Putting the “B” in LGBT

June 2, 2009 By Oriol R. Gutierrez Jr.

The Bi Writers Association (BWA) on Saturday, May 30, hosted the inaugural National Summit on Putting the “B” in LGBT at the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Community Center in New York City.

The all-day event was an impressive gathering of bisexual people and allies. Bi people from all walks of life were represented in the audience and on the panels, including activists, authors, journalists and politicians.

Sheela Lambert--founder of BWA and the event organizer--invited the National Lesbian & Gay Journalists Association (NLGJA) to send a representative for the closing plenary. As VP of print and new media for NLGJA, I gladly volunteered. I have always believed that all of us under the LGBT rainbow should be each others allies.

The event consisted of the following five panels:
Opening Plenary - Putting the “B” in LGBT
Bisexuality: Exploding the Myths
Community Panel: Telling Our Stories
Crafting the Message: How to Put the “B” in LGBT
Closing Plenary - Putting the “B” in LGBT: How Can We Do a Better Job?

The last two panels tackled the subject of fair and accurate coverage of bisexual people.

Joshua Lynsen of the *Washington Blade* led the Crafting the Message panel. He went through examples of good and not-so-good coverage. He also took us through the BWA media guide, which included interesting tips that would be more inclusive and accurate.

Tips included the suggestion of using “LGBT rights” versus “gay rights”; “same-sex marriage” versus “gay marriage”; “same-sex couples” versus “gay couples”; and other things such as not assuming someone’s sexual orientation based on the gender of his or her current partner.

Lynsen also called NLGJA out on the issue of our name not being as inclusive as it could be. Representatives from the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF) also shared in getting that criticism. It’s a legitimate critique,

which should be considered.

A running theme throughout the day was countering the myth that bisexual people fuel the spread of HIV (i.e., the so-called "down low" phenomenon). As part of my talk during the closing plenary, I made sure to add my two cents to further dispel this myth. It's one of the few instances that bisexual people are mentioned in the mainstream media, so it's an important issue.

By the end of the event, I was genuinely moved. The personal stories that were shared throughout the day of the struggles of bisexual people sensitized me not just intellectually, but emotionally. I consider myself a progressive. But if I have room to grow on my understanding of bisexual people, then I suspect many of us have work to do on this front.

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http://beta.docker.poz.com/blog/putting-the-b-in-lgb