

AVENues

Asexual:

A person who does not experience sexual attraction. Unlike celibacy, which is a choice, asexuality is a sexual orientation.

AVEN:

The Asexual Visibility and Education Network, an online community and resource archive striving to create open and honest discussion about asexuality among asexual and sexual people alike.

AVENues:

A new monthly publication available online, created by members of the AVEN community in order to further showcase our thoughts and promote discussion by and about asexuals.

For more information, visit <http://www.asexuality.org>.

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picture by KELENYS

Announcement

The newsletter@asexuality.org address was not working between the 3rd and 16th of November, due to the absence and reconstruction of asexuality.org after our former server suspended our account. During this time, emails to this address were not recieved. **If you sent something to AVENues during these weeks, it didn't get to us and we haven't read it.**

AVEN is back up and running, including the newsletter address, so it's now safe to send things in. If you think your letter, question, nomination, or submission may have been one of those lost, please email it again! We will send a reply acknowledging that we did receive and read your message, to avoid confusion in the future.

Thanks for your patience and understanding. AVEN may have fallen... but not for very long.

The AVENues Team

That which does not kill us

by *ANTHONY LECORCHICK*

As I am sure most of our readers know, sometime between the last issue of AVENues and this issue, AVEN got shut down by our now ex-host. To those that don't, a brief explanation:

Sometime towards the start of November, AVEN's old host made a change to its Terms of Service and promptly gave AVEN the axe. Were they justified in cutting our service? Should they at least given us fair warning? Well, I have my opinions, you have yours, but that isn't really what this article is about. What it is about is how, when dealt what might have been a mortal blow for other communities, not only did AVEN survive, it thrived.

I'm not sure of the exact time AVEN was taken down, but I know it was still up when I checked it sometime on Friday, November third. On Saturday, when I left for work, I turned AIM on – something I normally don't do when I'm not going to be around. I returned home that evening and noticed an IM. It told of how AVEN had been taken down by its host. I asked if there was

anything I could do to help out, and was told to tell any other AVENites I knew what was going on.

AVEN had not been down for an entire day yet, and already a good portion of the site's members knew what was going on.

I recieved similar IMs from other members, so I know that several AVENites were trying to get the rest of the board informed. Later that night I received another IM, this time giving the URL to a temporary message board. Again I was asked to send the word on, and again I sent it on (and got the message again from other members).

AVEN had been down for perhaps about a day now, and already a temporary board was in place. This spread of news was quite something to see, even if it was just in little square IM windows. Numerous people from the AVEN community, during one of AVEN's darkest hours, were working to get the word to as many members as possible.

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News from November

The AVEN website went down for about a week in early November. This occurred because Bluehost, AVEN's hosting provider at the time, changed its terms of service to prohibit “anything related to human sexuality” and suspended AVEN's account without warning.

The moderators of AVEN established a temporary forum on Proboards, called “AVENites Unite!”, where people from the AVEN forums could communicate with each other while the site was down. Some AVENites learned about the location of this board thanks to other AVENites that they had other contact with – over MSN, for instance. A link to “AVENites Unite!” was also posted to the Wikipedia, and the site administrators created a temporary page on the top-level asexuality.org directory explaining the situation and giving an additional link.

AVEN is now working again (including static content, forums, Wiki, AVENues, and some of the non-English-language forums), with a new dedicated server from bocacom.net. This server will be much better suited to AVEN's content and bandwidth needs.

An article on asexuality appeared in the Daily Telegraph in Britain on Monday, November 13th. This was followed by an interview with an AVENite on BBC Radio 5 Live on Friday, November 17th.

Another recent visibility opportunity was the taping of an asexuality-focused episode of the Montel Williams show in New York City at the end of October. The Dr. Kieth Ablow Show will be filming a similar episode in mid-December.

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I was not the first to arrive at the temporary board. When I arrived, even though the board had only been alive for a short amount of time, I was greeted with several threads. There of course were threads discussing (and griping about) why AVEN went down, as well as threads trying to assess the damages: what was lost, what could be salvaged. Alongside these threads, there were threads discussing what could be done to bring AVEN back. There were discussions of changing hosts, of getting a new server; people offered their time, their knowledge, and even money to help get things rolling again.

The temporary site had only been up a matter of minutes and already the community was moving to restore things.

Rather than weakening, the community seemed to grow stronger in this time of havoc.

Shortly thereafter, a temporary frontpage with the static content and a link to the temporary board appeared at the original URL, leading those missed in the wave of IMs to the temporary boards. They, too, joined in the effort of getting AVEN back up.

Needless to say, AVEN is now back as it was (though now on a dedicated server at a new host) and this episode of chaos is (thankfully) over. I think that AVEN has emerged from this event a stronger community, and while it wasn't fun watching AVEN get shut down for a time, I am glad I got to witness the strength of the community.

From the Forum

A selection of posts from the discussion boards on the AVEN website

I've never "known" I was asexual, I still don't "know" it now, even though given my tastes and behaviour it's a term that would describe me perfectly. Sex and sexuality are like alien perspectives to me, I don't/can't see myself from those angles, I suppose because they are all about how one relates to other people ... and I don't relate to other people. (... Well, I do in a way. But ... ugh, hard to to explain.)

Basically, I'm not snug with the term 'asexual' because it defines me from a sexual standpoint, and as far as I'm concerned sexuality is of no relevance when it comes down to loving someone.

- Penumbra, Thu Nov 02, "When did you know you were asexual?" in *Asexual Musings and Rantings*

You know that awesome feeling when you're in a group of people during a thunderstorm huddled around a fireplace together for warmth and safety from the elements? That's kinda what it feels like in here to me. Trickle in, in ones and twos, from the dark AVENless night, to join the others by the fire and bond....

^ _____ ^

- sonofzeal, Sat Nov 05, "out of curiosity" in *About the Banning!* on the temporary "AVENites Unite!" messageboard

Personally, I feel that just because I'm not entering into a dating relationship for various reasons (partly because I also cringe at the mushy stuff) doesn't mean I'm not intimately involved with other people. I just think I choose to structure my relationships differently... To call myself aromantic and to say that I want "nothing more than friends" would feel like I'm denying the levels of intimacy that I feel in some of my friendships. After thinking like this for a while, it's just seemed pointless to try to figure out if I should call something romantic or not, if the attractions I'm feeling are romantic. The terms have become kind of meaningless to me in my own situation, I guess. As social beings, I'd say we all feel various attractions to people. Maybe what some people categorize as "romantic" attraction is really a mix of different attractions – aesthetic, emotional, mental, intellectual, sexual, etc.

- ghosts, Wed Nov 15, "'Romantic' and 'aromantic' - do they work" in *Asexual Relationships*

From The Forum posts belong to their respective authors and do not necessarily express the official views of the Asexual Visibility and Education Network.

*Have you read anything well-put, thought-provoking, or otherwise neat on the Internet that's to do with asexuality or the asexual community? **Send it in** to newsletter@asexuality.org! We're always looking for new "From The Forum" material.*

Thoughts when AVEN got TOSed

by *AMCAN*

For a year and a half now I've had two homes; one is made of bricks, and the other exists in cyberspace. It has a pretty colour scheme, cake, and some wonderful people. My home in cyberspace is, of course, AVEN. But one evening, as I logged on, I was met by a very strange message: "This account has been deleted."

"It couldn't be," I told myself, but refreshing the page didn't work. I knew there had been problems – the site had sometimes crashed due to exceeding its CPU quota – but this? This wasn't just being temporarily locked out of home. Home had been demolished.

One problem I have experienced is, living in England, most of what happens on AVEN happens when I'm asleep. While I was happily sleeping, AVEN had disappeared and I was none the wiser. Fortunately, I had friends who knew what happened.

Within a few minutes, the flashing light of MSN heralded a full explanation. "AVEN TOSed?" I cried in disbelief. Yes, someone had changed the TOS and AVEN had been taken off the server. But there was hope! The community was still going strong, because AVEN has never been just a website. It's not home because of the colour scheme or

the cake, but because of the people, and the people were still going.

So I found myself in a shelter, not a home as such, but a temporary home nonetheless. It was like starting out all over, reaffirming that AVEN was still there even if the server wasn't.

Nothing like a crisis to bring people together! It was the virtual version of sitting around a campfire, sharing stories and jokes. There was anger, there was questioning, there was some laughter, but above all was the feeling that we'd stick together. This was merely a temporary setback, and we'd come back better than ever.

So strong was the feeling of home at the temporary board that it was almost strange to be back at AVEN itself! But things were soon back to normal. I've happy memories of that temp board. It's nice to go back and visit and realise that it doesn't matter what server we're on or what colour scheme we have. There's always a second home out there for me among people who understand me and make me feel like I'm not alone in the world. I'm part of an AVEN community.

Creatures of Broken Pieces

a poem by *CROWSKIN*

I'm not as broken as you think,
But that's not what society says –
We are creatures of broken pieces.
In a society of lust-driven mammals, we are 'flawed'.
Or is it that humanity has forgotten what is 'Love'?

How different is a tender word to a tender touch?
How obscene is the desire for a heart,
Rather than those driven for the lust?
Is it such a strange confession,
To not be plagued by that obsession?

When did 'friend' become a dirty word?
When was romance replaced with sex?
Just because I'm not like you,
Doesn't mean I'm so complex.

Our society is sex-driven,
Turning toddlers into painted dolls,
And outcasting those who won't conform,
Into their pretty painted roles.

It's strange how perverse it's viewed,
The lack of sexual desire.
When all around us thrives;
Sex crimes and sexual attire.
Minds driven by a raunched disease
Of sexual confusion and fires.

It's hypocrisy to blame us for our identities–
When you fight for equality –
...and shove your sexuality down our throats.
All the while blaming and hating,
Those who are retaining their sanity,
By not changing to your tune.

No, we aren't as broken as you would portray.
Not as broken as society has made us feel.
Our wings aren't shattered at our back –
Just waiting for the acceptance...
To bring our voices back.

Featured AVENite: “Triple A”

A personage from the forums that you'd like to get to know better

Name: Trip

Age: 24

Location: Pennsylvania

Preferred Label(s): Ultimate Supreme Commander of the World (just kidding with that one). Trip, Triple, Triple A, AAA all work fine.

Bio: You could say I always knew I was "asexual." I just didn't know that my asexual feelings were significantly different from those of most of the population. Before I heard about asexuality, I didn't realize that sexuals had real feelings to back up a lot of the sexual statements they made.

I visited AVEN a few times before I joined the community. I made a couple of posts at first, but soon stopped posting for a while. It was awkward for me to have stumbled into a community of thousands where several people held the same beliefs, ideas, and thoughts as I held. I was used to being unique.

Now, I've been referred to as one of the most prolific members of AVEN. I'm a member of the Project Team, and I work to promote asexuality as much as I can without divulging my true identity. I wish I could divulge my true identity, but my current career path does not allow for that to be a possibility. I hope for this secrecy to change within the next year.

How she came to AVEN: I read an article on CNN.com about a study claiming 1 in 100 adults are asexual.

The most important thing about AVEN: For AVEN, it's the community and the friends. I can develop a much deeper bond with AVENites than I can with most people in real life, because sexual activity and overtness don't overhang everything we do. I can be myself when I'm with AVENites, but I can't truly be myself when I'm around people who do not fully understand asexuality, as they misunderstand and misinterpret the things I do. In addition, I



might misunderstand and misinterpret the sexual signals they are sending to me, because I'm unaware of them or what those signals mean.

Advice for newcomers: Have some cake; the best friendships in the world can develop here. No matter what your experience, your thoughts, or your feelings, there are people here who are understanding, and people here who have probably been through the same things as you.

Other thoughts: I'm a regular visitor to some of the foreign language AVENs, and I love how welcoming and accepting they all are. I was leery about making anything other the official posts at first because I did not know the language the forum was for. I think it says a lot about people when you

can make nearly 100 posts on various topics throughout their forum, without knowing their language, and they've never reacted with anything but understanding and acceptance.

*Do you know people who have contributed to asexual visibility or education – hard-working asexy warriors who could use some recognition by the community? **Nominate them** by sending an e-mail to newsletter@asexuality.org! Their faces or avatars could be in our next issue.*

Introducing...
Food For Thought, #1:
Relationships

Some of the most interesting writing about asexuality comes from our forums, where asexuals (and the A-friendly) from all walks of life are invited to exchange their thoughts, feelings, and ideas. But not everybody has the time, patience, or technology for an Internet forum. The mission of AVENues is to bring some of the discussion AVEN is already having into a more accessible newsletter format.

In that vein, we're introducing "Food For Thought": a new regular feature to stimulate discussion and self-expression among our audience. Each month, we'll be asking an open-ended question. The following month, we'll showcase little paragraph-sized snippets of a wide variety of the answers we got. We hope that this will be an easy way to express the huge diversity and thoughtfulness of the asexual community.

Here's a question to get us started this month:

Describe the ideal kind of relationship(s) you'd like to have. Do you crave good friends, nonsexual romantic partners, commitment-free cuddle buddies, sweet solitude, something altogether different, or do your relationships transcend categories? Tell us about it!

Send your answer to newsletter@asexuality.org. Please put "Food For Thought" in the subject line and include an indication of the name, nick, or pseudonym by which you'd like us to credit you if we publish your answer.

Bon appetit!



art by SPINNERET

Call for letters

Got something to say related to the content of AVENues? Does something published here make you nod in agreement, pound your desk in disagreement, or scratch your head in sheer confusion? **Talk to us!** We'll answer any questions that you have and possibly (with your permission) even publish your remarks in a future issue.

Send your letters to newsletter@asexuality.org!

Are you asexual, questioning, and/or interested in asexual topics? AVENues wants your submissions!

Format: Letters, articles, short stories, poetry, essays, comics, photography, visual artwork.

Topics: Asexuality in general, the life of an asexual, asexual relationships, sexuality and asexuality in the media, advice for asexuals, things you've learned about or from asexuals and/or AVEN, asexual humour, etc.

You can also nominate people or posts for our From The Forum and Featured AVENite sections, bring asexual visibility-related news to our attention, answer a Food For Thought question, or make general comments and inquiries.

Send all of this stuff to newsletter@asexuality.org.