

intersections

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† gay & Catholic
by John Hairston

Early in my life I developed a stringent hate for the person I feared myself to be. Throughout grade school I felt a constant unrest within my mind and my heart – I believed my soul was tarnished, and I prayed everyday for God to lead me back to the path of salvation. Catholicism taught me to repent my evil thoughts so that I could be forgiven. I found myself in confession so often and for the same reason that I feared my religious leaders were tiring of forgiving me for the unrelenting thoughts consuming every facet of my emotions. My environment had and continued to condition me to believe my thoughts about other boys to be moral abominations. It was not until I was released from that oppressive environment that I was able to begin the long process of accepting myself and developing the self-confidence that I had previously lacked.

During my years of self-hatred so many aspects of my life were affected. I developed defenses – mistrust for others and a façade of happiness that allowed me to function in a society that continued to tell me I was despicable and that I could make those “horrid feelings” go away if I were diligent enough. To the outside world I was a bright, athletic, popular, friendly, happy and all-around good Christian boy. Inside I loathed every minute in which I had to continue to act as the person I knew everyone wanted me to be. I was deeply depressed and unable to feel even a semblance of comfort in social settings. Eventually, I became a hollow shell of the person I knew was the real me, not allowing anyone into my heart in any genuine way. My self-hatred of so many years left me with an anxiety disorder and difficulties trusting the intentions of my peers. I still struggle with inner demons, but the first step in overcoming them was ending the cycle of self-loathing.

In a culture that predominately assumes
bisexual male w/ a girlfriend
by Robert Wells

that everyone is straight, being attracted to someone of the same gender can produce both external and internal conflicts. However, LGBTIQ culture is not free from similar presumptuousness. I didn't truly realize the problem in others or myself until I started dating my first girlfriend.

When I first confided to my friends, both gay and straight, that I was dating a girl, many were perplexed.

“So what are you?” one friend demanded. Seeing that I had already told her that I was bisexual, I was surprised by her reaction. “Oh I know, but I was so sure you were just gay,” she replied when I reminded her yet again that I was bisexual.

It turns out that she wasn't alone – numerous other friends, my therapist and even my girlfriend thought that I was gay. At the beginning of the fall semester, I went to the first GLBT-SA meeting with my girlfriend. After the meeting, a new acquaintance asked of my girlfriend and me, “So, are you two best friends from high school or what?”

The next week, I went to another GLBT-SA function, this time alone. After the first incident, I was nervous to reveal to anyone that I was dating a girl. My fears were realized when we started generating ideas for queer activism on campus. Someone suggested we stand in the Pit and make fun of straight couples.

“How do you know they're both straight?” I thought. I hate when people assume I'm straight. And just like most heterosexuals, I hate it when people assume I'm gay. Bottom line: people hate assumptions.

I have been an extremely active member of the GLBT-SA this year and people that unintentionally offended me are now wonderful friends of mine, as are the numerous other people who assumed I was gay for so long. My friends don't resent me for being bisexual – it's just that the lines between straight and gay are so rigidly drawn that people have trouble understanding and remembering the existence of a middle ground.

I never really understood my own presumptuous attitude until I started dating my girlfriend. When I was secretly dating other boys during high school, I recoiled whenever I saw straight people kissing and holding hands in public. Now that I have the privilege to show public affection to the one I love without fear of ridicule, not much has really changed. I still automatically sneer at people I assume to be heterosexual for their ignorance of this privilege. But I have no way of knowing if they are actually straight. I can't count the times I have seen a cute guy and frowned when he takes the hand of a girl – I assume he is straight. You'd think I of all people would know not to assume such things but I'm just as guilty as the friends who assumed I was gay.

My relationship with my parents has drastically improved since I started dating my girlfriend. I can take my girlfriend on family outings and I no longer have to lie about where I'm going on a Saturday night.

I spent my high school days hiding my relationships and sexual feelings. I flinched every time someone assumed I was heterosexual. I hoped that when I finally got to college that I would no longer have that problem; yet I am still a victim of compulsive heterosexuality, in both the LGBTIQ and straight communities. If you don't want others to assume your sexual orientation, the first step is to stop making assumptions of others. I had to learn the hard way.