

Commentary

On Love, Sex, and All That Privacy Crap

This is the first in a series of three articles about issues related to gays and lesbians and the effort to build community.

by Crow

Energetic, talented lesbians gather to form a writing group. Wounded, bright and nurturing lesbians form a support group for incest victims. A politically committed group of gay men and lesbians form a newspaper collective. A group of gay men form an outing club in order to provide an opportunity for gays to meet outside the context of a bar. All over the country gays and lesbians gather in groups to connect, to heal themselves from the terrible isolation we suffer as homosexuals in a homophobic world, to pool our talents, our resources, our capacity to nurture so we can build a new culture, a superior ethic than what we've inherited from the competitive, war-loving patriarchy.

Two women from different towns meet in a writing group and fall in love. Two men who have known each other for years work on the gay pride march together and fall in love. Two dykes working on a woman's land project fall in love. Their respective groups respond to the news with warm smiles, teasing, congratulations, and back-slapping. A few months/years

later the happy couple "breaks up" and this time they can expect to walk into that same group carrying their grief, their confusion, their agony—and be met with silence. Suddenly their relationship is nobody's business but their own, their own "private affair." They are expected to settle their differences outside their group. You can cut the tension with a knife. Everyone squirms in their seats, disturbed, unsettled, making damn sure they remain "neutral" so as not to form camps or (god forbid!) express an opinion about something so personal as a love affair.

Suddenly the feminist ethic that we are a web connected to the world, that we are ecologically related to the earth and to each other; therefore, have a responsibility to break patriarchal patterns, that we must have the courage to confront our deepest fears together in order to heal — all of it flies out the window when faced with the common occurrence of a broken love affair. The "right to privacy" is protected. The web is broken. These men and women with an ecological perspective on the world "politely" avert their eyes. "Business as usual", like trying to ignore an elephant becomes so excruciating to one or the other half of this hapless couple that s(he) is forced to quit and only then does the group see that

a loss has been suffered—that our love affairs have a profound effect on each and every one of us.

Patriarchal patterns insidiously effect our lives. Same sex lovers are deeply enmeshed in dominant-submissive roles. Lovers start off with a commitment and then one suddenly switches sexual partners with the ex-lover's friend (just like in the movies). One man jumps from one monogamous relationship to another (ad infinitum) leaving a string of unresolved relationships behind him. One woman weans herself from alcohol, drugs, cigarettes or over-eating, can't figure out why she's so jealous and controlling when it comes to sex. Addictive patterns, failure to process, fears of abandonment, loss of identity, lies, manipulations (conscious and otherwise), games, acts of revenge, outright violence abound in our frantic couplings and yet we have no right to express a public opinion because "all's fair in love and war" and besides, it's their own private business.

I'd like to hear from those of you out there who have been hurt by this compartmentalized thinking, as I have. I'm writing this article not as a "how to", but to bring the issue to the surface so we can recognize a contradiction in our thinking that blocks our efforts to build community which is, after all, our only hope for survival. Next month: Part II Sex, Privacy, and the Dysfunctional Family (Aren't They All?)

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