EXCLUSIVE
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ORANGE IS THE NEW BLACK’S POUSSEY

LESBIAN ROADKILL
How British TV execs killed us off

HOW TO BE A GOOD BISEXUAL ALLEY

WHAT’S IT LIKE TO BE IN A LESBIAN POLY RELATIONSHIP?

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Sex, with a distinctly androgynous flavour

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IS Z-STAR THE LESBIAN JIM MORRISON?
Lez be honest. Isn't it time we said goodbye to biphobia?

Greedily. Slutty. Confused. That's what Arielle Scarrella's YouTube videos, What Lesbians Think About Boys, is anything to do by. It's a wonder that more bisexual women haven't lost faith in the humanity of their so-called sisters.

During her six-minute interview compilation, which went viral in 2011, Scarrella asks a group of self-identified lesbian women their views on bisexuals. To say the result was an embarrassment for liberal lesbians at large would be an understatement.

With sheer abandon, the lesbians featured in Scarrella's video catalogue the 'Talling' of the bisexual woman; her 'indecisiveness', for example, makes her 'less intelligent' than her lesbian counterpart, while her fondness for the phallic means that she's a fundamentally incompatible partner for any self-respecting lesbian. 'I mean, she doesn't do sex or anything, that's pretty big thing to disagree on.' Bum!

After asking bisexual women for their views on the matter, Scarrella concludes that although bisexual women would get annoyed with biphobia, they shouldn't they just take the high road. As a lesbian in a five-year relationship with a bisexual woman, I know that my partner shouldn't have to be the "better person" in order to make our union work. I also know how little truth there is behind the video's pernicious stereotypes. I'm not worried that my woman will run off with the next Harry Styles look-alike, for example. Neither do I find myself fretting about her past relationships with men, I can wield a Black & Decker with the best of them. Even her love of Lord Of The Rings' Legolas is of little real consequence to our relationship. Which, in case you were wondering about the "promiscuity" part, remains simply between the two of us.

Blatantly stereotyping aside, what I find most striking about Scarrella's video is the snapshot it offers into an under-documented part of lesbian life. If biphobia wasn't so accepted within lesbian communities, would those women have still been so eager to denounce an entire sub-section of society on camera?

Speaking to my bisexual friends (and I have surprisingly many, considering how rare Scarrella's gang think "real" bisexuals are), I found that they had encountered every negative stereotype mentioned in the video.

Holly and Joy, who are in a long-term relationship with men, tell me how tired they are of hearing that they couldn't be bisexual if they had boyfriends: "Lesbians say I can't possibly like women, while straight women think I'm confused. I'm not confused. I know it's normal for me to want both. Women feel right and men feel right," says Holly.

Joy adds, agreeing that many people appear to be baffled about what bisexuality actually is: "I've had boyfriends who have misunderstood bisexuality [...] assuming I was bisexual in the past but straight now. I'm with them. I've also had friends who ask me how I can be with a boy, for instance, when I used to have a small collection of partners, or at least one of each."

The belief that bisexual women are promiscuous appears to be one of the most damaging myths of all. Lottie, who is in an eight-year relationship with her girlfriend, agrees that the most persistent view people have of bisexuals is that they have an uncontrollable urge to have sex with both women and men, which leads them to cheat on their partners and get bored of relationships.

When bisexual people aren't being vilified for their excesses, however, they are paradoxically being rendered invisible, or their existence is denied entirely. This erasure of bisexual desires, particularly within communities that are supposed to celebrate love between women, highlights some of the more insidious elements of biphobia.

Let's take the lesbian cult classic The L Word, for example. As an agent of legitimating and societal change, we all know how powerful popular culture can be. Groundbreaking in many respects, TLW's depiction of non-lesbian love between women certainly wasn't one of them.

As the plot develops through each of the six seasons, bisexual characters are slowly and steadily erased from the script. In fact, by the time we hit the season six finale there's not a single bisexual left. Oh, sorry, sorry, spoiler alert. Although TLW initially championed its resolutely bi characters and explored the lesbian insecurities tied up with bisexuality (Dana's fear that Alice's desire for strap-on sex could only mean that she missed men, for example), this only makes the subsequent erasure of bisexuality from the plot all the more troubling.

More recently, Orange Is The New Black continues the tradition of bi-erasure within popular culture. Although protagonist Piper is shown to have had a series of serious relationships with both men and women, her identity as a bisexual woman is never addressed. Instead, Piper is described as an "ex-lesbian" or a "straight girl," giving further credence to bi-erasure in popular media.

Bisexuality is not only marginalised in queer culture but bisexual characters who become involved with men are continually depicted as "transitory" to the lesbian community, highlighting a fundamentally lack of understanding about what bisexuality actually is.

To bisexual people, this smacks, however, this misunderstanding might be a little more forgivable given that each bisexual woman I spoke to denied her sexuality in slightly different terms. While some claimed bisexual was the romantic and/or sexual attraction to both men and women, others believed it was the openness to sexual encounters or relationships with all people, regardless of gender or sexuality. But, if anything, this only highlights the subjective nature of sexuality and that we shouldn't be so quick to tar everyone with the same brush. What's most interesting about the subject of biphobia, from a historical perspective, is that the erasure of bisexual desires in TLW and ONB, as well as the lesbian agenda that discounts bisexuality as "fake," "slutty," and "greedy," have long roots in the historical struggle for homosexual emancipation.

Looking back in history, we can see how biphobia was employed as a tool by homosexual rights campaigners in the very first pursuits of legal rights for homosexuals. When homosexual communities initially began to emerge at the turn of the 20th century, medical experts distinguished between what they claimed "pederastic homosexuals," who were temporarily driven to homosexuality due to sexual excess rather than sexual difference, and those who were "congenital homosexuals" and, in the words of Gaga, born that way.

In attempting to promote a homosexual identity that had a biological basis, sexologists and grassroots campaigners were able to lobby against the laws that criminalised homosexuality on the grounds that true homosexual desires did exist. The bisexual "pervert," however, was a temporary aberration resulting from excessive sexual activity or substance abuse.

It was believed that these temporary perverts were to be found in exclusively female environments, such as hostesses, boarding schools or prisons. Sexologists claimed that given the opportuny of financial and romantic security with men, however, these women were already inevitably on the road to heterosexuality. It appears that the CTNHB "gay for the stay" rhetoric has a much longer history than we might've first thought.

Although the denigration of bisexuals as "promiscuous," "unnatural," and "confused" has traditionally served as a way of legitimating "real" lesbian identities, that time has surely long since passed. We no longer need (was there ever a need?) to promote our own agenda at the expense of others. Should we then allow bisexual women to take the high road? Shouldn't we all strive to be better, more tolerant people?

As one particularly pathy biosexual said in response to Scarrella's video, "We all love vagina - so, honestly, what's the problem?"

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How to be a good bi ally

1. Accept difference between people and treat others with kindness; live and let live.
2. Believe that bisexual exist; unlike ales, bisexuals do indeed walk among us.
3. If a bisexual one dated a woman but is now dating a man, don't assume her previous relationships were somehow "fake."
4. Don't try to question how bisexual a woman is: if a bisexual woman is currently in a relationship with a man, she is still 100% bisexual.
5. Don't try and talk bisexual into redefining her sexuality; you know it wouldn't work if someone tried to convince you that you were straight.
6. If you're at an LGBT inclusive event but don't see bisexuals being represented, ask why.
7. Don't believe that one bisexual woman represents an entire community; if you have had a bad experience with one bisexual woman, this doesn't mean that all bisexuals are inherently bad people. Imagine if someone judged you on one awful break up with someone else.
8. Finally, speak up if you hear someone being biophobic or not inclusive of bisexual people. We all have a responsibility to encourage acceptance and inclusivity.