

freedom has had an expendable faction, a political bargaining chip.... It may be that the bi segment is that bargaining chip, or maybe it's transgendered people. The point is, if you don't fit neatly into the box, you aren't 'one of us'; therefore, we don't want you or your ideas, experiences, voice in our club."

In this, Dillinger sees hypocrisy.

"It is rather sad that some people in the [gay and lesbian] community continue to perpetuate discrimination against other people when we've struggled so long and hard to fight this kind of poisonous thinking," he says with conviction. "It baffles me that people fail to see the hypocrisy in fighting so passionately for gay rights and then turning around and criticizing or verbally bashing bisexuality."

And even though Heche's name brings venomous taste to France's mouth, she clearly sees the hypocritical oppression and its root. "We fear that which we do not understand. Unfortunately I am guilty of this, as well. The gay and lesbian community has made such strides in changing the norms of our society by challenging the 'rules' that the heterosexual culture consider as standard. Then, we make our own set of rules by which we believe that everyone should live within. Are we any better than those who oppress us?"

Parker, who is African American, believes the same types of oppression that exist in American society toward ethnic minorities

Bi-specific resources

Although many organizations serve the bisexual community, here are a few local and national resources specifically addressing bi issues:

BiNet Oregon
www.binetor.org

BiNet USA
www.bisexual.org

Bisexual Information Web site
www.bi.org

Bisexual Resource Center
www.biresource.org

Portland Bisexual Women
portlandbiwomen@comcast.net

Portland Bisexual Community Forum
503-285-4848

"For me, evolving into being bisexual has coincided with a general sense of wanting to move beyond external definitions of myself"

—Meg Daly



Meg Daly identified as lesbian for six years before falling in love with her male partner and embracing bisexuality

play out in the gay and lesbian culture, too—even within the GLBT initials.

"There does seem to always be a way to develop a social hierarchy: gay then lesbian at the top, bisexuals in the middle and transsexuals at the bottom," Parker points out. Likewise, in mainstream society, she says: "Men at the top, women in the middle and people of color at the bottom. I think it is unfortunate that we care to label ourselves and allow this type of classism and phobia to exist anywhere."

And behind the hierarchies are a new set of queer rules.

"My own feeling is that the gay and lesbian community has adapted to the norms of our society; this [in turn] seems to grant us rights in passing judgment on what is acceptable and not acceptable in our culture for sexual preference," says France. "We broke free of the constraints that were placed upon us to allow us to live with our gay and lesbian partners. Then we made new rules to ban any other deviant behavior.... Shame on us."

The mirror

Fear plays a heavy hand in any strong aversion—especially where someone is

oppressed," asserts James, referring to that which is based at the root of the unknown. "So, there is an attacking that takes place to keep 'the other' at bay, while the entire time we don't allow ourselves to recognize that other within us...limiting our ability to richly honor ourselves and others through full-on acceptance."

Williams figures people are afraid that "somehow if someone is something that you are not, you are perverse and will be punished. Well, guess what? It's OK to be whoever the fuck you are. Billy can wear Mom's lipstick and pumps. Suzie can fix cars and cut her hair short. Chris can wear all the leather he/she fancies."

Of her partner of four years, France says: "I do not understand her attraction to both men and women.... She's been shaped by specific conditions in her own life that are unique from my own.... Each of us has a vastly different perspective."

And even though France loves and is committed to her partner, for her, the struggle is one of shared values. "Religious beliefs, social agendas, political agendas, family, environmental; the list is long," she says. And she believes they are at the cornerstone of relationships.

"After the bedroom, after the passion, we must have something that unites us.... There is a fundamental shared value for gays and lesbians of sharing that experience with another gay or lesbian person...experiences like coming out to family, friends, the hate, the fear of others, the fear within ourselves," states France. "If we don't share that experience with our partner because they don't identify as gay or lesbian, but instead they identify as someone who just wants to be open to any experience that life offers, then there is a part of us that they cannot understand.... Likewise, there is a part of them that we do not understand."

Occasionally, for example, her partner notices someone of the opposite sex and comments on his appearance as sexy or desirable. "I really cannot relate to her on this level," France concedes. "In fact, it can feel alienating to me, even though I am not threatened by it. It is more than being threatened, it is more like a disconnect between us, which I attribute the need to share core values that bind us together."

Like her, France hopes other queers will examine their own relationships and maintain an active dialogue in order to break down social barriers. She says, "I would challenge us to lift our ideals beyond the 'rules' that we seem to set for our society."

Williams adds: "Sometimes the worst prejudice is perpetrated by those who have experienced prejudice themselves. If we really want freedom, if we really want a

country where equality is cherished, we have got to put away our fear of what's different and open-heartedly embrace diversity." ■

GINA DAGGETT is a Portland free-lance writer who identifies as lesbian and is a 6 on the Kinsey scale. She can be reached through www.ginadaggett.com.

"By identifying as bi, you affirm the complex spectrum of sexuality"

—Yasmine Branden

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