

OPINION

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Catwoman: bisexual or over-sexualized?

In a world of gods and men, there seems to be a shortage of, well, people.

DC Comics and Marvel Comics, the largest competitors in the business of superheroes, have created a combined total of over 400 superheroes in the span of 81 years. Yet the percentage of LGBTQA heroes is, unsurprisingly, very low. That explains why Catwoman's recently revealed bisexuality could be the biggest breakthrough for diversity in comics in a long time.



BY ANNIE
FULLWOOD
STAFF WRITER

LGBTQA characters are hard to come across, but bisexual female characters are almost impossible, especially those with their own series. That a major comic book character who has appeared countless times on both big and small screens has been revealed to be bisexual is a major success for the LGBTQA community in regards to diversity. However, there is the ever-present fear that Catwoman's bisexuality may be overly sexualized in order to draw male readers.

"Catwoman #39," released Feb. 25, featured the well-known antihero kissing a fellow female character, and later her sexuality was confirmed on the blog of the Catwoman writer.

"She's flirted around it — often quite literally — for years now; for me, this wasn't a revelation so much as a confirmation," said writer Genevieve Valentine on her blog. "Was it a surprise for (the characters)? In terms of their sexualities, not particularly; certainly it's no surprise to Selina that she has an attraction to a woman."

Valentine described how the romantic tension had been building between the



Issue 39 of Catwoman illustrated the character kissing a woman. Writer Genevieve Valentine later confirmed Catwoman's bisexuality on her blog.

two for a while and will not completely overshadow her connection with Batman.

That is not how bisexuality (or humanity) works," said Valentine. "Selina doesn't care easily, but when she does care it strikes deep, and there will be plenty of that coming up."

The quiet and accepting response from the general public is encouraging for the future of diversity in comics.

"(The kiss that revealed Catwoman's sexuality) was an event that became clear, and there was no publicizing it," said Ben Marlin, associate professor of mathematics, faculty advisor to the Yachting Club and avid comic book fan. "It was just something that happened because that's just something that happens in life."

Unfortunately, comics have a history of using sexual relationships among women

to increase readership.

For example, former Teen Titans member Starfire has been recently rebooted into the new comic series "Red Hood and the Outlaws." Within the series, many aspects of Starfire's character and past have been changed from her original conception. She conveniently lost her memories, followed orders and quickly began dubious relationships with her two fellow main characters, who are both male.

"There were a handful of staff, mostly other women, who believed the writer was trying to equate being a strong woman with being, frankly, a slut," said an unnamed source to Bleeding Cool writer Rich Johnston. "No one said that the writer was misogynistic, just that perhaps he was writing from a male perspective."

The current worry is that this perspective

may be applied to Catwoman's own affairs. However, considering the skill with which the current Catwoman team is handling her character, the problem seems unlikely at the moment. What matters now is where this development could lead the character in later issues.

"It would be interesting if DC made its universe different from ours in terms of prejudice (against bisexuals)," said Early College student and comics fan Dylan O'Connor. "But DC has definitely been an activist before, so it would certainly be cool to see them do that again since they're kind of losing a lot of ground in other aspects."

For now, Catwoman fans are right to rejoice. We can only hope Catwoman's bisexuality will help pave the way for new LGBTQA comic-book characters.

Trans women deserve equality in education

"In trans women's eyes, I see a wisdom that can only come from having to fight for your right to be recognized as female, a raw strength that only comes from unabashedly asserting your right to be feminine in an inhospitable world," says Julia Serano in her book "The Whipping Girl: A Transsexual Woman on Sexism and ... Scapegoating Femininity."



BY WILLIAM
BURTON
STAFF WRITER

The treatment of transgender people is a huge issue in America and has recently been exemplified by a Massachusetts women's liberal arts college. Wellesley College has recently amended its policy on accepting transgender women. Women who identify as female can now be admitted, regardless of their legal sex.

Acceptance of transgender women into a women's college such as Wellesley is a huge step in the right direction for a greater acceptance of people who identify as transgender.

"I understand that for the colleges it's a difficult decision because they've been sort of building their reputations, or their communities, based around a particular notion of what it means to be a women's college, and what it means to be a woman," said Lisa McLeod, associate professor of philosophy. "I do think that people who identify as women ... should be admitted into women's colleges."

People who identify as transgender face much oppression in America, and this is something that needs to change.

"Transgender is an umbrella term for people whose gender identity differs from

what is typically associated with the sex they were assigned at birth," according to the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation.

GLAAD also states that transgender men and women are four times more likely to experience poverty. Ninety percent of transgender people experience harassment, mistreatment or discrimination on the job.

Twenty-two percent of transgender people who interacted with police reported harassment by police, and 46 percent of transgender people reported being uncomfortable seeking police assistance.

Even though there is mistreatment of transgender people in our country in general, the mistreatment of transgender women is especially prominent.

"Trans women are subject to dreadful abuse and violence," said Julie Winterich, associate professor of sociology and anthropology. "(Accepting transgender women into women's colleges) is one springboard (to acceptance), and I think whenever you institutionalize identities, it opens up cultural conversation and recognition of the different ways folks are discriminated against."

If women's colleges across the country have begun to accept transgender women into their institutions, it could spark a more acceptance in society as a whole. The amount of discrimination that transgender people face is truly astounding and needs to be addressed.

Not only do changes need to be made in the higher educational system, but changes throughout society will help to create a world where people can be accepted for who they are.

Accepting transgender women into women's colleges will be a huge step in the direction of justice and equality for all oppressed people, regardless of how they identify.

Swedish pronoun drives the gender revolution

GENDERLESS PRONOUN HITS SWEDISH DICTIONARIES

The word is "hen," and it could mean a big change for the gender binary.

According to the Swedish Academy, Sweden's gender-neutral pronoun is getting incorporated into the dictionary.



BY NICOLE
ZELNIKER
FEATURES EDITOR

Finally, those removed from the gender binary will be acknowledged.

"This is a move that gives the word a certain legitimacy and recognizes a need for a gender-neutral pronoun," said junior English major Laura Todd in an email interview. "Languages change over time to accommodate the needs of speakers."

This is an incredible step for non-gender-conforming persons, though it isn't entirely unexpected.

"Swedish society is very mindful toward the needs of its citizens," said Assistant Director of Study Abroad Daniel Diaz.

Diaz studied abroad in Sweden in 2003.

"Sweden has, for a long time, been extending liberties to different genders," said Diaz. "This has been a movement in Sweden."

Though "hen" has been around as a gender-neutral pronoun since at least 2012 according to Newsweek, the move to the dictionary means that Sweden as a country is breaking out of a restrictive gender binary.

"We don't have to follow dictionaries as if they're some ultimate authority, but ... it's cool," said Visiting Instructor of English Rod Spellman.

This is something we aren't even close to accomplishing in the United States.

"It's not even considered," said sophomore Taylor Brown. "We've taken steps to (acknowledge the queer community), but we're not ready to accept more than two binary genders."

Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines "they," one of the most common gender-neutral pronouns in the U.S., as an acceptable singular pronoun.

At the same time, those who use it as a gender-neutral pronoun are often told they're wrong.

"People don't want to have to accept grammatically or socially that transgender and non-binary people exist," said first-year Aron Correa.

Though "they" and "them" are the most commonly used gender-neutral pronouns, others include "zie" and "ey."

"People are using those gender-neutral pronouns," said Diaz. "You do find people who are starting to be very conscious in their writing and speaking, (but) it will take more time."

Because the gender binary is so ingrained in U.S. culture, it is hard for some to acknowledge that their idea of gender isn't the only one.

Like in Sweden, there is need in the U.S. for gender-neutral pronouns.

"It's just going to make a lot of people way more comfortable," said Correa. "No one can say, 'Oh, you can't have that as a pronoun.'"

Different pronouns ultimately have different connotations.

"Using a pronoun like 'they' means that I am open to the idea that gender is not solidly set and that I respect someone's choice not to be defined as one of the two binary genders," said Todd.

"He" and "she" carry baggage. "They" also carries baggage but of a different sort. The language we use is a powerful way to declare what we believe to be true."