence, ENDA, bi and trans visibility and inclusivity in the Administration and other issues. Richard Socarides, outgoing White House liaison to the g/l/b/t community, met with the bi and transgender leaders to hear their concerns in a meeting that was described as productive and promising....⁷⁰

That meeting laid the groundwork for White House meetings that would take place in the new century.

⁷⁰ "Creating Change Wrap-up," National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Press Release, November 19, 1996, <http://www.qrd.org/qrd/orgs/NGLTF/1996/creating.change.wrap-up-11.19.96>. Richard Socarides, ironically, is an out gay man who is the son of Charles Socarides, a psychiatrist who worked to "treat" homosexuality beginning in the 1960s. In 1992, he helped found an organization offering conversion therapy to change the sexual orientation of people with same-sex attraction. See "Deaths: Socarides, Charles William, MD," *New York Times*, December 27, 2005, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9B0DEED91230F934A15751C1A9639C8B63>. Use of conversion therapy on minors is currently banned in California, New Jersey, Illinois, Oregon, and the District of Columbia. It is considered unethical by the American Psychiatric Association.

Political Activism as Celebration

Sometimes political victories are the cause for much celebration and, in fact, inspire sites of rejoicing and festivities in and of themselves. Such was the case with the 1993 March on Washington for Lesbian, Gay and Bi Equal Rights and Liberation the last weekend in April. The 1993 march was the third of a total of five marches held on Washington for LGBTQ rights and, in many ways, the most grassroots and inclusive of all of them. The “bi” word was included, after much debate, in the title of the march for the first time and a bisexual speaker, Lani Ka’ahumanu, was invited to



Figure 10: Bisexual activist and reproductive justice and rights activist Laura Perez at the 1993 March on Washington for Lesbian, Gay and Bi Equal Rights and Liberation. Photo courtesy of Efrain Gonzalez.

Speak from the main stage on the National Mall for the first time as well.⁷¹

Bisexual activists converged on Washington, DC, a week before the march to staff an impromptu bisexual coordinating center located in donated office space in the Dupont Circle neighborhood (Figure 10). They camped out in the homes of local bisexual activists in the Mt. Pleasant, Adams Morgan, and Takoma neighborhoods; organized the Second National Conference Celebrating Bisexuality that took place two days before the march;

⁷¹ The National Mall was added to the NRHP on October 15, 1966. It is part of the National Mall and Memorial Parks NPS unit.

and held a national meeting of BiNet USA, followed by a Bi Dance at George Washington University's Marvin Center, the night before.⁷² The march itself had been organized with 50/50 gender/racial parity, meaning that there were many more women and people of color involved in leadership roles determining the platform demands of the march as well as traveling to Washington, DC, as participants.

First observed in 1999, Celebrate Bisexuality Day was started by three BiNet USA activists, Wendy Curry from Maine, Michael Page from Florida, and Gigi Raven Wilbur from Texas. It has been celebrated in small towns, large cities, and internationally, on the internet and at many events, usually around September 23, the date of the first event. A 2013 White House meeting between federal officials and bisexual activists to discuss bisexual issues was scheduled for September 23 in recognition of the day.⁷³ Since 2013, BiNet USA working in coalition with other bisexual and LGBTQ organizations, has expanded Celebrate Bisexuality Day to cover a whole week. The Bisexual Resource Center in Boston has also designated the



Figure 11: Faith Cheltenham, president of BiNET USA flies the bisexual pride flag outside the White House following the September 2015 bisexual issues policy roundtable with federal officials. Photo courtesy of Kevin Hogan.

⁷² The Second National Conference Celebrating Bisexuality, organized by BiNet USA, the Bisexual Resource Center, and the Washington, DC, organization Alliance of Multicultural Bisexuals (AMBi) was held at American University's Ward Circle Building, 3590 Nebraska Avenue NW, Washington, DC. The Bi Dance was held at George Washington University's Cloyd Heck Marvin Center, 800 Twenty-First Street NW, Washington, DC.

⁷³ The informal meeting took place in the Indian Treaty Room of the Eisenhower Executive Office Building (then the Old Executive Office Building) at Pennsylvania Avenue NW and Seventeenth Street NW, Washington, DC. The building was added to the NRHP on June 4, 1969 and designated an NHL on November 11, 1971.

month of March as Bisexual Health Awareness Month, focusing on raising awareness about bisexual health issues, nationally and locally.

Two years later, many of the same leaders who had been at the 2013 meeting returned that same week in September to meet again with representatives from federal offices to discuss bisexual concerns. When leaving the meeting, many participants pulled bisexual pride flags out of their backpacks and briefcases and created an impromptu celebration in front of the White House (Figure 11).

Conclusion

Bisexuals have chosen many different names for themselves through the years. Many people whose lives encompass loving more than one gender never openly call themselves bisexual, or even queer or gay or lesbian, or any other label that describes a sexual minority. Yet, bisexual people continue to exist, to make families and communities, and to organize—among themselves and with others—for better acceptance and understanding. Did bisexuals help build the United States of America? You bet. Have we discovered all the places they have lived and worked and loved and where they continue to do so? Not a chance. And that's beautiful. Discovering more of the history, seeing them clearly, are the next steps.