

Our Fence

Letter from the Editor Br. Michael C. Oboza (ret.)

On September 23, 1998, Michael Page, creator of the Bisexual flag along with Wendy Curry and Gigi Raven Wilbur organized the first Celebrate Bisexuality Day. The day we had community. We had our own Bisexual flag and no longer had to be invisible behind a 1978 Gay and Lesbian Safe place Rainbow flag created by Gilbert from San Francisco.



Celebrate Bisexuality Day
Wendy, Mike, Gigi

Whether it was to remember Freddie Mercury or share Gigi's birthday, Gigi said, "Ever since the *Stonewall rebellion*, the gay and lesbian community has grown in strength and visibility. The Bisexual community also has grown in strength, but in many ways we are still invisible. I too have been conditioned by society to automatically label a couple walking hand in hand as either straight or gay, depending upon the perceived gender of each person." Wendy shared in *BiWomen* Vol. 17 No. 6 Dec 1999/Jan 2000, "Celebrate Bisexuality Day was "a way to get bisexuals together for something other than a protest or a support group. We were looking for a way to unite with a positive message. "We are wonderful just as we are!"



On September 23, Celebrate Bisexuality Day 2013, Chicago is hosting Celebrate Bisexuality Day pioneer, Wendy Curry at Center on Halsted located 3656 N. Halsted at 7 p.m. All are welcome.

Our Fence newsletter is in collaboration with Bisexual Queer Alliance Chicago founded by Br. Michael C. Oboza (ret.) and co-founded by Ed Negron on October 16, 2010. Chicago's 6th Bisexual activism group in recorded history.

Our Fence with Wendy Curry By Br. Michael C. Oboza (ret.)

1. When did you know you were bisexual?

I knew there was something different about me from an early age. I often found myself playing a role - whether it be pretending I understood why we should "go crazy" when we saw pictures of a famous guy or being confused over why I shouldn't want to hug my girl friends. But it wasn't until I was in college, living with my (then) fiancé that I had that "light bulb" moment. Somehow I didn't even know bisexuality existed until then. I mean I had heard the term (regarding David Bowie) but I didn't think it applied to real people. Once I realized this, I became obsessed with learning more.

Fortunately, within a couple years, several amazing books came out. "Bi any other name" (Ka-ahumanu/Hutchins), "The Bisexual Option" (Klein). The same time, BBSs were taking off - giving us nerdlings a chance to find others like us. Dozens, if not hundreds of other bi people connected on BBS's and the early Brown University Listservs; all reaching out to find others like themselves. I'm still friends with many of them, to this day.

2. How did the first Celebrate Bisexuality Day happen?

BiNet USA was the US- wide grassroots organization (started, in part by the people behind "Bi Any other name"). People who were into organizing in whatever fashion, would eventually end up in BiNet's leadership body. I came from online organizing. Michael Page was recruited after kicking off The Bi Cafe - it was basically, a Bi facebook/craigslist. Gigi Raven Wilbur was a state organizer down in Texas with a bi radio show. At the time, the bulk of what we did (as volunteers) for BiNet was to try to represent the bi community at the national level: speak out when bi phobic things happened, represent our community at national LGBT collaborations, and in general reduce our invisibility.

It was important work, but three of us (Michael, Gigi, and I) were starting to feel a bit burned out. I hated the protest side of our gig. I really just wanted to be in a space with a bunch of bi/queer people. a place where I could be truly me and not feel like I needed to tune down the "unpopular" parts of me. I wanted to be able to speak without thinking and not worry that what I said didn't make sense.

Michael, sweet Michael, was getting eaten alive by politics. He, too, felt like he needed a community & a visibility. He invented so many things: the bi pride flag, the Bi Cafe. But he was sometimes seen as a threat to the status quo. Gigi was a fun, sweet gentle soul who had fought forever to claim her identity and space. She lost much in order to be her authentic self.

Each of us, like I said, were truly tired of taking scraps from the (then biphobic) Human Rights Commission and demanding inclusion (not to mention a name change) at the Gay and Lesbian Task Force. It felt like we weren't getting anywhere. It felt impotent. We didn't want to grovel for a seat at the table. We were tired of the "us too" conversation. We each got into organizing, in part, to have a community of our peers. Yet what we were doing was making us feel more alienated than ever. We were sitting around a one of the annual bi conventions, venting and someone. I think it was Gigi said we should have a party. We all loved the great bisexual, Freddie Mercury. His birthday was in September, so why not Sept? We wanted a weekend day to ensure the most people would do something. Gigi's birthday was Sept 23rd. It fell on a weekend day, so poof! We had a day. Why not just be part of the pride events? Well, for two reasons:

1) We were burnt out for fighting for inclusion. Heck! Just that year, I had to listen to a biphobic rant/"joke" from Kate Clinton at my local pride festivities.

2) Pride is an outward act - letting the world know we were not ashamed of who we were. CBD was meant to be an inward act. Getting our community together to celebrate who we were and how privileged we were to be who we are. We picked the name for a reason. Screw what anyone else thinks. We rock! We are fabulous! Their loss if they can't see it. There were 364 other days of the year where we can grovel for the B in LGBT. The one day was just for us.