

Love, Rage and the Occupation

Bisexual Politics in Israel/Palestine

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Panorama—Bi and Pansexual Feminist Community, Tel Aviv, Israel This text narrates the writer's story as a bisexual activist and, through it, also the story of the bisexual movement in Israel so far. In addition, the text endeavors to highlight the strands of militarism, violence and racism in Israeli culture, with a focus on the Israeli occupation of Palestine and the Palestinian people. This is meant to achieve two things: first, to deconstruct the false separation between the two fields of 'LGBT rights' and antiwar activism; and second, to promote the principles of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement, encouraging solidarity with the Palestinian people and nonviolent struggle against the Israeli occupation.

Introduction: Who I am and Why I'm Writing

My name is Shiri. I'm 28 years old at the time of this writing, I live in Israel and have been an activist on feminist, queer, antioccupation and animal rights issues for nearly 7 years now. I've been a bisexual activist for almost 3 years.

This text tells my story as a bisexual activist, and through it, I hope, also the story of the bisexual movement in Israel so far. In addition, I hope to show my readers the strands of Israeli militarism and its culture of violent and racist occupation of Palestine and the Palestinian people, which weave through all of our lives and all of our experiences here. With this I hope to achieve two things: first, to deconstruct the false separation between the two fields of "LGBT rights"[1] and antiwar activism, emphasizing connections between oppressed groups and their struggles; second, to promote the principles of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement, encouraging actions of solidarity with the Palestinian people and nonviolent struggle against the Israeli occupation.[2]

The BDS is a call made by more than 60 Palestinian academic, cultural and other civil society federations, unions and organizations (and supported by hundreds of organizations worldwide), for a comprehensive economic, cultural and academic boycott of Israel. The BDS lists three goals: ending the occupation and colonization of all Arab lands occupied by Israel in June 1967, full equality for Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel, and acknowledging the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as stipulated in UN Resolution 1948. The BDS is a global nonviolent movement, opposed to all forms of violence and racism (including anti-Semitism).

However, the BDS focuses not only on ending the occupation, but also in building a better society, thus the BDS endorses and is endorsed by many queer, feminist and other organizations.

On the queer side of the BDS, we emphasize the connection between the occupation and the oppression of Palestinian lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people in Israel and in Palestine. The occupation does not differentiate between queers and nonqueers—thus, under the occupation, Palestinian LGBTQ people are denied even the most basic human rights such as freedom of movement, medical care, education and so on.

Palestinian LGBTQs living inside Israel face systematic, legalized apartheid policies that discriminate against them in all walks of life, rendering them de facto second-class citizens (Palestinian Queers for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions, 2010).

In addition, Palestinian and Israeli LGBTQs are being cynically used by the Israeli government and Israeli propaganda in order to "pinkwash"

Israel's international public image. Israeli government, through the Ministry of Tourism, makes use of the relative tolerance toward Jewish LGBTQ's (especially in Tel Aviv), as a way of diverting attention from the many Israeli war crimes performed in Gaza, the occupied Palestinian territories and inside Israel itself. Thus, on the backs of the Jewish and Palestinian LGBTQ communities, Israeli propaganda can market a false image of Israel as a "liberal" "progressive" "gay haven," while demonizing Arabic Middle Eastern cultures and presenting

them as inherently LGBT-phobic—an Islamophobic notion whose goal is to further justify Israeli war crimes in Gaza and the occupied territories as well as against Palestinian citizens of Israel.

The cost of pinkwashing takes its toll not only from Palestinians, but also from Jewish LGBTQ people, as incidents of violence, discrimination, harassment and mistreatment are discretely silenced so as to prevent injury of Israel’s “progressive” image. In addition, pinkwashing helps the government in convincing the Jewish LGBTQ community that no further rights need to be won, that all is well and that there’s nothing left for us to do but join their shiny new brand of homonationalism. From a bisexual and transgender standpoint, it’s also worth noting that the process of pinkwashing not only erases the fact that bisexuals and transgenders have no legal recognition or rights in Israel (contrary to gays and lesbians), but also erases and silences inner community violence against us—perpetuated not only for our being bisexuals and transgenders, but also for our activist communities’ extensive involvement in the struggle against the occupation.[3]

This article consists of a sequence of stories from my personal history as an activist.[4] The reason why I chose to tell this story from my own perspective rather than take the more ‘dignified’ stance of an academic researcher is threefold. First, by telling the story from my personal point of view, I de-nounce a single, unified, master narrative. Whereas the events that I describe have certainly existed in—and influenced—what is so often called the public sphere, I still acknowledge that some people may have experienced the events I describe, in ways that are different from my own. Different people have also given different interpretations to the meanings of the same events, including ones different from mine. Experiences and views vary, and I would be reluctant to claim my view as a definitive one.

Second, living in a patriarchal, masculinist world, we all learn to appreciate certain values over others: objectivity over subjectivity, universal over personal, rational over emotional. The values associated with masculinity are socially rewarded with respect, dignity and status and are attributed more importance (within and without the academia). On the other hand, the values associated with femininity are perceived as flawed, undignified and often even inappropriate. Indeed, in polite “Western” society, speaking of one’s feelings or personal life is often frowned upon. Of course, these values are also racially charged: the former, masculine ones often linked to whiteness and ‘Westernness,’ and the latter, feminine ones, to ‘race’ and ‘third-world-ness.’ Thus, it is my intent to undermine and subvert these values through use of a personal narrative and emotional writing. By this I mean to suggest that emotions, subjectivity and personal perspectives are central to our experiences as people and should be respected as crucial to our understandings of the world. I feel that to claim a space and to incorporate these values in my writing is a political act of feminist and antiracist subversion.

Third, telling the story through my eyes is conducive to my understanding that, as us feminists like to say, the personal is political. In this, I not only mean that ‘exterior’ circumstances shape and often determine our lived experiences, nor only do I mean that the experiences in our lives have political meanings—I also mean to suggest that for many of us, who devote our lives to activism—the separation between the ‘personal’ and the ‘political,’ the ‘private’ and the ‘public’—is neigh nonexistent. Is suffering physical violence by the police more or less personal than suffering violence at home?

Do one’s friends and lovers touch our feelings more deeply in bed than on the streets? Is the struggle against our families, our teachers and our peers more or less painful, more or less passionate, more or less intimate, than the struggle against the system, the government and het-

eropatriarchy? Activists embody, in our physical bodies and in our selves, the lack of distinction between these 'two' imagined worlds. Nothing is personal that is not political.

Nothing is political that is not personal. In addition, I would like to think of this lack of differentiation as bisexual in character, marking a collapse of boundaries, a destabilization of binaries and a breaking down of order.

A disclaimer should be made as to why I'm writing these stories—what should be made of them, and what should not: This text is not here to tell you about a strange land, far, far away. It is not here to be exoticized as the tale of a 'developing' bisexual movement in a 'developing' or 'backward' part of the world, where brown-skinned 'savages' fight with one another. The call for solidarity under the BDS (or for solidarity with the Israeli bisexual movement) is not to be taken as an appeal to a higher, whiter moral guardian. Nor is this text, in its better parts, to be taken as buying into Zionist pinkwashing propaganda of presenting Israel as the friendly 'progressive' 'LGBT' haven it markets itself to be.

What this text is about is the violence and difficulties that we all experience in our communities. It is here to enlighten similarities rather than differences—the difficulties described herein are not unique but exist everywhere, should be addressed by us all.[5] This text is here to encourage political responsibility and accountability in all of us, in our communities and in our countries—the Israeli occupation could not have existed without the active financial and political support given it by the United States of America, United Kingdom and other 'Western' countries. This text is also here as an alternative activist model for whomever might want to start their own radical bisexual movement, in their own area. It is here as inspiration for change within the existing bisexual movement in the United States and Europe, in terms of critical perspectives, ideology and activist methods. And finally, it is here for whomever wishes to learn or study about Israel, its bisexual movement, its radical queer history and the queer struggle against the occupation.

Some of the experiences I describe in these stories are difficult, violent and traumatic (including descriptions of physical violence, death and grief). If you think that any of the stories might trigger past traumas for you or make you otherwise uncomfortable, please consider reading this piece (or the relevant parts of it—especially the seventh and eighth stories) somewhere that feels safe for you and at a time when you have emotional support available should you need it.

First Story (2006): Queeruption

My story begins in one of the critical moments in the history of queer antioccupation activism in Israel,[6] one that many of us now recall as a seminal moment in our personal histories as activists. This was the summer of 2006.

Black Laundry, the first queer group decidedly working against the occupation, had just finished dying out only a year beforehand, and I never got to be a member. (By the time I had heard of their existence—thinking, for the first time in my life: “Oh my god! There are others who think like me!”—they had already begun to disperse. Later on I heard that even had I known of their existence on time, I couldn’t have joined—they refused to accept bisexuals [a policy that some claim later changed]).

My friends’ and my official hang-out at the time was Salon Mazal, the Tel Aviv infoshop (a center for alternative political information, as well as a library, a workshop space and a vegan restaurant). This was where all the cool gay and lesbian radicals used to hang out (the cool transgender radicals had, at that point, not yet migrated from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv). Their clique was very closed, however, and I never felt comfortable going there alone.

Until this day I can’t place my finger on the cause of the cold treatment that my friends and I often received: Was it our bisexuality? Did they think we were straight? Did they create a closed culture whose standards we couldn’t achieve? Or was it something else completely? Today I know that I was not the only one feeling left out of those circles, and still the reasons for this remain hazy. Despite this, my friends and I still loved the place, as it echoed with our activist passions, provided us with learning and tools through the many books, zines and workshops, as well as being, of course, an awesome hangout where you could get a full vegan meal for the price of ILS 20 (equal to about US \$5).

When I heard that the people from Salon Mazal and the leftovers from Black Laundry were organizing an international queer anarchist gathering in Tel Aviv (the ninth international Queeruption), I immediately became excited about the idea. The event was planned many months in advance, and I knew that an organizing committee was meeting weekly at the Salon.

However, the tension of the event dispersed for me when I realized that I was feeling too shy to actually attend an event organized by people I knew but did not seem to acknowledge me. My then-partner and I suggested to host a workshop about queer heterosexual sex (a very bisexual topic, at a time before we started thinking about bisexuality politically). However, the organizers failed to contact us, and I never did attend the gathering place.

Where I did come into contact with the Queeruption was the demonstrations that took place that summer.

On July 12, 2006, the Lebanese ‘terrorist’[7] group Hezbollah kidnapped three Israeli soldiers on the border of occupied south Lebanon. In response, the Israeli military bombed Lebanon’s capital Beirut, its airport and many of its hospitals, schools, power plants and infrastructure and killing 1,191 of its citizens over the course of the next month. This murderous attack, thinly dis-

guised as a response in 'self-defense,' had very quickly come to be known as the Second Lebanon War and was widely supported by Israeli government, parliament, media and public.

However, not everyone joined to the sound of the war drums and the smell of blood and fire—the demonstrations against the Israeli attacks on Lebanon—and later the war—started out on the very day the attacks began.

The first demonstration, held in front of the Ministry of Defense (such an Orwellian name), attracted 200 to 300 people. The second day, a 100 more.

By the end of the week, we had a full-fledged antiwar march attended by well over 4,000 people. By the end of the war, we'd had demonstrations of more than 10,000 (all large numbers in Israeli terms).

In light of the war, the Queeruption camp, which was intended to be a creative workshop and activist space, had changed its plans and converted into a queer antiwar activist headquarters, responsible for the now-mythological Pink-Black Block during the demonstrations against the war.

Participants were requested to show up in pink-black clothes, and we were handed pink ribbons to tie around our wrists, necks, bags. Some of us even tied them across our mouths or eyes, in reference to ubiquitous hear-no-evil, see-no-evil, speak-no-evil of Israeli militarist fascism. The block also included a drumming band, whistles and other noise makers, chanting, jumping and dancing—making our resistance loud, queer and celebratory. In that period, there was at least one demonstration every week, if not every day, and I attended each and every one of these blocks. Although I still (was) kept at distance from most of the people involved, I began identifying faces, began to make some friends, receive some smiles. I always attended with my own friends, too, and so I never felt alone.

The demonstrations were delightful. We danced, jumped and shouted in the streets, drawing the attention of the protesters, the media and the spectators. I remember us marching, in the biggest demonstration, on Even Gvirol St.,^[8] the street echoing with our drum beat, our chanting. A moment later, we were standing in place, then jumping, running and then dancing in a circle to the sound of the drums. Through all our pain and rage, passion and fury, our anger and celebration, we created something new: a spark, a life force.

And in that moment, of protesting against the occupation, being loud and anarchist and queer and surrounded by my kind, all at the same time—in that moment, I had found my political home.

We weren't spared of police (and other) brutality, of course. One of the biggest demonstrations we had, ended in Maggen David Square, a small square that couldn't fit the large crowd gathered. Inevitably, people started flowing unto the road. However, before we even finished gathering everyone into the square, the police—on foot and on horses—had already started violently pushing us into the sidewalk (and, inevitably, into each other).

There was no space inside the square, and on the other side of it the police were all too happy to push us—when we failed to be pushed for lack of space, we were beaten and arrested by the police. The situation finally became so hard, that the protest organizers (feminist women) had called out to all women on the loudspeakers, to stand between the protesters and the police in order to defend our friends—the policemen are often less brutal with those of us who pass as female. I remember standing there between the lines, feeling scared and defiant. I was lucky enough to prevent a few arrests that day.

After our protest was over, the police disappeared from sight, leaving us alone to deal with violence from the counter (prowar) demonstration from across the street. Many of us had to stay

in the square to protect the stage and sound equipment from vandalism, evading the counter-protesters' violence as we did so. An argument I had with one of the Zionists from across the street (who came to speak to us), ended with him shouting again and again,
"Amir Peretz[9] wants peace, in your heart you know this!"

Second Story (2006): The Joh Protest Vigil

In that summer, the Jerusalem pride march was canceled.

Jerusalem Pride became a hotly contested territory 3 years after its inception. From 2002 and until 2004, it ran annually, relatively smoothly and with few negative side effects. However, the parade came to national attention in 2005 when a single terrorist (an orthodox Jew) stabbed three of the attendants with a knife, with intent to kill. (Interestingly enough, the person who jumped the perpetrator and caused his arrest was one of the Jerusalem bisexual activists). When, one year later, the Jerusalem Open House (JOH)[10] had started organizing an international pride parade in Jerusalem (under the ironic title of “Love Without Borders”[11]), a city dominated by religious populations sprouted a hitherto-unforeseen coalition between the Jewish, Christian and Muslim communities not to let us dirty perverts march in ‘their’ city. The police’s official reason for denying permission to march was the Lebanon war, deciding it was unsafe to march at such a time.

On August 10, the JOH organized a protest vigil against the cancellation of the parade by the police. This was the fourth (and, as it turned out, last) week of the war, and many Israeli flags were to be seen among the rainbow flags of the vigil. Most of the people were standing quietly, some were singing Jewish songs. The atmosphere was overwhelmingly Zionist. I arrived independently with my friends, and a few minutes after we arrived, the two Queeruption buses came in as well. People joined in with signs, chants, flags and lots of energy, and we joined them, chanting, waving flags and making noise. The slogans, however, though queer, were mostly focused on the war.

This was later debated within the community: some thought it was legitimate for us to bring our own messages to a protest meant for our community. Others thought that changing the message was insensitive and that priority needed to be given to the queer message over the antiwar message, in the spirit of community solidarity. Although I didn’t think so then, today my opinion leans toward the latter, and I feel uncomfortable about the hijacking of the message such as we did.[12] In addition, I feel uneasy about the priority that the occupation takes here above and beyond every other topic, to the extent of silencing other activist issues.

What’s not debated, however, is the police brutality that then ensued.

Even though Israeli law permits any size of gathering, including chants of slogans as well as signs and flags (so long as there’s no march and no speech), the police often makes its own rules by deciding that chanting is illegal, that a certain number of people is illegal, or that certain content is illegal. The police started brutalizing us maybe 10 to 15 minutes after the Queeruption arrived. Their reasons: we were chanting, we were many, and we were waving Palestinian flags (In fact, only one of us was, and it’s perfectly legal. But hey, what’s that to the police, if they’re making it up anyway?). The JOH organizers watched idly by as policemen hit the protesters, dragged us, threw us into the street and arrested two of our friends. Only later, while sitting and waiting for the arrestees, did we hear JOH’s official response, claiming not only that we broke the law, but also that we were harming the ‘gay and lesbian’ struggle in Jerusalem. Of course,

they lent us no legal support or assistance in releasing our friends from arrest. We had to rely on our own.[13]

From the moment that two of us were arrested, our protest ended, and we found ourselves making our way on foot to the police station where they were taken. I found the group's lawyer Yossi Wolfson and told him all the details that I could about the arrest that I witnessed so that he could talk to the police on our behalf. The whole group sat and waited until the day went dark and the notorious Jerusalem night cold kicked in. We froze, we ate, we sat and played or chatted. I got interviewed by the media for the first time in my life (answering questions from the *GoGay* Israeli news site reporter). I don't know how long we sat there when, finally, a policeman came out from the station and asked for two people to sign release bonds for the two arrestees. I volunteered to sign for my friend Carmel, and another volunteered to sign for the other arrestee Yotam. When we came out of the station, all free to go, the group joyfully cheered. We took the bus back to Tel Aviv with the *Queeruption*. I was dead tired as I got back home, at 2 am that morning.

Third Story (2006): The March that Didn't March

Eventually, the Jerusalem pride march was postponed to November, though clouds were constantly hovering over its head. We knew that the police was only looking for excuses not to let us march due to the wide opposition that the march encountered from religious communities in Jerusalem, as well as the general public. The most widespread public sentiment regarding the Jerusalem pride march, from that year on and until now, was that it shouldn't be held there due to its 'offensiveness' toward religious communities. Now, at that point, the march had been rescheduled and postponed several times already. The police's notice—on the eve of the march—that the march was to be canceled and converted to an enclosed event, came as no surprise to us. Many of us have discussed the subject beforehand. We'd been planning a Pink-Black Block for the march, and many of us decided that in case of cancellation, we would march anyway.

The official reason for the cancellation of the march was yet again related to the occupation and Israeli military violence. A week beforehand, the Israeli military forces invaded the Gaza Strip town of Beit Hanoun and killed 50 of its inhabitants. A week later, just in time for the pride march, the police pulled its by-now-familiar trick of using the ubiquitous "Security Situation" as an excuse to cancel our march, citing a "fear of retribution action" as the official reason for canceling. We all knew the real reason, of course.

That evening I took the bus to Jerusalem to participate in an emergency Pink-Black Block meeting. Before I went from Tel Aviv, we had already started forwarding e-mails calling people out to march with us. "Liberation doesn't happen through a happening, and rights are not attained by asking nicely", the e-mail read, "We don't need the police or the supreme court to fight for our rights. Changes happen when women rise up and proclaim: This is where we stand! We cannot do otherwise!—**Tomorrow we march, we cannot do otherwise.** "

At this point, I need to take a step back, and explain who these 'we' were: The illegal pride march in Jerusalem was, perhaps, the first queer action that I had directly organized. The initiative came from my friends (at the time), following prior conversations on the topic. I went to the meeting in Jerusalem as a representative of our initiative to make sure people came to protest with us. The reason I'm stressing this is that all three of us were bisexual, and although this was a time when we weren't really thinking about bisexual politics, we were still making a difference and changing community history in a way that is often unacknowledged. In fact, during and after our action, all news coverage (in Hebrew and in English), as well as community discourse, referred to our protest, the organizers and the participants therein, as either as 'gay' or 'homosexual' (although even the protest itself included people of many sexual orientations and gender identities).

The meeting in Jerusalem that evening was charged, you could feel the excitement and the tension in the air. Lots of people were present, and everyone was angry with the police, though

not everyone agreed on what should be done about the situation. Some of us wanted to protest illegally, others wanted to bring our messages into the enclosed pride event.

Eventually, after realizing that we couldn't reach consensus, we decided to split into two groups. Those of us who wanted to march went home, those who wanted to join the event (which later came to be known as the 'pride cage'), stayed there to make signs and posters. The meeting ended at midnight. I was excited, impatient and utterly terrified.

I hardly slept that night. When morning came, I was still just as impatient, just as tense and scared as I had been the previous night. When my friends and I got there, we caught a glimpse of the police bus driving away, carrying off 30 people into arrest.

What happened was this: the media publicized our action before we started it. The journalists notified the police and extreme right-wing activists, both of whom were there to meet our group that morning in the Bell Garden (our meeting place). The right-wing activists came all set with knives and other sharp weapons. (As my friends and I got to the garden, they yelled at us and taunted us from afar.) The police arrested everyone in our group for illegally marching, while everyone was sitting on the ground. The right-wing activists were left to their own. In fact, one of the excuses the police had used to justify our arrest was 'defending' us against the right-wingers.

Taking a step aside here for a moment to explain who these right-wingers were and what were they doing there: Baruch Marzel, Itamar Ben-Gvir and their group of fellow activists are Jewish settlers most well known for their extreme right-wing opinions and their provocative support of ethnic cleansing of all non-Jewish people in all territories occupied by Israel.[14]

These people, who arrived in hopes for a rerun of the 2005 LGBT-phobic stabbing, are people most infamous not for their violence against queers, but against Palestinians. This fact matters highly because it allows us to see that the sources of violence in Israeli society always remain the same, no matter toward whom they happen to be aimed. Whether it is violence against queers, Palestinians, women, Mizrahis,[15] migrant workers, refugees,[16] or any other marginalized group in society—the source always seems to be militarist Zionist ideology and values. In this case, it was the very same people who came to hurt us, that would normally hurt Palestinians.

So, my friends and I were watching as the police bus drove off, carrying off 30 of our friends, Baruch Marzel to our side, taunting us and telling us to be ashamed of ourselves, and lots and lots of policemen all around. When we approached the entrance to the garden, the cops told us to stay away.

My partner kept walking, taunting the cops while practicing his legal right to walk down the street. When they went for him, I tried to prevent his arrest (by holding onto him in the manner we usually practice in demonstrations), calling our friends for help. But our friends stood by and watched as the cops pushed us into one of their cars. (I never asked them why. I guess they decided they didn't have much chance, and didn't want to get arrested along with us.) We were then driven off to the police station, where we joined our friends on the bus of arrestees.

I remember feeling a bit relieved when we got there. What I feared the night before came true, and in a way it diffused the tension. I don't remember the arrest itself as being so bad, though right now, while writing, it's surprisingly hard for me to think about. We all stayed on the bus and decided on solidarity arrests—literally, that no one is free until everyone is free. We also refused to get off the bus before the police complied with our request to let us all stay together. The first 2 hours were actually kind of fun and felt more like a queer school trip than anything else. We sang queer songs at the cops and kissed each other in front of them. Leading a bus full of people in singing Monty Python's Lumberjack Song was one of my personal high points that

day. We used our cell phones to read news reports about ourselves on the Internet. We laughed at the ways in which the news depicted us and got angry about the JOH's response (famously, they said: "We have nothing to do with those anarchists from Tel Aviv"). We spoke, we laughed, we sat and we waited.

But as the hours wore on, the suffocation and closeness of the bus became harder on everyone. People grew more tired and less patient. I got into a fight with my partner, which in hindsight I mark as the first crack in our relationship—a crack that would, 6 months later, bring about our breakup.

Because we refused to get off the bus, we couldn't even go to the bathroom.

There was no water or food, either, as no one had thought of bringing any, and as the policemen were decidedly unconcerned about our needs.

I didn't wonder why none of the people in the other Pink-Black Block were coming to the station (to help us and to bring us food). Only years later, did I hear that at the same time as we were arrested, the people who went to the 'pride cage' were busy sitting down and trying to reach consensus about what to do.

Finally, the policemen started letting us make rounds to the bathroom, taking turns of two at a time. Shortly afterwards, they finally relented and allowed us to stay together for arrests and questioning (though they only took about five of us for this, and only people passing as male). In the meanwhile, we moved from inside the bus to the courtyard of the police station, where we sat in the shade. When some of our friends arrived with food and drink (which they passed to us through the bars of the courtyard), we were nearly ecstatic. We finished all the food in 10 minutes. After sitting a little bit longer, we decided to have an improvised self-defense class, in which one of the participants taught us how to avoid arrest (we hoped the cops would appreciate the irony). Our lesson was cut off prematurely, as the police decided to let us all go.

The sun was setting, and we walked toward the city center. It was a Friday, and those of us who came from Tel Aviv had missed the last bus back.[17] We stopped for a few minutes on a cliff, observing Jerusalem saturated with the golden light of sunset. Down below, like a concrete snake, lay the separation wall, dividing Jerusalem into Jewish and Palestinian parts, imprisoning those on the side of Palestine. I remember looking at that wall—then relatively new—and feeling utterly desperate.

Interlude (2006–2008): Intersections and In-Betweens

A week after the arrest, we returned to Jerusalem—this time to Zion Square, at the city center. What started out as a single protest vigil turned out to be a year-long campaign in which our group stood at the square for one hour every Friday afternoon, rain or shine, carrying signs, waving flags, giving away fliers and talking to people about the importance of the pride march.

At the end of each vigil, we performed a symbolic march of our own, walking up the street with our signs and flags. These vigils were highly successful and became well known in the community, in Jerusalem and elsewhere, attracting more and more participants each week. Today they are thought of as one of the contributing factors to the approval of the Jerusalem pride march the following year.

I think about all these things as part of my bisexual activist history.

Not only because I was involved with organizing them as bisexual, but also because this is where and how I learned how to be a bisexual activist.

The activist methods, ideology and critical thought that I've learned through my radical queer activism were the basis from which I came to tread on bisexual ground. I have learned to look at power structures with a keen eye, I learned to criticize normativity (hetero-, homo- and bi-), I learned to identify racism, sexism and transphobia at a glance, even at their most sophisticated forms. I learned about the strong connections between all of these things and capitalism, nationalism, fascism, Zionism and the occupation. I learned about inner-community hierarchies and how eagerly the 'good people fighting for our rights' will throw us overboard at the first sign of trouble and at the service of their own interests. I learned about violence, love, passion and leadership. I learned solidarity, rage and pride. All of these things I took with me to my bisexual politics and activism.

Politics and ideas were not the only thing I acquired, though. Slowly, the community that gathered around the Pink-Black Block, and the pride vigils morphed into what later became the transgender community. The radical politics stayed, but the focus changed. We started talking more and more about transgender politics, about transgender identities, about cissexism and about transphobia. During that time, I was quite involved with that community. I attended parties and other activities, and participated in the first transgender blocks in Jerusalem and in Tel Aviv. I connected to transgender politics in a very deep way and started reading a lot about the subject, what I read resonated with me. Never completely. The texts I'd read and the discourse in the community focused mostly on transmasculine experiences. I connected with the idea of gender as mutable, of deconstruction of the gender binary and of denaturalization of sex—but the experiences described were never mine. I didn't think about that as anything out of normal, though—my experience as bisexual has well prepared me to having to step just a few inches aside in order to 'fit' the images I was reading and talking about (never quite addressed to me). For a long time these issue echoed, but I did not feel entitled to call myself "genderqueer." I never felt

like I was ‘queer enough’ or ‘trans enough.’ The change came about when I was handed a flier about genderqueer identity in the first transgender block in Tel Aviv. It explained that some genderqueer people aren’t always visible as such, and that you don’t need to look or act a certain way to identify as genderqueer. That was the moment I acquired a new identity.

My experience with the transgender community continues being significant to this day, as my relationship to and with the community has been highly contested and often difficult. This community spoke—and still speaks—my language. It is a radical, fabulous, colorful, political, creative space for people of multiple identities, and there was a period of time when I felt I too had a place in it. In that community, I found language, politics, friends and lovers—but I also found pain, loneliness and isolation. Increasingly, I felt dislocated. Constantly moving these ‘few inches’ aside, being addressed to as something I was not, was becoming increasingly taxing for me. It seemed that being bisexual was out of the range of possibilities in the spaces I inhabited. Passing as a woman also rendered me invisible in terms of my genderqueer identity. I imagine a lot of people might have thought of me as a straight ally rather than a full member of the community. In fact, for years I had internalized that attitude myself and imagined that I had less of a right to speak about transgender issues or ‘for’ transgender people, a notion which I had only recently started to deconstruct. And of course, speaking about biphobia was never well rewarded, either. Eventually, it was the feeling of alienation which I felt with the transgender community that gave way to my need to form a new bisexual community.

But that was later.

The first transgender block in Jerusalem took place 2 weeks after the first one in Tel Aviv. The year was 2008. I was riding in a car with my friend Mark (who had recently come out as an FTM transgender[18]), another FTM trans friend, and two other bisexual genderqueers—all coming to participate in the march together with the transgender block. I do not recall the march itself—what came afterwards was much more important. The first drop of water that germinated the seed of bisexual activism in me. After the march, we reached the Bell Garden, where a stage was set and speeches were made.

(Some of the people from the block—and especially from our car—decided to yell out “bi and trans” every time one of the speakers said “gay and lesbian.”) Midspeeches and among the crowd, I saw one of the people from our car speaking to someone and heard the words “bisexual group” in their conversation.

An interlude is now in order. Throughout my years in the LGBT community (as I entered it at age 16 and to that day), I was always looking and waiting for a bisexual group to open. While in high school, I participated in the GLBT Association’s[19] youth group but stopped going after a while because it was mainly intended for gay males. I attended the lesbian youth group twice, and never returned again, as it was intended for lesbians only.

In those years (during and long after my participation in those groups), the GLBT Association constantly ran an ad in the *Pink Times* magazine,[20] saying that a bisexual group will soon open. I used to call them every now and again and ask when the group would start meeting, but it never came through. Eventually, I stopped trying. When in 2005 a first-ever bisexual support group was started in Jerusalem (by the first Israeli bisexual organization, Bisexuals in Israel, in cooperation with JOH), I chose not to attend, as I felt Jerusalem was too far for me to travel to on a monthly basis (this was before the pride vigils, when I arrived there every week). Two thousand and five was also the year in which a first-ever bisexual block marched in Jerusalem Pride (organized by Bisexuals in Israel)—but I was not there to see it, nor did I hear of it. I knew that Bisexuals in

Israel existed, and yet I'd never managed to find a way to contact them or join them. In 2006, on the eve of our illegal march, the Jerusalem bisexual group was preparing for a block at the pride cage. Their notification e-mail read: "There is a rumor running around that a march is still being held. This rumor is false and misleading! If such a march takes place, it will be without security or permission." (I didn't give it much thought back then, but reading it now, the irony is not lost on me.) My friends and I were actually planning to march with their block—but naturally, our plans were changed as we organized the illegal march.

And so, for years I was waiting for a bisexual group to open, for a bisexual community to start, for something to happen ... all the while, I was busy doing queer activism and not really thinking much about bisexual politics. I remember conversations with my friends about biphobia and bisexual erasure. We sometimes talked about how we felt ignored and marginalized as bisexuals in the queer community. However, our conversations never went deeper than that, and it seemed as though there was always something more important to do or to talk about. In fact, I never felt that doing anything was an option at all.

I remember one day visiting with a friend and seeing the *Bisexual Politics* anthology (Tucker, 1995) on the shelf. (The book had come from the GLBT Association's library after my friend's partner got kicked out of there for having married a man, thus proving herself 'actually straight.' She was the Association's bisexual community coordinator.) I remember feeling like I should be reading this book, like this was important—but something prevented me from picking it up. As if it wasn't quite important enough, or as if it was too important, and I was afraid of discovering something that hurt. An e-mail I wrote to bisexual activist Elad Livneh[21] only a few days before the 'march that didn't march' describes my intense emotional reaction to biphobia on the Internet and cites this reaction as the reason why I wasn't more involved with the online forum. In 2007 when Bisexuals in Israel stopped its activity, I was too busy doing other things to notice ...

And now the year was 2008, I was standing in the Jerusalem pride parade and watching my friends talking to Elad Livneh, who was inviting them to join the first bisexual support/social group in Tel Aviv. I immediately became excited and joined the conversation. I introduced myself to Elad, with whom I had only spoken online before, and asked about the group, wondering aloud how it could have happened that I didn't know about it. He told me that the group was relatively new and was meeting once a month at the new Tel Aviv LGBT center. I was literally overjoyed. This was something I had waited for, for years.

It was another month before I finally made it to the group for the first time, but this one month had started a huge change in my life and my activist history. The first drop was an e-mail Elad sent to the group on June 30, 2008.

Along with technical details about the next meeting's place and time was also a request sent to Elad by one American bisexual activist, a woman of whom I'd never heard before, by the name of Robyn Ochs.[22] Robyn was editing the second edition of an anthology of personal texts by bisexuals from around the world and had requested Elad to reach out to the Israeli community for texts. This led into two things: One, I had read one of my first books about bisexuality: *Getting Bi* (Ochs & Rowley, 2005)[23]; and second, I wrote a text for its second edition. This latter action was no less than historical for me—this was my first bisexual activist action, leading into many after it. It was also my first publication in a book, which got me very excited.

My essay was deeply influenced by the impression I've had of the book when I first read it. I was not pleased with many things I found there—along with the happiness and excitement of finally reading a book reflecting some of my own experiences and discussing bisexuality explic-

itly, I was also deeply discomforted by the gender binary language and liberal/assimilationist politics that I'd found in most of the essays. In my own text, I sought to distance myself as far as possible from that discourse, and I did so by rejecting the word *bisexual* and identifying as pansexual instead. My essay identified gender binarism and assimilationism with the word *bisexual*, while setting pansexuality as more radical, more queer and generally more evolved than bisexuality. These were my views at the time, and I now find them typical to (many parts of) pansexual discourse. Today I recognize this type of view as resonating with biphobia, situating bisexuality as an oppressive/privileged/nonpolitical "other" in contrast to other identities that are somehow naturally more subversive/radical/political—a practice old and familiar in the language of LGBTQ.[24] Today, whereas I still vehemently oppose mainstream bisexual discourse's gender binary language and liberal/assimilationist leanings, I now place this notion not within the word *bisexuality*, but within the historical development of the mainstream bisexual movement in the United States and Europe, which lead to this kind of problematic politics. That said, to this day, despite my passion and appreciation of the bisexual movement in general, looking at mainstream Western bisexual groups and their politics, I am constantly (and painfully) reminded of the reasons why people would want to disown the movement and take on a different identity. As to the word *bisexual* itself, I now think it's a very powerful word with many radical political meanings, which can be used as epistemological bases for the deconstruction of many hierarchies—in discourse and in activism.[25]

Another error that I wish I could now correct, I only learned by reading another essay in the book after receiving my copy—a text by Richard M. Juang (2009). Richard spoke about racialized[26] people and our families of origin, about how we learn to be ashamed of our families and to emphasize distance from our cultures of origin as proof and grounding of our queerness.

He then proceeded by offering an alternative narrative, describing how his family and familial space contributed to the development of his bisexual and genderqueer identities. I identified with the essay on all those three grounds, of being bisexual, genderqueer and racialized. After reading it, I realized that I had performed the same mistake that Richard was talking about in his essay: I wrote about my Mizrahi family as a conservative, limiting, 'backward' space. This was my attempt to vindicate Israel from orientalist views, writing that "not all families" in Israel were "like mine." However, I now realize that through this attempt, I was only reinforcing the very same attitudes towards racialized Israelis—namely, the Mizrahi women of my family (who are assertive, fierce and beautiful).

I also wrote about my identity, the place where I live, and the transgender community I then inhabited. I spoke about loneliness, isolation and oppression. I finished the essay with the words: "I want to step away from all of that. I want to create something new. I'm not sure what this thing is.

Maybe you could help me?" This was my call out for a new kind of activism.

For a new kind of community. From that moment on, I started slowly taking on that notion, taking more and more steps to create the kind of bisexual space that I had always wanted to have for myself.

Fourth Story (2008): First Steps and Beginnings

After writing the essay for *Getting Bi*, the next thing I did was design a flier for the bisexual group at the LGBT center. I enjoyed my first meeting with the group but was disturbed by the overwhelming majority of cisgender[27] men in a group which aspired to gender mixed. I worded the flier in a way that I hoped would appeal to women and gender deviants and explicitly mentioned that the group was open to people of all sexes and genders.

Thus, bringing more people to the group had become my first bisexual activist project. I photocopied and handed out the fliers, I advertised the group on many places on the Internet, and I even fought my terrifying stage fright to come up on stage at the community transgender party (DressUP) and invite people to the group. I was hopeful and motivated, and I had found a new passion within myself.

Looking back, this was probably the moment when things clicked. As I designed and printed the flier, I realized that throughout my years of queer activism, I had never thought to put these two things together: my bisexuality and my activism. Although I had activist skills and was putting energy into queer issues, and though I had always thought about and was disturbed by bisexual erasure, though I always sensed the need for a political bisexual community—I had never thought of making the connection between these two things. It was as if this wasn't an option at all, not even a question to be raised and then rejected—it simply did not exist. As I started working on the flier, I was able to identify this virtual nonoption as internalized biphobia.

Bisexual erasure ran so deep in my mind—and in the minds of my fellow (bisexual) activists—that we simply hadn't realized that this was a topic we could actually work on. Marginalization of the importance of bisexual issues was also deeply embedded within us—seemingly, there was always something 'more important' to do.

Today I realize that the struggle against biphobia, as a social structure, is a struggle for our lives, a struggle for our survival and for our very existence.

In a world in which bisexual people kill themselves, get sick, lose their homes, their families, their friends, their communities, their support, their jobs, their money, their education. In a world where people get bashed, beaten, killed, raped and much much more, all as a result of biphobia[28]—in a world dominated by structures of monosexism,[29] cissexism, heterosexism, sexism, racism, classism, speciesism, nationalism, militarism and many more forms directly influencing the lives of bisexuals—in a world such as this, fighting the struggle against biphobia and monosexism—and every form on Earth that is linked to it—is not only necessary, but also essential.

At that time, I didn't know about all these statistics of horror. However, the realization that the bisexual struggle was a struggle for myself, for my own life, and for the lives of many other bisexual people, had now taken root in my mind. This realization has since lead every one of my actions in bisexual activism and will probably remain so for the rest of my life.

One more thing I started doing at the time was writing. I had published my first *GoGay* article on bisexual erasure on November 19, 2008, in which I wrote about various instances of bisexual erasure that I had seen in the radical queer/feminist community. At the end of the article, I called out to all people of the bisexual spectrum[30] to unite and create a political community and activism to subvert bisexual erasure within the LGBTQ community.[31] I wrote:

In the last two years a transgender community was started, which did not exist before—an active, political and creative community, addressing important issues which have never been addressed before. Let’s do the same for ourselves—we also have needs, we also experience oppression, we also need spaces for speaking, for information, for support and for culture. Once we let ourselves be heard, once we see ourselves as we are—then others will surely follow our lead. (Eisner, 2008) I emphasize this passage not only because of its status as my first public call-out for a new Israeli bisexual movement, but also because of my mention of the transgender community as the inspirational source for the future bisexual community that I had in mind. The reason why this matters is that in Israel, the bisexual community has grown out of the transgender community, inheriting many of its traits, activist methods, thought and language. Furthermore, in Israel, the bisexual community was founded, and is led, by genderqueer and transgender people, fundamentally incorporating a nonbinary, gender-deviant and feminist perspective basis. I find this a particular point of strength within the bisexual movement in Israel, subverting much of the problematic gender-binary discourse and self-congratulatory transgender tokenism suffered by many bisexual communities in the United States and Europe, and creating a truly radical platform for rethinking sex, gender and sexuality. Without deconstructing binaries of sex and gender, we could never deconstruct the binary of sexual orientation. If the goal of the bisexual movement is to transform society and to end hierarchical sexual binaries, the first thing it needs to do is to break down the system of sex-gender-sexuality[32] and rebuild something new, starting out from zero.[33]

I finished the article by mentioning the new bisexual group at the LGBT center and invited people to attend. At the time, I believed that the existence of the group was important and essential to raise awareness of bisexuality and create a political bisexual community and activism. I continued with my efforts in advertising the group and in getting people to join, for many months, believing that the only reason why they didn’t come was internalized bisexual erasure and lack of awareness. However, at the same time, I felt increasingly uncomfortable within that group, sensing what I experienced as sexism and cissexism. The group continued being a cis male-dominated space, and I felt an increasing pressure to be the educator on these issues for the group. In addition, the people in the group seemed resistant and reluctant to do bisexual activism, and my attempts to push for such were encountered with not much more than appreciation for my own efforts.

Whereas this won me respect with some of the group members, it was also very draining for me, and I found myself finally attending the group less and less frequently, and attending only out of a sense of obligation to an obscure bisexual existence proved by the existence of the group. Finally, I realized that the group had stopped working for me and stopped attending.

The group, however, is still active and remains the longest-running bisexual activity currently in Israel.

Fifth Story (2008–2011): The B-Movies

When I was still attending the bisexual group, some people raised the idea that we might dedicate some of the group's meetings to watching movies together. The idea clicked with me—movie screenings are incredibly easy to organize—and being a film student, this was a natural field for me. I had been looking for ways of expanding events, increasing community formation and visibility for the bisexual community, and so the idea of forming a bisexual film club seemed important and fun. I contacted the LGBT center and suggested to start a monthly bisexual film club.

I use the word *suggested*, though in practice it was more like *requested*.

'Our' LGBT center often seems to carry the notion that by allowing us to organize activities for them, they are in fact doing us a favor. In fact, at that point I had so much internalized the exclusion of bisexuals from anywhere LGBT that I really was convinced they were doing us a favor by allowing us to use "their" space. In the subsequent years, this treatment repeated itself many times, as the center refused to give us a price discount (despite their self-professed policy to discount events targeted at marginalized communities, and despite many people's complaints of not being able to pay the entrance fee), and as the center kept moving us between rooms, rescheduling and sometimes even canceling our meetings, all according to their needs. During our second year, the center had one-sidedly decided to move the day of the club from Thursday to Sunday, causing the club to lose its group of regulars and sending the club into a year of temporary coma.

Nonetheless, during its first year of activity, the club had become an alternative bisexual group space for those who felt uncomfortable with the bisexual support/social group. The space within the club (which we named "B-Movies") was decidedly feminist and trans-inclusive. The people who showed up were exactly the kind of people that I felt the other group was missing: women, trans people, feminists and radicals. Today I see the club as yet another seed from which what is now the bisexual community first sprouted. Some of the people from the first B-Movies group were later also among the founders of our bisexual organization, Panorama, and among the instigators of the new wave of bisexual activism.

The club is currently still active, running monthly each first Wednesday of the month, after having been moved last year (its third) to the local anarchist/queer/vegan bar, the Rogatka, and subsequently, becoming a free entrance event. The Rogatka is a nonprofit club run by a volunteer anarchist collective for the purpose of providing community space as well as community resources, usually hosting radical political events, queer/transgender parties, punk shows and vegan workshops and events. These days, all bisexual community activities, save for the social/support group at the LGBT center, are held there. This choice of place is, of course, not coincidental and is one of many elements symbolizing the bisexual community's connections to the various forms of radical politics and communities in Israel.

Sixth Story (2009): Tel Aviv Pride Month

Around April 2009, I'd published an article on *GoGay* (one of many at the time) giving advice to LGTs on how to be good allies to bisexuals. Following the article, I found myself in conversation with one political partner of mine, trying to think up of ways to increase bisexual visibility and to further encourage the formation of a bisexual community. Once again, the transgender community served as direct source of inspiration for us, inheriting its grassroots community-building techniques. "How about organizing a bisexual party?" she wrote to me in an e-mail, "Parties do wonders to visibility, they're fun, positive, and they contributed loads to the transgender/queer community." Thus, we decided to organize a bisexual pride party for the Tel Aviv pride month.

We named the party MESS-e-BI (pronounced: *mess-ee-bee*, literally meaning: bi party) and set the date for the night of the Tel Aviv pride parade.

We knew that this would not be a one-time event, but a regular night, and put much thought into it accordingly. Our model for the party was similar to that of the queer and transgender parties, featuring music and dancing, alongside drag performances by community members. The significance of the drag performances for us was in allowing the community a space in which to be creative, while creating a unique style of performances for the bisexual community parties. In addition, the connection that this manifested to queer and transgender subcultures was also important to us, as we saw (and continue to see) ourselves as part of those communities, and embrace these histories as our own (acknowledging that bisexuals have always been part of them anyway). We invited DJs and drag performers we knew from other regular nights, such as the Tel Aviv-based DressUP, and the Jerusalem-based Gevald! As this was the first party, most of the performers were not, in fact, bisexual (as there wasn't much of a community at the time to form such a pool), however many of the performances focused on bisexuality as a topic.

We wanted everyone to feel welcome at the party. As bisexuals, we were all too accustomed to the painful reality of bisexual erasure and exclusion, as well as the feeling of never being named and thus never truly invited to queer parties and events. As a method of ensuring that people of all sexual orientations and gender identities felt welcome and invited, we explicitly wrote that the party was open to people of all sexes, genders and orientations. In addition, we included a long "grocery list" of sexual and gender identities, including bisexuals, pansexuals, omnisexuals, bi curious, questioning, un-labeled, lesbians who like boys, gays who like girls, queers, lesbians, gays, straights, transgenders, genderqueers, intersex, butches, femmes, BDSM[34] people, poly people, allies, partners and friends.[35]

The party was also decidedly nonprofit and financially accessible. Financial accessibility was particularly important to us, as we were aware that many in our community (as in any marginalized community) are unable to pay the high fees of many 'normal,' profit-oriented parties. It is worth noting here that, as I mentioned above, bisexuals have been found to be statistically more likely to suffer from poverty than gay males, lesbians or heterosexuals (Ulrich, 2011, p. 27). However, even regardless of this fact—the bisexual community (in Israel and anywhere) includes people from many additional marginalized groups, including women, transgender people, peo-

ple of color, disabled people, working-class people, youth and many more populations for whom money could be a problem. We therefore decided to have a three price range for the party: a regular price of ILS 30 (around US \$8.5), a discount price of ILS 25 (around US \$7), and a pay-as-much-as-you-can rule, for those who didn't have enough money to pay either. Our invitations always clearly state: "No one is left outside for lack of funds." In addition, we chose to hold the party on a Thursday (and not the more traditional Friday), so as to make sure that people had the option to arrive and leave by public transportation. The profits of the party were to be divided between the performers, the DJs, the organizers, and everyone else who helped out.

Another aspect that was important to us was sexual safety at the party, and the importance of creating a space with awareness of sexism and transphobia. We were aware that sexual (and gender) harassment is present everywhere, and that though there's really no way of avoiding it completely, there still are many ways of raising the issue to the surface and addressing it.

For this purpose, we decided to include a team responsible for dealing with sexual harassment at the party, and in addition, we read out a few guidelines about consent at the beginning of the party (and continue to do so at each party). We requested people not to touch others without first asking permission, we asked to be aware of—and to mind—the boundary between looking and staring, we mentioned that not everyone uses the same pronouns as they might seem to and that asking first is a good idea (an especially significant point in Hebrew, where *you* is gendered), we asked people not to take pictures of others without permission, and requested people to be aware that not everyone at the party is necessarily bisexual, and thus not everyone are interested in being approached or hit on by members of any gender.

We publicized the party everywhere, online and off, also receiving exposure through the official pride month calendar published by the Tel Aviv municipality. We were very excited—this was the second-ever bisexual party in Israel (having been preceded by a party in 2006 in Jerusalem, organized by the old JOH bisexual group, by then already dispersed), the first one in Tel Aviv, and certainly the first one to receive so much attention. We were making history.

Another thing that happened around that time was the creation of a national bisexual and pansexual mailing list for the community in Israel. Up until May 2009, all discussions about bisexuality and all invitations to bisexual events usually circulated around the transgender mailing list (trans.il). This kept going until members of trans.il had started complaining that bisexuals were hijacking the list. One day I received an e-mail from a transgender pansexual member of the trans.il list, suggesting me to start a new list for discussing bisexual topics. Once the list was founded, it started growing exponentially, and by the time only one week had gone by, 50 people were already registered, and lively discussions were taking place about the bisexual community, our goals and the future of bisexual activism. Today, the list is almost 3 years old, includes more than 250 registered members and is used as the main platform for bisexual activist organizing in Israel.

Around that time, the founding of our new bisexual/pansexual organization also took place. It was late April, and I had decided to organize a bisexual/pansexual block at the Tel Aviv pride parade. When I spoke to the person in charge, he notified me that a large corporation had decided to do-nate money to print banners for the various groups in the parade (in return for printing the company's logo on the back of the banner and receiving free advertising with the added PR benefit of being a 'donor'). This corporation, however, had set one condition, which was that banners should only be printed for older and more well-established groups. In practice, what this meant was that for the person in charge to be able to pass our bi group off as a well-established

one, I needed to make up a name, design a logo and then send it to him. After I went home, I got online and started speaking to a friend of mine, and asked him if he had any creative ideas for a name. The name he came up with was “Panorama,” corresponding with “pansexual,” as well as giving the feeling of a wide range of identities.

Thus I had notified the organizers of the pride parade, that the name of the bisexual group would be *Panorama—bi and pansexual community*. At first, I really thought that the name would be just that—a name. But very soon I saw that it took on a life of its own. Panorama quickly became not only a name, but also a representation, an ideology and an activist community.

Very soon we started discussing and having debates about the organization’s purposes and its agenda. However this came later ... for now, Panorama was a name on a banner to be printed for the parade.

The name of the organization, as well as the fact that I was organizing the bisexual/pansexual block, had also ‘won’ me a ticket into the semi-cret inner-circle of the decision-making mechanism in the Tel-Aviv LGBT community. For the first time, I was invited to a prepride parade meeting, intended for the heads of organizations in the community.

A side-step is now in order. The Tel Aviv pride parade has been taking place officially since 1998 (with precedents since 1987), and up until 2006 had been organized by the GLBT Association. In 2006, the Association lacked the funds to organize the annual parade, a problem that resulted with a takeover of the pride parade by the Tel Aviv municipality.

In 1998, I was a 10th-grade high school student and very passionate about what I thought of at the time as “gay and lesbian rights.” I had no idea that these parades that I attended in years 1998 to 2000 were the first official ones in Israel, I only knew that it was important for me to be in them. However, this was not an uncomplicated choice. Even when the GLBT Association was still in charge of the parade, the parade itself had been mostly unbearable. Firstly, it should be remembered that June in Tel Aviv is very very hot. Marching on the streets in the hours of the afternoon is no small thing for anyone; however, this is something that I, and many others, are willing to bear, if the purpose is important. However, the real problem for me was the structure of the parade—a succession of trucks playing loud music and advertising various commercial sponsors, muffling the sounds of the actual LGBT blocks; the various (straight) city officials on stage stroking their own egos for hours on end; and no clear political message but that of a consumerist party—was never my idea of a demonstration for social change. I felt that the parade was vacant, vapid and flat. I found myself attending yearly only by principle but feeling like being there meant absolutely nothing. Eventually, I stopped going (not without a pang of guilt).

Now, if the parade was commercialized and vapid under the GLBT Association’s direction, then under the municipality’s it became even more so.

Throughout the years, the trucks only became larger, the sponsors became bigger, and the political message became even more diluted. As the Tel Aviv municipality was now responsible for the parade, the municipality and its functionaries now determined the messages, the agenda and the content of the parade itself. Municipalities, of course, are not interested in resistance by their very nature—a resistance to LGBT-phobia[36] and a demand for liberation would naturally be threatening toward the governing structure of city and state. In addition, a pride march as demonstration would surely have driven the sponsors away and given the community one less opportunity for being good consumerists under capitalism. The municipality thus chose to further emphasize the ‘party,’ the consumerism and the vapid parts of the parade, while conveniently neglecting the political messages, the protest and resistance, presenting the illusion of

a happy, united Gay, Gay, Gay and Gay (GGGG)[37] community and happily treading over the concerns and needs of virtually every marginalized population under LGBTQ.

As the years went by, the municipality, along with the Israeli government, had found yet another use for the pride parade in Tel Aviv—pinkwashing. The government’s Ministry of Tourism along with the Tel Aviv municipality, had discovered that by emphasizing Israel’s ‘tolerant’ attitudes toward GGGGs and by presenting Tel Aviv as the “gay-friendly” haven of the ‘barbaric’ “homophobic” Arabic Middle East, they were managing to divert attention away from Israel’s war crimes, genocide and ethnic cleansing made against the Palestinians, thus successfully creating a false image of Israel as a “liberal progressive Western” country, a beacon of White light in the ‘darkness’ of the Middle East. Thus, a new kind of propaganda was sprouted—that focusing on the meager rights given to Jewish gays and lesbians (only) in Israel, while dismissing severe oppression made by the Israeli government against Palestinian queers (and the whole Palestinian people), and sweeping under any rumor of anti-LGBTQ violence and oppression in Israel made against Jewish queers. And 2009 was the year when the method of pinkwashing had first started gaining momentum.

Two thousand and nine was the 100th anniversary of the founding of Tel Aviv by Ashkenazi[38] colonialists on Palestinian land (including the Palestinian city of Jaffa). The entire year was marked by various celebrations organized by the municipality, which, in turn, had also claimed the pride parade as part of its colonialist celebration campaign, giving it the title of “100 reasons for pride” (obviously, a title that would never have been chosen even by the most assimilationist parts of the community itself). The municipality imposed the message with the help of the wealthy corporate sponsor responsible for printing the banners—underneath the logo of each group, was printed the slogan-reference, “One reason for pride.” Unfortunately, this was also the message carried on the banner of our bi block.

Attending my first prepride parade meeting at the LGBT center, organized by the municipality’s representative, was quite a negative experience for me. I had arrived to see a room full of people from the various LGBTQ organizations in the community, seeing the faces that held the power. Out of maybe 40 (or more) people in the room, I was the only out bisexual, one of two out transgender people in the room, one of three Mizrahis in the room, and one of 10 female-identified people. To tie this all together, I was certainly the only female Mizrahi genderqueer bisexual person present.

Each of these factors would have placed me in a lower status and power in a room full of Ashkenazi gay cis men—all of these combined have placed me as one of the most marginalized people in the room. I do not write this by way of complaint or self-victimization but to emphasize the power structure within the community. The community, more often than not, is ruled and represented by its members who have been benefactors of privilege in society. Those who are in power inside the LGBTQ community are the same ones who would have been in power in ‘general’ society had it not been for their one deviation from the standard—their homosexuality. Thus, the agenda often presented as the “LGBTQ” agenda, or the “LGBTQ” struggle for rights, in fact reflects the interests of this narrow group of people, for whom the only barrier from living their normal, privileged lives, is their inability to marry or to legally exploit the bodies of brown women in poverty to beget children and raise normative families (AKA “surrogacy” and “adoption”). Indeed, when there’s food on your plate and your stomach is full, you’re free to concern yourself with ‘more important’ matters.

In that meeting I had experienced this entire social structure personally.

The method used to run the meeting was ‘open,’ a method meaning that whoever speaks the loudest gets the permission to speak, and a method by which the ones with the most authority and privilege would receive the most opportunities to be heard as well as having their opinions respected and listened to. Speech is a political issue. When people from marginalized groups speak, people attribute us less authority and less importance. People listen less and respond less. They quickly dismiss our views as marginal and ignore our suggestions. As a result of these experiences, we learn that what we have to say is less important, less worth noting, not as smart or as significant as what other people have to say. We internalize dismissive treatment of ourselves and learn to dismiss what we have to say in advance. When we do speak, we have to reassure ourselves a thousand times that this is important enough to say, that we should make ourselves heard. And upon speaking, we are once again met with the same silencing treatment. This is what it means to be a person from a marginalized group in any setting involving people of privileged groups and is true for every kind of marginalization and privilege present, be it bisexual/monosexual, queer/heterosexual, transgender/cisgender, feminine gender/masculine gender, Black/White, disabled/able bodied and so on. To counter this construct, people should be aware of their privileges in relation to people from marginalized groups and pay attention to the space that each person takes up in the conversation.

People of marginalized groups should be encouraged to speak, and people with privileges should take care that they don’t take up more than their proportionate space in the discussion.

Of course, none of this was acknowledged or addressed in the meeting I attended. I sat quietly for most of the meeting and watched the ‘important’ people talk, feeling like I had nothing much to say, and much less opportunity to say it. However, at some point, the meeting’s ‘host’ (the mayor’s adviser on gay issues, Yaniv Waizman) went through the official pride month program, reading out the titles and descriptions of each and every party listed—every party, except the bisexual one. Suddenly, there was something important worth saying. I waited until he finished speaking so I could make a comment about the party (and hopefully, thereby subtly insinuate towards the ‘small,’ automatic exclusion that happened). However, as I started speaking, I was ignored and cut off by another speaker, a gay cis man. The man spoke for 10 minutes, after which I tried to speak again and was again cut off, this time by someone else. I spent the next 20 minutes trying to speak, each time starting and being ignored and cut off by someone else. This wasn’t done intentionally, of course. No one in the room knew me. However, the entire outset made it very clear that I was not one of the ‘important people’ in the room, was not part of the group of leaders, whose job is to speak and be listened to. When I finally did manage to speak, my news of the party were encountered with positive response; however, when Waizman looked at the paper in his hands to look at the event that he had ‘missed’, he read it out as “bisexual and fun-sexual party” (mispronouncing *pansexual*). This showed me how little people knew (or cared) about the bisexual community, despite their own self-professed good intentions.

I spent the rest of the month being entirely stressed out about the party and the parade, a kind of stress that was to repeat itself many times over in the following year, and that was characteristic of my activism at the time. At that point, I was working pretty much alone, making decisions and working on things generally by myself. I did this as I was certain that there was no one to do it but me, and that if I did nothing, well, then nothing would be done (an unimaginable option for me then, and one which I still struggle with today). Today I see this as resonating with the feeling of isolation that many bisexual people feel in regards to the community and also in regards to activism. I see this as a political issue influenced by the effects of internalized biph-

bia, because part of biphobia's destructive effects on all of us, is creating a disconnection and a separation between us (as bisexuals, as queers and as people), leaving us isolated and lonely, overburdened with work and quick to burn out as activists. In addition, doing things alone creates a power imbalance, meaning that few people have control over agenda, resources and organization. Throughout these first months I worked alone because I felt as if I had no one else to do this work with (and in many ways, I didn't). This left me exhausted and created a dynamic within the bisexual community in which on the one hand, all the hard work is cast upon me, and on the other hand, other people are structurally barred from accessing power.

Today I realize that sustainable activist work needs to be done together, creating groups and communities to help each other with work and with providing emotional (and other) support. The solidarity that we can experience through a shared struggle is also a counterattack to the society's biphobic structures isolating us from one another and is a revolutionary way of creating an alternative to the alienation and separation of mainstream society.

The disability justice movement calls this "interdependentness" and notes the necessity of connections between people as central to creating sustainable activism. In addition, using this kind of ethic allows us to subvert social values such as individuality and self-reliance, which glorify not only isolation but also able-bodiedness. Working through an ethic of interdependentness, politics is no longer something left 'outside' of our relationships and our personal lives, activism is not only something we 'do,' but also something we live. Our lives and our relationships have political meanings, and changing our lives is just one more way of fighting oppression and bringing about the revolution.[39]

The MESS-e-BI was held on June 11, the eve of the Tel Aviv pride parade, and was a huge success. To date, the first MESS-e-BI was the largest one yet, attracting many dozens of people. We opened the party with a word from the organizers, receiving a great applause as we welcomed people to the first bi and pansexual party in Tel Aviv, and invited people to join us in building our new community.

True to our origins, the MESS-e-BI performances underline an understanding of drag as political, not only in the way of being gender subversive (Butler, 1991), but also as a tool of raising and addressing various political issues. The performances, thus, are never merely there to entertain but are also perceived as located on a spectrum of political activism. Concurrently, the performances at that first party were many and diverse, running from light entertainment to bisexual pride, to LGBTQ solidarity and issues of feminism.

During the breaks between performances, the DJs played music while some people danced and others went outside to socialize. The evening ended at a late hour, and we received many compliments for the wonderful evening, asking when the next party was being planned.

Five hours after getting home, I had to wake up and organize the bisexual stand at the pride happening, and then the bisexual block at the parade. My levels of stress and exhaustion peaked as I went to the Meir Garden, where the happening was held. The bisexual stand shared a table with the BDSM stand—an apt intersection, as the BDSM group was organized by bisexual activist Pnina Moldovano, and as my lover, who came to help me with the stand, was dressed entirely in (vegan) BDSM gear. I had one bisexual flag, custom sewn for me for the bi party and for the bi/pan block, which I spread out on the table as a cloth. I also brought free purple ribbons for visibility, and cotton bisexual bracelets that I'd crocheted in advance (for sale). I'd also received an additional flag and some bisexual pins from one of the participants of the transgender block, who didn't need them anymore. In addition, I received lots and lots of bisexual stickers left over

from previous years, by Daniel Hoffman, the founder of the late Bisexuals in Israel. All of these, in addition to the large banner we received from the LGBT center, contributed to our visibility, which was modest but important at the parade. Our block was attended by about 10 people (most bisexual people I knew had decided to march with other, “more important” blocks), but the atmosphere was good and the consequence was historical. To the best of my knowledge, this was the first bisexual block in the history of the Tel Aviv pride parade.

I remember returning home from the parade, exhausted and aching, so tired that I couldn't even sleep. I lay on the bed with my lover, watching the sunset from the window coloring the room with gold and feeling relieved that everything was over with. Acknowledging that during the previous weeks, I had exhausted myself half to death, I decided not to participate in any other pride events or marches that year, and to focus on resting and recovering instead.

Seventh Story (2009): Jerusalem Pride

[Trigger warning: This story (as well as the next one) contains descriptions of violence that might be difficult to read. If you suspect this might be triggering for you or make you feel uncomfortable in any way, please consider reading these parts of the text in a place that feels safe for you and when you have emotional support available.]

On June 25, the day of the Jerusalem pride march (held that year to honor 40 years to Stonewall), I woke up deciding once again that I had no intention to attend. I had an exam that day, and in the days before it, I was not concerned with the march or its contents but rather with studying.

However, all this changed when I checked my e-mails that morning, to discover that at the very last minute that the JOH had relented to (awesome) pressure from the transgender community and added a transgender speaker to the list of speeches on stage.

A week beforehand, the Haifa pride march took place with a stage and speeches that included only one woman (a heterosexual ally) and a multitude of gay and straight white cis men. In response, two feminist activists, lesbian and bisexual, demanded the right to speak on stage and after some pressure and much insistence were given the microphone as the last speech. They spoke trying to remind people of the erased voices of women, bisexuals, lesbians, transgenders, Palestinians and all the other marginalized voices in the community. They sought to emphasize that the pride parade was supposed to represent and sound the voices of all groups in our communities rather than just one, and to point out the unequal distribution of power, status and agenda within and across our communities.

Following their speech, in the week preceding the Jerusalem pride march, both these activists sent e-mails to the JOH to ensure that the pride march would include a bisexual speaker. The JOH responded by saying that it was already too late, that the speeches had already been set, that speaking was limited to heads of organizations, and that bisexuals didn't need a speech anyway, as our needs would be covered by the multitudes of (yes) gay and straight white cis men.

The JOH's excuses fell short as I read JOH Director Yonathan Gher's e-mail to the trans.il mailing list, at 10 am that morning, stating at the last minute, that the JOH would permit a transgender speaker to go on stage. The speaker (who was unaffiliated to any organization) was allotted 3 minutes, thus proving that last-minute changes were indeed possible, if the spirit was willing. At 11 am, I called Gher, presenting myself as the head of the bisexual organization Panorama and demanded that the bisexual community would be allowed a speaker. If the JOH only wanted heads of organizations, I said, I was more than willing to speak as one myself. I spent the first 5 minutes of the call just trying to convince him to hear me out rather than hang up the phone. After I spoke, he hung up on me anyway.

Immediately after that call, I called my political partner who organized the first MESS-e-BI with me, and who had gone up on stage in Haifa the week beforehand. I told her that we were facing a rerun of last week's events and told her to brace herself. She and I then called some

other people to join us in our action, and I also notified the bisexual mailing list of a last-minute bisexual block at the Jerusalem pride march. Thus our protest action was born.

Before I start describing what happened, I need to make it very clear that when I thought of repeating the action from Haifa, what I was expecting was the same kind of response from the JOH as the two activists received from the organizers of the Haifa pride march: I expected that we would go there, argue with them a bit, pressure and demand and then be allowed a few minutes on stage. The idea that what actually happened, might happen, did not even occur to me, and when it did, it left huge imprints on my psyche. To this day, what happened there remains the one most traumatic event in my activist history, as well as the first and only such event in the history of the Israeli LGBTQ community.

Taking the bus to Jerusalem, I was tired and tense. Although I took the ride that was organized by the Tel Aviv University's LGBT group, there was no one there I knew, and I sat alone, feeling scared, furious and silenced, holding tight to my bisexual flag. I couldn't stop thinking about what I might say when I got on the stage, and I thought I would surely die. When I got to the march, I located our little action group, which consisted of five people—only to be split again into the bi block and the transgender block, as two of us remained with the bisexual block, and three marched as transgender. Our bi block in Jerusalem was a bit smaller in size than the one in Tel Aviv but perhaps more visible. We shouted slogans that we invented on the spot and had more bisexual flags than we had in the block in Tel Aviv. During the march, I was somewhat distracted from my anxiety, proud to be part of the bi block and feeling happy that people attended.

After the long walk of the march, we finally arrived at the Independence Garden, where the stage and the speeches were held. The speeches and performances were already long under way, and we were scared that we would lose our momentum. The stage was surrounded by a plastic security fence and attended by security forces (reminiscent of the 2005 stabbing). It is worth noting that security guards in Israel undergo training by the military.

In fact, the preferred people for such jobs are the ones who have had combat training during their military service. Many of the people who find jobs as security guards are ones who were combat soldiers during their mandatory military service, thus daily engaged and well versed in the various forms of violence extracted by the Israeli military toward the Palestinians. The JOH hired private security services; however, the security companies in Israel form part of the spectrum of militarism in our society, true to the origins of their training and to military security policies in Israel (read: violence and brutality, as well as racial profiling of Palestinians and Mizrahis).

We jumped the fence. Our plan was to occupy the back stage area and to refuse to leave without receiving the right to speak. Our plan was based on radical nonviolent protest, creating a conflict without harming people or property, and we were sure we would be heard. However, from the moment that we jumped the fence, the security guards were upon us. One guard took me by the hands and dragged me on the asphalt path, hurting my ankle in a way that took a month to heal, while another guard was going after my friends. As I was being dragged, I called out to the people in our group, and they came running for me, avoiding the other guard and combining their arms together with mine so as to prevent him from carrying me away. We sat on the grass, then, next to the path on which I was dragged, arms still combined, while the GLBT Association's Chairman Mike Hamel, acting as representative of the JOH, came to speak to us. We requested to be allowed on stage, asked to be given one minute, even 30 seconds, anything just to be able to speak our message. Hamel refused time and again, saying that it was already too late, that

the police would “shut them down,” that our perspectives were already covered by (once again) White cis-gay-male speakers. To our counterarguments, he replied claiming that we were in fact the violent ones and that we were the ones seeking to silence different voices, completely ignoring the physical violence that had just taken place, as well as the silent violence of current and historical muting and erasure of bisexual voices from the “LGBTQ” community.

Throughout all this mess, I failed to notice that one of us, Lilach, had disappeared out of sight. I was too occupied with trying to avoid getting beat up and then trying to get the JOH to relent, that I completely missed out the fact that Lilach had gone elsewhere. And thus, when I heard the word *bisexual* spoken on stage, the feeling that we actually succeeded was sudden, surprising and completely surreal. I instantly got up and ran toward the stairs leading to the stage. I didn’t hear what Lilach was saying, but as I reached the stage and climbed the stairs I heard her saying, “Soon they’re going to take me out by force.”

And then everything flickered again. The same guard who dragged me before was now jumping me and pushing me down the stairs, almost making me fall. As I reached the grass, he grabbed my wrists, bending my arms behind my back. I remember shouting out in pain, trying to sit down on the ground so he won’t be able to drag me again. I remember him saying something, which only later my friends told me was, “She’s going to get arrested today.” Everything was fast and slow and blurry. Pictures taken from the scene show Mike Hamel standing idly by and watching as the guard did what he did to me. At that moment, though, I didn’t know what was going on, certainly not who was watching. All I knew at that moment was pain and survival. Then somehow, eventually, the guard let me go. Only later had I been told that the people I was with had ripped his hands off of me.

A step aside. Just as the security guard had received his training in a military context, so was my response based in military trauma, as I had suffered violence before at the hands of police and military. It is worth noting that physical and other forms of violence are a routine occurrence as far as things are concerned for Palestinians (including those with Israeli citizenship). Many Palestinians need do nothing more than to practice their legal right to freedom of speech, to find themselves arrested for months without trial or release, for such charges as terrorism, assault of police officers (code word for “brutally arrested”) and other groundless claims. In general, the acceptable notion among police and military in Israel is that any protest—violent and nonviolent alike—against the Israeli occupation, constitutes an act of terrorism or support thereof. As to Israeli Jews—we are spared of prison time, however we do receive our dose of nice brutality in demonstrations.

As I was beaten by the guard, where I went in my head was the village of Bil’in. Bil’in is one of the many Palestinian villages which the Israeli separation wall had disconnected from the people’s land and livelihood.

It is also one of the prominent centers of solidarity struggle against the occupation, involving Palestinian, Israeli and international activists. For many years now, the village has been hosting weekly nonviolent demonstrations against the separation wall, each Friday afternoon. These demonstrations are routinely encountered with severe military violence, including use of tear gas, flash bangs and rubber bullets. Many people have been injured and some killed over the years by the IOF[40] attacks on the protesters. I was in Bil’in only once, years before, in 2006, and experienced all of these things that were previously only words. The experience of violence of an extent that I had not expected was the same in both these cases. The armed violence I’d been exposed to in Bil’in and suffered by the IOF was certainly more severe than the mere dragging

and kicking I'd experienced at the Jerusalem pride march; however, the undertone for me was the same. It was the violent attempt to silence resistance, it was the violence directed toward those who refuse to shut up, it was the same pain of trying to break out of the cycle of silence and violence and oppression and death—and being encountered only by the same blank face of the system that created the need to protest in the first place. It took me a month to fully recover from the trauma of being in Bil'in. And though I didn't know it then, on the backstage of pride—it took me over a month to recover from what happened in Jerusalem.

Finding myself sitting on the grass, short of breath and dizzy, disoriented and hurt, I stared around in confusion. My friends were nearby, shouting to the journalists that were standing near the stage, that bisexuals were in Stonewall, too, that we deserved a place in the community. It took me a few seconds to reorient myself to the shouting and the cameras and the crowd.

In my head, I was still falling, falling, falling. I got up from the grass and shouted that Stonewall was an illegal action, that the first pride march after Stonewall was organized by a bisexual, that without her we would not have been there that day.

The next point in time that I remember finds me sitting on the grass in a distance from the stage, alone and crying. The people from that action group were not my friends, nor people I felt close to. Now I'd lost them and had no one else. I tried to look but couldn't move one step. I felt like I was dying. I sat and didn't even try to move or try and stop the tears.

Bisexuals are the sexual orientation group most likely to suffer from depression (Ulrich, 2011, pp. 11–12, 14, 24), and this tendency has certainly not skipped me. I spent many years of my life dealing with depression, which in time has made it easy for me to identify it, and slowly learn how to deal with it. That moment was a learning moment. Depression and biphobia teach us that we're alone. They teach us that we're worthless. They teach us we deserve the pain. And as I sat there crying I realized that this was what was happening, and I remembered: two weeks beforehand, at the MESS-e-BI, Lilach had given me the only hug I had received all night. Later, when the party ended, we had a tiny conversation about friends and support, and I could tell she was a good person. I also knew that though we weren't close, and hadn't known each other for so long, we liked each other. I took my phone and called her, asking where she and the others were.

Apparently they went right beside the stage, standing close together with the people of the transgender block, whom had also shared their megaphone with us so we could keep protesting from the crowd. I sat there with Lilach and started crying again, this time being surrounded by people who cared.

Lilach hugged me on one side, and my friend (who wasn't yet my friend) Aylam Bar-Shalom put his arms around me from the other. I must have cried for 20 minutes, all the while hearing the hosts on stage praising the “good atmosphere” and saying how fun it was to be there, how good to see a march oh-so inclusive.

This was the first (and so far only) time that an LGBTQ organization in Israel had extracted physical violence against activists from the community.

It was also the moment when the bisexual movement in Israel was born.

When the speeches were done, we split up, only to rejoin together at the DressUP party held in the center of Jerusalem right after the march. I was falling apart. I wanted to go home, but I didn't want to go alone. I ended up staying for the entire night. Lilach stayed with me the whole time, hugging and me comforting me. I was starving and was grateful for the vegan food stand that the organizers had set up on the balcony (because I had no money on me, they also gave me food for

free). The DressUP organizers called us up on the stage, where we spoke about what happened, and where we finally received the support that we expected from the community. When I think about that evening, everything shows up tinged with black and grey, a snowy haze, the aftermath of violence, the need to stand and smile and act as if we're all still human. Some of the march organizers from the JOH attended the party. Every moment was tinged with the feeling of trying not to collapse, trying to hold together and hold on for just one more second, just one more, and then another, until I can finally get home. Almost no one made eye contact with me.

When it was Lilach's turn to perform, she went up on the stage with her guitar and dedicated her song to me. It was a song about love and the revolution, about creating change together, about love, sisterhood, rage and pride.[41] I saw the way she looked at me, the sound of her voice and the look in her eyes, and I knew she fell in love with me. Although our relationship only started a few months later—here, among the pride, violence, struggle, pain and hope—was the seed of our love.

After a long, long walk to the car, we took a ride back home with a friend. Four of us in the car, the hour was late, exhausted and ruined we spoke about bi politics. We spoke of the transgender community, about the JOH, about our feelings of erasure and homelessness, we spoke about the bisexual community that we wanted to build. We wanted a place where we would feel at home. A place to feel included and to be celebrated. Bisexuals are like weeds—we grow between the cracks, between the plots, wherever we are is the wrong place, always a disturbance, always ripped out. We wanted a place to feel welcome. We wanted to change the community. And we wanted to change society.

I woke up the next morning to an Internet buzzing with discussion about us and our action. It started with the *GoGay* news report about the march, including our action, and continued throughout the next month at an average rate of two articles per week, all writing and commenting about our action. As expected, most articles, and the overwhelming majority of reader responses, were negative. We were accused of any ill imaginable and possibly attributable to us—violence, aggressiveness, silencing behavior, even elitism and chauvinist machoism. A response article was published by one of the volunteers at the JOH, accusing us of lying in our telling of the story (which was published in *GoGay* 2 weeks after the incident). None of the articles discussed the violence against us or the JOH's responsibility for the exclusion and the violence that took place. The reader responses looked even worse, not only accusing us of all of these things, but also speaking out what the dignified published respondents were thinking but couldn't possibly say without outing themselves as biphobic: Why are bisexuals trying to insist on their place in the community? Bisexuality doesn't exist, bisexuals aren't part of the community, and even if they were, their needs are all already covered by the struggle for gay assimilationism—no unique bisexuality exists.

Again and again, the articles and the reader responses tried to silence us, urgently and violently.

What nobody realized was that all this dirt, all this biphobia and all of this silencing, was in fact forming a long and meaningful discussion in the community, speaking and addressing issues about bisexuality and bisexual people as a group, starting to engage with a topic that so far had been so deeply silenced nobody bothered to think about it. An additional benefit was that many bisexuals had heard about the action through the *GoGay* coverage and became aware of the bisexual movement, the bisexual community and bisexual politics. The community thus grew exponentially.

Nevertheless, that time was hard for me, and for over a month, all I felt was being haunted by the incident. The physical violence of the JOH and the verbal violence of the articles and the responses seemed to exist on a single continuum of silencing and erasure. It wouldn't let me go. I felt like I could not move on, lonely, depressed, stuck and constantly under attack.

Little solidarity came by way of the community, little comfort or support was offered to me.

A particularly disturbing memory is of a social event at the Rogatka, only a few days after the march. I came into a space where all the people present were people I knew, from the radical queer and transgender community.

Everyone also knew about what happened at the march, and the way we were treated with violence. I half-expected and half-hoped that people would approach me, ask about it and offer solidarity and sympathy, but none came.

In fact, nobody even said 'hi.'

There were, however, a few specs of light throughout this long ordeal: The first positive article about us was published one day after our action and was written by the chief editor of *GoGay* Tal Eitan. Tal congratulated us for our boldness and our daring, expressed solidarity with our goals and urged the bisexual community to unite into a new political movement. He wrote:

I was filled with happiness as I heard that a group of bi activists went up on stage, took over the microphone and told the organizers exactly what they thought about bisexual exclusion from the speeches. I was happy to hear that there are still people who can see the fences separating between pride and outside [...] that there are underdogs, who bite and scratch and kick, and make a lot of noise, and make a lot of people angry, but remind everyone of what truly matters. (Eitan, 2009)

Another speck of light was an e-mail that I, and the rest of our action group, received a few days after our action from a friend of mine, one of the organizers from JOH. My friend wrote sensitively, taking responsibility and apologizing for what happened, offering sympathy and constructive suggestions for the future. And though he wrote personally, and not as a representative of JOH, his e-mail was the only such expression of accountability that we had received from any member of the JOH, even until today.

A third was the second positive article published about us on *GoGay*, written by former head of the late "Bisexuals in Israel" Daniel Hoffman, an article that, in many ways, had sealed the month of horror and left us with some time to catch our breaths. In an article titled "A Letter to Fritz,"^[42] he wrote:

I promised I would update you when something important happened. So here it comes—remember I told you that even the holy city of Jerusalem had started hosting pride marches? That was a few years ago. And you remember I updated you that for the first time, in 2005, proud bisexuals marched there as well? So now, four years have passed, and again the community awoke to the sound of bisexuals, also in Jerusalem. A group of activists create perfect mayhem as they burst into the speech stage and one of them manages to reach the microphone, to snatch it and protest the bisexual exclusion by the rest of the community [...] Only a few seconds which gave birth to a shower of words, responses, interpretations, opinions, offenses, slander, flattery [...] Later, the opinion articles started sprouting. The dirt was tossed from every possible

direction and the erasure machine came into action, with emotional responses, with logical responses, with demagogic responses abound, with contradicting facts and the official responses. And perhaps this is a blessing in disguise? Perhaps the renewal of public discussion of bisexuals is in fact the central part[...]?

Today the bisexual community is struggling from a place of power—the stable space it claimed for its own. Suddenly you can read a reader response accusing the bisexual community of being “aggressive and imposing its opinion on the majority”. I didn’t know if that was sad, naïve or gladdening [...] Back then you told me: “So what if they hate? When you hate it ends up blowing in your face,” and I told you that in Hebrew it was also a pun.[43] For the hatred that was inside the community, blew up in its face at the Jerusalem march. And after the blow-up, after the fight, we’ll create a world of peace, the sound of silence. I only hope we use that sound for listening, for cooperation and for creativity. (Hoffman, 2009)

It took me a few more weeks until I felt like I was starting to recover.

What happened in Jerusalem had a deep effect on me, which continues to influence me to this day. Thinking today about what happened, I know that what hurt me the most was not the violence itself (as this was something I was already used to in various demonstrations and protests), but rather the fact that it was directed at us from within the community—the only place in the world that we expected to accept us, the community that we considered ours. To have been treated like that by members of your own community, by an organization whose self-described goal is to promote understanding, tolerance and cooperation, is to be derided and dismissed in the most painful way possible: to be betrayed by the ones you trust the most.

Our action has won us publicity, discussion, acknowledgment and a new bisexual movement—but the price we had to pay was dear. Today, I don’t regret our action, nor do I regret its results; from that moment on, we could no longer be ignored as a community (even if only as lip service), and for that achievement, I would have done it again. People heard about us, our community grew and our struggle started. However, I still wish that things could have been different, that the price would not have been so painful.

Eighth Story (2009): From Bad to Worse—The Bar-No’ar Shooting

I was finally starting to recover from the Jerusalem action: I remember the week when I finally started feeling like I was doing better. I had a university paper to write that I had not yet started due to the emotional distress I was undergoing, and at that last week I decided that I would begin writing after the week was done. I thought that the worst part was over, and that now I might be able to focus on resting, calming down and healing from that long month of June.

On Saturday, August 1, 2009, an anonymous man came into the GLBT Association’s youth club (the “Bar-No’ar”) and started shooting. Twelve were injured, and two killed: 26-year-old Nir Katz, and 16-year-old Liz Troubishi.

The killer was never caught and still roams free. An article I wrote and published on *GoGay* the next day describes my response, and the way that many of us had felt that night:

I was home last night when I received the message about the Bar-No’ar shooting. There were no headlines on the newspapers yet, and no reports, but rumors have already started running: a man came into the GLBT Association’s house and started shooting people. Eight were injured, we didn’t know if anyone was dead. The moments afterwards turned into one constant flow. Suddenly from eight, the number rose to ten, suddenly there were two dead. Suddenly there were phone calls, who’s okay, who’s not, who knew whom, who was there, what happened. Suddenly, names started appearing.

I’m still not sure I know what happened there. I went to sleep at midnight knowing I might have to wake up and join an emergency meeting. The phone might not have woken me up, but my fears, my thoughts and my sadness did. I slept very little, turning over in bed. Waiting for the night to end. Between one nap and the other, I fear. A deep, helpless, irrational fear: what if this killer breaks into my house, kills me too? I lie in bed and try to forget. And toss, and turn, and toss, and turn. For a few minutes, I dream everything is okay.

And how imaginary was that fear? The killer really did break into my house, and the killer really did murder me. And my blood, and my entrails, are right there on the floor, and the crying, and the hurt and the mourning, are all right here. Only this house was my metaphorical house, and I—I was other people. What this killer broke was the doors of our community, our doors of safety, and he killed and shot and injured us, who were inside [...]

I can’t get away from the feeling that none of us is safe, ever. That we all always need to stand guard and to struggle. To never forget or sink into complacency—this hatred is around us all. This hatred is rooted so deep in our society. The same night when

half of my friends attend a demonstration against the deportation of the refugees.[44] One day after a Facebook friend tells about military violence at a Palestinian wedding (a picture of his shirt, stained with blood). The same day when I read a discussion on the transgender mailing list about uniforms, military, occupation and aggression. One day after I receive a new book, *Getting Bi*, in which a text of mine is published, and cry out of excitement—because here’s a book that does not ignore me, here’s a place where I, too, am present. And into this maelstrom fall the gunshots, the bodies, the wounded. And I wonder why I ever tried sleeping.

That Sunday afternoon, a protest vigil took place in Rothschild Avenue by the place of the shooting. Scared and exhausted after a sleepless night and a day of work and worry, I came to the vigil holding my bisexual flag. I found Lilach, my friend and fellow bi activist Cameron, as well as others, and together we hurried toward the speech podium that the municipality representatives had placed there to take over the protest, which was put together organically by members of the community. In times of trauma, it’s sometimes easier to drown yourself in tasks—all day I’d been trying to call the people of the municipality and let them know that the bisexual community wanted a representative to speak at the vigil. I couldn’t catch them (and, of course, they didn’t think to contact us).

And so, my friends and I yet again repeated our method of approaching the organizers and asking to speak. After a few moments of convincing, they gave us one minute at the end, and one of us went up to speak, a speech that, perhaps was to the bi community, just as historical as our action in Jerusalem 2 months beforehand, as it located Panorama and our community, not only as vocal about queer politics, but also about the politics of government and state. It also later created many inner bi community debates, questioning our political positions as a community, and especially Panorama’s, as an organization.

Our representative spoke about the connections between the violence and militarism in Israeli society and the act of murder performed the night before. About a society in which hatred, fear and dehumanization is not only a standard but a social demand, a society built upon walls, separation and segregation, a society where every group foreign from the mainstream is fair game for attacks, oppression and marginalization—a society that produces violence, a society that produces murder. She spoke about the shooting not as an isolated incident but as an event intricately woven inside and sprouting out of a social atmosphere of violence, militarism, racism, sexism—and LGBT-phobia. In a society where it’s okay to attack celebrants of a wedding (if you’re the army and if they’re Palestinian); in a society where it’s acceptable to deport refugees running for their lives, for the only crime of being non-Jewish and Black; in a society where one out of four women gets raped and one out of three assaulted and yet survivors are being silenced, ignored, disregarded or harassed—in a society like that, it is also acceptable to shoot into a youth club, when the only crime staining the people within is being LGBTQ.[45]

After our representative spoke, the vigil ended and people started going home. A picture taken and later put up on Facebook shows me sitting at the side of the avenue next to the road, holding my flag and leaning my head on Lilach’s shoulder, trying not to cry. I was supposed to meet my family for dinner that evening and started contemplating whether now was a good time to come out. My body felt sore, and I was tired and miserable. I’d spent the 2 hours in between at an open Re-evaluation Counseling (RC)[46] meeting, organized and held that day to provide support for members of the LGBTQ community. I had to go early, run home, change my clothes and drop my

flag off, then meet my family at the restaurant. When I got there, they said I looked good. I felt like I was dying.

On Monday, a large meeting was held at the Tel Aviv LGBT center to discuss community response to the shooting, convened by the municipality.

Similar to meetings about the Tel Aviv pride parade and pride month, this meeting, despite its flowery title, was not in fact meant for consultation, but rather for updating community organizations and delegates on decisions already made behind closed doors. We came to the meeting on Monday evening to be told that a large rally will be held in Rabin Square on Saturday, and that the rally's slogan would be the militarist expression, familiar to us from Israeli right-wing politics, "We are not afraid." We were given to understand that a speakers' list was already well under way and that the entire rally was already being organized.

But this is not all that happened. On the night of the shooting, a new radical queer group (the Pink Coalition) had formed, as a response to the shooting, to inner community politics, and the way that things were managed. As I already mentioned, those in power positions had tried their best to take over the protest and to keep grassroots responses from happening. They also maintained a clear separation between the shooting and all other forms of violence in our society. When Israeli government and Knesset members had started offering their condolences (doubtlessly for their own political PRs rather than for any real sorrow), rather than to take the opportunity to protest the government's own responsibility for mass murder, ethnic cleansing, racism, capitalism, sexism, LGBT-phobia and many more abuses performed and perpetuated by the government and its members— those in power within the community embraced the attention and tried their best to cooperate. Needless to say, what this cooperation necessitated was presenting the government and media with nothing but palatable opinions, identities and faces within the LGBTQ community. Anyone too radical, too angry and hurt, too visibly queer or trans, too dark-skinned, too female, too disabled, and so on, was discretely removed from public attention and the eye of the media.[47]

Two more disturbing responses to the shooting were militarism and internalized LGBT-phobia. The militarist discourse of "We're not afraid" (of our "enemies") had hurt our ears and hearts, as people of the community were struggling for a space that would contain the multitude of emotions, sorrow and mourning that flew from us. Many of us were deeply anxious, some suffering post-traumatic stress. Many people didn't feel safe enough to go out of their houses unaccompanied. We were sad and afraid, and the militarist and patriarchal attempt to silence our sadness and our emotions made us frustrated, angry and depressed. In addition, from the moment the shooting happened, leading figures within the GGGG community (notably, biphobic, transphobic and sexist gay public figure Gal Uchovsky) had taken upon themselves to cast the blame on the community itself—accusing "closet cases" of being responsible for LGBT-phobia and the social ostracism of LGBTQs. An especially notorious article was published on *GoGay* by American Jewish gay porn director Michael Lucas, titled "A Letter to the Cowardly and Despicable Closet Cases," blaming bisexual men and other "closet cases" for the shooting.

All of these things were very much felt while we convened at the meeting. The air was tense, we knew it was going to be hard—the power relations we were already so accustomed to fighting within the community had risen to a volume that made us realize that this was going to be intense. But honestly, nothing prepared us for what happened next.

At the beginning of the meeting, a group of lesbian feminist activists attempted a takeover of the meeting, an action that I was incredibly happy—though fearful—to see. As Yaniv Waizman

(who convened the meeting) ran late, the women started the meeting without him. Coming to the meeting fearing for my chances of speaking and being heard, I immediately felt relieved when lesbian feminist activist Yaara Chotzen rose up and started conducting the meeting, stating that it will be held using feminist methods and making sure everyone would be heard.

What followed, however, was an outcry amongst the people present, who were apparently just waiting for the 'mighty leader' to arrive and show the little girls their rightful place. During the meeting, and from the moment that Waizman arrived, we were first reprimanded, and then silenced more and more vocally. The meeting blew up and broke off in the middle over matters of power, representation and speech: Who had the power to determine the message? Who had the power to choose the community's response? Who had the power to decide who gets to speak out on stage, and who gets silenced? All of these issues were also reflected in the meeting, as we were constantly yelled at, cut off, and (as always) accused of violence and aggressiveness. A friend of mine, suffering from post-traumatic stress, had started breaking down in the entrance hall of the center and (as she later told me) got violently pushed by the manager of the LGBT center for "making too much of a fuss." The meeting broke off and yet again reconvened, but without change of attitude or willingness to listen to those of us who were different.

After 3 hours of mayhem, we went upstairs for a queer support meeting.

As we reached the room, I collapsed on the stairs crying. In my head, I went back to Jerusalem, where I and my friends were beaten and kicked off of the stage for attempting the very same thing: to let our voices be heard. Just like then, I and my friends had confronted those in power in attempt to speak for ourselves, hoping to find a space of acceptance, a crack of solidarity, only to be pushed back, silenced and excluded once more.

It's worth noting the reasons for our silencing, which exist on two levels: the visible and the invisible, the spoken and the unspoken. On the visible/spoken level, the most oft-cited reason for the silencing that took—and that keeps taking- place, is our radical left politics. This is worth noting because our opposition to the occupation is held in particularly problematic regard—the connection that we sought to expose, between the shooting, the occupation and racist violence in Israel was one that most assimilationists had strongly opposed—especially in that speaking out those opinions would ruin their newfound romance with the government. On the invisible/unspoken level lies biphobia, transphobia and lesbophobia: the belief that our groups, our opinions and our struggles are at best marginal and unimportant and at worst an impudent disruption to the proper course of community organizing and agenda.

As it turned out, the pressure worked. With no small effort, after the meeting and the mayhem, members of the Pink Coalition, including myself, had activated as much pressure as possible on the municipality and its functionaries to let bisexuals, transgenders, lesbians and Palestinians have a representation on stage at the Saturday rally. And so, in a rally 3 hours long, after 20 minutes given solely to our LGBT-phobic President Shimon Peres, and many minutes given to various straight and gay White cis men, the one lesbian speaker received 5 minutes to speak, the transgender speaker received 2, the bisexual speaker received 30 seconds, as did the gay Palestinian speaker. Following the meeting, the municipality had also changed the slogan of the rally from "We're not afraid" to "Moving on with pride," a slightly less patriarchal/militarist message. This was the first time in the history of the Israeli LGBTQ community, that a bisexual representative had been invited to speak on stage in advance. Later on, the municipality was applauded by the community for the wide diversity it had allowed. Little did they know that the

real work was done by us, the grassroots activists, and that without our pressure, no one would have gone on stage but the same old junta of the GGGG elite, conveniently leaving us outside.

Seven months later, we discovered that the murdered activist Nir Katz (R.I.P) had identified as bisexual for many years of his life, preferring to be unlabeled throughout his last few years. Nir had written an article against biphobia in 2005, in which, among other things, he wrote: “A bisexual is anyone who identifies as such [...] and no one has the right to deny him of his identity, especially people from the gay community” (Katz, 2005). In light of his words, it is sad, infuriating and ironic to think about the way his bisexuality was conveniently erased—along with his veganism and his antioccupation activism—all in favor of speaking about him as gay and as an ex-soldier, to the pride and glory of the State and the community.

I did not attend the rally. The week of protest and fighting ended for me in a candlelight Take Back the Night march, organized and attended by the Pink Coalition on Thursday evening. We walked on Rothschild Avenue, where the shooting took place, and continued to HaChashmal Garden in south Tel Aviv. There we held an open stage, where I read out my text of pain, rage and mourning that I’d written in the beginning of that week. As I read it out, I felt all eyes upon me, I felt them listening, and I felt my text taking shape within the minds and hearts of those who listened. I spoke with pain and with rage, with fear and no hope, choking back tears, I let my voice shout and then break. I finished reading to lift my eyes from the paper and see the eyes of the stage host red and bright with tears, and lifting my eyes to the audience, I saw those tears again, reflected. I had never been listened to like that: understood. As I walked down from our improvised stage, I felt that for one moment, we had succeeded in our goal. For one moment, we created the solidarity, the attentiveness, the listening and support that we all had been craving, pursuing and aching for all week. For just a moment, our community was hurt, mourning, angry and depressed—but also soft, strong, loving and accepting.

Ninth Story (2009–2010): Process, Conflict and (Partial) Resolutions

The Jerusalem action and protest vigil speech had created many discussions and debates within the bi community regarding our ideology and politics.

One particularly emotional response to the protest vigil speech on the bisexual mailing list, accusing the speaker (and the rest of us) of “inserting politics where it didn’t belong” marked the beginning of a 2-year long debate (never completely resolved, always somehow alive) about our community’s political identity. Very soon, discussions were sparked up as to whether our community—and our organization, Panorama—should be officially identified with left-wing politics as well as with feminism, or whether we should stick to the one topic of bisexual politics while remaining silent regarding other issues. Another question arising strongly was whether we, the activist core of Panorama, were representative of the bisexual community—for, regardless of Panorama’s official political status, we were all well known as feminist, anarchist and radical queer activists, and there was no disguising the fact that this is who we were and those were our opinions.

At that point in time, Panorama was still named merely “Bi and Pansexual Community,” and the stance that I maintained at the time was that we should avoid vocalizing our feminist, anarchist and state-related political opinions while doing bisexual activism. My reason for this was my hope that the organization would be as inclusive as possible for anyone wanting to join, worried that setting up such a political standard would put many people off. Many others, however, felt that the organization that we had founded together could only be inclusive of us if we could be open about our opinions rather than attempt to hide them. We needed a space where we could feel at home, and where we could enjoy the fruits of our labor by allowing ourselves free expression and promotion of the ideas in which we believe. In addition, as the status quo is always determinant in the formation of communities, keeping silent on certain issues often results in tolerance of these same problems within the silent space. As society is sexist—remaining silent on matters of feminism would maintain the presence of sexism in the community; because society is racist and militarist—remaining silent on these matters would maintain the same. We did not want to buy into the status quo of silence and oppression, and we did not want to accept these things in the community we were striving to form for ourselves.

Panorama’s first meeting was held on August 25, 2009, and its agenda likewise reflected the tension between these two perspectives. During the meeting, we had decided to add the word *feminist* to our name, thus changing the name of the organization from “Panorama—Bi and Pansexual Community” into “Panorama—Bi and Pansexual Feminist Community.” The left wing political debate, though, remained unresolved. The meeting itself, however, was held at the Left Bank club—a left-wing community center and the Israeli communist party’s headquarters. The location, of course, bore its own message and was a sign for the decisions to come. Other topics discussed at the meeting were our goals regarding bisexual community and politics, as well as

ideas for actions and activities. In the short term, many of the things remained spoken rather than done, and yet we had created a source of inspiration for the long run—indeed, many of the actions we discussed back then, are now coming into fruition, whereas others have been around for much longer.

Panorama meetings are managed using feminist and anarchist methods: anyone can show up at the meetings; moderation is rotated with each meeting (while also encouraging people who never moderated before to volunteer); speaking is done in turns, either through rounds or through a list (wherein whoever raises her or his hand is put on the list and given a turn to speak); it is forbidden to cut each other off mid-speech, and to save time, we use anarchist “sign language”—using our hands to convey agreement, request to interrupt, offer a technical point, and so on. Thus we make sure that everyone is given a chance to speak her or his opinion and to listen to others. Decisions are made by consensus. Another bylaw was resolved unanimously on the second time that we convened: each meeting shall be accompanied by a vegan cake.

Our second and third meetings were convened on April and May 2010 and held in my house, discussing the left-wing political issue, and finally resolving that Panorama will be officially identified as a radical left-wing organization, without derogating from its focus on bisexual politics and bisexual activism. However, this debate has never entirely ceased and is constantly alive within the community—no longer so much on the mailing list, but certainly in online forums. Many people still feel unrepresented by Panorama and its radical activist core, creating an urgent need for a second bisexual organization in Israel. Many times the founding of a second organization has been discussed among the nonradicals of the community; however, such an organization is yet to have taken form.

Despite the political division, however, Panorama has nonetheless succeeded in creating and maintaining a friendly community for most anyone interested in joining it. People who strongly oppose Panorama’s radical political stances nonetheless attend many of our events and reportedly enjoy them. In addition, the community’s mixed population, along with the core activists’ radical activism, methods and views, leads to a state where new people who join the community are able to learn more about radical queer, feminist and left-wing politics, thus locating the community as a center of information and education for new activists.

Interlude (2010): Progression and Achievements

2010 was the year of parades for the Israeli LGBTQ community. The pain and rage for and around the shooting had accumulated and were translated into an explosion of activist energy and action. The increasing divisions between the radical queers and the assimilationist GGGs also joined in the picture and created a multitude of energy among us, which we diverted into radical queer activism and the creation of alternatives within the community. Pride and protest marches bloomed in many cities in Israel, most of them as a result of grassroots efforts.

The activist rise around the shooting, as well as the Jerusalem action, had dramatically increased bisexual visibility and awareness, and the bisexual community was represented by speakers on almost every pride march that year in many parts of the country. For the first time in the history of the community, organizers of marches approached us to ensure a speaker ahead of time in their attempts to be inclusive—or to create tokens.

All throughout the year, the community grew. With the increased exposure bisexual politics had received, more and more people found their way to join the community. Our activities had by then become regular and the community became anchored around three central platforms: the online mailing list, the various social activities and political activism. In this, too, our community took after the transgender community, which is anchored around similar platforms. Our mailing list grew and still keeps growing, allowing political discussions and debates, as well as advertising of social events and community news. The social events (the B-Movies, the MESS-e-BI, the social evening Coffee Bi, as well as other regular and irregular activities) had become and continue to be a space in which to socialize, meet people and create friendships and other relationships, thus providing a social base to the community. The political activism enables us to be creative, to work together, contribute to the community, raise bisexual awareness and create social change.

Two thousand and ten was also the year in which the first academic panel on bisexuality was featured, at the 10th annual queer studies convention in Israel, *An Other Sex*. The panel included three speakers: Esther Rapoport spoke about bisexuality and the colonial discourse on primitivism, a second speaker spoke about compulsory monogamy and polyamorous existence (following Adrienne Rich[48]), and I spoke about repressed bisexuality in film. The panel itself was a direct result of contact I've made the previous year with the organizers at Tel Aviv University (and in particular with Prof. Aeyal Gross), and conversations about the topic throughout the year. On my part, I took the effort to encourage people from the community to submit proposals about bisexuality. On their part, it was good to see a willingness to feature a panel on this topic for the first time in the history of the convention.

In the summer of 2010, three pride marches were held in Tel Aviv: one by the municipality, and two alternative. The first was named the “radical march” and was organized by transgender activist Elisha (Shuki) Alexander, a march mainly focusing on queer resistance to the occupation. This was only a little over a week after the Gaza flotilla slaughter: an incident in which the IOF

attacked the Gaza Freedom Flotilla, a peace activist initiative meant to break the naval siege on Gaza and transfer humanitarian aid supplies and construction materials into besieged Gaza. Before reaching occupied Israeli territorial water, the flotilla was attacked by the Israeli commando unit Shayetet 13, who then killed nine activists, injured dozens and subsequently arrested and deported everyone on board. Similar to any Israeli military attack on civilians (or anyone at all), this too was immediately and automatically justified by the Israeli government, parliament, media and public, and this too, was followed by a week full of left-wing demonstrations in protest of the slaughter and the continuing siege. The day of the Tel Aviv pride was too soon after the incident for us to forget, and indeed many felt the need to commemorate the incident in the radical pride march.

The second was named the “community pride march,” attempting a different message of protest against the municipality’s control of the pride parade and its contents, against the silencing of marginalized LGBTQ communities (including the Palestinian LGBTQ community), and against social LGBT-phobia, particularly in response to the shooting. This march was organized by a group called “Marching for Change,” of which bisexuals formed a prominent part—namely, Lilach Ben-David, Eran Cohen-Geva and myself.

The motivation for me to take part in organizing such a parade was strong and inevitable, derived from the previous year’s events and my realization that I had nothing to look for within the mainstream GGGG community of assimilationists. I wanted to put my energy where I could receive something back rather than being trampled and drained. In addition, and as always, I sought to contribute to the creation of something new within the community, to attempt once more to create a queer home for myself and change both the community and society as a whole.

After long months of work, our community march took place on the same day and at the same time as the municipality’s ‘official’ parade (though in different locations). Our march started out from south Tel Aviv, marching into the city center

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