

*Live Like Someone  
Left The Gate  
Open*

NARRATIVE  
POETRY FROM A  
LESBIAN MORMON

By Kimberly Burnham

**Live Like Someone  
Left the Gate Open**

**Kimberly Burnham**

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## Preface

It is 2012, and there are still people who want me dead because I love a woman. The purpose of *Live Like Someone Left the Gate Open*, which is narrative poetry, is to inspire self-compassion and courage in readers who feel different from their families or alienated within a tight-knit community. It is designed to expand the mind, unlock the heart, and ignite the spirit of the reader. Perhaps it will comfort some and confront others with my human vulnerability.

Brené Brown said, "If you put shame in a Petri dish, it needs three things to grow exponentially: secrecy, silence, and judgment." I share these narrative poems because I will no longer be a silent party to the war inside myself, between my Mormon childhood and my lesbian activist present. I am contributing my experiences in hopes that the war on women, the gay community, all minorities and those who are different will end.

There is a quote: "A strong person stands up for themselves, a stronger person stands up for others." I am standing up for myself and saying, "This is who I am," in the hopes that others will also be empowered to stand against hate and bigotry, wherever it is found.

My hope is that we are moving towards a society where all voices are vital and valued, and each unique one of us will find a place where we can contribute to peace and abundance for ourselves and

for our communities. And so the purpose of *Live Like Someone Left The Gate Open* is to add my voice and inspire others to do the same—because we aren't yet in that peaceful and abundant place.

Two of the poems as noted were originally published in Inner Child Press anthologies.

I recently posted a video on YouTube as part of the "*Mitt Gets Worse*" campaign. The title is a play on the "*It Gets Better*" program, which is designed to reach out to youth in the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual and Queer community (LGBTQ) and say to them, "You are not alone. Don't kill yourself because it does get better." Within minutes of posting my video, I had two comments: "Kimberly, You speak from the heart, we appreciate that. Romney would be terrible for the country. God help us!" and "Homosexuality & Feminism are satanic agendas to destroy the foundation humanity was planted on, foundation built calculatedly by our creator, sustainer, & savior."

Both sides claim, "God is on our side." The only way that is possible is if we come together as individuals, communities, and countries, seeing the similarities in ourselves and ultimately being seen.

Kimberly Burnham  
Spokane, WA

## About the Author: Kimberly Burnham, PhD

Born full of potential, wild and free in the American West, Kimberly Burnham roamed the world. She saw it through the eyes of a woman descended from generations of Mormon pioneers, as a woman who graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Zoology (Marine and Aquatic Biology) from Brigham Young University in 1982 and a PhD in Integrative Medicine in 1996. As a lesbian, she came out to herself and her family after serving my mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons) in Tokyo, Japan.

Her first published work bearing only her first name to identify the authorship was a chapter in Lilith's 1988 anthology *Guide to Gracious Lesbian Living*, entitled "*The Secret Life of a Working Woman's Wife*." Kimberly is also the author of the messenger mini-book *Our Fractal Nature, a Journey of Self-Discovery and Connection*; a chapter entitled "*Fractals: Seeing the Patterns in our Existence*" in Jack Canfield's *Pearls of Wisdom: 30 Inspirational Ideas to Live Your Best Life Now!* and a chapter entitled, "*The Eyes Observing Your World*" featured in Christine Kloser's anthology *Pebbles in the Pond: Transforming the World One Person at a Time* (2012). Her chapter in

Several other books: are written from her perspective as part scientist, part wizard, and part massage therapist as I help people see, experience, and move in new and different ways. My goal is to

change the face of brain health, foster hope, and help you experience this incredible world.

*Live Like Someone Left the Gate Open* is my first book of poetry, although I have had individual poems published in the Inner Child Press' anthologies *Year of the Poet* 2014 and 2015 series, *Hot Summer Nights* and *I Want My Poetry to . . . .*

A self-professed global nomad, I teach healing modalities internationally. I am a fifth-generation Mormon, a lesbian activist, and a transformational author. I speak out about how we are all connected, and I encourage both large audiences and individuals to recognize their similarities to others in order to find connection and comfort. One of my personal mantras is, "Do what you feel passionate about." Passion will reveal your paths to success and safety, and at the same time it provides opportunities to learn from people who are different from you. My message is strengthened through personal experiences of diversity, having grown up in the US, Colombia, Belgium, Japan, and Canada. I currently live in Spokane, WA with my partner, Elizabeth W. Goldstein.

More resources can be found at:

[KimberlyBurnhamPhD.com](http://KimberlyBurnhamPhD.com)

[CreatingCalmNetwork.com/alternative-health-and-wellness.html](http://CreatingCalmNetwork.com/alternative-health-and-wellness.html)

[InnerChildPress.com/the-Year-of-the-Poet.php](http://InnerChildPress.com/the-Year-of-the-Poet.php)

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## Who Am I?

I have always felt different—different from my siblings, classmates, and colleagues. I feel my difference as I relate to people at church, in synagogues, at school, at work, in airports, in clinical settings, even at a red rock beach. A product of my childhood, having grown up around the world and with all sorts of people, I understand diversity—diversity of languages, cultures, religions, beliefs, and appetites. Practically from the time I was born in Provo, Utah, I had a sense of myself as unique in the world.

*Live Like Someone Left the Gate Open* is about coming to terms with being different and unique—just as all of us are. It is also about dealing with the losses we sometimes experience when we move forward or in a new direction.

I am the quintessential third-culture kid, a child who has lived in several cultures, a global nomad, although not always by choice. It wasn't until I was seventeen that I first felt the loss of a familiar place more keenly than the thrill of a new "home", a new experience, a new era in my life. Whether you have travelled extensively or not, perhaps like me you have experienced the rich tapestry of life, eating new foods, talking with strangers, observing life from within and without the distinct and diverse cultures of this amazing world.

I reach out to the stranger, the one who is different, the one who sticks out at an odd angle from

the pattern. I see you trying to fit in, camouflaging yourself as an average member of a tight-knit group. I feel in my body the challenges of being different. I am a chameleon.

Growing up, church was the one place I felt safely welcomed and comfortable. Even the buildings looked pretty much the same; they were designed with similar layouts whether we were in Los Angeles or Bogota or Brussels. Even in strange lands, I found people like me. We shared a view of God, of the purpose of life, of where we came from before our parents created us on this earth, and what we could expect after we died. I grew up enjoying an idyllic life as a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. And as a Mormon I served a year and a half mission in Japan when I was twenty-one. It was then that I started bumping up against the reality that maybe I didn't fit in as well as I had hoped.

Within two years of serving in the Tokyo North Mission (from September 1978 to March 1980) I knew for sure I didn't fit in. I went into hiding, pretending to be someone I am not so I could continue my church membership long enough to graduate from church-owned Brigham Young University in 1982, just after I kissed the girl.

I lived my life like a pendulum swinging from one extreme to the other. I would vacillate between outright lies when confronted by my family or employer about my sexuality, and then days later, I'd march in the Toronto Gay Pride parade, shouting as

loud as I could, "I am here, I am queer, get used to it." Then to church on Sunday. It was a confusing time.

The poems in this collection chronicle my struggle to discover who I am when I feel safe and comfortable, and what I mean to the people closest to me, those people who know me and love me. The journey has not always easy, and it's not even really over. I still don't always know who I am to the people I love, or even to the woman I am in love with.

With an abundance of love and self-development, I have come to a place where it matters more who I am to myself than who I am to you. At 55, I am more interested in how I can make our world a better place and who I can learn from than I am in creating the drama of trying to find love and security where there is none. Today I use my rich experience of diversity to serve my community, my family and myself.

And having found places where I can serve, contribute, and matter, I wake up each day ready to create an emotionally rich, abundant colorful life without regrets. In other words, I am trying to live like someone left the gate open on purpose for me. I invite you to take the journey with me from a birthing of self, a sense of home and a welcoming community, through the turmoil and confusion of leaving one community for another, to a place where different doesn't mean bad and each of our voices is vital and valued.

*Who Am I to You?*

A big party at your parent's place  
a family friend asks you to dance  
you sit on the edge of his chair  
laughing, talking as if

I don't watch  
with territorial bile rising  
your short skirt's hem  
touching him

Who am I to you?  
Not here in our bed,  
but out in the world, browsing for books  
near home, far from work  
where no one must know  
us, our love

"Look at this quote," I turn to say  
and find you way across  
the store talking to a stranger  
never met but know  
at once—your ex

The way you stand,  
the way he looks is how  
I know  
but not what you will say if  
I come close

Who am I to you?  
mayhem of the mind  
crazed by doubt  
I imagine an introduction  
and can't bear to hear  
"a friend"  
so I turn and head home alone  
without making you choose  
love, family, work,  
without even saying goodbye.



*Straight Allies*

Some start as bigots  
till the day love  
questions reality.  
"Seriously, do you not know  
any gay people?"

"You know me!"  
Imagine yourself 30 years  
from now, the feeling  
as time marches  
forward into peace.

You can do for us  
what we can't do for ourselves.  
You can lend your authority  
to voices that love.

People assume  
straight and white  
you sustain their hate.  
The world will change  
because it is right.  
Where will you stand?

Having seen me  
reveal my breakable heart  
and speak difficult words.  
"You know me."  
"You love me."

*Gaijin!*

Outside person,  
stranger in a strange land,  
foreigner.

Merciless in their shouting,  
small children alternate between  
pointing out my foreigner status  
and English words of a popular commercial:  
"This is a pen," they say, waving  
their hands in the air.

In Japanese, I say,  
"No, I am a Nihonjin, Japanese."  
The kids laugh.  
Tall, brown shoulder-length hair, hazel eyes—  
just my existence makes their point.  
I am an outside person.  
I don't belong  
to the prevailing culture.  
On my way to see a friend.

Later she will send me a picture  
of her baby and I, inscribed  
on the back with, "Congratulations,  
you are the first foreigner  
to hold my baby."  
Constantly reminded.

"No, I am Japanese," I say

with a smile. It is a joke,  
a pun of sorts. In Japanese  
I continue, "How many legs do I have?"  
"Nihon" the answer: "Two legs."  
The same sounds,  
different characters  
from the "Nihon" of Japan,  
the land of the rising sun.

"I am a Nihonjin," I say.  
"Jin" means person, human being, and so  
I say "I am a two-legged person"  
as the syllable sounds say "I am Japanese."

The children recognizing the pun  
laugh off to school,  
unconvinced.  
Still an outsider,  
never to be part of the in crowd.

*Loving Differently From You*

Don't judge me for salting watermelon,  
putting mayo on fries, juicy mango  
dripping, coconut milk enveloping  
gluten-free quinoa. Palpably unique,  
not an ordinary story, I recognize  
the quiet intensity of specific love.

Don't judge me for loving her smell  
after she plants pinkish-purple pansies,  
the hot stones on my back, the way  
her breath comes in frustration  
from her right shoulder,  
or that she can haul  
a table saw from our basement  
and build a raised bed for tiny strawberry  
husk tomatoes, lemon cucumbers,  
20th century pears and Goji berries.

Don't judge me for loving in far-flung  
mountain retreats, while meditating  
in Buddhist centers, on airplanes  
high above foreign lands, in workshops  
learning her number 9 to my 3,  
her inspirational ENFP to my INTJ scientist,  
willing myself  
to understand every aspect and  
how deeply we are connected.

Don't judge me, my love

of the self-soothing twist  
of her hair  
over a rough patch  
at her neck,  
all the things distinctively  
my love, like earthy beets  
in my waking consciousness  
where I am free to be  
outstandingly me in her arms.

(Originally Published in Inner Child Press's Hot  
Summer Night, 2012)

## *Load-Bearing Relationships*

Who are you?  
Your connection with self,  
a load-bearing relationship?  
Fine weaving into the fabric of life  
a rainbow pink shawl  
warming every part  
of one.

The tenuous bridge between  
articulating element of cells,  
systems, individuals, communities.  
Will it bear the load,  
a single straw  
of alienation,  
a sense of separation?

A drop of foreignness  
washing away the bridge,  
the pain of a back broken,  
connective tissue stretched  
beyond tensile strength,  
mechanical pride, prowess, lioness.  
Is yours  
a load-bearing relationship?

*Ghost of the Recent Past*

You would see me I suppose  
if we stood face to face.  
Old friends insist I still  
physically exist, in joy now.

But like railroad tracks  
our paths never cross,  
seeming to at first glance  
but no accidental reunion  
in the distance.

I left my latest book  
in the crack between the screen  
and your door, wrapped  
in plastic against the rain,  
inscribed with the love  
of years shared.

But you've moved  
to another plane,  
my emails unanswered,  
the voice I leave  
on your machine  
doesn't seem to make a sound  
in your universe.

A party I say, love to see you  
reaching out over the rift  
breaking apart my world

as I walked away  
from the place we both worked  
the mentor we both loved  
into my new life  
where I am not crushed  
but must live without you.



*Funhouse Mirrors*

Have you ever been in fun  
home with funny mirrors  
you look tall, slender, right  
next to mirrors making you short  
and fat, or wavy,  
drawing you out of focus  
away from the short attention span?

Even  
in an undistorted bathroom,  
that reflected image of your face,  
landing on your eyeballs,  
is filtered, interpreted, assigned  
a meaning that may or may not have  
as little to do with reality  
as a funhouse reflection.

And yet our mirror neurons  
look for the familiar,  
ways to identify with others,  
feel the truth in other's words,  
the flick of a wrist,  
the twist of a smile.

Can you own yourself  
in your story, or feel a woman  
living her whole life  
a few feet from her body?

Do you resonate  
with the story of you  
are telling? As every cell  
listens.

Is your story  
friendly, inviting you home?

Do you know what motivates  
you to share a hug  
or push yourself away?

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The unity of one  
parents the many

as self centers on one  
distinguished from another.

Waves race out  
from the pebble,

the thought, the drop  
of consciousness centered

in self-imposed  
illusions of separation.

And then rebirth  
or birth again from another place.

A fresh new start opens  
to consciousness in self.

*Viewing the Physical*

A veil pierced by life  
you won't know me  
nor I you  
here before the gap,  
too long,  
but I have chosen this life,  
the time, the distance, the journey across.  
I welcome it, invite it, create it,  
frightened of standing alone  
the sting of failure  
miles of loss

terrified I come alive  
illusions shattered  
waves of the future still  
the driving wind quiet  
enough to hear the still  
small voice

craving reassurance,  
touch, love,  
to feel safe and true

glimpsing how the fear is  
without cause,  
irrational, still scared  
within the thrill of a new  
light at the end of the tunnel.

*9:30 AM, Sunday, July 21, 1957*

In Utah Valley  
a gift full of promise born,  
Cancerian crab on the verge  
of a Lion comfortable on earth,  
in water, in air,  
fired by life.

A Chinese rooster,  
colorful, creative, bold,  
sincere. A totem bear,  
a teddy bear. A third-culture kid,  
a chameleon. An Andean ibis  
high on the rock.

*The Middle*

I have no middle name.  
The middle is for my maiden  
name when I marry,  
predetermined.

My father. away  
on a US naval ship in Japan,  
hasn't yet seen his first child,  
the oldest of five.

Predictions are made:  
birth, baptism, university,  
mission, marriage, children,  
grandchildren.

Blessings given on ancestry:  
protected pioneers forming  
wagon circles  
maximizing inner ground,  
ranchers, potato farmers  
a trace of French royalty,  
of Anglo-Saxon warriors, and  
a gay great uncle.

There were polygamists,  
sexual preference minorities who  
exchanged a structure of family life  
for US citizenship in Utah's 1890.

Each one born alive  
with narrowing and expanding  
possibilities.

No one is born hating.  
Hate has to be taught.  
May H8 no longer last  
through the generations.

*The Color of Rainbows*

My mother is an artist,  
blending colors of oil  
on a blank canvas,  
teaching art down the hall  
from where I sit  
at my third-grade desk.

I have seen magnificent works  
hanging on the walls  
of famous museums  
and tiny out of the way art galleries.

I can look at a rainbow  
and see the separate colors  
and the edges  
where the lines blur.

I try my hand, I sketch  
a perspective, the lines of houses  
meeting in the distance  
create a robust three-dimensional view  
of a city, each home  
carefully crafted lines,  
the roof, the windows,  
the perspective  
seeming to meet in the distance.

My mother speaks to anyone,  
finds the beauty in it all.



A child doesn't always want  
her mother talking  
and laughing with strangers  
at airports, at stores, but  
because of her I can see  
the colorful world meeting  
in the distance.

I develop a photographer's eye,  
training myself to pay attention  
to the details, to where the lines  
go, to where the branches disturb  
the symmetry of my life.

*The Cross*

The vertical line of an elevator taking me up,  
straight through the clouds of fear  
blocking the way to heaven.

The silver bullet lining the edges,  
the boundary between you and me.

The horizontal road, maple trees  
in golden hues of fall, leafy  
five-pointed stars  
brightly lining the way.

Geese a flying V overhead,  
drafting each other, sheltering,  
saving strength for the journey  
to where life goes next  
when they're gone from here.

Rivers at a crossroad, feeding  
each other, no competition,  
no choices to be made, only  
forward to the sea, Earth's  
abundant salty tears.

*Salt Water Destiny of Identity*

By unseen chains,  
I am tied to the sea.  
One percent salt  
in my blood,  
my sweat, my tears.

One red blood cell  
in salt water shrivels  
and dies, the fresh water  
sucked from it.  
Yet the salt of the earth  
attracts the water,  
attracts me.

In the Great Salt Lake  
my whole body floats,  
and in the Mediterranean  
and then the Dead  
Seas after I pop up out  
of Pacific waters  
skiing its ocean waves.

I tell about myself  
a self-fulfilling prophecy,  
writing, riding into the sea of reality  
from marine biology in a landlocked school  
to a pride of spine-covered  
Red Sea lionfish.

I love the place where parched desert  
meets  
cool waters deep,  
intriguing boundaries:  
the red rock of southern Utah's  
Lake Powell, the Sinai desert's  
Red Sea, sunlit cactus-covered  
Mexico butting up against the Sea  
of Cortez, where there is beauty  
in the sound of a mother  
whale calling to her baby.

The fractal shoreline weaving  
blending, touching the rocks  
and hearts, calling the energy  
to this interface, this relationship  
of diversity.

## *Newly Felt Emotions*

A glance at nature,  
emotionally controversial genetics  
shows a newborn experiences  
surprise. Then rising like Grendel's mother,  
a baby with observable anger.

Three to five months brings the contrast  
of joy and sadness. Not yet a year  
comes fear and disgust.  
Shame slips in between the months  
twelve and fifteen, just as she starts to walk,  
exploring the world.

Feeling the touch of light  
waving on eyes, drumming your ears  
to sleep, nourishing kiss of molecules  
taste buds touching olfaction's inner  
skin instant messaging,  
Hello, limbic to brainstem

Asking straight stick-like  
"Is this irritating?" Provoking  
a withdrawal. "Is it disgusting?"  
Packing conformity's hall.

"Pleasure?" Drawing near.  
"Is it this harmful?" Provoking rejection  
of life threatening mistakes, strangers, self,  
community in a confusion of touch.

Usefulness satisfying chosen carrots  
information alive for another day  
to choose wisely.

### *Shame*

Shame sucks up the never-enough  
resources, waiting, eagerly  
dowsing for the cool water  
to quench the inferno.

### *Sugar of Kindness*

Wildly imagining a red pair of boots  
walking up past the white  
picket fence, the stone cold steps,  
knocking on iridescent blue metal  
to ask for sweetness.

### *Mindfulness*

Since Plato we have known:  
Be kind, everyone fights a hard battle.  
Since Rumi, we have recognized:  
A field beyond right, way past  
wrong, where you and I and she  
are kin, lit up, on the edge,  
bright lights exploding  
deep in the balanced center  
a limbic system plots  
to keep you safe, connected  
to your neighbors.

*Monkey Mind*

The ultimate question over thousands  
of years of human history:  
How do I keep myself safe? Family?  
Community? Deciding, along with Albert Einstein,  
is it a friendly or hostile universe?

Mystery convinces  
your alligator brainstem  
impossible to outrun the rage-filled  
guardian of limbic life,  
in a friendly universe,  
supporting your growth,  
your ability to thrive.

The ultimate question,  
How do I keep myself safe?  
When home seems full  
of flying monkeys.



*Please Just One More Year*

At seventeen, furious with her father  
moving her 3932 miles, exchanging  
Brussels for Cleveland. Really? Away  
from as-close-as-she-ever-got-to friends,  
an all star basketball team,  
red and white jerseys,  
Belgian chocolates and,  
the place her passport says she is a foreigner.  
To her family, "Go back without me. I'll be fine."  
A third culture kid, a corporate brat,  
a lifetime of foreignness.

The rain forests of Bogota, Colombia,  
fearful of kidnappers, of letting go of Mom's hand.  
Change, movement, upheaval  
The stable fabric of life?  
Church and family.  
A blur of world art, politics, religions,  
common ground.  
Four languages spoken,  
heartfelt gratitude for spell check.  
Foreigner, outsider, gringo, gaijin, American.  
Wiping spit off her shirt in Europe  
at twelve seen as a perpetrator,  
Vietnam war.  
Yearning for more compassion  
from her own countrymen.

A lifetime of dread, "Where are you from?"

Where am I home? Growing up. Realizing  
everyone hides feelings of alienation.  
No one ever says, "I feel completely normal."  
"I fit perfectly here."

Everyone wants to feel safe, and no one does.  
So, smile kindly, put her at ease  
and welcome her home,  
from the wilderness.

*Salt Lake City Airport: The Duality of Hair*

Trapped in a mind-numbing airport,  
tired, harried people witness  
my shock at a self-righteous woman,  
a chaperone bent  
on my public shaming.

She thinks my shoulder-length hair,  
light brown gently touching  
the cool green of my preppy collar,  
is too long, and she'd be right  
if I were a man, a BYU student  
out of synch with The Code.

She sees me—five-foot nine,  
strong hands of a basketball player,  
shyly self-conscious in white  
painter pants, broad swimmer's shoulders—  
she wrongly assumes.

A confident woman  
may have shocked the humiliator  
back boldly, perhaps  
lifting her shirt to flaunt breasts  
evidence of gender.

My mind races, running  
for cover.

I stand silently praying

for a cloak of invisibility unfulfilled  
longing to see recognition,  
understanding in another's eyes.

*Just Twenty One*

*"Increased personal righteousness is reported by LGBT Mormons as the most common yet least effective method of attempting to change sexual orientation." - It Gets Better at Brigham Young University YouTube Video.*  
<http://youtu.be/Ym0jXg-hKCI>

Teenage crushes set aside  
at twenty one, age of women  
Mormon missionaries.  
I want to be around them,  
admire them, learn from them.

A lovable puppy  
hanging on their words,  
on the scent of their perfumes,  
electrified by the accidental touch.  
I will be them soon.

Standing by my car  
I say good night to her,  
Mormon missionary,  
a day of pious study behind  
us, now wresting  
with emotions, struggling  
to find my way to "nothing  
wrong with hugging."

"Of course you can hug me," she says.

There is too much desire.  
I am not a puppy.  
She does not understand  
nor do I  
but it is the only righteous path I see:  
"I can't hug you  
because I want to."

*Tokyo 1978: Run Mormon Missionary*

Side by side facing outward  
in the humid Tokyo evening,  
red and white tennis shoes  
sit ready by the unlocked apartment door  
where four of us live.

Calmly, as if I'd gone to look for a book  
to intensify my scripture study,  
I escaped into the crowded night  
where I am not allowed  
without my companion,  
my doryo in the field.

Alone, I run past the yakimo man  
hocking hot orange fleshed  
sweet potatoes,  
past the family in flip-flops  
on their way to the public ofuro  
to bathe. Breathing in  
the steamy, spicy air  
of Soba noodles, savoring  
my brief autonomy.

I run until the stress has left  
my body, releasing the anxiety  
of a bar perfectly set too high.  
Past the red Shinto shrine and  
the still dark bell of Buddhist  
stone guardians.

I return to life  
as a Mormon missionary,  
back to the predictable uproar  
of broken rules.

No regrets. In Japan,  
I learn of my inner strength,  
how doing one of the hardest  
things in my life feels.



*Mormon Missionary in Japan*

Both craving and fearing connection,  
the flip side of shame.  
A year and a half  
immersed in Japanese.  
My mind like duck feathers,  
resisting the religious waters,  
steeped in nature,  
Shinto spirituality,  
meditative Buddhism.

I am not in Japan to listen  
but to preach, to bend minds  
to the ways of my Mormon ancestors,  
five generations back.  
"Do you know why you are here?"  
"Do you know where  
you will go after this life?"

At twenty one I have all the answers.  
Explaining the purpose of life  
in exotic languages.

I don't yet know,  
there are many ways  
to the top of Mount Fuji,  
as I tentatively begin the search  
for my own internally driven answers.

Years later, at 54

I have time to be  
a seeker of answers  
to questions a 21-year-old can only ask.

## *Diligence*

A woman at home wonders on  
the value of life, waiting  
in vain for the knock. But two  
missionaries out to convert  
the world were stopped,  
a monsoon of obstacles, bone soaking  
rain, rejections piling up, driven  
home to the guilty weight  
of dry clothes. Their early dinner cooks,  
and they promise themselves  
tomorrow,  
a longer, more diligent day.

And the woman waits. Twenty-five years  
later, two diligent missionaries  
brave the rain, find her beckoning,  
answering "Yes! Yes!" A revelation,  
an intuition of blessings, years missed.

That's how the story goes.  
An urban legend meant  
to inspire Mormon missionaries,  
inspires me  
to the bathroom,  
throwing up, streaming tears  
of my impossible responsibility  
as the purveyor of God's love.

I knock in fear of the sloth

that makes her wait.

Then judged, I walk away,  
for love.

*Kissing The Girl*

first time tangled bodies  
behind unlocked dorm room doors  
I hesitantly probe for reward

with trust in intuition  
as a kid seeking comfort  
I kiss the girl

outer voices cry "Repent!"  
an inner knowing  
feels magnificent

and God watches  
sun dried lips kiss  
safe in the knowing

it's just practice for when  
we each will marry men  
(she did, I didn't)

I wonder when I do come out  
will my family disavow  
me, institutionalize me,  
kidnap me "home"  
or disown?

At 24, I can't yet see  
a loving acceptance for me  
and who I'll be with this kiss

*Truth Hurts, Secrets Kill*

A mother loves  
and accepts her gay child,  
embraces her daughter's girlfriend.

Still holding secrets  
disconnecting, she cannot tell  
the men in her church.

She will not shock  
the neighbors whose children  
are gay but do not know.

She will not be the one to tell  
yet unwillingly holds  
her secrets.

She cannot share with friends,  
whose lovely daughters  
married men who left  
these women for other men.

Raw open wounds  
where authenticity,  
connection, and compassion  
find barren ground.

*The First Coming Out*

"When are you getting married, already?  
Any prospects?" my cousin prods  
in the August heat of a family reunion.  
Nearly thirty years old, I say,  
"I am gay."

She and I shared summers  
sorting tart red cherries  
on her father's farm and running  
free around my European home.

Nights dreaming in sleeping bags  
out on the grass watching  
shooting stars. Together  
riding farm cows  
and Belgian streetcars,  
never imagining a future  
split open like ripe red  
farm tomatoes by "I am gay."

The deep waters of Lake Powell  
cools our shoulders, safe for cliff jumping,  
water skiing. Trying to save my life  
in these waters. Five years I have been  
with a woman, and my cousin  
wants me to know "I am here for you,  
if you want to repent, return  
to the faith of our fathers."  
My cousin wants to know,

"Are you attracted to me? To my sisters?"

Will I survive without the love  
of my family, my community?

"Do you wish you were a man?"  
she wonders, as if wanting  
to be a man is the same  
as loving a woman.

She wants to know, "Why  
are you gay?" Acts with causes  
are avoidable, curable she hopes.  
She is a mother concerned  
for her children, for the way  
they will grow up in a world  
where "I am gay."



*Red Rock Childhood Memoires*

Once when I was ten,  
in the coolness of the early, early morning,  
my father explained  
the magic of photosynthesis,  
of creating light into matter,  
to stay awake as we drove  
through Southern Utah  
to meet my cousins  
in the red rocks of Lake Powell.

An international businessman,  
used to logic and numbers,  
he can't imagine twenty years  
later writing a letter,  
a response to his oldest coming out.  
"I don't understand or condone,  
but you are my daughter  
whose happiness I value.  
I love you."

After a time of training,  
reinventing ways of relating,  
my girlfriend and I  
are welcome.

I didn't grow up with hateful people.  
It took coming out to  
calmed the fears.

*Ask a Different Question!*

Yearning to share the images  
I see in her eyes electrified  
by a lover's touch.  
Don't ask me why  
I will not marry a man.  
I am a lesbian? I don't know  
the answers you seek. Don't ask,  
"Do you want to be a man?"  
No, ask me a different question.

How beautiful she is planting  
spring flowers, riding her bike,  
sleeping quietly beside me.  
Don't ask how I could be such a thing  
about regrets, loss, people I have hurt.

Help me with love  
to reconcile church and family.  
Seeking a question full  
of hope and joy,  
the way I feel with her  
at "The Last Holiday."  
Ask me how great a driver she is  
how she helps me feel safe in this world.

Ask, "When did you know you loved her?"  
Not some creepy question.  
My heart will answer so you  
can see how alike we are.

Throw me a different question  
before alienation and fear wash me away,  
bridge me back to your heart,  
to my inner wisdom connecting me  
to you with this momentary question.

*Small Children Query "Are You a Boy or a Girl?"*

*"There is a special place in hell for women who do not help other women."*

Madeleine K. Albright, former United States Secretary of State

In the car,  
my five-year-old niece  
makes a ring with her arms  
"Pick some flowers."  
I pretend, I have seven  
Evoking peals of laughter.

Beside me, my girlfriend  
gives me a look.  
As my niece says,  
"that means you have seven boyfriends."  
"I only have one girlfriend."  
gets me the don't-be-ridiculous look.

Slowly and clearly, she says,  
"Only Jack and my dad can have girlfriends."  
"Vicki is my girlfriend."  
A look suggests,  
I am hopelessly out of touch,  
"You are a girl!"

No fertile ground for differences here.  
Ever hopeful,

perhaps a seed of tolerance  
will grow.

*Seeing Me, Trusting Me*

Gratitude for suggesting  
my niece should nap  
on the bed where, resting still  
on a Lazy Susan quilt  
my grandmother and I made,  
I read.

Thank you for not assuming  
feelings I do not have.  
I desire a woman,  
not every woman,  
not little girls.

Thank you for trusting me  
with babysitting,  
to go out to the neighborhood park,  
to cut the cord.

Yes, I am different  
from you.  
I love a woman.  
Please understand  
this truth.

*Misplaced Pity*

Remember 1982  
my last year at BYU  
loving my girlfriend  
in my grandmother's basement.

Sad to think  
grandma doesn't know  
now at 34,  
I am happy with who I am,  
this life I have.

Married and widowed four times,  
she sees an old spinster working  
because she can't get a husband.  
A bit of grandmotherly advice  
comes my way:

"While young enough,  
find a good husband.  
I have watched your cousins  
every one of them found  
her ideal,  
went after him,  
hook, line, and sinker."

She doesn't see  
me.  
She doesn't see  
happiness she can't imagine.

*A Sip of Green Tea*

Today I create a ritual,  
a healthy green tea ceremony. I say  
"I am here!" swirling  
a steaming cup, the tiny green  
waves soon sipped impact  
the core of me.

I contemplate the cup: a cherry-blossom  
design, a gold-ringed top,  
"Made in Japan" still stuck  
to the bottom of this gift  
from a friend twenty-five years ago.

Mormons don't drink tea. I break  
this childhood religious rule  
consciously. But so much change—  
I have a girlfriend now,  
I practice integrative medicine—  
the code no longer makes sense,  
does more harm than good  
to my liver and psyche.

I no longer ask, "Is it true or  
is it real?" I ask, "Is it useful?"

To not drink green tea for fear  
of going to hell? No, but it is more  
than that. As the Sufis say, I must  
kill off my ego, my idea of being better



than you because  
I live by a dietary code.

Today I have to kill off my self-righteousness  
in order to drink this green tea. I see  
good in you and me and she  
with a sip. I warm my soul.

*Alien for Her Love*

Eating chocolates  
on a Japanese hillside, falling in love,  
ignoring the border between us.  
Only love, laughter, and joy today.

We are gaijins, outside people,  
with work permits and English jobs  
who cannot go home without  
considering the border between.  
I am an alien when she is home.

He cannot tell by looking nor  
by listening to my "Eh!"  
Will he strand me at this border?  
Guardian of his country's sacred line,  
we love, we bleed, we hope  
at this manmade line drawn in the snow.

No green card movie for two  
women at the border awash  
with people wanting in  
for work, for dignity, for love.  
I release the stress by joking at a party,  
not knowing my words land  
on a border guard.

Quietly  
she says,  
"We are lesbians,

but be careful."

Work, dignity, value, self-worth?  
How can I contribute when I worry  
I will be found wanting of legal papers?

Perhaps one day we will be free  
of fear and hunger for home  
for belonging where we love and live.

*Bilingual Navigation*

Pomme, a delicious crunch of apple  
the pampon of ambulances  
strangers rescued in one  
or the other languages—  
we, oui, ouais, ouah—  
the taste of fries with mayo  
oddly familiar, comforting,  
these foreign passports of home

bilingual street sign words  
sprayed out alone, blackened,  
silenced in retaliation,  
others are orphaned, and  
drivers, travelers, seekers  
lost in a maze of sullied witnesses

an acorn of confusion,  
trying to describe the joy  
of your face in one  
monochromatic language

*Complexity Even a Child Can Understand*

"My daddy is dead."

"I know, honey," I say  
to a six-year-old girl after  
he is no longer missing but  
found crumpled in the Grand Canyon

"Did you know him?"

"I did. I loved him." Images  
of our connection: massage school classmates,  
painting our clinic warm peach.

"Your daddy had famous clients,  
an American TV star, a fashion industry  
mogul, probably gay like your daddy."  
And clients from his Polish community.  
Some would give him reading homework.  
So smart, a great listener,  
a relaxing massage, a good book discussion  
wrapped into one delicious hour.

I also loved your mom,  
seven years plus a lifetime, then  
I hurt her. After I left, she wanted  
you with him, so excited to see you.

I am so sorry he died  
before he could hold you in his arms,  
teach you about the world,  
take you to art museums.

He escaped here  
to his Polish lover, a ballet defector  
he came to Canada. For love.

*Circa 1988, Gracious Lesbian Living*

My chapter is there in  
*Guide to Gracious  
Lesbian Living.*

The author  
has no last name.  
Her immigration papers  
are not in order.  
Her family doesn't know.

She is coming out  
small. Telling but  
not owning her story.

Available on Amazon.com  
for the whole world to see  
the shame she felt  
in claiming her story,  
her life, her choices and love.

"As young girls, most of us expect  
to get married and stay at home  
taking care of our partners.  
The possibility of that partner  
being a woman may never  
have crossed our minds,  
role models for this particular situation  
few and far between.  
Nevertheless, life would be boring

if everything turned out exactly as planned."

- Kimberly, *The Secret Life  
of a Working Woman's Wife*

Who plans for love?

For 1988 in Toronto authoring a chapter  
signing only by my first name  
For lot and lots of amazing life.

Then 2012, West Hartford, Connecticut  
entering an LGBT poetry contest with  
*Live Like Someone Left The Gate Open*,  
Narrative Poetry from a Lesbian Mormon:

Live like someone left the gate open  
and now that no one is watching  
What will you do?

What does the world say is wrong  
but you know is so perfectly right for you  
in your life at this moment?

Do it, now.

Live like someone left the gate open,  
leap and run like a puppy  
finally, magically,  
free to express the exuberance  
in the boldness of hope.  
Powerful as your mind  
blurs the lines  
between what is real  
and what is dreamed into reality.



*Wild Dolphins at My Finger Tips*

The second dolphin fin breaks  
the surface of the sun-drenched  
Atlantic. My shirt flies  
over my head, my dry things  
left behind on the hot Carolina sands,  
safe with my girlfriend.

Seabirds diving, fishing.  
Neither hunter nor hunted,  
I will the dolphin to wait.  
Chanting, I stroke into waves,  
eyes stinging with saltwater,  
pummeled by the chaos  
of hunted fish, striking  
like popcorn on high summer heat.

I am suspended in water,  
reaching to her, silky smooth  
sea creature, a wild dolphin  
at my fingertips.

The sun is brighter, the waves  
crash louder, as I glance  
back to my love. She has touched  
the wild, natural part of my soul  
and ignited my dreams.

*Gratitude and Pain*

I release all vows, relinquish,  
A blessing of thanksgiving for many things  
Four years of irresistible cuteness,  
soothing tension,  
snuggling together with you  
Days and nights  
we seemed so perfectly in sync.

Bike rides to the farmer's market  
skiing and hot springing  
finding orphaned rocks  
singing at Jewish Renewal  
trampoline springing with children  
driving a stick shift, chopping wood  
learning and preparing for adoption  
days at the beach swimming with dolphins  
sharing food you prepared for us.

The full lipped reassuring glances  
gaiety and a smoldering place by the fire

I release and pardon you for making requests  
I couldn't meet. I ask for your forgiveness  
for an affair, for not consistently being  
honest and available  
and most of all for not always  
meeting your needs.

Go in peace.

You will remain in my heart forever.

*Clear Endings and Strong Beginnings*

Not enough time gone  
for what needs time  
to shift, to ripen, to move,  
to close one relationship  
before another begins.  
Time please hurry,  
pass so I can embrace  
what I now feel.

Nearly numb with rage  
at what steals my time,  
cuts me off  
in my accelerating desire  
for time together.

I follow my mind  
to where I've run  
completely out of time,  
extinct. I need more  
time to remember  
time together.

Moving forward, backward  
in time, I feel the warmth  
of your arms, the intensity  
of your eyes, the sound  
of your breath, the sweet pitch  
of our love in time.

*My Mormon Life Enmeshed*

Disappointing teammates,  
I will not compete on Sunday.  
Puzzling friends,  
I won't have a beer.  
My Mormon life started  
long before I was born.  
Sheepishly, I claim my heritage  
to my gay friends  
as hard as claiming my orientation  
to my Mormon community.

"Mormons are not the bigoted religious right."  
My heart believing the best of my upbringing.  
Mormons are naturally mystics,  
listening to the guidance of a still small voice,  
inner wisdom, praying directly to God,  
receiving personal answers.

Then Prop 8, Mormon millions spent on hate,  
bent on snatching my rights,  
threatening my family's safety.  
I never expected to say,  
"Take me off the rolls of the church.  
This is not the church of my childhood,  
of my missionary service."  
No fairness here.

Choices forced,  
I choose the woman I love.

*The Official Response*

And King Solomon said: *"Fetch me a sword. Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one, and half to the other."* - The Christian Bible's 1 Kings 3:24-25

The bishop is touched  
by a poignant, difficult letter  
written from a sense of betrayal  
and disillusionment,  
brought to this most serious decision:  
Excommunicate me!  
He believes, "The teachings of Christ  
you found so comforting, healing, and true  
continue to be our proclamation to the world."  
He assures me the doctrines  
of this church have not changed.

Yet I see the world  
where a presidential candidate  
does not embrace differences,  
does not learn from those who are not the same,  
does not understand inclusive diversity initiatives,  
nor notice how he and I are rooted,  
to five generations of Mormon pioneers,  
and connected to everything and everyone.

I must find a way to thrive in peace,  
knowing, we each are  
uniquely different,  
worthy of love and respect.

Don't speak for God.  
I answer to God only.  
I see You and Me and She.



*Stars of Vision of Carrots and Begonias*

Beauty: a life of seeing you, red roses,  
white temple spires  
and iridescent blue butterflies.

When I was 28 and  
working as a professional photographer,  
an ophthalmologist in his stark white coat,  
diplomas on the wall,  
predicted blindness  
in my future  
due to the birth of my eyes:  
Keratoconus.

"It is genetic . . .  
so there is nothing you can do,"  
he lied,  
predicting my future,  
spurring me on  
into complementary and alternative medicine  
to find solutions that find me now,  
55 years old, with the best vision  
of my life.

I call my disease  
"carrots and begonias,"  
for it has motivated me,  
nourished my desire,  
driven me out into the world,  
fueled my yearning to see

beautiful purple flowers  
and fiery red fall foliage.

*Squinting Against the Light*

Against harsh light, squint  
and all shades blend,  
distinction a mass of loss,  
diversity a wash, and what's  
left visible is prescribed green.

Opening I consciously see  
the succulent green  
lightly speckled, dark  
nourishing tea green, verdant  
knowledgeable snake green,  
relaxing turtle shell green,  
the almost black of shadow green,  
poplar green fractal leaves,  
off the Berkshires' roof I see  
a thousand shades of green,  
each leaf a witness, a judge,  
in service of diversity.

Cracking thunder voices bring  
a sunlit rainbow hues of green,  
water drowning seedlings  
with nutrients and advice,  
washing away the shadowed dirt earth,  
arid in the sunbeam.

*What if You Knew the Future*

A doctor of pain predicting  
blindness, lameness, sunlit curses  
based on defective DNA. Skeptics  
ignoring nurture's epigenetics.  
Placebo: absolute certainty of nothingness.  
Future problems of past reflections  
visualized antidotes impossible.  
Kim possible in every informed cell.

What if? A neighbor, a bishop,  
a preacher's sword slicing  
fractal branches, crushing  
lines of exclusion childhood illusions  
in heaven's echelons because of love,  
willingly attracting life, mitigated by inner  
strength, science, miracles  
waving wickedly at the unknowable.

A futurist speed-watching  
fast forward newsreel patterns,  
emerging into futures precluding  
change as we hurl, never reaching  
there, always here  
attracting a future lived  
not pleasing everyone  
or always getting it right.

What if you knew how  
you would die? What if

wrong costs you the future  
at 12 or 21, only to learn  
as you flow futureward.

## *Inner Bridges*

Connective tissue,  
whole body communication,  
an architect's dream spanning gut  
and knee, streams of building blocks  
from words to heart,  
sacrum naturally supporting  
columns of flexible molding  
to mechanical force with shape-shifting layers  
surrounding nerve networks,  
migration, proliferation,  
reproduction, identity differentiation.

You separate from me in the fluid  
uniting every cell in deep sleep,  
the creative wonder of unified fields.

Homeless calcified bones with relationships,  
hands making watery the unyielding gel  
as neighbors gently touching the dwelling place  
of the soul, creating self-supervision,  
guy wire guidance, a steady gait,  
proprioception's discovery  
of individuated space,

Room to falter in the stress  
of injured trunk, hips, and arms  
tied together, a three-legged race  
to inflexible sedation,  
fibromyalgia's missing mechanical link

as everyday cells are scrutinized,  
judged worthy or not.

Is it the "right" red?  
Is the tensile strength  
good enough  
to physically bear life's  
challenges, stretched capacity  
determining shape,  
sometimes turning to cancerous ideas  
living beyond their prime.

Disappointment drowning in fear,  
remodeling the loss  
as inflammation does a burn over,  
triggering sensitive nerves and  
robbing adaptability  
in a drought cycle of pain.

A single beam of light  
accelerating tissue repair  
along local passages,  
triggering a cascade of remote effects,  
massage therapy, caring hands winding, pulling,  
reforming the defamation.

Acupuncture channels connecting  
surface skin with spleen,  
pancreas, internal organs  
through collagenous trains  
carrying breath from marrow

to stem cells of Tibetan Inner Fire,  
mechanical transformation  
over fractal scales of time  
awash with change.



*Sandy Particles, Waves of Sea*

Red hot September sand  
on my bare feet in the Sinai  
Desert, rolling hills, roving sheep,  
and their Bedouins.

A lone American on this much-  
battled beach, I've arrived  
through three barricades of  
machinegun-toting soldiers.

Six thousand miles from home I dive  
below the surface in a clump  
of safely boring sea grass, when  
it gives way to a pride of lionfish—  
miniature sea terrorists—  
beautiful-but-deadly spines streaming  
colorfully in the current.

Wide, vertical bands of black,  
red, and green markings with sharp  
white stripes separating, camouflaging  
the nature of these predators.

Twice the size of my outspread hand,  
the lionfish float close enough  
to touch. I pressed my hands tight  
against my body. They are brave  
when hungry and hunting.  
Tiny eye-like structures—

the business ends of spines—  
confuse their quarry, trap and kill.

I know other deadly creatures  
surround me. The Titan  
triggerfish will aggressively guard  
her home, her nest, her eggs  
with fierceness. Sitting quietly  
amongst the coral, a cousin  
to the lionfish, a stonefish can be  
deadly, penetrating the black neoprene  
of a diver's protective gloves.

I could be dead before reaching  
the beach, here in the Red Sea.  
Predators lurk, the least visible  
the most deadly.

Below me, cozy, nestled in  
the sand, a blue spotted stingray.  
Cone shells looking like small gooey snails  
are deadly harpoons, paralyzing  
their fleeing prey.

A green sea turtle glides  
along the coral, a huge alligator  
fish pokes her snout from below  
the sandy floor, set for an ambush.

The stillness broken only by the sound  
of air leaving my mouth, bubbling

up to the surface. I am under no illusions  
of safety as I follow my passion, yet  
I pass unharmed, held safe by the water.

*I Storm This Stage*

I chose to storm this stage,  
chose to speak through  
fear, sadness, and yes,  
elation. A moment of insanity,  
like when, at 14, I rappelled  
face first off a Utah cliff.

I chose to storm this stage.  
At 54, my coach's voice stalks my head:  
"Move on stage like a lion.  
Make the audience feel,  
if they look away, you will  
eat them."

I chose to storm this stage.  
"I am here!" I plant my claim  
to the stage, to my life, to my story.

There is only gaily forward  
to move, driven to share  
peace, hope, and health.  
I stride through the nerves  
and love, across a tightrope  
tautly drawn between passion  
and safety: my story.

I chose to storm this stage,  
to tell of another day. I yell  
"I am here!" at the Blue Hole.

No one but the Egyptian shopkeepers  
wants me here, at the edge  
of this much fought over beach,  
where I fulfill a dream to dive  
in the Red Sea, to swim  
with jagged coral and  
poisonous lion fish:  
I agree:  
"the most beautiful place on Earth,"  
says Godfather of the sea,  
Jacque Cousteau.

I chose to storm this stage,  
and the tears well. I know  
where my story goes. "A week  
after the dive, in Tel Aviv, I watch  
a big screen as the Twin Towers burn."  
I was there despite family fears  
and questions: How to keep safe  
in this world?

"Passion and beauty,"  
I say.....

*Why Am I Here and What Do I Say?*

To Global Nomads,  
Third Culture Kids, Army Brats:  
"You are not alone. Your community  
is tens of thousands strong.  
Everyone feels like a stranger  
and no one is. We are all  
chameleons hiding in plain sight."

To Lesbians, Gay men,  
Bisexuals, Transsexuals,  
the disenfranchised for love:  
"By the time we are a year old  
human beings can experience shame,  
it is natural and everyone does."

To Fearful Zebras, Tall Giraffes,  
Wily Coyotes, Dogs and Wolves:  
"Eat, Run, Play with all  
that life is about.  
No one knows the future, or afterlife even ...."

To Religious leaders,  
Bishops, Popes, Priests, Rabbis, and Mullahs:  
"There are many ways  
to the top of Mount Fuji,  
to hell and  
heaven, is not  
beyond the clouds,  
just beyond the fear."

Don't cause the pain,  
mirror neurons give  
you the ability to imagine."

To those in need of healing,  
flight from pain of fractured bones  
and cracked open hearts,  
from the autoimmune attack on self:  
"Nothing is impossible,  
quantum physicists have shown  
particles and waves,  
and weirder still,  
never give up hope,  
recognize who you are  
in Einstein's supportive universe."

To Insomniacs, Heart  
Attacks, Seizures, and those  
trying to stop of the flow  
of water, time, progress:  
"The ordinary rhythm of life  
is much stronger than you,  
best to go with the flow,  
once you find it."

To those on a quest for abundance,  
life, vitality: "Seek your still small voice,  
intuition's guide, follow your passion,  
safety and success will track you  
to the ends of the earth,  
or better."

- Originally Published in Inner Child Press' *I Want My Poetry To....* (Volume 2, Sept 2012)



*Authentic Chameleon in Time and Space*

A chameleon changing, blending  
rearranged: each lemon, camel eh on,  
heal con me, my reptilian  
brain making me safe, monitoring  
other's doings, always scrutinizing,  
do I fit here? Are you my community?

How do you put on a Jewish tallit?  
Articulate a Christian prayer?  
Just watch.

Where do you put a garden party's  
dirty paper plates? Saving plastic  
forks? Just watch.

How do you buy a German  
subway ticket? Just watch.

I imagine myself able  
to talk to anyone, anywhere.  
You and I have something in common.  
Did you live in Latin America as a child?  
Europe? Asia? Canada? Work in Italy?  
Germany? Hong Kong?  
I can talk to you.

Do you eat meat? Are you vegan?  
Gluten-free? I can speak of Japanese food,  
my favorite raw vegan in San Francisco's  
Cafe Gratitude, Thai food  
from Toronto's Coco Peanut.

"Canadians may not know who they are, but they know for sure they are not Americans." But I am both, and a gringo, gaijin, illegal alien, foreigner, landed immigrant, EU resident, global nomad, third-culture kid, with two passports and fluency in four languages, and so many more allegiances to the comfort of home.

I am a lesbian. I have been straight, deep in the closet, out and proud chanting, "I am here! I am queer! Get used to it!" and in awkward shameful moments I have felt compelled by my reading of the room to lie about my love for a woman.

I can talk politics, democracy's republic, parliamentary systems, a benign dictatorship, and healthcare in socialist countries. I can talk to you, the far socialist left and the red religious right. I can find the middle ground.

Conversing about religion I can understand the Mormon church of my childhood's mysticism,

Shinto shrines, the Buddhism of Japan,  
Thailand, Tibet, the Judaism of secular Israelis  
and observant Jews, the beauty  
of the Baha'i Gardens in Haifa,  
an Islamic Sufi view of Turkey, Istanbul's  
Blue Mosque, the Church of Jesus Christ  
of Latter-day Saints temple building  
near my home in Connecticut.

A religious eclectic, "What do I believe?"  
Why do I lean to the left? Views colored  
by experience, spit on my shirt, treating soldiers  
injured in battle, seeing children  
hungry and cold, I have known the joy  
of giving, sharing, being  
grateful for how lucky I am.

And so I can talk to anyone,  
except about who I am,  
really deep inside  
where I am home.

Not a pretender, an imposter, a fake,  
just many things. I have earned  
a living collecting insects,  
saving drowning children,  
teaching English, massage therapy,  
integrative manual therapy,  
craniosacral work and matrix energetics.

Equally comfortable as an esoteric

energy practitioner, neurology specialist  
Expanding vision  
of what is possible.  
Reinventing the face  
of neurodegenerative disorders:  
Parkinson's and bigotry  
through the vulnerability  
of sharing my own story:  
faith, insight, and vision recovery.

A treasure hunter, I am a writer  
of stories, published transformational  
author, poet, photographer of onions,  
journalist, entrepreneur.

Yes, I can be a cold-blooded reptile,  
a chameleon and a warm, fuzzy  
teddy bear, still searching for my niche  
while I live here in time and space,  
breathing home into my heart.

*Hummingbird*

Whispering westward  
secret healing, native norms,  
calming two spirits  
with Navajo nothing  
above blue sky,  
where a white crane  
flies straight

a tiny rainbow bird zigzags,  
hovering, flaps at  
80 beats per second  
vertical, lateral, back  
feather scraps,  
a sun in disguise  
courting the moon.

Hopi kachina aqua blue green moccasins  
and unmasked hues, fertile yellow  
corn, a flood of anger subsides  
deaf warrior singing magic  
sucking evil from the cursed.

While Romeo looks for light  
in Juliet's solitary red flower,  
divine ancestors appear  
in smoke  
hastening rebirth.

*To Do List: Avoid Alzheimer's*

Learn something new today.  
Information Medicine  
to avoid Alzheimer's?  
Do Times crossword puzzles,  
learn Japanese,  
sing lyrical folk songs.

Desire, your desire,  
context is everything.  
The crossword puzzle  
is information medicine.  
Reading and responding  
demands new routes  
of gray and white  
through your brain,  
healing connections,  
creating colorful shiny new pathways.

Love what you love,  
hate what you hate,  
yes, hate okay but  
don't in a confused daze believe  
loved is good, righteous, and true  
and the hated is evil.

At the deepest quantum level,  
you matter,  
the observer matters  
your intention is matter

The intention to solve  
the puzzle, experience novelty  
accept the stranger  
is the medicine.

Working out the edges  
all the fractals boundaries  
where you and I bump up  
against each other,  
sharing what we know of life.

Matrix energy  
magic flying lessons  
in time and space.

*To the Stars*

High above my love and I  
on a solid Peruvian rock face,  
a trio of Andean ibises squawk and scold:  
"Why do you disturb our peace?"

"I AM HERE!" I exclaim  
at Amarumuru's stony star gate.

The blue and white ibises wing away,  
satisfied I belong  
where an Inca priest once walked  
into the rock face and up  
to the stars.  
Saving treasures from  
religious marauders.

I touch the warm skin of my forehead  
to the cool rock. I see my own flight  
to the stars.



*The Open Gate*

Live like someone left the gate open,  
run out into the smell  
of freshly cut summer grass.  
Feel the meditative quality,  
the back and forth,  
of a sun-drenched electric mower.  
Put some sweat into the creative  
ideas filling your head.

Live like someone left the gate open,  
defy gravity,  
the crazy construct of the collective  
unconscious.  
Drive physicists wild  
like gravity does, a force  
not strong enough to do  
what you see it do.  
Create an impossibly joyful life.

Live like someone left the gate open,  
and now that no one is watching  
what will you do?  
What does the world say is wrong  
but you know is a perfect right  
for you in your life at this moment?

Live like someone left the gate open,  
leap and run like a puppy  
finally, magically, free

to express the exuberance  
in the boldness of hope.  
Powerful as your mind blurs  
lines between the real  
and what is dreamed into reality.

Live like someone left the gate open  
on purpose  
watching over you  
as you explore the world  
of your imagination.

Live like someone left the gate open,  
sneak out, freely  
enjoy the twilight braided  
between dog and wolf,  
now that you see  
it is open for you.

Everything new and exciting  
and scary  
but you  
have committed  
to live like someone left the gate open,  
so you do.

*The Past Careening Into the Future*

1852 Great great grandma born Mormon  
in Salt Lake City, Utah;  
105 years later, Kimberly born  
at Utah Valley hospital;

1969-1974 grows up overseas  
Colombia and Belgium;  
1978 Kimberly serves God  
as a Mormon missionary in Japan;

1981 Comes out as a lesbian  
(to herself and girlfriend only);  
1982 Graduates Brigham Young University;  
1988 Authors a chapter  
in *Guide to Gracious Lesbian Living*  
signing only her first name;  
then lots and lots of stuff,  
including becomes a Canadian citizen;

2001 Scuba diving in Egypt  
then works in Tel Aviv, Israel  
September 11th; then lots more life;  
including denied a marriage license  
with her girlfriend, by the county clerk  
in Boulder, Colorado (May 17, 2004);  
2012 Living an amazing life;  
enters an LGBT poetry writing contest

and writes a book of poetry,  
*Live Like Someone Left The Gate Open.*



## Gratitudes

My gratitude goes to my parents, who raised me within the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints with love and abundance and to my siblings and cousins who see me for who I am and love me way beyond just acceptance.

To Elizabeth, my partner goes my gratitude and love for who she is in the world and who I can be when I am with her, for the acceptance of who I can become and companionship along the journey.

Without Chandler Tyrrell at Wordstream, my writing would not be as good as it is. I truly appreciate his skillful editing.

Thank you to my many friends who read this work and gave me feedback not only so it would be a better piece of work but shared their love and insights so that I can grow and learn how to navigate the world in a more joyful way.

My appreciate also goes to poets and writers who have inspired me in my exploration of the meeting place of my Mormon upbringing and my lesbian activist present. Thanks you to Christine Kloser, mentor, transformational author and catalyst extraordinaire;

## Lesbian Mormon and Other Oxymorons

Kimberly Burnham, a PhD global nomad teaches internationally. A 5th generation Mormon, lesbian activist, inspiring author, speaks out we are all connected.

1852 Great great grandma born Mormon in Salt Lake City. 105 years later, Kimberly is born at Utah Valley hospital. At 25 is the first lesbian in her family.

A global nomad, growing up a gringo in Colombia, ugly American in Belgium, a missionary in Japan, Canadian journalist, eh, finally international entrepreneur.

1982 graduates Brigham Young University. 1988 authors a chapter in Guide to Gracious Lesbian Living signing only her first name. 2004 denied a marriage license.

A chameleon, blending, rearranging letters: each lemon, heal con me, my reptilian brain keeping me safe, monitoring others doing, always scrutinizing, do I fit?

How do you put on a Jewish tallit? Articulate a Mormon prayer? Just watch. Where do you put a garden party's dirty paper plates. How do you buy ... Just watch.

Not a pretender, an imposter, a fake, I am just many things. I have earned a living collecting insects, saving drowning children, teaching English and magic.

Equally comfortable as an esoteric energy practitioner and neurology specialist. Expanding vision of "possible" faces brain disorders: Parkinson's and bigotry.

A treasure hunter, a writer of stories, published transformational author, photographer of onions, freelance journalist, health coach coaxing out your story.

Yes, I am a cold blooded reptile, a chameleon and a warm teddy bear, searching for my niche, as I live here in time and space, breathing home body and soul.



## I am from Provo, Utah Essays

Answers catch on my tongue, roll around the textured walls of my mouth, causing my skin to turn green. I am a chameleon desperately try to blend in as I answer challenging questions. Common questions, send me into hiding, snatching moments, in an effort to figure out how long I have for the answers, how much I should say? Gauging the situations, the environment, the person asking the questions, I hate easy questions like, "Where are you from?", "Okay, where were you born?" , "Where did you go to school?", "Where do your parents live?"

Straightforward questions are unbearable tricky for me. The answers, the intersection point between my straight-laced Mormon past and my activist lesbian present.

I was born in Provo, Utah, where my parents have returned to live, after I grew up overseas. I graduated with a bachelors in Zoology (marine and aquatic biology) from Brigham Young University (BYU), so simple cocktail party questions once answered, usually lead to, "Are you Mormon?"

I am, five generations back and yes, there were polygamists but then Prop 8 destroyed what was left of my relationship with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter--day Saints (Mormons), the part of the relationship that wasn't already difficult because I kiss a woman, while still attending a Mormon university.

So, sometimes it is embarrassing, in the circles I run in, to admit to being a Mormon, especially with Mitt Romney, running for president of the United States. Simple questions, "Where did you go to school?" send me into a chameleon panic wondering, does this person really want to know all the details or how can I answer truthfully, without giving way too much information.

It is the same way I feel when someone finds out I speak Japanese, which I learned as a Mormon missionary, although I later returned to Japan, with my girlfriend to teach English. There are lots of intersections in my life, certainly between the religion of my childhood and my sexual orientation.

Conflicted about those intersections is how I was feeling, just before I served a year and a half mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the Tokyo North Mission. Putting teenage crushes aside at twenty-one, the age at which women become Mormon missionaries, I wanted to be around them, admired them, learned from them. I was like a lovable puppy, hanging on their words and the scent of their perfume. Electrified by an accidental touch, knowing I will soon be one of them, albeit far, far from home.

Standing by my car. Saying good night to her, a Mormon missionary in my town after a day of pious preparatory study, wresting with emotions, struggling to see the way to "nothing wrong with hugging".

"Of course you can hug me," she says.

There is too much desire. I do not have innocent thoughts. She does not understand, nor do I but it is the only righteous path I see. "I can't hug you, because I want to."

"Increased personal righteousness is reported by LGBT Mormons as the most common yet least effective method of attempting to change sexual orientation," a quote from the It Gets Better at Brigham Young University YouTube Video.

<http://youtu.be/Ym0jXg-hKCI>

Within a three year period, I went from serving as a missionary to being a lesbian at Mormon owned BYU, out only to myself and my girlfriend and then back to Japan to teach English to Japanese businessmen. It was a time of internal upheaval and great change for me as I talked to a few people, little by little about what I was discovering about myself.

What I have learned from navigating these canyons, like the red rock of Southern Utah, is that the part of my life that I want to hide also connect me to amazing communities, if I can just keep my own self-hatred at bay. If I can be comfortable in my own unique skin and share myself openly, honestly, and unapologetically, there are ways in which I can connect with anyone, not because we are the same but because we are unique with some overlapping edges.

Often we are connected in unexpected ways. A few years ago, a three-year-old with blond hair, the color of corn silk drawled in her Virginia accent, "your hair and my hair are the same." My brown hair, had started to go grey when I was twenty, by the time

I was 50, it was completely white. I smiled at her and said, "honey, I wish that were true." She could see a connection, where I did not. There are times when I forget to look for the similarities. I get comfortable hiding, camouflaging the parts of myself that I am not at ease with. I start thinking, as long as I don't move, grow, or learn, I can keep myself safe from feeling alone, misunderstood and different.

But it just doesn't work. Hiding and alienation leads to religious wars and bigotry. It is easier to hate when you feel you have nothing in common. Recognizing the pain or excitement behind a smile makes it much more difficult to hate. In a world of seven billion unique people, each sometimes feeling too different or ashamed to be understood, I hope to inspire you to shine, where you are known, respected and loved. Bringing together my unique global experience, personal eyesight recovery, and insights from my brain health focused PhD, I share my ideas from the healing journey.

Global peace and personal safety is achieved through following the passions of gut feelings and your still small voice, so you can show up authentically in the world. That is what I learned as I watched the events of September 11th, 2001 in a Tel Aviv hotel room. That experience taught me how to find safety and inner peace and how abundance comes through personal education and learning from those who are different. Come out, share yourself, your ideas, your desires so you can be heard. My

message is, "there is enough for all of us in this amazing world. You and I are enough."

Sure, I can focus on the ways in which we are different, perhaps you are a man, that differentiates me from half of the seven billion human beings on this planet. The earth is also half full of women and I can look at the ways in which I am the same as them, in a world where "them" can become "us". Three and a half billion is a huge number of people to take pleasure in something familiar or known. I share 98.5 percent of my DNA sequences with chimpanzees, so my similarity with you and with other human beings is even greater.

You and I and she are the same. I know, I know, I said we are not the same and I don't know you. I do know something about you though. You are human and just that connects us on some level to the other seven billion people on this planet. You understand English, along with up to 1.5 billion other people.

And yet I am also unique. There is only a one in seven billion chances that a living person on planet earth was born in Provo, Utah, USA to an accountant and an artist, and grew up in Los Angeles, California; Bogota, Colombia; Brussels, Belgium, Cleveland, Ohio and then lived in Tokyo, Japan, Toronto, Canada and then on September 11th, 2001 found herself in Tel Aviv, Israel watching the twin towers burn, after experiencing a magnificent scuba diving trip in Egypt. It is a unique combination but each place, each node of my life provides a potential intersection,

something we have in common, a reason, you and I don't have to feel alone, different, alienated from each other.

A sense of security begins with listening to your intuition, passionately following your dreams and making choices based on what you want, not what you fear. You are not alone. You are probably not even that different from the rest of us out here, waiting to get to know you better.

No one ever says, "I feel normal. I fit perfectly here." Everyone wants to feel safe, and no one does. That has to change because when all seven billion of us feels like we fit, we will have global peace and the abundance each one of us seeks for ourselves and our families.

I am from Provo, Utah blog post at  
*ImFromDriftwood.com*

Summer vacation at seven years old, the best part of the day is as much ice cream as I want and a can of grandpa's Fresca, which he always had in the fridge because he was a diabetic. With saccharin instead of sugar, the Fresca is "healthy" for my recuperating body, now missing a set of tonsils, removed the day before. I am resting comfortably on the yellow and brown plaid couch. My parents, younger sister and baby brother are outside having a picnic in Provo's dry summer heat. They are eating corn on the cob, thickly sliced red beefsteak tomatoes

on soft spongy hamburger buns and homemade pickle relish. I am staring at the red brick fireplace in a place that has always felt like home to me.

Once when I was ten and could swim really well, I woke in this house. Then in the coolness of the early, early morning, my dad explained photosynthesis so he could stay awake as we drove through Southern Utah, past Blanding, where he was born, meeting my cousins in the red rocks of Lake Powell. I was finally old enough to see the lake because you had to be able to swim to go on trips on my great uncle's boat.

In those moments, my dad never imagined years later writing a letter, a response to his oldest coming out. "I don't understand or condone, but you are my daughter whose happiness I value. I love you."

I lived, here in my grandparent's house with my mother, when I was born. That day, my father got a telegram through the U.S. Naval Messaging Services. He was sitting quietly in his compartment lacing his shoes, when a voice shouted down the topside hatch, "Your telegram is here!." The message had arrived a few hours before, but since it was not his ship's turn for the radio guard, no one woke him as soon as it arrived, as he had instructed every single one of the watch standers to do.

Incoming Message: "Provo, Utah 7:10A Girl Weight 7 Lbs doing fine born July 21st 9:30 PM. Congrats, Ace."

He sends back a message carried by Western Union Telegram, his response to his first child, "I am filled with pride and happiness. God keep both of you until I get home. All my love. At Comfleacts Yokosuka, Japan.

Twenty-one years later, I am back at my grandparent's place getting ready to go a few blocks away to the Missionary Training Center, where I spend two months learning Japanese.

Just before I put teenage crushes aside and served a year and a half mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) in the Tokyo North Mission, I am studying with the local women missionaries, where I live outside of Cleveland, Ohio. I want to be around them and admire them. I am like a puppy, hanging on their words and the scent of their perfume. I am electrified by an accidental touch, knowing I will soon be one of them, albeit far, far from home.

One of those muggy Ohio nights, standing by my car, saying good night to her, a Mormon missionary after a day of pious preparatory study, I am struggling to see the way clear to "nothing wrong with hugging".

"Of course you can hug me," she says.

But there is too much desire. I do not have innocent thoughts. She does not understand, nor do I but it is the only righteous path I see. "I can't hug you, because I want to."

A few months later in Japan, my red and white tennis shoes sit ready by the unlocked apartment



door, side by side facing outward, where four of us live, in the humid Tokyo evening. Calmly, I stand up and move as if looking for a book to intensify my scripture study. I make my escape into the crowded night where I am not allowed without my companion.

Alone, I run past the yakimo man hocking hot orange fleshed sweet potatoes, past the family in flip flops on their way to the public ofuro to bathe. Breathing in the steamy spicy air of soba noodles, I savor my brief autonomy. I run until all the stress has left my body. Releasing the anxiety of a bar set too high, I pass the red Shinto shrine and the still dark bell of Buddhist stone guardians. I run back to my life as a Mormon missionary, back into the predictable uproar of broken rules.

A few years later, after I have returned to Provo, to BYU, to complete my degree, my cousin prods, "When are you getting married, already? Any prospects?" She confronts in the August heat of a family reunion. Nearly thirty years old, I say, "I am gay." Speaking the words to my favorite cousin. My cousin, who when a stranger cuts her off in traffic excuses, "he probably just got the call, his wife is in the hospital having his first son."

She and I shared summers sorting cherries on her father's farm and running free around Europe, where my family lived. There were cool desert nights in sleeping bags watching shooting stars and times together riding farm cows and Belgian street cars. A childhood full of memories, never imagining a future

split open like a ripe red farm tomato by the revelation, "I am gay."

That day, the deep waters of Lake Powell cooling our shoulders. These waters safe for cliff jumping, water skiing and swimming. I have been with a woman for five years.

My cousin wants to know, "Are you attracted to me? to my sisters?"

"Ewww, stop."

"Do you wish you were a man?" I look at her, loving a woman is not the same as wanting to be a man.

She wants to know, "Why are you gay?" She is a mother concerned for her children, for the way they will grow up in a world where, "I am gay." Years pass, before I venture out, again in a letter to my parents.

I used hate easy questions like, "Where are you from?", "Okay, where were you born?" , "Where did you go to school?", "Where do your parents live?" Straightforward questions are unbearable tricky for me. The answers, the intersection point between my straight-laced Mormon past and my activist lesbian present.

The funny thing is, while I was born in Provo, Utah and my parents moved into my grandparent's newly renovated house after my father retired, I grew up overseas, so there are ways in which it doesn't feel like home, except in my heart. After my mission, I returned to Provo, to Brigham Young University, so

simple cocktail party questions once answered,  
usually lead to, "Are you Mormon?"

I am, five generations back and yes, there were  
polygamists but then I kiss a woman, while still  
attending a Mormon university.

Hard Choices Essay Submitted to  
MormonWomen.com

I am staring at the car door, carefully positioned between you and I, wishing there was more time, time to sort out confusing feelings. A sister missionary, your curfew is fast approaching.

"A spectacular day," I say, thinking about the celebratory day the three of us have had, you and me and your companion. I just got my call letter, Tokyo North Mission. Japanese will be my fourth language. I never expect to go somewhere they didn't speak English, Spanish or French.

"Congratulations, again," you say, and I know you mean it because I have been studying with you, preparing for my mission every Monday and whenever I had a day off from my summer job at the mall.

"I want to hug you," I say, voicing for the first time, the jumbled feelings in my mind. Feelings I have never acted on.

I want to be around you and admire you. I am like a puppy, hanging on your words and the scent of your perfume. I am electrified by an accidental touch, knowing I will soon be a sister missionary for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

"Of course you can hug me," surprised, you say into the muggy Ohio night.

I try to see my way clear to "nothing wrong with hugging." But there is too much desire. I do not

have innocent thoughts. You do not understand, nor do I but it is the only righteous path I see.

I toss scriptures, I have been holding in my hands, getting sweatier by the moment, into my cream color Chevy Malibu Classic and say, "I can't hug you, because I want to."

Then, I get into the car, close the door, and drive off without rolling down the window or giving you a chance to say anything that will change my resolve to straighten out my life with a mission.

I am going to do this and I do honorably complete my mission but there is no straightening of my life.

## Other Books by Kimberly Burnham

Amazon

<http://www.amazon.com/Kimberly-Burnham/e/B0054RZ4A0>

Inner Child Press

<http://www.innerchildpress.com/the-year-of-the-poet.php>

Creating Calm Network

<http://www.creatingcalmnetwork.com/alternative-health-and-wellness.html>

## Book Review of Avraham Azrieli's The Mormon Candidate

“A revolution! Just like the Arab Spring, We will instigate a Mormon Spring.”

Born in Provo, Utah, a fifth generation Mormon, I think Avraham Azrieli's goes a little too far with a scene set in the Washington, DC temple where a Jewish reporter sneaks in and a Mormon, a Danite tries to kill him in the sacred celestial rooms of the temple.

Reading The Mormon Candidate I feel sorry for Mormons, most of whom are really good people trying to live good lives in the world because the revelations in books like The Mormon Candidate make it as difficult for Mormons to come out about their religious beliefs to their neighbors as it is for a lesbian to come out to her Mormon family. But I loved the conversation between the investigative reporter and Mormons whose faith was shaken by finding themselves in the cross hairs of Mormon hate.

In Avraham Azrieli's Novel The Mormon Candidate, is a conversation:

“We know our fellow Mormons. All they need is a spark to ignite their core of righteousness, to set free their suppressed recognition that the Church must change. They will fight to end racism, to end women's abuse and subjugation, to end homophobia, to end the dictatorship from the top.”

“A revolution! Just like the Arab Spring, We will instigate a Mormon Spring.”

I loved reading this book, found it very true to Mormon practices. I couldn't put it down.

My hope is that this book will ignite such a Mormon Spring.

Just before the conversation they say:

“Mormons will congregate in their wards and rise up in protest. They’ll force the sclerotic leadership to let go of the reins of power and step aside.”

“Change will come. The Saints will rebel against the strict chain of command; destroy the hierarchical Church authorities that dictate everything down from Salt Lake City. And then the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will cast aside its anachronistic doctrines and come into the modern age.”

Breaking Up the Trio of Secrecy, Silence and Judgment a Review of Martha Beck's Leaving The Saints: How I Lost The Mormons and Found My Faith

Leaving The Saints: How I Lost The Mormons And Found My Faith by Martha Nibley Beck tells a poignant story of growing up in the Mormon church and in the shadow of her "famous" father. She exposes the dark underbelly of a religious organization that seems to be more concerned with its reputation than



truly serving its members and being a force for good in the world.

While the story is at times horrifying, Martha skillfully shows her wit with lines like, "He's going to outer darkness, too. Most of us, after all, will be from Provo," which is also where I was born. Or when she says, "This isn't a dramatic event. No angels appear, no bushes burst into flame. I don't even get a quick visual of my old pal the White light."

Martha Beck also describes the value of even one supporter, someone who believes her and says, "Martha ... I don't believe God would ever ask anyone to endure that sort of thing without talking about it. No one. No matter what."

There are parts of the book that bring to mind, Brené Brown on the Power of Vulnerability....."If you put shame in a Petri dish, it needs three things to grow exponentially: secrecy, silence and judgment."

With *Leaving The Saints: How I Lost The Mormons And Found My Faith*, Martha Beck has broken through the silence and secrecy to bring us all closer to a world where children are not abused and silenced.

Reading the non-fiction *Leaving the Saints: How I Lost the Mormons and Found My Faith* and the novel *The Mormon Candidate* made for an interesting contrast and comparison and in both organized religion, particularly the Church of Jesus

Christ of latter-day Saints, the church of my  
childhood, did not come out favorably.

## Live Like Someone Left The Gate Open Back Cover Copy

Poetry / Self-Help

Are You Holding on to a Regret or Shameful Secret?  
Do You Wish To Full Express Yourself Without  
Feeling Different or Excluded? Are You Longing to  
Find Your Community?

Live Like Someone Left The Gate Open is the poetic key to living openly, freely, and on purpose as you explore the world of your imagination. It shines a light on the way out of the internal shame and alienation that has lead seventy-four percent of lesbian and gay students at Mormon owned Brigham Young University, Kimberly Burnham's alma mater, to considered suicide as a viable alternative to living a fully expressed life.

With her insightful poetry and the included Book Club Guide, you will learn to:

- Weave your own unique story into poetry
- Leave behind fear, pain, and jealousy for the healing energy of compassion, admiration, and gratitude.
- Create the passionate life and community you desire.

*"Intriguing and sensitive, Kimberly's poems are a journey through the heart of a woman—from self-doubt to self-assurance and from religious follower to spiritual guide." – Carol Lynn Pearson, poet laureate of the Mormon church and author of No More Goodbyes and Mother Wove the Morning*

*"Kimberly has a very sweet talent." - Eloise Klein Healy, Author of seven collections of poetry and founder of Arktoi Books.*

*"Live Like Someone Left the Gate Open is Kimberly Burnham leading us gently through the many ages of her life. It is innocent and pure, exploratory and powerful, brave and scary. It is a coming of age story from a young girl who thought she had all the answers, to a mature woman who now knows many more questions. It is a love story—raw, passionate, and tender." – Ann White, author of Living With Spirit Energy*

*"This poetic masterpiece will have you laughing, weeping, and rock you deep down to your very core. You will immediately fall in love with Kimberly's poetry, her masterful storytelling, and her unique ability to pull you into her journey of sexual self-discovery, secrecy, bigotry, love, and acceptance. A powerful, emotional, no holds barred, must read that will have you celebrating her honesty and courage." – Denise Wade Ph.D., relationship expert and transformational author of Healing a Broken Heart*

Live is a book of poetry...Kimberly Burnham's coming out story from growing up Mormon, serving a mission in Tokyo, Japan for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints to graduating Brigham Young University and moving back to Japan with her girlfriend. In 2008 she officially left the Mormon church with its support for CA Prop 8. She has since converted to Judaism & lives in Spokane, WA with her partner who is a rabbi.

... You can do for us / what we can't do for ourselves / you can lend your authority/ to voices that love...

... laughing, talking as if / I don't watch / with territorial bile rising / your short skirt's hem / touching him ...

... Don't judge me for salting watermelon / putting mayo on fries, juicy mango / dripping, coconut milk enveloping / gluten-free quinoa / Palpably unique ...

... I have no middle name / the middle is for my maiden / name when I marry / predetermined...

...I stand silently praying / for a cloak of invisibility / unfulfilled / longing to see recognition / understanding in another's eyes...