



Blind LGBT Pride The “Inside Out” Newsletter

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The Newsletter of Blind LGBT Pride International is published in March, June, September, and December. Material for consideration for inclusion in the newsletter that is of interest to the membership is welcome. All material for inclusion must be received by the first of the month of publication. The editor reserves the right to edit submissions and to include or exclude materials submitted. Items for consideration should be sent to: Connie Torrisi, Editor, InsideOutEditor@Blind-LGBT-Pride.org

Blind Pride is a Special Interest affiliate of the American Council of the Blind and is dedicated to facilitating the free exchange of ideas, opinions and information relative to matters of concern to blind people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. Visit us at www.blind-lgbt-pride.org

EDITOR’S NOTE:

You can skip to the next article or section of the newsletter by using your word processor's Find or Search function to find the ## sign.

AUDIO VERSION: The Inside Out Newsletter is now available by phone! BPI's quarterly publication is now available in an audio version by phone. To listen to the latest edition call 773 -572-7846 and follow the prompts. (Check with your provider to determine if toll charges apply.)

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From The Presidents Desk

By Guillermo Robles

Greetings from the golden state of California. It is truly a privilege to be writing to you as your president. Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Guillermo Robles, and I live in Los Angeles. In the past I was always on the outside looking in with regard to ACB. However, this has not been the case as far as the state level is concerned.

Since 1994, I have been an active member of the California Council of the Blind (CCB). During my early years with CCB, I produced the Spanish translated version of the California Connection, a news and information Service designed to provide CCB members with regular legislative updates, resources and activities of CCB's 45 chapters. I was also elected Vice President of CCB's Greater Long Beach Chapter, where we not only dealt with matters relating to blindness and the CCB, we also found ways to effectively outreach to and educate the larger community.

During my free time, I can be found enjoying a good book, going for walks with my black lab guide, Breck; spending time hanging out with friends, and singing with the Angel City Chorale.

This summer, I had the chance to take part in the business meeting of Blind LGBT Pride international by phone. I was glad that BPI offered this service for those that could not be in attendance. It was good to see that good positive changes are coming to the organization. One of those changes is the ability for members not able to attend convention to be able to vote electronically. An amendment dealing with electronic voting was passed by the membership at this meeting. For complete details on this amendment, please refer to the June Inside Out Newsletter. We are excited about this new change, and we look forward to be implementing this new means of voting.

At our annual business meeting, elections for President, Vice President, Treasurer, and one member at large position were held

Mark Hanohano is definitely no stranger to the Vice Presidency. He served his first term in 2010. Mark has also served as Convention Coordinating chair. He currently serves as President and Executive Director of Los Angeles based Community Alliance for the Blind.

Born in Honduras, Gabriel Lopez obtained a Bachelor's degree in Business Law in 1999. He has also worked as a corporate lawyer in Honduras from 2000 to 2005. He has taken course studies on International Trade at Miami Dade College. Currently Gabriel is working toward his Masters degree in Business Administration at Barry University. Gabriel's nonprofit experience includes the Franciscan Institute for the Development for the blind where he serves on their board of directors. He has served as treasurer and Vice President of UCHEU, (Union of Blind Hispanics) in Miami. Gabriel is now serving as Vice President of the Miami Beach chapter of the Florida Council of the Blind. When asked how Gabriel likes to spend his time, he informed me that he is deeply into music. He plays different styles of music on the piano.

Kevin Ratliff serves as secretary for BPI. He is also involved with other affiliates in ACB. He is currently active in the American Council of the Blind in Texas. Kevin currently works in the Human Services field in Austin.

George Ashiotis is currently serving as Member at large and continues to serve as Membership Chair for the fifth year. His background is in Theater Arts, both as an artist and as an administrator. He was Co-Artistic Director of Theater By The Blind until 2008. His interests include music, cooking, and reading.

And then there's our talented and illustrious Editor!!! Connie Torrisi is our next Member At Large. She is a retired veteran of the Social Security Disability Determination program. She has been a member of Blind Pride for over three

years. During most of her time with BPI, she has edited the Inside Out newsletter. During her spare time, she enjoys writing, editing, and playing chess on the computer with people all over the world. Connie lives with her partner Ruth.

Mikey Wiseman lives in Miami Florida. He has worked as a corporate trainer in an international company serving the highly regulated telecom industry and now dedicates his time to serve on city commissions and a number of local non profits. His forte is public relations and special event planning/fundraising. He is currently serving as Member At Large and is Chair of the Member Outreach Committee. Mikey is also active with the Florida Council of the Blind.

Immediate Past President Don Brown has been affiliated with the American Council of the Blind, ACB, and the California Council of the Blind, CCB since 1986. He was the founding President of the Berkeley Council of the Blind and has held both appointed and elected positions within CCB and ACB. Don as been elected to the office of President, Vice President, Secretary, and he has served as Inside Out Editor for BPI. Don has been an active charter member since BPI's first meeting in Tulsa. Don lives along the Eastern shore of the San Francisco Bay with his guide dog Diamond, and pet dogs Cosmo and Javier. He is the founder and owner of a small consultancy business and works full time in the area of disability program management with the local municipality. Don is an avid food and drink connoisseur who loves reading, listening to music, online shopping, and spending quiet times with his partner Chris.

This board is definitely excited for a brand new year of change. At the time of publication, we will have started outreaching to other affiliates within ACB, as well as other blindness related organizations abroad. We are also going to see to it that we accurately take steps to reflect each and every part of our name. We will represent the blind, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people internationally. It is extremely important for the membership to make a conscious effort to get involved and help us meet this goal both now and in the future. For this reason, we have created a Member Outreach committee where members can go to and voice their concerns and offer suggestions. A complete list of all committees and contact information will be found later on. Now is not the time to sit idly on our hands and take a wait and see position. It is time to think outside of the box and think of ways to get involved. In this newsletter, we offer you a way to do this. Let us go forth and make Blind LGBT Pride International something that both the sighted and blind LGBT community can take notice of. Since social media has become prevalent in this society, we have established a committee that builds on the previous Communications committee. We are now calling it the Communications and Social Media committee. Please visit our website to join our Facebook group, our fan page, and follow us on Twitter. It has been a pleasure to meet with some of you, and I look forward to meeting more of you throughout the year. Now, onward and upward.

With Much Pride,

Guillermo Robles,
President

2012 Convention Report

by Don Brown

Following much planning and organizing, BPI's 2012 National Convention was held at the Galt House Hotel and Suites in downtown Louisville, Kentucky.

This year's theme, "Celebrating Self, Creating Community" was shown and felt throughout the week. As with the previous year, this year's Conference and Convention provided our members and allies numerous opportunities to rekindle old friendships and to embark upon new ones. Aside from the various workshops, massive exhibit hall, a myriad of side trips, networking opportunities, our Monday evening Annual business meeting and election was one of the highpoints of the week. After hotly contested races for vacant board of director's seats, including President, Members elected Guillermo Robles of Los Angeles as BPI's fifth President. Mark Hanohano, Gabriel Lopez, and Mikey Wiseman were elected as Vice President, Treasurer, and at-large seats respectively.

Another highpoint of the week was our organization being re-chartered under the new name Blind LGBT Pride International, adopted in 2009. The charter was presented to BPI's founding President, Rob Hill, during the opening session on Sunday evening.

Our caucus meeting was held on late Thursday evening. As a testament to BPI's political influence in ACB, 6 of the 7 candidates for the ACB Board of Directors and Board of Publications attended the caucus meeting asking for our seven votes. Each candidate BPI supported was victorious in her/his race. .

A great deal of thanks goes to Rob Hill and Harlo Peece our 2012 National Delegate and Alternate Delegate respectively. Both Rob and Harlo generously volunteered their time to proudly represent this organization on the convention floor.

On behalf of the 2012 Convention Planning Committee, I'd like to thank all of you who participated in Louisville and we look forward to seeing you next year in Columbus, Ohio.

BPI Committees

Below is a description of the active BPI Committees:

Constitution and bylaws: Responsible for interpreting and applying provisions contained in the constitution, adding and deleting language once amendments occur, prepare amendments for membership consideration.

Membership: Tracks current members and compiles reports to be sent to ACB when needed, designs and initiates the dues renewal process

Communications and Social Networking: Organizes the Inside Out Newsletter, as well as dissemination of information through social media, reviews all outgoing communication for accuracy.

Public Relations: A liaison between ACB as well as other blindness related organizations, LGBT organizations and the media. In charge of promotion of BPI on both national and international levels.

Convention Coordinating: Organization of BPI convention program and arranging any logistics with the convention site and ACB.

Outreach: Responsible for developing and maintaining relationships with potential members as well as keeping existing members engaged.

Fundraising: Responsible for exploring and pursuing opportunities for developing revenue generating activities.

I.T.: Responsible for all aspects of BPI's www presence and ensuring the organization the organization has a positive on-line presence.

We Want Your Input

The Blind Pride International 2013 Convention Committee has been formed and has started planning for our gathering in Columbus, Ohio next summer. The number one goal of the committee is to provide for greater participation by BPI members. To achieve that, we hope to provide activities of the most interest to as many as possible.

To accomplish this, we ask your assistance. If you have attended previous conventions or have ever wanted to attend; if you have some ideas and experience that can be helpful, please contact us. Suggestions from other gatherings you have attended are also welcome. We want to offer as much variety as possible.

We ask that you get back to us before mid October. The Committee's goal is

to have a rough outline by November. While that may seem early, it can take some time to schedule people and places.

Forward your answers to the questions below to: convention@blind-lgbt-pride.org

Be as brief or detailed as you like. At this point, nothing is too big or too crazy. Columbus is a very accessible city and most of its cultural, educational and entertainment venues are close to the convention center. We are fortunate to have a very wide canvas to draw on.

1-Have you attended a BPI convention in the past?

2-Are you planning to attend the 2013 convention?

Keeping in mind the ACB convention starts on Thursday, July 4 with business conducted from Saturday, July 6 through Friday, July 12:

3-When do you plan to arrive and depart Columbus?

4-How would you suggest we schedule BPI business, education and entertainment activities?

5-Would you like to see the BPI Suite open for casual meetings, socializing and just dropping in?

6-Is there a BPI convention activity you' have attended and enjoyed and would like again?

7-Can you think of a program or activity you have not seen at past conventions and would like to see at the 2013 Convention?

8-What activities would you like: Social, i.e., tours, shopping, shows, etc?
And/or:

Educational - presentations or group participation?

Once again all input is valuable. Thank you for responding by mid October 2012.

Editorial: The New Education

When young people enter college, it is typical for them to enroll in courses such as "Critical Thinking". The idea behind such a course is to teach young men and women how to evaluate information and draw conclusions based on information from a variety of sources. Students are taught to ask questions and think for themselves.

It seems that there is an effort in some areas of the United States to move away from independent thinking and take giant steps backward to create a nation of mindless sheep who do not question anything and who accept everything they are told as the whole truth. This is a dangerous social pathology that allows those who seek to control the population to grab power away from the masses.

Recently there were elections in some states. In Texas, Louisiana and Mississippi measures about education were adopted. In all three states a measure that stated "Creative thinking breeds rebellion" was passed and teachers are now not allowed to teach kids to ask questions but only to accept what's taught. For those who still think we are not going backwards you might want to rethink your opinion.

While this is not directly related to the interests of the LGBT blind and visually impaired community, the elimination of independent thinking will eventually engulf us along with everyone else. We can only hope that the effort to squash critical thinking does not spread throughout our society. Freedom comes in many forms, and the freedom to think for one's self is as valuable, if not more so, than all the other freedoms we enjoy.

Gay Rights Pioneer Honored by Astronomers

WASHINGTON (AP) — A Canadian amateur astronomer has named an asteroid he discovered after U.S. gay rights pioneer Frank Kameny, who died last year in Washington.

Kameny, who earned a doctorate in astronomy at Harvard University, was an astronomer with the U.S. Army Map Service in the 1950s but was fired from his job for being gay. He contested the firing all the way to the Supreme Court and later organized the first gay rights protests outside the White House, the Pentagon and in Philadelphia in the 1960s.

Kameny died last year at age 86.

When astronomer Gary Billings read Kameny's obituary, he consulted with others in the astronomy world. They decided to submit a citation to the Paris-based International Astronomical Union and the Minor Planet Center in Cambridge, Mass., seeking to designate Minor Planet 40463 as Frankkameny.

It's located in the asteroid belt, orbiting between Mars and Jupiter. The Kameny asteroid is visible through a telescope and was first discovered in 1999 using long-exposure photography.

"Frank would show up as a little dot that moves between two points," Richard "Doc" Kinne, an astronomical technologist at the American Association of Variable Star Observers in Cambridge, Mass., said in an interview. He helped write the citation that would lead to the naming.

While comets are often named for their discoverers, those who discover asteroids have 10 years to suggest a name once the discovery is verified. The submission is subject to review by a 15-member international panel, said astronomy historian David DeVorkin at the National Air and Space Museum. Astronomers often use the names as an acknowledgement of someone's contributions to science or culture.

A published citation officially naming the asteroid on July 3 notes Kameny's history as a gay rights pioneer.

"Frank E. Kameny (1925-2011) trained as a variable star astronomer in the 1950s, but joined the Civil Rights struggle. His contributions included removing homosexuality from being termed a mental disorder in 1973 and shepherding passage of the District of Columbia marriage equality law in 2009," the citation reads in the Minor Planet Circular.

Kinne said he and Billings wanted to honor Kameny for his legacy, even though he was pushed out of the astronomy field.

After Billings read Kameny's obituary, he wrote to Kinne.

"Hey, I have a few asteroids I discovered that I haven't named yet," he said.

"What do you say we name one after Frank?"

"I was utterly floored," Kinne said. "To me, this is a big deal."

Billings told Kinne he was moved by hearing the story of how he had met Kameny about three years ago in Washington and many passers-by stopped to thank him for his advocacy.

"I concluded he was a man I would have admired," Billings wrote to Kinne. "Add that to the fact that I have many friends and acquaintances who are members of the LGBT community, and I felt it was something I wanted to do to honor Dr. Kameny — and my friends!"

Before Kameny died, Kinne and others had been working to present him with a certificate of recognition from the American Astronomical Society and perhaps create and fund an award in his honor. Kameny also received an official apology from President Barack Obama's administration for his firing years ago.

"He was an astronomer," Kinne said. "The culture of the time took that away from him, and now he's getting it back. He would have liked that."

Kinne and Billings submitted the citation for the asteroid late last year. By July, they hadn't heard whether it was approved and feared it had been rejected. On July 6, they got word that Kameny is an asteroid.

Quick News Notes Around the USA

Massachusetts

The first openly gay congressman is now the first sitting congressman to be in a same-sex marriage. Democratic Rep. Barney Frank married his longtime partner, James Ready, in a ceremony officiated by Massachusetts Gov. Deval L. Patrick.

Minnesota

Opponents of the Minnesota constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage have raised six times as much money as the amendment's supporters so far this year.

Minnesotans United for All Families, which is working against the amendment, raised about \$3.8 million from January 1 to July 10,

Georgia

Three young men have been sentenced to five years in prison for the videotaped beating of a gay man on an Atlanta street corner that was captured in a widely viewed video.

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution reports that Dorian Moragne, Dareal Demare Williams and Christopher Cain were also given five years of probation. Their sentences stems from the Feb. 4th beating of 20-year-old Brandon White.

Vermont

Vermont's attorney general has joined Connecticut and New York in asking a New York and Connecticut federal appeals court to rule that the law defining marriage as between a man and a woman is unconstitutional.

The Hollis K. Liggett Award

Each year at the annual ACB convention, the Hollis K Liggett award is presented for the best newsletter produced among ACB affiliates. As many of you know, Inside Out was nominated for the award this year.

Since no information was ever released regarding the winner of the award, the Editor sent a note of inquiry to ACB. The Editor received a reply that ACB decided not to give the award this year. No further explanation was provided.

##A Journey to Happiness

by Jessica Wicks, Guest Contributor

We humans start labels early on, at the beginning of life; the doctor says you are either boy or girl. The world then assigns roles for that label, whether it fits or not. At age three, I realized I was a girl, no matter what the label. Despite their best efforts, and my own for that matter, that sense of who I was would not go away. I

told my Mom and wow she overreacted. Then again, it was 1950, before most Americans even had a name for it. My poor parents, bless their hearts, did the best they could do to butch me up. Cowboy outfits and toy guns, footballs galore, and Christmas's were so predictable. I learned to play the game, pretending to be their little macho boy and yet we all knew better. I could only find recourse in the imagination, in a private little sanctuary out back of the garage where I could be that other person, out of sight and mind. Kids at school knew I was somehow different, and every day I was getting jumped to the tune of Queer! Homo! Even before I knew what those meant. Then at around twelve, I realized I was attracted to boys. Gay and transgender, and here I was living in East Texas. It was a scary time in my life. Over time, I developed skills for my own protection, like language skills to talk myself out of fixes or the ability to disappear in a crowd. Oh and I really did try with every fiber of my being to be that straight son my parents desired so much for me to be.

Clearly that didn't work so well. I periodically experimented with gay sex in those early years, but only with people distant enough to not rat me out to my friends etc. I was so confused, and actually lived two lives. One was a good kid, Eagle Scout, pillar of the community while the other was bordering on the wild child destined for reform school. I think that's what comes from living lies. I'm not sure I knew just who I really was anymore.

My first steps out of the closet were in 1967. I was twenty and off I went to San Francisco and lo and behold there were all these lovely gay men but then I went back home, and as if it had never happened, back into my shuttered closet once again. Finally I actually got married, though to a lesbian woman. A grand experiment that failed. We soon went our separate ways and I began to gradually open that closet door.

As a gay man, I could be more feminine, and I thought that would work. Over time though, I increasingly realized that it wasn't enough. Alcohol and drugs proved inadequate as well. It never really was about dressing up, but about how I perceived myself in this crazy world. So about that time as I was beginning to prepare to transition when I met Mr. Right. His name was Skip and my first true love. With love however, honesty is essential. Finally, with great trepidation I told him my dark secret. This amazing man actually insisted I be true to myself, even though he had never so much as dated a woman before. It was with his support that I began the long process of changing gender.

There are many elements to transition. Psychological counseling, rather painful electrolysis to remove facial hair, learning the elements of speaking and behaving that would keep me from getting killed and allow me to "pass" in the real world. There were doctor visits to begin hormone replacement therapy, then talking to my employer; praying I could keep the job while I transitioned. Then, after over a year of counseling and living my true self, I was able to have a final visit with a psychiatrist and get the okay for surgery to replace that penis with a

fully functioning vagina. Modern science really is amazing. Each step could be an essay all its own, but that's the short version of the journey for most male to female transsexual women. Each experience is unique however aside from the process.

I did have a startling surprise during transition. After the introduction of hormones, I found myself attracted to women rather than men. It's like I was homosexual on each side of the gender journey. I loved Skip though. We talked about it, and we remained together until he became ill from viral encephalitis and died in '97. I lost most of my birth family with transition, but a family of choice stepped in to fill the void.

I met Robin a couple years later. She's lesbian, and we've been together since 1999. We moved from Texas to Minneapolis and are living happily ever after. Together with our fur babies we live in a lovely affirming community where we can just go about the business of living. I feel truly blest to have experienced love, not just once, but twice in one lifetime.

Why did I do it? For the first half of my life I was miserable. Every trip to the bathroom was a reminder of what was wrong. Every use of the masculine pronoun served only to accentuate my difference. When I awoke from surgery, they tell me I had a big smile across my face. It never went away. My motto in life is, "To thine own self be true." Today I'm living that truth.

Trivia Spot

In 2007, Theresa Sparks became the first transgender woman to be appointed Police Commissioner in San Francisco.

Special National Book Month Edition

Each year in October, the National Book Foundation sponsors National Book Month.

In celebration of National Book Month, Inside Out is including an extended book review section of books of interest to blind, LGBT readers.

Reading is a fundamental pleasure in life, but it remains a somewhat limited activity for the blind and visually impaired. Reading provides a world of entertainment, information and an opportunity to expand one's knowledge. Accessibility, however, is not always full spectrum. As such, we must access books and other reading material in various ways. I myself, use a device called Eyepal Solo LV to scan books onto a flash drive and then read the book on my computer, where I can enlarge the font size and choose a font style that works

for me. I also download digital books from BARD or borrow audio books from my local library as well as read books on my Kindle. BARD is probably the best solution but the available selection of LGBT topics is quite limited. As of this edition, BARD had 166 hits when I inputted the search term "gay." For the search term "lesbian" there were 23 hits. For the search terms "transgender" and "bisexuality", there were 4 hits each. Compared to what is available on the open market, this amounts to a very small number of accessible books on LGBT topics. (Note: the search term "blindness" brought up 248 hits.) Generally, new titles are not available through BARD when they are first released. Given this overall small number of LGBT books listed on the BARD website, it seems clear that blind and visually impaired readers can not limit themselves to BARD. As such, I do not limit book reviews to only those books available through BARD. As a convenience to members, I have included the available formats for each book reviewed.

In Review

Books are presented in no particular order.

Non-fiction

#1 - **Victory: the Triumphant Gay Revolution** by Linda Hirshman (2012)

Reviewed by Richard Nelson

If you follow the news, you know how Victory ends. The U.S. Senate passes DADT repeal in the 2010 lame-duck session. New York's Senate passes marriage equality on the last day of its 2011 session. In 2012, support for marriage equality crosses the 50% barrier in opinion polling. The book's title may be premature, but the bend in the arc of history seems clear.

What you may not know, what Linda Hirshman makes vivid by weaving together the personal tales of various gay men and lesbians from the past 100 years, is the distance the gay rights movement had to travel to arrive, today, at the doorstep of legal equality. Hirshman starts from the beginning, with young men and women moving to cities in the early 1900s and finding, for the first time, clusters of other people just like them. Over the ensuing decades, she chronicles their joy of discovery, their fear of being discovered, their self-organization to respond to threats to their lives and livelihoods, and, eventually, their upending of what it meant to be a good American, reframing morality and the standards of citizenship so they could embrace gays and lesbians. The reader sees the progress, made in fits and starts and in many different places, come together in a way that the movement's alphabet soup of organizations may obscure -- HRC, SLDN, GLAAD, Lambda Legal and the rest are all natural outgrowths of the very first living-room meetings when gays and lesbians began to discuss the rights they were surely entitled to and formulate the legal and moral theories that would underpin their eventual success in claiming those rights. Hirshman shows how the work of all of these groups, of activists across the country, under girds the progress the community as a whole has made.

Available formats: Hardcover

#2 – **Transgender History** by Susan Stryker (2008)

Reviewed by [wildflowerboy](#)

For readers interested in contemporary transgender history in the United States, this short and sweet book is an excellent introduction to the topic, covering all of the major political struggles, victories, backlash, and debates from the years just following World War II to the present day. In this book, you'll learn about important but little known transgender protests such as the riots outside Cooper's Donuts in LA in 1959, Dewey's lunch counter in Philadelphia in 1965, and the Compton's Cafeteria in San Francisco in 1966, as well as the famous Stonewall Riots of 1968. Along the way, we meet transgender activists like Sylvia Rivera, Marsha P. Johnson, Leslie Feinberg, Dean Spade, Imani Henry, Riki Wilchins, Lou Sullivan, Kate Bornstein, Beth Elliott, and many others, and political organizations like S.T.A.R., Transexual Menace, and the Queens' Liberation Front. In addition, Susan Stryker explores the transgender movement's relationship to feminism and gay and lesbian activism, discussing subjects like feminist transphobia amongst second-wave feminists, third-wave feminist inclusion, the impact of queer theory on the transgender movement, and the gender queer phenomenon. Thank you, Susan Stryker for this wonderful celebration of transgender history. It was both a joy to read and very educational!

Available formats: Paperback, Kindle

#3 - **To Believe In Women** by Lillian Faderman (2000)
Reviewed by pirie@aol.com

I don't ordinarily write reviews; rather, I read them. But I must take issue---and I very much disagree---with the two-star review (above) given Faderman's newest book 'To Believe in Women'. Faderman's work, from the classic 'Surpassing the Love of Men', through 'Scotch Verdict', 'Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers' (and the great, sprawling anthology 'CHLOE plus OLIVIA' which she edited and for which she wrote the prologue to each section), stands far away and above the work of almost any other scholar of lesbian history; indeed, the great bulk of work by contemporary scholars in the field of lesbian history has not only been based upon, but legitimized by her efforts. She was *the* pioneer, and continues to be the foremost lesbian historian of our time. And while Faderman is a scholar of tremendous erudition, as a writer she manages to walk a line between the academic and the accessible with all the wit, grace, and agility of a cat. In 'To Believe In Women', she is, as ever, at her best.

Taking on the task of interweaving the political, social, and educational impacts of American lesbians of past generations on American culture is no easy job; in 'To Believe In Women', Faderman handles that job with style and finesse. She explores not only these women's accomplishments, but their failures and setbacks, as well. She examines not only successful lesbian relationships, but those that fail or compromise (a form of failure in itself) because of social fear, financial insecurity, or simply a change of heart. But what is perhaps one of the most pleasing points of this book is that Faderman allows these long-gone (and sometimes heterosexually- married) women to speak for themselves and their lesbianism in private letters and personal diaries; papers in which, even when the writer was (occasionally) attempting to be 'discreet', the lesbian subtext is far from sotto voce. Faderman makes her case for these women's lesbianism amply clear to anyone with the simple ability to *think* as they read.

In short, 'To Believe In Women', is yet one more excellent addition to lesbian history; a book to be savored, enjoyed, and remembered.

Available formats: Hardcover, paperback, Kindle

#4 - **Getting Bi: Voices of Bisexuals Around the World** (2009 2nd edition)

By Robin Bernstein

Getting Bi is a stunning collection of first-person narratives by bisexuals from around the world. The term bisexual functions as a useful shorthand for a broad

spectrum of sexualities: as the editors note in the Introduction, some contributors self-identify as queer, pansexual, omni sexual, or label less, while others acknowledge attractions to multiple genders while identifying as lesbian, gay, or heterosexual. This complexity infuses the book at every level, as writers differ not only in their definitions of bisexuality, but also in their politics, spiritualities, sexual practices, and patterns of daily life. The essayists include accomplished writers and bi activists such as Loraine Hutchins, Carol Queen, and Amanda Udis-Kessler, as well as literary unknowns, many of whom are published here for the first time. Most of the essays are conversational in tone and personal in content, as the writers discuss coming out, the choice to identify (or not) as bisexual, life experiences, sexual desire, bi community, and political activism.

Many anthologies aspire to be international in scope, but few achieve that vision. Getting Bi is a rare success in this respect, as the book includes voices from Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, Cuba, Denmark, France, Germany, Iceland, India, Ireland, Italy, Japan and many more. This diversity of location and perspective makes Getting Bi useful in college or high school courses that center global and/or transnational analyses of feminism and/or sexuality. The lively and engaging content continues and extends the best traditions of **Bi Any Other Name**, while the international scope and glorious polyphony mark the beginning of a new era in bi literature. This book is an astounding achievement.

Available formats: paperback

FICTION:

#5 - **Flowers From Iraq** by Sunny Alexander (2012)

Reviewed by Terry B.

This is the story of Doctor Kathleen Moore. Kathleen is a physician in the small town of Canfield. She was abused as a child and after a family tragedy, grew up in foster care. Kathleen's childhood was made more bearable by her living in a fantasy world. The book Alice in Wonderland played a big part in her early years.

Kathleen went from foster care to being a closeted physician in the United States Army. Kathleen eventually served in Iraq and was badly injured, which ended her army career. After her discharge and recuperation, Kathleen applied for a post as family physician in Canfield. It's here that she meets Claire Hollander. Kathleen is smitten. Unfortunately for Kathleen, it appears that Claire is straight. Or is she?

When Kathleen and Claire spend more time together and get to know one another, it is apparent that the feelings Kathleen's been having are mutual. What will it take though for one of the two women to make the first move?

When Kathleen and Claire do eventually get together, Kathleen can't let go of her inhibitions. She has to stay locked away deep in the closet, hiding all her deepest darkest secrets. Will Claire be able to help Kathleen overcome her insecurities? Will Kathleen be ready to trust Claire with her secrets from the past? Until Kathleen can come to terms with and leave her past behind, she can't possibly

hope to move on and have a future with Claire.

The story is told with flash backs to Kathleen's past. The way this was done was brilliant. Each flash back shows the part it is playing in Kathleen's present time. The reader has no doubts as to what Kathleen is suffering, why and how it all began way back.

This book is a wonderfully well written page turner from start to finish. Sunny Alexander has an extraordinary way with words and is an incredible story teller.

Available formats: Paperback, Kindle

#6 - **Fair Game** by Jose Lanyon (2010)

Review by Sirius

Elliot Mills is a former FBI agent who is now a college professor after a terrible knee injury while on duty took him away from the job that he loved. The injury also took him away from his lover and FBI agent Tucker Lance. Their affair might have been a brief one, but it was a passionate one that appears to have ended badly. When boys start going missing on campus, Elliot can't help himself with being drawn into the cases at the request of his father and the campus president. Little did Elliot know when he agreed to help that it would force him into close contact with Tucker.

Available formats: Kindle

7- **Afflicted** by Brandon Shire (2012)

Reviewed by Shirley Quinones

This was a surprisingly good book to read. Why surprisingly? Well, I just had the synopsis to go by and I was convinced that a relationship between a blind man and a male escort just was not viable. I know, shame on me! However, I very humbly admit that the author brought these two characters together seamlessly and their journey was a joy to read. You get to know the characters inside out and you just have to root for them to make it work.

Both characters had issues to deal with that interfered with finding love, but they were great characters to get to know. Hunter, so strong and determined, revealed a very vulnerable side filled with loneliness and a need to love and be loved. And Dillon, sweet, sweet Dillon, he had a rough past, a very interesting present and a loneliness so great that you could only feel for him. I very much enjoyed how these two got together.

I have to congratulate the author for such beautiful writing. Every emotion - lust, loneliness, anger, insecurity- was so magnificently written that I felt each and every one of them, especially Hunter's. The author managed to describe these in a way that really allowed me relate to him. The sex scenes described from Hunter's point of view were splendid. At first, I had to really pay attention since it

was so very different from what you read everyday with a sighted main character; not only for these scenes, but for every single detail. Page after page filled with feelings, smells, tastes and sounds. The dialog was superb, both entertaining and captivating. It all made for a great read.

So you might be wondering, "Why do I give it 4.5 out of 5 stars? Well, I feel that the ending came abruptly. I could not believe that it finished so unexpectedly. I remember looking at my location in my Kindle and thinking to myself that it was a mistake. In my opinion, they were in the middle of one of the most defining moments of their relationship and I thought they would start sharing more about each other which in turn would take their relationship to the next level. They did that up to a point, but not to my satisfaction. But that's just me. I tend to take my fictional characters too seriously, so it was a minor detail in an otherwise marvelous book.

I am looking forward to next book since I am very interested in knowing how Hunter and Dillon continue together. Well played, Brandon Shire! You had me hooked from the start, now I have to wait and see where you take us next.

Available Formats: Kindle

Board of Directors

PRESIDENT

Guillermo Robles

California

President@Blind-LGBT-Pride.org

VICE-PRESIDENT

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California

Membership@Blind-LGBT-Pride.org

SECRETARY

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Texas

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TREASURER

Gabriel Lopez

Florida

Treasurer@Blind-LGBT-Pride.org

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT

Don Brown
California
PastPresident@Blind-LGBT-Pride.org

MEMBER-AT-LARGE #1

Connie Torrisi
Massachusetts
InsideOutEditor@Blind-LGBT-Pride.org

MEMBER-AT-LARGE #2

George Ashiotis
New York
MemberAtLarge2@Blind-LGBT-Pride.org

MEMBER-AT-LARGE #3

Mikey Wiseman
Florida
MemberAt-Large3@Blind-LGBT-Pride.org

Snail Mail ADDRESS:

Blind Pride International
5010 Echo Street Unit A.
Los Angeles CA 90042

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