

THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN COLLEGIAN

Collegian Columnists Homepage Opinion

Parcells: Am I queer enough?: Biphobia in LGBTQIA+ discourse harms us all

Hannah Parcells, Content Managing Editor September 24, 2024



The Colorado State University Pride Resource Center hosts a booth for National Coming into Queerness Day Oct 11, 2023. The center had many resources for LGBTQIA+ education and a photo booth with pride flags.

Editor's Note: All opinion section content reflects the views of the individual author only and does not represent a stance taken by The Collegian or its editorial board.

September is Bisexual Visibility Month, and as someone who identifies as bisexual, I've been thinking quite a bit about this idea of visibility and what it truly means.

Ad

The queer community is often painted with one broad brush, especially in conversation with primarily straight people. This can give the impression that queerness is a monolithic experience.

The notion that there is one true queer experience is harmful to everyone in the queer community, as it automatically minimizes any experiences that fall outside those specific criteria. Discourse within the queer community often stems from this rhetoric and results in horizontal aggression on both sides of the issue.

Many bisexual people are probably familiar with harmful rhetoric surrounding their identity from other queer people: "You can pass as straight," "You're only queer if you're in a same-gender relationship," or, "You can just choose to date a straight person."

This sort of biphobia sucks for many reasons. First, it minimizes the experiences of bi people and implies any oppression they face from straight people is a choice. Second, it minimizes bi people's place in queer spaces — spaces where we are supposed to be safe.

The discourse within the queer community about which group of people has more privilege is frankly frustrating. It pits two oppressed groups against each other instead of allowing room for productive conversations about the diverse experiences that come with different identities.

I want to make it clear that while I am addressing biphobia within the queer community, I am in no way arguing that bi people have it worse than other queer people.

"Queer people are minimized, judged and hated in society plenty. We don't need to treat each other with the same disrespect. When queer people are pitted against each other, we lose the ability to fight against the systems of oppression that harm us both."

Bisexual people's oppression should not be propped up on a pedestal, and it is critical to understand that in no way should other queer people be viewed as another class of oppressors.

The true source of our oppression is never another queer person, regardless of the harm we might inflict when we don't examine and acknowledge our own internalized biases. Societal structures of power continue to be the source of queer people's oppression, while also being the very systems that make everyone's experience with oppression different.

Oppression does not exist solely on a binary axis, and it certainly isn't a competition. There is no prize for the winner of the "who has it worse" debate — a debate that often completely ignores the role intersectionality plays in our experiences.

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This discourse within the community only serves to isolate and invalidate other queer people. It hurts, and when we're isolated and hurting, we lash out. Hurt people hurt people.

As a queer person who has proudly identified as bisexual for quite some time now, I hate the rhetoric that comes with this discourse. I grew up seeing it in queer spaces — spaces where I should have been able to figure out my identity safely.

Instead, I felt invalidated, even as I was coming to terms with my sexuality.

I was able to work through those insecurities as I grew up — thanks in part to having a solid community around me — but that doesn't erase the harm, and it doesn't mean my experience is universal.

Plenty of young queer people aren't as lucky as I was, and my heart aches for them knowing they may be made to feel unwelcome in spaces where they should be safe.

The validity of my identity does not depend on other people's perceptions, and I'm sick of having to defend my presence in queer spaces.

Sexuality isn't defined by who you're dating. Sexuality is defined by sexual attraction. Someone who has no romantic or sexual experience is just as valid in their sexuality as someone who has had those experiences.

Bisexuality is defined equally by attraction to the same gender and by attraction to gender identities other than your own. Both experiences are key to being bisexual.

Harmful stereotypes about bisexual people continue to be comfortably embraced by society. These stereotypes appear differently depending on who is espousing them, but they are harmful nonetheless.

Queer people are minimized, judged and hated in society plenty. We don't need to treat each other with the same disrespect. When queer people are pitted against each other, we lose the ability to fight against the systems of oppression that harm us both.

The queer community is vibrantly diverse, but in order to maintain a healthy and accepting environment, we must be willing to acknowledge and be compassionate toward other queer people's experiences, regardless of whether or not those experiences are similar to our own.

Reach Hannah Parcells at letters@collegian.com or on Twitter @hannahparcells.

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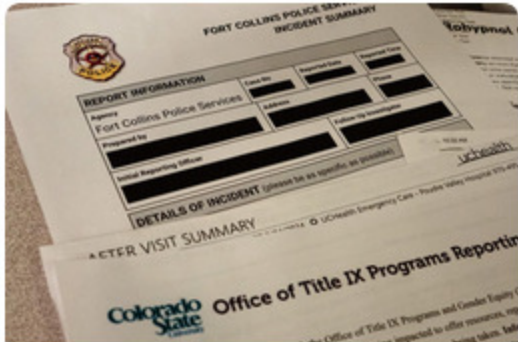
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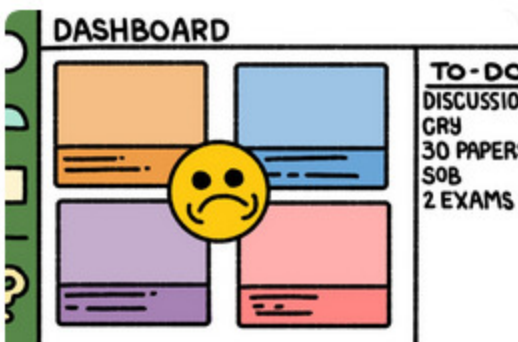
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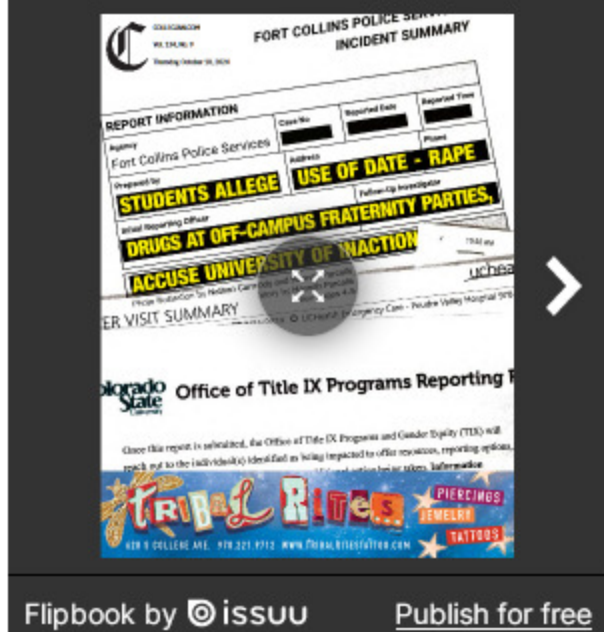


Hannah Parcells, Content Managing Editor

Hannah Parcells is incredibly proud to step into the role of content managing editor at The Collegian for the 2024-25 school year. Parcells is currently pursuing two degrees: a Bachelor of Science in psychology and a Bachelor of Arts in political science with a concentration in global politics. Stubborn, opinionated and endlessly curious, Parcells has always been passionate about understanding and helping other people, and she hopes to use her education to leave the world a little better than she found it. Born into an Air Force family, Parcells spent her youth exploring the Great Plains and developed a deep love of all things nature. When she wasn't exploring the world at her fingertips, Parcells often had her nose stuck in a book, which is how she discovered her love of science, history and, above all, a good story. Parcells stumbled headfirst into The Collegian in fall 2023 as a reporter when she transferred to Colorado State University and a friend recommended it due to her passion for writing. She fell in love with chasing down stories and became the news editor at the end of her first semester. Parcells strongly believes in the power of information and is committed to upholding The Collegian's long history of honest reporting and encouraging readers to get out and explore the world around them. On the off chance she's not buried in textbooks, research papers or policy analyses, Parcells can be found on a hike, listening to music or at any local bookstore or coffee shop, feeding her ongoing addiction to both caffeine and good books.



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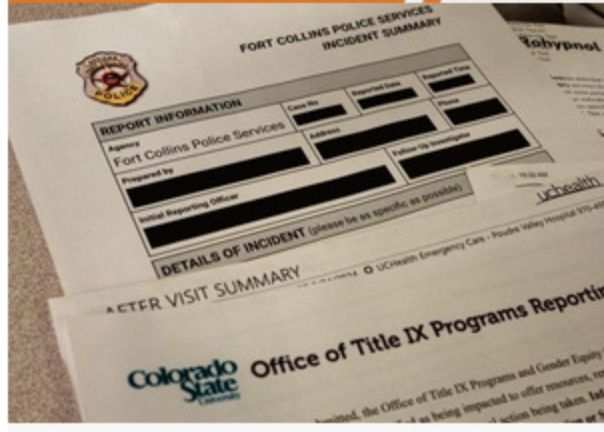


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