

Mary Shearman:

I've been watching All My Children for twenty years, since sneaking into the TV room behind a large chair as a four year old during naptime. My grandmother has been watching it since its inception in 1970. Never did I anticipate this daytime soap opera would influence my grandmother's view on my life, community and friends. I've identified with some form of queer identity for ten years. Thus, the community I find myself in generally includes gay men, lesbian/dyke women, people into BDSM, trans and others who I would not try (nor would they appreciate) categorization. My grandmother, very set in her ways, whom I have a very close relationship with always refers to my friends by their sexual preferences, or has until recently. I can't remember how many times I've heard "Is he normal or gay?" and then in future conversations "Is that the gay?" I cringe.

When Bianca Montgomery came out as a lesbian on All My Children, I found that the sideshow spectacle was more prevalent in the media as opposed to any progressive aspects "First Same Sex Daytime Kiss!" The introduction of Zoe, a transgendered lesbian (who has since disappeared from the program), however, received much less mainstream broadcasting media coverage; although media specifically catered to soap consumers has featured headlines such as "Tranny takes over All My Children" and speculation that the writers are trying to boost ratings by trying to switch up the action of illicit affairs and baby snatching. All My Children has been a history of tackling subject matter that is considered controversial for daytime television since the when a character with AIDS was introduced. So why has Zoe been abandoned?

Since this character has appeared on the scene, my grandmother has a lot less difficulties with the preferred pronouns of my friends and shows some recognition of the challenges trans individuals face. The positive implications of this in my life are extraordinary not only in terms of her acceptance and understanding of my community, but also because my long-term partner identifies as trans.

I speculate that Zoe has left the program because the executive team at All My Children decided the daytime world was not ready for a trans character and has decided to return to baby snatching. My analysis consists of a close study of media relating to the character and interviews with fans of the show including my grandmother. No matter what the reaction was to another openly queer character on the show, consciousness was raised broadly due to Zoe's creation.