



Do I Contradict Myself?

"Do I contradict myself? Very well then, I contradict myself. I am large, I contain multitudes."

- Walt Whitman

This quotation has been jostling around in my head for quite some time. I'm reminded of it every time I become involved in a conversation about how we describe ourselves as a community. I was struck by it recently when I attended a meeting about creating a community center, and a discussion took place around the name.

When we discussed what our community looked like, and who we wanted to feel welcome in this community center, it was large. Who is "our community?"

The list of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Trans, Questioning and Ally labels encompass a number of people in our community, but

My apologies to Shakespeare, but I'm just not sure a rose would smell as sweet.

we're trying to get away from identity politics. Even as I typed out that list I was struck by the order in which we tend to list our sub-groupings. We also decided against the term queer, because it does alienate some members of our community.

I find myself enjoying the challenge of creating a name. The act of giving something a name takes on an almost mystical quality. My apologies to Shakespeare, but I'm just not sure a rose would smell as sweet. By naming ourselves we are defining the scope of who we consider to be "our community," and presenting an image of ourselves to those who fall outside of that definition.

Who is our community? We are people connected by both strengths and struggles. We are in and out of the closet. We are fighting for marriage and we are polyamorous. We believe in unity, and we are divisive. We contradict ourselves. We're large. We contain multitudes. ▼

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