

# HOMELESS IN PARADISE

July 17, 2015

Column #38



## Part 1: LGBTQ: QUESTIONING, QUANDARY, OR QUEER?

*ABCs of Non-traditional Sexual Orientation*

By Wanda Sue Parrott

**PREDICTING** long-awaited results of the 2015 Point-In-Time Homeless Census is easy. If newsmakers of the past month are accurate indicators, changes in the non-traditional sexual-orientation of society—both houseless and sheltered—is at the start of a revolution that will go mainstream. Consider these facts:

An Aug. 8, 2013, *HealthyCal* headline stated: “Homeless LGBTQ youth face greater health risks in Monterey County.” A survey conducted by Applied Survey Research as part of Monterey County’s bi-annual homeless census was cited:

“Homeless teenagers and young adults in Monterey County who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or who question their sexuality—also known as LGBTQ—have an increased risk of mental health problems, sexual exploitation and suicide.”

Shame, fear, and guilt, underminers of self-confidence, can be cruel killers of joy for youths wrestling secretly with their sexuality.

### 20 Percent Of Homeless Population

The 2013 homeless census revealed that “LGBTQ teens and young adults make up 20 percent of the homeless population in the county.” That is one out of every five homeless men, women, and children of all ages. They were more likely to become homeless and face greater health risks because of various stressors, including family rejection, bullying and discrimination, and fear of being bullied or discriminated against.

According to Nan Roman, president of National Alliance to End Homelessness. the actual number of LGBTQ teens and young adults in the county who experience mental health problems likely is higher than the survey showed. She said, "I bet a lot of kids didn't answer completely" about their sexual orientation. They were ashamed and afraid.

### That Was Then; This Is Now

Much has changed in two years, as evidenced by major news stories last month. The traditional June, long the heterosexual wedding month, is now Gay Pride month—and what a newsworthy month June 2015 was! Even the straight community paid attention as former U. S. Olympics athlete Bruce Jenner stole the news-light with his/her sixty-something transgender debut on the cover of *Vanity Fair* magazine under the new name Caitlyn/Kaitlyn Jenner.

Then the U.S. Supreme Court popped the champagne cork with its landmark decision on June 26 that legalizes same-sex marriage nationwide.

As the nation starts to digest what is undoing traditional sexuality by introducing genre after sub-genre of sexual preferences, let's reconsider Nan Roman's 2013 statement: "Kids who are rejected by their families are more likely to use drugs. They have more mental health problems and are at higher risk of risky sexual behavior" (Griffy, *HealthyCal*, 8/8)

Although such commentary might prove true in 2015, it's predictable statistics will change by 2017. Why? Because being part of the non-traditional sexual movement is now popular. It's cool to be into the LGBTQI&etc. movement. And all of us who have survived our own adolescence know peer pressure is more powerful than parental or institutional influence.

So, in essence, now that it's okay to be openly gay—or something between straight and hermaphroditic—what can traditional heterosexuals do to adjust to a changing society in which both homeless and sheltered persons have a wide range of sexual orientations from which to choose?

### **Learn From The Youth**

I suggest letting youth—those age 25 and younger--teach us what they are experiencing as their generation evolves through the multi-choice sexual revolution.

For example, Eugenia is the name I've assigned an enthusiastic, uninhibited 19-year-old college freshman home from summer break. What a great student-teacher she was at an I-HELP dinner in June.

Eugenia's parents are volunteers who serve food at the church where I am on the social justice committee. Eugenia came along as a guest. The shiny, pink-cheeked young woman with a bright smile was beaming as she sat at the head of the table and introduced herself to thirty homeless men gathered for an indoor Sunday picnic dinner.

"I am bisexual," Eugenia announced with self-confident jubilation. "Bisexual means I find myself attracted to both men and women. I was born Eugenia, but please call me by my new name—my Pride name—Minky."

Eugenia/Minky is just beginning the adventure of a lifetime by experiencing multi-choice sexuality in ways old schoolers like me never dared dream would be possible to explore with or without guilt.

Regardless of final statistics the 2015 homeless census reveal about the LGBT community in Monterey County, big changes lie ahead--because once attitudes change, avalanche-force social revolution follows. Here are the ABCs of what Minky taught me. More will follow next week. You don't have to be homeless to benefit from it, but you do need to have an open mind.

### **Abcs Of Non-Traditional Sexuality**

LGBT stands for "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender." It's a term that started as LGB in the 1980s and evolved to LGBT in the 1990s.

LGBTQ: Around 2000, the letter "Q" was attached to mean one of three things: Questioning (a person is exploring his/her sexuality in general); Quandary (torn between straight and non-straight and wrestling with the decision of which he/she is); Queer. Initially, queer was a derogatory term dating as far back as the 1950s or earlier but has been dusted off lately and is considered complimentary, like being eccentric compliments an artist with a flair for the unusual.

LGBTQI: Most recent addition, "I" stands for Intersex (formerly Hermaphrodite, a person with sexual organs of both genders) and/or Intergender (a person who is not chromosomally defined clearly as either male or female).

Note that there are six colors in the rainbow flag that was originally symbolic of Gay Pride but is now simply called the Pride Flag because gay is only one of Pride's non-traditional sexual orientations that aren't reserved for youth alone. Next week we'll explore other terms and older LGBTQI homeless folks.

###

Contact Wanda Sue Parrott at 831-899-5887 or [anykitchenerfdn@hotmail.com](mailto:anykitchenerfdn@hotmail.com).