



LIVING OUT LOUD by Kathryn Martini

Confessions of a 'Latebian'

Being out adds to our authenticity as a group of people

For many years grassroots activists have encouraged queer people to come out of the closet—it's been an important element of each political battle we've been forced as a community to face. Coming Out and Living Out "normalizes" us to the normative culture—the theory being that it's hard to discriminate against a queer if you're friends with one, right? We know that being out doesn't make us normative to the culture and doesn't eliminate prejudice and discrimination, but it does add in a large part to our authenticity as a group of people. Part of being authentic is living boldly for the world to see and having pride in the realities that define us.

Living Out Loud is not the path of choice for everyone; each of us must make our own way in our own time. Some may never leave the comfort of the closet, and some may have never seen the inside of one. Those who do Live Out Loud have the power to bring to light issues and interests for the rest, but there are no passive players on our journey.

I came out later in life. I was a "late awakener," a "late-in-life lesbian," a "latebian"; I hadn't built a circle of people in the community who were my age, and I had very few friends left from my previous hetero lie—I mean life. There is security that grows in knowing who you are at a younger age and establishing yourself; I was trapped in a dichotomy of identities, and I had to make a decision about how I would live my next chapter. It wasn't easy, but somehow I found the courage to keep moving forward and discover my truth.

I chose to Live Out Loud, and I've never looked back.

In the past several years I've had the opportunity to experience life on a level I never could have imagined as the suburban-soccer-mom-of-three I once was. Living authentically as a lesbian has expanded not just my world but also the experience of those around me. Coming Out and Coming In to myself has allowed me to view our culture and life in general through a genuine lens, offering insight and appreciation

never known before. I've been fortunate to live two lives and in two different domains—the journey has lent a much deeper understanding of them both.

Living Out Loud expanded my purpose and gave me a voice to speak up and stand up for issues affecting my own family, the sexual minorities community and society as a whole. These issues include: body image, gender expression, parenting and family, domestic violence, health, sex, relationships and finances. For too long people have been afraid to talk about sensitive or taboo issues that greatly affect our day-to-day lives out of fear or shame; for too long these issues have stayed in the closet. Queer people are underrepresented in mainstream popular culture and social issues, and because of that underrepresentation it may appear that these issues don't affect our community; that, of course, is untrue.

It is my intent to use this space in *Just Out* to address some of these important issues that affect both men and women in our community. I hope to offer a perspec-

tive that is honest and relative in order to educate, entertain and enlighten. It won't all be serious; there are a lot of fun areas where we are also underrepresented, like travel, fashion, hobbies and sports.

I'm certainly not an expert on every subject I hope to address (especially sports), but I will make extensive effort to properly research the topics and present information in a relatable manner. I'm just an everyday lesbian living in the Portland metro area; I'm a full-time student finishing an English degree; I take care of my wife, my home and my three daughters; I write. I'm on an interesting journey and eager to learn about thought-provoking things on the way—I hope you'll come along and we'll delve in together. JO

KATHRYN MARTINI, a Portland freelance writer, blogs at www.recoveringstraightgirl.com.

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