

Defining Our Own Sexual Liberation

Critical Moment

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We believe it makes sense to live a life that allows us a right to enter into multiple intimate relationships. We believe the notion of finding everything you've ever wanted in one person, whether a friend or lover, is a huge expectation for any one person to ask for or fulfill. This is our story of how we met, found community, and are building a vision together.

Ignacio's story

I began my non-monogamous sexual self-exploration after breaking up with a woman I spent five years with. The last year of our relationship, we mutually decided to "open it up". Our years together had been very fulfilling but after several years together, came to the conclusion that our love for one another did not diminish the lust, attraction and need for other queer people in our lives. We embarked on a journey that most of our friends had only whispered about. It was a process that seemed natural to us but a process all too unfamiliar. We struggled and I believe our break-up had much to do with the lack of information and community around this lifestyle.

After our foiled attempt at an alternative relationship I was not deterred. I knew it would be difficult due to societal views but I felt monogamy was a societal construct I did not want to be controlled by. Controlling mechanisms ranged from being viewed and named a "whore", my motherhood being put into question because I was not setting a good example for my daughter, being told I would get a sexually transmitted disease and eventually live a lonely existence due to my selfishness. Regardless of those roadblocks I continued to explore. I ventured into other open relationships, being "single" and dating several people and experimenting with primary partners and swinging. This journey is a continual one that I cherish because I am creating my own view and ideas about what intimate relationships, love and sex mean to me.

YK's story

My relationships have always been unconventional in some ways, whether because of my queerness, my gender identity or my color. This is one of the reasons I began a self-evaluation process to find out what felt right to me outside of the limitations of what I was told to feel, think and do.

My personal exploration of non-monogamy came about as I began to recognize that my attractions for many people were not validated when I was in relationships with one person. I felt strongly that it was healthy to name, express and pursue desire when I felt it. This desire was never limited to one single person, yet I was told by society and laws to limit myself to desire only one. I was also told that everyone else was supposed to find one person. I had many different types of relationships that I cherish, felt happiness in,

and learned lessons from. Yet throughout all of this, I felt that society's constructs were limiting me by controlling my body, mind, sex and sexuality.

As a person who strives for personal liberation in all aspects of my life, as a person who constantly struggles to grow and change, I have been finding that I am able to find my own path, create my own relationships and define my own ideas of sex, sexuality, love and relationships. I look forward to my future growth and embrace my personal journey of purging, unlearning, creating and naming.

Finding Community

When we met, we had been traversing through our separate paths along an unwritten script of non-monogamy. There is no guidebook for how to live your life, if you live it outside of social convention. As with any situation that is exploratory, or without a script, we had each been learning through trial and error and self-exploration.

We met through our political organizing work and found that we had many things in common, including being political non-monogamous queer people of color.

Non-monogamy is political to us because it strives to break from social constructions of what it means to be in any kind of relationship with another person or persons. It also aims to break from the mentality of "I own you," which we believe comes from a capitalist idea of ownership and property.

What is polyamory?

How many friends do you have? Do you have just one? Most people would say, they have many different kinds of friends. Friends that are supportive, friends that you hang out to have fun with, friends that offer community, and friends that give you love.

We have many friends because we have many sides to each of us. Friends touch upon and access different aspects of our personality, background and experiences.

This is how we feel when we talk about intimate relationships.

Even when you think you find someone that fulfills many or even most of your wants and needs, we cannot assume that person will never change, and we cannot assume that you will never change. Growth is a natural process of life, we learn this as we find and lose friends and have lovers come and go. We hope that there is never a moment in our lives that we do not grow, learn or change.

Our belief is in a philosophy that opens our minds up to thinking dynamically about ways we can interact and grow. In this context, we are people who have different identities: being queer, being people of color. We explore different ways to find this with and through our interactions with people around us.

We call this philosophy polyamory.

Polyamory goes beyond non-monogamy. It is negotiated, ethical non-monogamy. Polyamory is the non-possessive, honest, responsible and ethical philosophy and practice of interacting intimately with multiple people simultaneously. It gives one the option of having relationships outside of social norms. Polyamory is from the root words Poly (meaning "many") and Amour (meaning "love/lovers"); hence "many loves" or Polyamory.

Polyamory is an umbrella term, it can mean many things, such as being in a triad (when there are three people who are intimate with each other), having a primary partner, being single but having multiple lovers or relationships. To us, revolutionary polyamory means purging the seeds of oppression that try to corner us into ownership, control of our bodies, and illusions of security through something outside of yourself.

Examining and coming into this philosophy is not an easy task.

Similar to coming out as a queer or transgender person of color in a homophobic/transphobic, racist society, we have needed to learn the process of shedding the ways in which society at large has taught us how to live, love and navigate through this world. This means unlearning and challenging most of the information we are given on a daily basis. This means questioning the ways we are told the world is supposed to work. Even with polyamory, we knew that many models of intimate relationships were largely based in the dominant culture, i.e. white culture.

As people of color, we work to find creative ways to expand our culture, language and relationships outside of the box that we are pushed into by dominant culture.

The boxes we are often pushed into are "family values", religion, and "ethics". We are initially taught that a family is a man and a woman married with children. Even now, family values are being challenged as being queer people with children, but perhaps we need to think about breaking from the framework of conventional structures altogether. We are taught that there are ways to conduct ourselves in relationships even when we are dating, that there is one religion with its values that takes precedence over other beliefs, that society dictates what is wrong and what is right.

Being polyamorous is not anti-love or anti-relationship, but simply thinking differently about relationships that were created for us. The government and state have always tried to enforce how we are supposed to use our bodies as queer people, poor people and people of color. Poor women of color going through forced sterilization, past sodomy laws, sex work, abstinence until marriage policies and Bush's Healthy Marriage Initiative are examples of our bodies being controlled by others, not by ourselves.

Polyamory fits into our life, because of our politics, our practice and our beliefs. Even when we are considered outsiders and not understood because of these beliefs, we continue to pursue our desires and ideas with passion. We don't claim to be perfect or

better than anyone else, but we do understand that we live in a country that oppresses our actions, thoughts and desires. These are the things that we are trying to break out of.

A Revolutionstar Experience

Revolutionstar Experience is the effort we, as two queer political polyamorous people of color, put together to bring to our larger communities. It is our philosophy of detoxifying our people of color bodies, minds and spirits from oppression within and outside of ourselves. As we walk through our lives we are bombarded with dominant culture and systemic oppression. Purging and unlearning these is key to finding personal and collective liberation. We emphasize constant self-evaluation and self-criticism as part of our personal work and growth. Only after we have gone through individual growth and are fully conscious with ourselves can we begin building with our larger community.

We started Revolutionstar Experience to bring our personal experiences of purging, and still continuously purging, ourselves of the seeds of poison that we as people of color, especially queer, genderqueer and trans folks of color, experience, and how these seeds alter our existence and intimate interactions.

Revolution can mean many things, in this case, to us, it means upsetting the setup. Polyamory is revolutionary to us because it is a way to deconstruct and dismantle the systems and setup that attempt to oppress us through sexism, racism, homophobia, transphobia and other oppressions.

We do many things to try to help our queer, genderqueer and trans communities reach this radical vision, such as workshops, a retreat called Purge to explore our bodies, sex and sexuality, an effort called OP3 (Oppressed People's Protection Plan) to talk about violence within our own communities due to systemic control, and also organize play parties, events where we offer space for queer, genderqueer and transgender people of color to express themselves without inhibition.

We aim to make our play parties spaces for people to think about and exercise sexual liberation without guilt, shame, judgment or single-mindedness. We think about these as opportunities for queer, genderqueer and transgender people of color to reach a radical vision collectively.

These projects are liberating in that they allow us to question, act, and feel freer within our own bodies and minds outside of the ideology that bombards us. Our workshops have focused on the important intersections between politics and "alternative" ways queer, poor people and people of color can begin to consciously use our own bodies that the state has historically tried to police. We not only emphasize the importance of sexual liberation but also how our sexual oppression has been tied to policies, politics, the state and laws. We try to address how sexual liberation is not just about the sex we have but it is also hindered by the systemic control of our thoughts.

Our collective and individual growth continues through our work with Revolutionstar Experience. We look forward to this lifelong journey.

Ignacio Gilberto Rivera is a Trans-Multi-Gender queer, Black Boricua, lecturer, poet, spoken-word performance artist and sex educator.

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