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Bi the Way, I'm Queer

Chelsea E. Broe
Gettysburg College

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Bi the Way, I'm Queer

Abstract

363 days ago, on October 11, 2012, I came out as bisexual.

Every year, the queer community observes October 11th as National Coming Out Day, a day when queers of all kinds can openly acknowledge and celebrate their sexual orientation and gender identity. [*excerpt*]

Keywords

Surge, Surge Gettysburg, Gettysburg College, Center for Public Service, bisexuality, coming out, heteronormativity, LGBTQA, National Coming Out Day, Sexuality

Disciplines

Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies | Gender and Sexuality | Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Studies | Sociology

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SURGE

[VERB] : to move suddenly or powerfully forward or upward

BI THE WAY, I'M QUEER

October 9, 2013

363 days ago, on October 11, 2012, I came out as bisexual.

Every year, the queer community observes October 11th as National Coming Out Day, a day when queers of all kinds can openly acknowledge and celebrate their sexual orientation and gender identity.



I didn't plan on coming out. I don't just mean that I didn't plan to come out on that day (although waking up that morning, coming out was the furthest thing from my mind). I mean I never planned to come out. I told myself it was because I disagreed with [the underlying heteronormativity of it](#), the assumption that everyone's straight until proven otherwise. I told myself that I would just be out. Skip the part where I tell everyone and instead just act like that's how it had been all along. Because it was, after all, how it had always been. I was always queer, so why should I call attention to it now?

But year after year, I never was out. I still only acted on my straight tendencies, disregarding the other half of my sexual identity.

The summer after my sophomore year, a friend tried to out me. He was at the beach and texted me joking about sending me pictures of scantily clad beach-goers. When he asked if he should send pictures of men or women, I said men. "Just men? Are you sure?" He asked. Part of me thought this would be the perfect time to be out, to acknowledge that I also like women without drawing attention to it. But by insisting on the question, my friend already was drawing attention to it. And even though he probably had good intentions in trying to get me to be honest about my sexuality, the pressure I felt by being put on the spot made me feel even less comfortable with my identity than before.

As time went on, staying in the closet got easier to justify. I told myself that I didn't want to make my female roommates uncomfortable. I worried that coming out might threaten my friendships. I'm a naturally affectionate person: I hug, kiss, and hold hands with my friends without second thought. But I feared that coming out might change these friendships, that my friends would read into these insignificant gestures and question my motives. Plus, I told myself, I'm bi, so it's not like I would be miserable staying in the closet. Even in the closet, I would be able to express half of my sexuality. That's not so bad, right?

And then last October 11th, I just couldn't take it anymore. ALLies celebrated National Coming Out Day with a PostSecret event in which students could anonymously submit their secrets—orientation-related or otherwise—to be chalked around campus. Some were silly. Some were serious. And then there were two secrets that really got to me: in the secrets, the students essentially said they knew they were bisexual but decided they would never come out.

I was completely disheartened. What's so wrong with bisexuality that multiple students consciously decided they would hide this part of their identity forever? I wanted to find these people and shake some sense into them, tell them "You can't hide who you are! You have nothing to be ashamed of!"

And at that moment, I knew I couldn't stay in the closet anymore. I told my friend Emily I needed to talk to her that night. I made her promise that nothing would change between us because of what I told her. And then, I told her everything. And telling her, saying it out loud for the first time in my life, made me feel free. Less than an hour later, it was Facebook Official. I wrote,

I was really frustrated to see the chalked walks on campus of people who are afraid to come out as bisexual, but then I realized how hypocritical that is of me. Cuz I guess I'm kind of bisexual, too.

Coming out is a struggle. But after doing it, I realized that most of my fears about coming out—making others uncomfortable, losing friends, upsetting my family—were wrong. Most people accepted it without question. Some needed me to explain it to them before they were comfortable with it. And yes, there were a few friends and family members who didn't support me. In the process, I realized that people whose opinion of me changed because I came out didn't deserve my friendship at all.

The ability to accept yourself as you are is an amazing feeling. I'll never forget the first time after I came out that I saw an attractive woman, and I could turn to a friend and say what was on my mind: "She's really cute."

Friday is National Coming Out Day, and if you're one of those people who said you'd never come out, this is me shaking you and telling you to stop hiding who you are. I know it's scary, and I know you have your reasons for not doing it, but the feeling of being totally honest about who you are makes it worth it. Coming out doesn't have to mean telling everyone. There are great resources on campus—the [ALLies club](#), [LGBTQA Advising](#), and the [counseling center](#) — where students can talk about their sexual orientation without fearing repercussions. Even if you tell just one person, you'll be glad you did.

Chelsea Broe '14
Editor

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