

Youth

Gay Pride: What It Means To One Lesbian-Bisexual College Student

by Serena D. Dickson

With the coming Gay Pride Day, I have been thinking a lot about gay pride and what it means to me.

Well, first of all, what does "gay" mean to me? "Gay" is my catch-all word for lesbian, gay, or bisexual--a sexuality that is (for me) more "in-tune" with people of the same, or both gender(s). Being gay doesn't mean that I fall in love or have sex with only women, or both men and women. It doesn't mean that sex and falling in love is all that I think about.

My mind can house more thoughts than just sex(uality). For instance, I think of friendships, careers, the state of the world (and country); generally what everyone thinks about. I think about these things differently, though. I think about mainstream ideas from a non-mainstream point of view: viewing the world not only from oppression, but with a heightened sense of awareness, most likely due to the oppres-

sion that I, among others, encounter.

So if this is gay to me, then what is my concept of "pride?" Pride to me is the knowledge that my view is unique, but not isolating. That my orientation, sexuality, identification, mind, and consciousness are my own as well as being similar to others. That my orientation, etc. is okay and other people think it's okay too. Pride for me is realizing who I am, what I stand for, and not being afraid to tell/show it to others.

It isn't just wearing t-shirts, buttons, haircuts or showing affection in public. It isn't just marching in Montpelier or Burlington; it isn't just writing for *OITM*. I live with my pride every day; it shows in everything that I do: the clothes that I wear, the way I walk, the way I talk. If I weren't proud to be a (newly identified) lesbian-bisexual, I would not be thinking, let alone writing, this article. But most of all, my pride shows in the fact that I am alive, for if I had no pride, I would have no life.

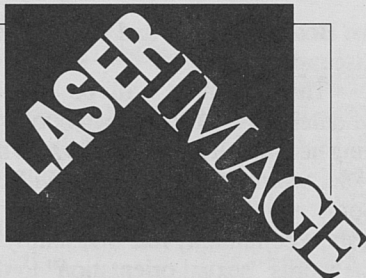
Integrating the two, "gay pride" then means (to me) that I am proud to have experienced these oppressions, to be able to view the world from a heightened awareness. I am proud to have gone through a

short twenty years as a lesbian, bisexual wom_n (however you want to spell it), human being, and the oppression and intolerance I have experienced for being who I am. If I hadnot experienced the oppression/intolerance, I would not be who I am today, and I like (even love!) who I am today.

One might say that I walk a 'gay pride march' every day of my life, just by walking every day of my life. I agree with that: Everything that I do shows that I love and respect myself as a human being regardless of my orientation, etc.

I am not just a lesbian, bisexual, pervert, dyke, queer, homo, or whatever other people (or I) try to label myself. I am Serena D. Dickson, a twenty-year-old college student-writer and I am happy to be Serena D. Dickson, a twenty year old college student-writer. I am not just a wom_n (however I or you choose to spell it). I am a human being: homo sapien, mammal, living, breathing, feeling, laughing, crying, being.

My "gay pride" goes much deeper than pride for who I am attracted to. Attraction is not forever. However, my spirit, regardless of my identification, is.



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