

Opinion articles do not necessarily represent the views of the Portland Observer. We welcome reader essays, photos and story ideas. Submit to news@portlandobserver.com.

OPINION

Learning to Love Who We Love

I've always assumed I was straight — but am I?

BY JILL RICHARDSON

Two weeks ago, the equivalent of a bomb exploded in my life.

I've had personal problems of various sorts for 30 years, and daily migraines for 22 of them. Three years ago, I finally realized my symptoms were those of trauma. I didn't know what happened to me, but clearly something had.

I began therapy for trauma, and it's been gradually helping. Then, out of the blue, two weeks ago I realized what the original trauma was. When I was six, I had just learned about female anatomy,



and I was saying my new favorite word over and over.

A lot of kids go through a similar phase, and the parent's job is to teach the child what's appropriate — and what's not. Whatever was said to me instead was so shaming I experienced it as a trauma.

Once I realized this, I began to put the puzzle pieces together about my own life. I basically shut down my entire sexuality when the trauma occurred. Now it's starting to come back. I've always assumed I was straight — but am I?

Honestly, I don't know. My hunch, however, is that I am not. I think I am probably bisexual. I just didn't realize it till now.

Once upon a time, we had no concept of being "straight," "gay," or "bisexual." There weren't sexual identities, just behaviors and preferences. Back in those days, conservative Americans distinguished only between two kinds of sex:

sex between married heterosexuals for the purpose of procreation, and sinning.

But in the late 1800s, that changed. We began to see "homosexuality" as an identity. It's not just something you do, it's who you are.

Which means that once I'm fully healed from my trauma, once I'm able to access my full range of emotions and desires, I might have a different identity from the one I've inhabited for decades.

I'm almost 37 years old. I don't want a new identity. I'm just me. If I happen to like women, I will still be me.

To say this has thrown me for a loop is an understatement. I'm shocked. I didn't expect this was a possible outcome of healing my trauma.

Our culture expects anyone who isn't straight or otherwise gender-conforming to "come out." But the idea of coming out presupposes a culture where that might get a hostile reception.

I'm fortunate that for me, it's not a big deal. I have exactly two friends I might lose if it turns out I like women. For everyone else in my life, whom I date or marry makes no difference to them. (Unless, of course, they want to date me.)

The notion of "homosexuality" was first created by psychology to diagnose the "mental illness" of being gay. Thankfully, we've moved away from that harmful and wrong idea.

Why can't people just be people and love who they love?

Can we move into a post-homophobia world in which dating someone of the same sex as yourself is no longer strange or taboo, and because nobody needs to fear rejection by friends and family for being themselves?

OtherWords columnist Jill Richardson is the author of Recipe for America: Why Our Food System Is Broken and What We Can Do to Fix It.

Citing Religion to Exclude Health Care

Ultimately this could affect everybody

BY MARTHA BURK

When Obamacare — aka, the Affordable Care Act — became law in 2010, it mandated coverage of birth control without



administration went to great lengths to exempt churches and church-related institutions from the rule, while still guaranteeing their female employees the right to birth control if they wanted it.

Then the Supreme Court stepped in, siding with Hobby Lobby and ruling that "closely held" corporations with religious objections

coverage.

Wait a minute.

Corporations not only have religious freedom but now moral principles, too? I didn't even know they went to church, and I'm pretty sure I've never seen one get down on its knees and pray.

On the other hand, I know women — who are actual people — have religious freedom under the Constitution, too. What about their right not to be forced to bow

tions have constitutional rights, and they've consistently ruled in favor of their corporate buddies over women in employment discrimination cases.

On top of that, six of the nine justices are male, and most of them of rather conservative religious persuasions. The odds look to be stacked against women.

Expanding so-called corporate citizen rights deeper into health care could ultimately affect everybody, not just women.

Christian Scientists are opposed to all kinds of medical treatment, including for diabetes, cancer, and meningitis. Jehovah's Witnesses don't believe in blood transfusions. There are undoubtedly other religious taboos on medical procedures.

Enterprising businesses that want to save money could cite "religious freedom" to exclude virtually any medical treatment from their insurance plans. Surgery, antibiotics, immunizations — you name it.

Where will it end? We don't know. Even if the lawsuits are ultimately successful, a decision could take years.

All I know is that I don't want my neighborhood corporate citizen making my health care decisions.

Martha Burk is the director of the Corporate Accountability Project for the National Council of Women's Organizations and the author of the book Your Voice, Your Vote. Distributed by OtherWords.org.

Massachusetts, California, and the ACLU have filed lawsuits to stop the rollback. Good luck. Besides Hobby Lobby, the conservative majority in the Supreme Court ruled years ago in the Citizens United case that corporations have constitutional rights, and they've consistently ruled in favor of their corporate buddies over women in employment discrimination cases.

co-payments.

Some employers didn't like the rule, and Hobby Lobby hated it so much that the company filed a lawsuit to stop it. Company owners said they didn't believe in contraception and claimed that covering it for female employees violated their religious freedom.

Understand, the Obama ad-

could join religious employers in excluding birth control from their insurance plans.

Now the Trump administration has gone a giant step further. They're now allowing any and all businesses, including publicly traded ones, to also cite "religious or moral objections" in denying their employees contraception

to their employers' religious beliefs or highly suspect "moral" principles?

Massachusetts, California, and the ACLU have filed lawsuits to stop the rollback. Good luck. Besides Hobby Lobby, the conservative majority in the Supreme Court ruled years ago in the Citizens United case that corpora-



5010 NE 9th Ave
Portland, Or 97211
Phone: 503 284-2989

We specialize in a variety of cuts for men and women, hot towel razor shaves, braiding, hair extension, Shampoo, blow dryer and Platinum fade.

Call Today or Walk in !!!