

GENDER SERVE Newsletter

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What Are Our Values?

I recently left Hamilton Place with the strident echoes of Respighi's Pines of the Appian Way ringing in my ears and, as I walked the short distance home, I reflected upon the glory that was Rome.

Shortly after my return home I turned on the radio to hear the latest news report, wondering which bit of world politics would be headlined. Instead, I was deluged with news of the withdrawal of Olympic Gold from Ben Johnson. At seven a.m. next morning I was awakened by my clock radio. Again prime time was devoted to this world-shattering news. Our newscasters seemed to be able to think of little else. I turned off the radio in disgust. One hour later, the BBC placed the item at the end of their bulletin.

I went to sleep the following night wondering where are our values. When news of Ben Johnson's victory arrived I was not surprised, but I did reflect upon the terrific pressure under which he must have laboured. He had been third in his heat, but he continued to boast that he would win the gold medal. After all the ballyhoo he had to win. From where did all the pressure originate? From Canadian expectations; it was our own fault. The public press exerted terrific pressure upon our athletes, forecasting expectations of medals in a

number of sports, but the medals materialized in those events where public pressure-public expectation - was least.

North Americans expect nothing but victory; we have to be top dog. We refuse to learn from bitter experience. If we cannot do it honestly, we are tempted to dishonesty. As a child, I remember the ill-feeling aroused by sports events between England and the U.S.A. when Tommy Lipton lost repeatedly to the American defender of the America's Cup. He had the disadvantage of having to sail his Shamrock across the Atlantic in order to compete under the rules then in force. I can remember my father, who was a boxing enthusiast, complaining at American refereeing of international boxing bouts in the days when the world heavyweight championship ring had not become the monopoly of coloured boxers. If man cannot win at war, he has to win at sports, in business or in politics.

Ben Johnson is coloured. Have we reflected upon the indignities inflicted upon those "lesser breeds without the law" (Kipling) by "superior" white races? We see it in South Africa today. What were the pressures upon Ben Johnson - a Jamaican by birth to succeed? To what extent have the expectations of the

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What Are Our Values (cont.)

Canadian public destroyed this man's future? It mattered not that Canada is his adopted country so long as he brought back a gold medal to Canada. Canadians demanded that he prove his superiority for the glory of Canada - or so that we could bask in reflected glory. What a colossal inferiority complex we must have!

Ben Johnson's debacle is not the only event to have shocked the Canadian public this year. A few short months ago we were idolizing another hero. We gave him a "royal" wedding in Edmonton. Within weeks Wayne Gretsky, knowing that his future lies in a successful marriage, left the Oilers. Hockey fans were outraged; they could no longer bask in the reflected glory of their "King". Could it be Wayne's fault, or could we find a scapegoat?

To what extent does this need to bask in reflected glory affect our individual personalities? I maintain that Gore Vidal hit the nail on the head when he made "the huge printed plaster chorus girl who holds a sombrero in one hand" a major symbol of his Myra Breckinridge, in which he further emphasized the influence of Hollywood in shaping our values. Western culture rushes blindly after gold: gold, glamour, strength and beauty are our gods. Love of our fellow beings is an also ran.

I believe that one of the results of this race for false values has been the glorification of sex. Hollywood has glamourised

strength and beauty; film stars' salaries have glamourised gold. Can it be surprising that some human failures dream that the glamour of Hollywood can solve all their problems? Why are there so many persons with confused gender identities in California? Money means power; beauty, or strength, may entrap money. Most male-to-female gender dysphorics - if not all - have at some time fantasized the glories of being ravishing beauties. It is only as we get older that we are able to discern things in their true perspective. I suspect that the same is true for the female-to-male dysphoric: here the preoccupation is with strength and with the money that dominance can command. Of course, success is not the inevitable result in either case. Ben Johnson won the 100 metres, but success has eluded him.

One final thought is necessary. I have avoided using the term transsexual. The Freudian may maintain that this final comment is a defence mechanism, but I am convinced that there is such a being as a true transsexual, even though the gender identity clinic may not yet be able to identify him or her with certainty. The true transsexual recognises the pitfalls of gender identity, the fallacies of what society expects of the stereotypical man or woman and finds fulfillment in sex reassignment only because s/he finds the true self in such a change.

S. C. H.

Rupert Raj: Canadian Pioneer

It is nearly nine years ago that I attended a Christmas party in an older rental house in Toronto. Until that time I had avoided association with the world of the cross-dresser. At that party I knowingly met my first transvestite, my first homosexual and my second transsexual. The first had been the late Janice Anderson, at that time Secretary to the Foundation for the Advancement of Canadian Transsexuals and virtually the housemother in the home I was visiting.

I could not but notice a bearded man, somewhat shorter than the normal male stature, who was acting as host. I was meeting Rupert Raj, founder of F.A.C.T. and Editor of *Gender Review*, for the first time. I have admired his pioneering spirit ever since.

It is not easy to complete a university course when one is plagued by gender dysphoria, let alone after having lost both one's parents in a car crash, yet Rupert had managed to graduate from Carleton University with a B.A. degree. He had then returned to Calgary where, with two F-to-M friends, he founded F.A.C.T. on January 1, 1978. Things did not work out in Alberta and Rupert had hoped to pursue graduate studies at Carleton. This did not materialise and in 1978 he moved the offices of the Foundation to Toronto and enrolled at George Brown College, where he studied printing. When I met him he seemed to be preoccupied with the wish to make a career in working with the "transsexual" community and to make his name

as a writer and expert in the field of gender dysphoria syndrome.

Rupert's later experiences cannot have been happy ones, but he has persisted in his desire to help others who face the dilemma of a confused gender identity. The pressure of his studies forced him to give up his work with F.A.C.T. and his editorship of *Gender Review*. Because of his determination to service the gender dysphoric community he had difficulty in establishing a firm footing in employment. He must have been frustrated in that he has always wished to be able to attend meetings of professional associations working in the field of sex, but could seldom afford the expense involved although he held membership in those associations. He has grasped every opportunity to witness to the needs of the gender dysphoric through lectures, press interviews and television appearances. He has set his hopes high and taken as his role model persons of the stature of Dr. Paul Walker, the founding president of the Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association.

Perhaps it has been Dr. Walker's realization that the gender dysphoric community is not a dependable means of making a living that has at last brought Rupert Raj to the realization that he must carve out a career for himself in life. After more than ten years of devotion to the cause of the transsexual he has realised that he must give
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Rupert Raj (Continued)

priority to establishing himself in life. This he is succeeding in doing. While giving up responsibility for Metamorphosis Research Foundation, which he founded after leaving F.A.C.T., he continues to serve the gender dysphoric community through his registered counselling service Gender Worker, but with the recognition that this must take second place to his career.

In a letter headed Not Quitting the Game - Just Switching Sides, Rupert states that he has "decided to put myself first - before it was too late and I died of overwork". He recognises at last that he has suffered from burn-out on at least two

occasions and, failing to find persons who would take over the operation of M.M.R.F., has reluctantly liquidated the organization.

The gender dysphoric and the transsexual communities owe Rupert Raj an inestimable debt of gratitude. I personally am happy to acknowledge my own indebtedness to him for having provided the vehicle through which I myself became committed to the gender dysphoric cause. I have been blessed with the security that has been vouchsafed me at the end of a successful career in education; Rupert has yet to attain that security. I, for one, wish him every success in his future endeavours. He deserves it.

S.C.H

A Phalloplasty First?

A recent newspaper item reports that Dr. Nit Chayakiarti has successfully transplanted a penis in a seven-hour operation at Bangkok's Police Hospital. The donor is described as being a homosexual who had requested M-to-F surgery.

This may raise hopes in the minds of some F-to-M TSs. But wait a minute! The recipient was a soldier whose wife had cut off his penis in a jealous rage. Married men should beware! There is an old saying that hell hath no fury like a woman scorned.

The genetic male still has the necessary internal "plumbing" that can receive a penile transplant. The F-to-M transsexual has not.

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FACT Clearing House

M-to-F transsexual, mid-fifties, retired, Guelph area, seeks other bona fide TSs for companionship. Details from GenderServe; quote G29.003, stating if in Clarke G.I.C. programme.

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AM I BEING UNDERPAID?

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