

Choi's Story

Choi is a Muslim and identifies as bisexual and female.

I'm a middle class Far East Asian Londoner who grew up in a homophobic part of London. I also lived in a Muslim country where there was an unofficial L, G & T scene. Note the missing B in that sequence.

"Allah SWT made me the way I am. I could've been fashioned as a so called normal Muslimah, but I'm not. I could've easily given up on Islam, but I haven't. Had I been a conventional and 'ideal' Muslimah I would view the religion as something to be practiced without thought or meaningful belief. I believe that with my identity it allows me to practice the religion in a more wholesome manner. Allah SWT has created us in all forms and identities-to say that one deserves to exist more than the other is another way of denying Allah's SWT diversity in creation."



I'm not entirely out-this is more of a Bi thing, though of course being a person of faith and non-hetero identity is still pending overall acceptance from all types of societies, both queer and none queer. The way I used to come out as queer was introducing people to my female beau I was dating at the time and making it clear that I hung around with women who were clearly into other women. For me and others around me, it spoke in volumes more than sitting down and spelling it out in words. Funnily enough this method worked at the time with my fellow Muslims more than others.

"The majority of bisexuals don't come out for a variety of reasons. The most notable would be the lack of understanding about bisexuality, alongside the stigma that goes along with it. Not all of us are fond of being labelled as confused slappers chasing after everyone's tail-it's not very flattering to see others flatter themselves as our expense. We don't have that many role models in society and somehow, even though they've been in mixed gender relationships they're still labelled as gay or straight (i.e. Freddie Mercury, Oscar Wilde and Pink to name a few) Others choose not to come out as we have a nuanced attitude towards sexual orientation and our scene is very inclusive-there's no right or wrong way to be an 'ideal' bisexual, it's just not having a preference on genders you're attracted to. Therefore, we don't really have an exclusive and in your face approach to things-we just are who we are."

When I was growing up there were emerging groups of queer people of faith but none for Muslims. I could never call myself L or B. It took moving to a Muslim country to see that we existed but there was definitely a lack of acknowledgement for bisexuals-even the women's

support group I went to for queer women were pretty biphobic to the extent of telling women who were questioning their sexuality, not to be bisexual.

Same sex attraction is still not something that is blatantly discussed amongst my conventional Muslim peers and family, but the same could be said if I were to practice a lifestyle that wasn't in accordance to their norms anyway. I could be a multi-millionaire bio chemist with a cure for all the diseases in the world and still get labelled as a bad Muslim for not knowing how to make a decent curry for a family of five while playing wallflower. Much is to be said for people of faith who claim that everyone should believe in religion but are selective of who should believe it in the first place. I usually don't have time for them-if I go to masjid, I say my prayers, read a bit of Qur'an, go for a halal meal and that's it.

“With the LGBTQI community I make it clear that I am Muslim. People take in my race, mainly because I'm not South or Middle East Asian. A lot are surprised, some would fetchingly try and give me a lecture about how I have little choice in being a Muslim. But I make it clear that as is with any other religion, Islam is my choice and for a multitude of reasons that I wouldn't know had I not been part of this identity.”

Being Muslim LGBTQIA+ is considered pretty unique, which is sadly enforced by society more than religion itself. I am proud to be part of the bisexual community which I believe is the most inclusive in the LGBTQI world. Islam, when practiced at its best is also inclusive – our Golden Age made sure of that. As said, I would rather not deny what Allah SWT created me as.

“I think that there is a gradual change for LGBTQA+ Muslims in the West which is going positively, albeit it at a delayed pace. However, with our fellow Muslim queer kin in Muslim countries who have been living peacefully in their integral ways, I do think they have been in the sudden spotlight which hasn't been beneficial for them. The gay venues that I used to hang out in the Muslim places where I have lived have all shut down and laws are stricter now. So called religious communities are cherry picking what constitutes as Islam while deflecting this on others and trying to make the religion completely inaccessible. On the flip side as Muslim LGBTQIAs are gaining more ground it also debunks the arguments of Far-Right Nazis using scapegoating arguments of homophobic Muslims to kick out brown people from Western countries. At your service, people. You're welcome.”

It is important to have organisations like Hidayah for people to know that life does not revolve purely around your sexual orientation. It revolves around you. Sexual orientation is just one part of you, not the entirety of it. No one has a right to decide for you what identity you should belong to. No one has a right to tell you what you should practice. There doesn't need to be a choice between religion and sexual orientation. Not all of us have to pick up that bottle of Pinot Grigio and a bacon sandwich during Ramadan just because we're told that being Muslim and LGBTQIA++ isn't possible. Religion is a personal decision for ourselves because that's who it's

supposed to enrich and support. It's important that we have more faith groups that allow you to be who you can be, rather than what you can't.

“Bisexuals talk too much. Please don't take it as a sign that we're chatting you up.”