

ROBYN OCHS

b. October 5, 1958

BISEXUAL ACTIVIST

“Activists are cultural artists. They envision a world that does not yet exist, and then take action to create that world.”

She is an influential bisexual activist, educator, speaker, and editor.

Robyn Ochs is a prominent grassroots activist, educator, and speaker, and the editor of *Bi Women Quarterly* and two bi anthologies. She is known for her bisexual advocacy, working to illuminate the complexities of sexuality, dispel bi+ misconceptions, and shatter stereotypes.

Born in San Antonio, Texas, Ochs grew up during a period when bisexuality was largely invisible. By the time she entered State University of New York, Purchase, she had only heard the word “bisexual” once. In her first month as an undergrad, she fell “madly in love” with a woman. She concluded she was bisexual, and the idea frightened her. She remained silent about it for five years.

Ochs earned her bachelor’s degree in 1980 and moved Boston. After attending a women’s group that discussed bisexuality as one of its weekly topics, her activism took root. She promptly cofounded a support group, the BiVocals.

In 1983 Ochs became an administrator at Harvard University, where she eventually earned her master’s degree in education. Also in 1983, she cofounded the Boston Bisexual Network. She cofounded the Bisexual Resource Center two years later.

Ochs worked at Harvard until 2009. She served as the faculty advisor to the student LGBTQ organization, and she cofounded the LGBT Faculty and Staff Group and the LGBTQ Lunches lecture series.

An intersectional coalition builder, Ochs served on the Mass Equality Board of Directors for 12 years and as commissioner of the Massachusetts Commission on LGBTQ Youth for three. Her definition of bisexuality: “The potential to be attracted—romantically and/or sexually—to people of more than one gender, not necessarily at the same time, in the same way, or to the same degree” has been adopted by bi+ activists and organizations worldwide. She has taught courses and led workshops across the United States and in 15 countries on subjects such as the politics of sexual orientation and the experiences of those who defy artificially imposed binaries (e.g., sexual orientation, gender expression, race).

Among other honors and awards, *Teen Vogue* named Ochs one of “9 Bisexual Women Who Are Making History” and *The Advocate* named her to its list of 50 States, 50 Heroes. She has received the Susan J. Hyde Activism Award for Longevity in the Movement and the Harvard Gay & Lesbian Caucus’s Lifetime Achievement Award.

In 2004 Ochs married Peg Preble. They were among the first same-sex couples to marry legally in Massachusetts. Initially, news coverage described the marriage as a “lesbian wedding.” Ochs called out the media for bisexual erasure.



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