

ComingOutWomen Meeting, #2, 2/16/11

Some Answers to Questions for Reflection

1. Why come out as an LGBT person if I'm not in a relationship?

Being an LGBT person is an integral part of my being. Heterosexual people who are not in relationship may still talk about their attractions to people of the opposite sex. And being “out” as an LGBT person lets the world know that one more fine person is LGBT—therefore helping to dispel myths and stereotypes that may be engendered by having so many LGBT people being closeted. “Coming out” is a lifelong process of learning and being who I am (authenticity) and living fully who I am (wholeness)—not closeting my (God-given) sexual orientation. I AM WOMAN! (Empowered)

2. What are some of the “myths and stereotypes” about lesbians?

- * Homosexuality is a disease, “just a phase” that will be outgrown. It can be “cured.”
- * All “homosexuals” are alike. We all live “the gay lifestyle.”
- * Lesbians are “that way” because we hate men, want to be men, can’t get a man, have been abused by a man. All lesbians need is a “good man” to “turn us around.”
- * Lesbians are “that way” because we had dominant mothers or weak fathers
- * Being lesbian is “all about sex”—sex that can’t be controlled. We “flaunt it.”
- * Gays are the highest risk group for getting AIDS.
- * LGBT people hide in the shadows and alleys waiting to victimize others. We try to “seduce others” into being LGBT
- * Lesbians “jump from one relationship to another.” (No support, B&T; daily stress)
- * There seem to be very few happy LGBT people.

3. What is homophobia? Fear and/or hatred of LGBTs (or those received to be LGBT) What approaches help to eliminate homophobia?

One of the strongest predictor of acceptance of LGBT people is knowing a friend or family member with LGBT orientation. Although most people believe that they know no one who is LGBT, most people just don’t know that they DO know LGBT people. (So this answers Question #1.) In fact, the vast majority of LGBT people probably just don’t feel safe in coming out. This contributes to “the silence.”

There are also many LARGER issues at the core of homophobia: dominance and “power over”; patriarchy (the enforced belief or ideology that males must be dominant over females); sexism (the system that carries out patriarchy); heterosexism—with compulsory heterosexuality and heterosexual privilege.

4. What is an “-ism”? An “internalized -ism”? Exercise of power to provide a basis for discrimination against a non-dominant group. Examples: sexism, racism, classism, ageism, able-ism, heterosexism. “All of these oppressions are linked by a common origin: economic power and control. . . . To eliminate one oppression successfully, a movement must work to eliminate them all”—or the success will always be limited/incomplete. (Pharr, 53) All of the non-dominant groups are considered “less than.” When we hear this for a lifetime, we are likely to internalize the “-ism,” such as in “internalized racism.”

5. What are some examples of: (a) male privilege? (b) heterosexual privilege?

