Biseksualci su rijetko prepoznati

Robyn, 52, is a US bi activist. She is the editor of the groundbreaking 42-country anthology Getting Bi: Voices of Bisexuals Around the World, and of the Bi Women newsletter, co-founder of the Bisexual Resource Center and other bi groups. She has taught several university courses on bisexual identity and spoken at universities and conferences around the world. She is married to Peg Preble, her long-time partner.

Q: What led you to become a bi advocate?

Robyn: I was in the right place at the right time. I got involved in bisexual activism in the 1980s, and I saw a clear need for an organized voice. I cared about many other issues, but most already had organized movements and strong leaders. This was one area where I believed I could make a difference.

Q: Who are your role models?

Robyn: My role models are local, national or transnational activists who have a deep and sustained commitment to making change, and who inspire others to get involved. Most social movement involve many people, but only a few individuals become symbols or spokespeople for their movements. Some of my role models work for quietly for change and are not well known. But of those who are public figures, a few names that come immediately to mind are Sunil Pant (Nepal), Alejandra Sarda (Argentina) and ALL of the brave activists in Uganda who are risking their lives by being visible.

Q: You are quite famous, or should I say infamous, for referring to the bisexual community. How strong, actually, is the bisexual community?

Robyn: That depends entirely upon how you define it. The community of people who organize their activism and social lives around bisexuality is small. The number of bisexuals who focus their activism on broader LGBTIQ issues is much larger. Most of my bi-identified friends are active in the larger LGBTIQ movement. Many are busy living their (apparently gay or apparently straight) lives with their same- or other-sex partner, raising children and going to work. One challenge is that unless you run around declaring your bisexual identity, or unless you happen to behave in a way that mirrors other people’s stereotypes about bisexuality, you are assumed by others to be lesbian, gay or straight.

Q: One can often hear things that female bisexuals are free to practice and enjoy their bisexuality, but not male bisexuals. This double standard is probably something you also came across. How would you comment on this? In your opinion, what is the difference between bisexual men and women?

Robyn: People find male bisexuality much more threatening than female bisexuality, and male homosexuality much more threatening than female homosexuality. The root of this difference lies in sexism. Female sexuality is not considered a threat because people do not take female sexuality seriously. And people are upset by male-male sexual behavior in large part because of the perception that one of the males is allowing himself to be treated like a woman, and that is considered a terrible and degrading thing. What does this say about how we value women?
Q: In the mainstream media we can see the rise in the positive representation of homosexual people, however, bisexual people are either negatively perceived or not represented at all. What are your thoughts on the representation of bisexual people in the media?

Robyn: When considering representation, there are three main factors at play here:

The first is the fact that bisexuals are rarely RECOGNIZED. A woman with a male partner is assumed by others to be straight. A woman with a female partner is assumed to be lesbian. A woman alone will likely be seen as straight (our default assumption), unless she is in a “lesbian” venue, in which case she will be read as lesbian.

What kind of behavior would a person have to engage in to be read as bisexual? She appear in public with a man one one arm and a woman on the other, engaging in public displays of affection with both. Or she could be known to have multiple current partners, including at least one man and one woman. Or she could leave a man for a woman, or a woman for a man. (Interestingly, in this scenario, many people still might not see bisexuality. Rather, they might interpret her as having finally “finished coming out” or having “gone straight.”)

If you think about it, these examples mirror the most common stereotypes of bisexuality. And that is no coincidence. These are the rare instances when bisexuals become visible, and because of this, many people equate bisexuals w/ promiscuity, cheating, destabilizing relationships, untrustworthiness, horniness and hyper-sexuality. Bisexuals who are not currently engaging in one of these behaviors are seen assumed to be straight, lesbian or gay.

Is it true that some bisexuals behave in ways that are consistent with some of these stereotypes? Of course it’s true. Like people in any identity group, bisexuals run the full range of human behavior, from asexual to promiscuous. But only for bisexuals—and arguably also for gay men—is our identity seen as causing promiscuity. But the truth is that our sexual orientation does not cause or predict our behavior.

Second, some discomfort with bisexuality stems from the fact that it is a SEX-uality. Most Western cultures are simultaneously obsessed with and repelled by sexuality. In the US, sex is used to sell just about everything, everything is sexualized, and yet the subject of sexuality evokes profound discomfort. We have a perverse relationship to sexuality and bisexuals along with lesbians and gay men are victims to this. Our lives are sexualized. Straight people are seen as having lives. Lesbian, gay and bisexual people are seen as having «lifestyles». Straight people are seen as having families. Lesbian, gay and bisexual people are seen as having sex.

And a third challenge is that we love our binaries. Many people falsely believe sexual orientation to be comprised of two distinct categories: gay and straight, and imagine the space between to be nonexistent, or at least unstable. And, of course, the media both simplifies and sensationalizes reality and has no interest representing in an uncontroversial bisexual narrative.

Q: What about the stigma of bisexuality? Quite often we can see biphobic attitudes from both heterosexual and homosexual people. In your opinion is there a difference between the two, or is biphobia the same wherever it comes from?

Robyn: In some ways it is the same, and in other ways it is different. The roots of biphobia directed at bisexuals by gay men and lesbians lie in the dynamics of oppression. Coming out and living as gay can be very difficult. Many gay men and lesbians have experienced a great deal of hurt and rejection, and shared pain is one of the foundations on which many “lesbian and gay” communities have historically been based. External oppression may create a sense of not being safe and a strong need to maintain a clear boundary between “us” and “them.” We bisexuals are by definition problematic in this regard, blurring the boundaries between insider and outsider. And further, bisexual visibility within the LGBT community calls into question the inaccurate assumption that there is a monolithic lesbian and gay community with a single set of standards and values, composed of individuals who all behave similarly and predictably, as well as the notion that sexual orientation is simple.

In addition, lesbians and gay men fear that whatever they might have to offer to their bisexual partner will be insufficient to outweigh the external benefits offered to those in heterosexual relationships. There is some realistic basis for this fear: Heterosexual relationships are privileged, and some bisexuals, like some lesbians and gay men, adopt at least a public front of heterosexuality to avoid family censure, develop careers, and raise children with societal approval. However, I also believe that this line of reasoning shows internalized homophobia. What gets lost in the fear is the fact that same-sex relationships offer benefits not available in heterosexual relationships, including the absence of scripted gender roles. Most important, the psychic cost of denying one's love for a particular person can be astronomical.
Q: Some will say that bisexuality is incompatible with marriage, or even monogamy. What was, or is, the bisexual stand in the marriage rights debate?

Robyn: Bisexuality is an identity, and describes the range sexes/genders to whom a person has the potential to be attracted. It is not a prediction of a person's behavior at any particular moment of their life. Telling you that I identify as bisexual, gives you no information about whether I am monogamous, polyamorous or even celibate. Are some bisexuals non-monogamous? Yes, of course. But so also are some lesbians, some gay men and some heterosexuals. As a bisexual person who is also monogamous and married, I see no conflict.

I don't speak for all bisexuals (no one can present an entire community), but my bisexual position is that everyone should have the right to marry, if they choose to, as well as the right not to marry, if they choose not to. Every person should be able to choose the type of relationship that works best for them: to be single, married (same- or other-sex), monogamous, polyamorous, celibate, whatever. As someone who has been in love (at different times) with women and with men, I think it is absurd that my rights and privileges should vary depending upon what happens to be between my partner's legs!

Q: You yourself are married to your long time partner, now wife Peg Preble. You were married on the first day it was legal to do so. Could you tell us, what was that day like? This was of course a special day for you and your partner, but if you could tell us something about the atmosphere of that first day.

Robyn: When Peg and I were finally able to marry, we had already been together for 7 years. I honestly believed at the time that getting legally married would not be that big of a deal. But it was. What we experienced on May 17th, 2004 was unexpected: we were surrounded by love and support and affirmation. People smiled and waved to us from cars and buses. Outside Town Hall, just before we married, a complete stranger ran up to us and handed us a bouquet of flowers. After the ceremony, we ran into my 75-year-old dentist, who was visibly moved and gave us each an enormous hug and his heartfelt congratulations. On our way home, following the ceremony, a street artist approached us, gave us one of his paintings, and said “Congratulations. Let this be your first wedding gift.” Back at home, later that day, our straight neighbors came out in large numbers to congratulate us. Peg and I were surrounded by love. We were embraced by affirmation. It was something we had never before experienced on such a large scale, and something that I realize now that we had never expected to experience. And that was – for me – the surprise value of marriage.

Q: Has married life changed You? If so, in what way?

Robyn: There is something profoundly powerful about standing up before the people who matter most in your life and stating publicly your commitment to your partner. Legal marriage is one – but certainly not the only – manifestation of our deep commitment to one another, and it has strengthened our relationship.

Q: Still, there is a large number of LGBTIQ people who oppose the gay right to marry. What is your message to those people?

Robyn: There is a clear difference between having the right to marry and choosing to marry. I am fully aware of the problematic history of the institution of marriage, and of the desire of some people to choose not to marry. But I am firmly pro-choice on this issue: I believe that each of us should have the right to decide whether to marry, or not. It is my hope that LGBTIQ people who do not wish to marry will support and advocate for each person’s right to make this choice.

Q: Unfortunately we have seen a rise in LGBTIQ teen suicide, especially in the States. How do you comment on this? What is Your suggestion to battle this problem?

Robyn: We must create a world that respects and values people of all sexual orientations and gender identities. We have to be willing to acknowledge and respect that fact that many of us become aware of our sexual orientations at a very young age and stop pretending that young people don’t know what they’re feeling. We need to stop telling young LGBTIQ people, and LGBT adults too, that our lives and our love are not valuable. Fundamental changes must occur.

Q: Your book Getting Bi: Voices of Bisexuals Around the World has seen its second edition. What is this book about? Who should read it? How did you come to the idea of writing it?

Robyn: Getting Bi is a collection of essays, poetry and personal stories of people from 42 different countries on six continents. I’d recommend it to everyone: to people who identify a bisexual, to people who have questions about bisexuality and want to learn more, to therapists and counselors, to lesbian and gay advocates, to people who want to be good allies by educating themselves. There are so many
Q: What are your plans for the future? Can we expect a new book perhaps?

Robyn: My most immediate project is get more people to read this book. And I am delighted to report that we are working on a Spanish edition, which should be out in 2011.

I’m also the editor of Bi Women, a quarterly newsletter, and I expect to continue this project. You can read Bi Women online at biwomenboston.org.

I have many more writing and multimedia projects in my head. I’m trying to prioritize quality over quantity.

Q: You were the recipient of many awards and honors such as the National Gay & Lesbian Task Force Susan J. Hyde Activism Award and the Harvard Gay & Lesbian Caucus Lifetime Achievement Award. What is the success you are most proud of?

Robyn: It is a wonderful feeling to have my activism (and by extension, my communities) recognized, but the thing I am most proud of is not an award. Rather, it’s the fact that I have been an activist for more than 30 years, that I’m challenging myself and learning more every day, and that I remain excited about my work.

Q: How do you see the world in the next 10 years?

Robyn: That’s an enormous question! Environmentally, we are in a great deal of trouble. We need to stop abusing the world’s resources and live in a way that is sustainable. And I know that my own country is the worst abuser and I am one of many people attempting to change that. But I think that you’re asking about LGBT rights.

Globally, we have made enormous change over the past two decades, when there was not a single country that recognized same-sex relationships. Now there are several countries on 4 continents with full marriage equality: Argentina, Belgium, Canada, Iceland, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, South Africa, Sweden and parts of the US and Mexico offer marriage equality. An additional 20 countries – including most western European states as well as New Zealand, Uruguay, Colombia, Ecuador and Slovakia recognize same-sex partners in the form of civil unions or registered partnerships. This is a profound change in a very short period of time! I expect that over the next 10 years, we will continue to make progress.

Here’s our challenge: change has obviously not been evenly distributed around the world. Some countries have marriage equality and many others have strong social and legal prohibitions on same-sex relationships. Those of us who have the privilege of living our lives in the open need to do everything we can to support the struggles of those who cannot yet do so, both within our own national borders and across borders as well. And we have to advocate for our youth and our elders, and those who are oppressed because of their gender expression. I’m personally committed to working to unite all of our “letters” (LGBTIQ). To achieve equality, we must all stand together.

Q: Do you have any final thoughts or a message for the LGBTIQ people in Croatia?

Yes, I and the readers of Bi Women would like to learn more about LGBT life and the LGBT movement in Croatia. For this reason, I would like to interview a bi-identified woman in Croatia for the Bi Women newsletter. If are interested in being interviewed, or in writing for Bi Women, you can reach me at biwomeneditor@gmail.com.

Thank you so much!

Robyn: Thank you. It has been a pleasure!
Q: Zbog ?ega ste postali borac za bi-prava?


Q: Tko su Va?i uzori?


Q: Vi ste (notorno) poznati što se ?esto referirate na biseksualnu zajednicu. Koliko je zapravo jaka biseksualna zajednica?


Q: O Vremenu prikazivanja biseksualnih osoba u medijima?

Robyn: Kada razmi?ljamo o reprezentaciji, ulogu igraju tri faktora:

Prvo je ?injenica kako su biseksualci rijetko prepoznati. Žena s muškim partnerom je prepoznata od ostalih kao heteroseksualna. Žena s partnericom je lezbijka. Žena koja je sama ?e vjerojatno biti prepoznata kao heteroseksualna, osim ako je na lezbijskom mjestu, tada ?e biti prepoznata kao lezbijka.


Je li istina kako se neki biseksualci pona?aju u skladu s tim stereotipima? Naravno da jest. Poput osoba u bilo kojoj grupi, biseksualci predstavljaju sve aspekte ljudskog pona?anja od aseksualnog do
promiskuitetnog. Ali samo za biseksualce, i vjerojatno gej muškarce, naš identitet je vi?en kao onaj koji uzrokuje promiskuitet. Istina je, naravno, da naša seksualna orijentacija ne govori o našem ponašanju.


I tre?a stvar je u tome da volimo binarnosti. Ve?ina ljudi, krivo, shva?a da se seksualna orijentacija sastoji od dvije kategorije; homo i hetero, a svijet izme?u se smatra nekonzistentnim ili u manju ruku nestabilnim.

Mediji naravno simplificiraju i sensacionaliziraju stvarnost i nemaju interesa prezentirati biseksualnost u nekontroverznom diskursu.

Q: Što je sa stigmom biseksualnosti? ?esto možemo vidjeti bifobi?ne stavove kod heteroseksualnih ali i homoseksualnih osoba. Po Vašem mišljenju, postoji li razlika izme?u to dvoje ili je bifobia ista bez obzira na podrijetlo?


Treba dodati kako se lezbijke i gejevi ?esto boje da ne?e mo?i pružiti svojim biseksualnim partnerima ono što bi oni mogli dobiti u heteroseksualnim odnosima. Baza tog straha je realisti?na: heteroseksualne veze su privilegirane i neki biseksualci, kao i neki gejevi i lezbijke, održavaju javni izgled seksualnosti kako bi izbjegli neugodnosti. Monolitske gej i lezbijske zajednice s jedinstvenim standardima i vrijednostima koja se sastoji od individua koje se ponašaju jednako i previdivo, kao i pretpostavku da je seksualna orijentacija jednostavna.

Q: Neki ?e re?i kako biseksualnost nije kompatibilna s brakom ili monogamijom. Koji je biseksualni stav u debati oko prava na brak?


Ono što smo doživjele 17.05.2004. je bilo neo?ekivano: bile smo okružene ljubavlju i podrškom od preuzimanja brakovanja.
Peg i ja smo zaista bile okružene ljubavlju. To je bilo nešto što nikada nismo doživjela u tako velikom rasponu i ono što sada shvati da je nikada nismo "otekvivala" tako nešto. Za mene je to bila iznenađuća vrijednost braka.

Q: Je li Vas brak promijenio? Ako jest, kako?

Robyn: Ima nešto zaista možemo nažalost, to nije iskazati svoju privrženost vašem partneru. Legalan brak je jedna, no svakako ne jedina, manifestacija duboke privrženosti jedno drugome i ono je definitivno ojašnjavaš vrijednost braka.

Q: No, i dalje postoji veliki broj LGBTIQ ljudi koji se protive gej braku. Koja je vaša poruka tim ljudima?


Q: Nažalost, svjedočili smo porastu LGBTIQ suicida među teenagerima, pogotovo u SAD-u. Kako komentirate ovaj problem? Koji je Vaš prijedlog za ovaj problem?

Robyn: Moramo stvoriti svijet koji će poštovati vrijednosti svih ljudi i svih seksualnih orijentacija i rodih identiteta. Moramo biti voljni priznati i poštovati svičenstvo koje ima u sajstvu seksualnog orijentiranja već u jako mladoj dobi. Moramo se pretvarati kako mladi ljudi ne znaju što osjećaju. Prema tome, mladi LGBTIQ ljudi i LGBTIQ odrasli snima, da naši život, naša ljubav, nije dovoljno vrijedna. Fundamentalne promjene se moraju dogoditi.

Q: Vaša knjiga “Getting Bi: Voices of Bisexuals Around the World” je doživjela drugo izdanje. Recite našim čitateljima o tome govori Vaša knjiga? Tko bi ju trebao pročitati?

Robyn: “Getting Bi” je zbirka eseja, poezije i osobnih priča ljudi iz 42 zemlje sa 6 kontinenta. Preporučila bih je svakome; ljudima koji se identificiraju kao biseksualni, ljudima koji imaju pitanja o biseksualnosti i žele naučiti nešto više, kao i terapeutima, savjetnicima, lezbijskim i gej aktivistima, kao i ljudima koji žele biti dobri saveznici. Ima mnogo različitih glasova u ovoj knjizi koji predstavljaju širok pjesnik rodova, iskustva i godina, tako da mogu obeći da ima ponešto za svakoga.

Q: Koji su Vam planovi za budućnost? Možemo li očekivati novu knjigu?


Ja sam također i urednica “Bi Women”, glasnika koji izlazi svakih 3 mjeseca i očekujem nastaviti s tim projektom. Možete ga pročitati na biwomenboston.org.

Imam još nekoliko multimedijalnih i literarnih projekata u glavi, no pokušavam raditi na kvaliteti ne kvantiteti.

Q: Dobitnica ste mnogih nagrada i poasti između ostalog i National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Susan J. Hyde Award za aktivizam kao i Harvard Gay and Lesbian Caucus Award za životno djelo. Na koji ste svoj uspjeh najviše ponosni?


Q: Kako vidite svijet u slijedećih 10 godina?


Q: Imate li kakvu poruku za LGBTIQ ljude u Hrvatskoj?

Robyn: Nisam upoznata dobro sa situacijom u Hrvatskoj i voljela bih to promijeniti. Ja, a i moji ?itatelji, bi rado saznali više o LGBTIQ životu i pokretu u Hrvatskoj. Rado bih da mi se jave ljudi, posebno biseksualne žene koje su voljne podijeliti svoje pri?e na biwomeneditor@gmail.com .


Robyn: Hvala vama! Bilo mi je veliko zadovoljstvo.