

T R A N S G E N D E R

T A P E S T R Y

SPRING
2002

ISSUE #97
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TRANSSEXUAL INMATE ISSUES

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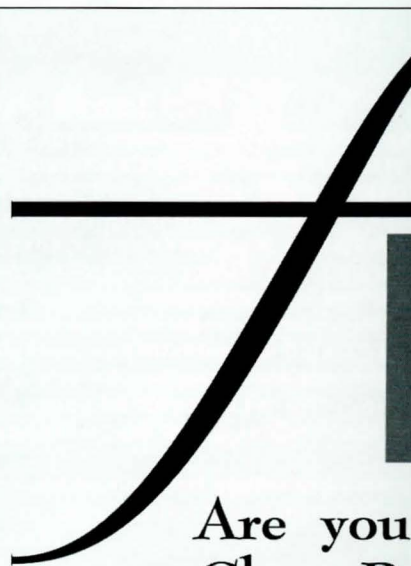
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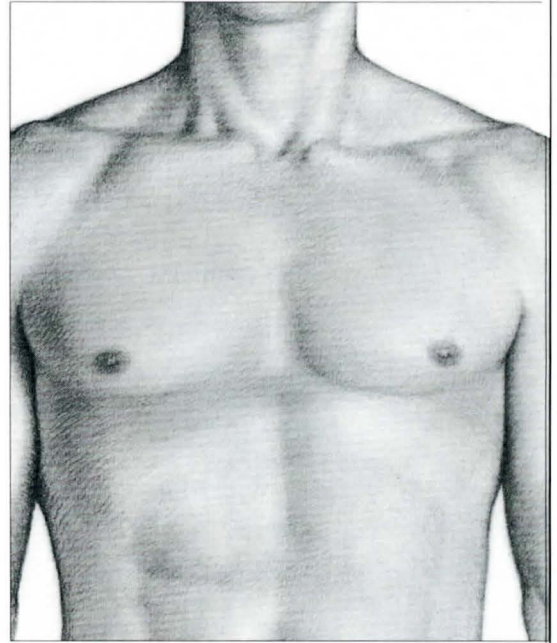
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FOUNDER

Merissa Sherrill Lynn

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Dallas Denny

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Donna Cartwright

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

kari edwards

Miqqi Alicia Gilbert, Ph.D.

Monica Helms

Andrew Matzner

ART DIRECTOR

Larissa Glasser

PHOTOGRAPHY

Mariette Pathy Allen

CONTRIBUTORS

Zythyra Basha	AprilRose Schneider
Susan Blewitt	Andrew N. Sharpe
Shirley Boughton	Steph
Paedra / Peter Bramhall	Virginia Stephenson
Pat Conover	Carl Tripp
Dallas Denny	Robyn Walters
Miqqi Alicia Gilbert	Janis Walworth
D.L. Hawley	Shawn Williams
Gianna Israel	Robyn Sondra Wills
Tucker Lieberman	Christine Jane Wilson
Andrew Matzner	Annie Wright
Vernon Maylsby	Julian Wolfe
Judy Osborne	J. Utschig
Quinn	

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Joan Hoff

PUBLISHER

The International Foundation for Gender Education (IFGE)
Julie Johnson (Chairperson)

MANAGER, IFGE

Denise Leclair

CIRCULATION

DEYCO



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Member COSMEP

Transgender Tapestry is a magazine for and about crossdressers, transgendered, transsexual, intersexed, and other gender-variant persons, and those who support them.

OUR READERS

Write for a general audience. Our readers include closeted and out people: cross-dressers, transsexuals, transgenderists, intersexed persons, gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, heterosexuals, therapists, physicians, ministers, spouses and significant others, family members, and friends. Our readers span all ages, races, nationalities, religions, spiritualities, beliefs and opinions, and educational backgrounds. Your piece may be targeted for one group, but it should speak to the larger readership.

We want writing that challenges categories, presumptions, and accepted thought.

HOW TO SUBMIT

The best way to send materials is via e-mail. We get it immediately and we don't have to retype it.

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Attach a file, using MIME encoding. These formats are acceptable for text files: Microsoft Word, WordPerfect, Rich Text Files (RTF), and Text.

It's okay to send text in the body of an e-mail, but our Eudora Light mail reader doesn't recognize embedded codes.

Graphic images should be in TIFF, EPS, or JPG format.

Unless they're self-extracting, please don't send zipped files without clearing it with us beforehand. No e-mail? Send a PC-compatible or MAC floppy to Dallas Denny, P.O. Box 33724, Decatur, GA 30033-0724.

We hate typing in text, but we understand some people can't afford or don't like computers, so believe it or not, we accept articles on paper. Please include a brief biography with your submission.

WHAT TO SEND US

We want original material. We rarely accept simultaneous or previous published submissions. We're interested in ideas which have been previously under-explored. We accept submissions on gender issues of general interest, including: new (for some people) types of diversity; little-known information about transgender history; under-utilized resources and populations; personal struggles; social or medical issues; humor with an underlying message; and satire.

THINGS WE SHOULDN'T HAVE TO SAY

DO send us stuff. Deadlines are firm. Contact us before submitting. Talk with us before writing, if possible. Let us know what you want to do and when you can deliver it. Send us a rough draft if you have one. Be reliable. Make your word stick. Be concise. Don't ramble, and don't try to tackle too much in one article.

Don't be heartbroken if we don't use your submission. A rejection often has more to do with the theme or the space available in the magazine than the quality of the writing.

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A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

I've long been a supporter of the Standards of Care of the Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association. I felt they made great sense in a time when transsexual and other transgendered people were typically confused, frightened, and ignorant of their life options. In this postmodern age in which more and more of us are strong and sure of ourselves, I'm no longer certain about the appropriateness of the Standards of Care, and I'm becoming more and more convinced that it's unethical to apply constraints to a class of people without solid evidence that they are needed.

Just as I'm an opponent of seat belt and motorcycle helmet laws which eliminate freedom in the name of the greater good, I've decided to come down in opposition to Standards of Care which give therapists gatekeeping powers over other human beings. I routinely use my seat belt, and I wouldn't ride a motorcycle without a helmet, and I didn't have sex reassignment surgery without having lived 24/7 for more than a year, but I assert my right and the rights of others to live free without such constraints.

Do transgendered and transsexual people have mental characteristics which render them less capable than others of making important decisions? That was once believed to be the case, but it certainly isn't the predominant view nowadays, and the scientific data do not support such a notion. Why then, does access to medical care require therapy letters, and why is this the case only for transsexual and other transgendered people?

Although the Standards of Care are more than 20 years old, they have not generated data to support their effectiveness. Even though many therapists and for that matter many transsexuals believe it to be true, no studies show a period of real-life experience leads to a better outcome than surgery on demand, no studies show transsexuals are better off for having to wait for hormones. We do, on the other hand, have a considerable literature showing that when one human being holds thrall over another, mistreatment is prone to occur. The power given



therapists by the Standards of Care sets up a dangerous differential that can, has, and will continue to lead to exploitation and other abuse.

I speak not only as a transsexual, but as a formerly licensed mental health profes-

sional (I retired my license to practice psychology in year 2000, after 20 years). I have many friends who are therapists, and I think highly of therapists in general, but when they and transsexuals interact under the auspices of the Standards of Care, they must play out respective roles which make effective therapy difficult or impossible. Their interactions become a careful dance in which transsexuals do whatever is required to get their permission letters and therapists do whatever is required to make sure transsexuals don't get the letters *unless* and *if*. And then, when the letters are supplied, the transsexual is more often than not outta there, to the frustration and chagrin of the therapist.

I submit that the Standards of Care have outlived their usefulness—or, rather, I should say that the parts of the Standards of Care which set up gatekeeping functions for therapists are obsolete and should be expunged. Certainly, Standards of Care for the treatment of transsexuals and other transgendered persons are needed, but they should concern themselves with broad ethical issues and not with hormones and surgery policing business. Sadly, in their concentration on issues of access, recent revisions of the Standards of Care have dropped important constraints of care providers—for instance, they no longer address the issue of overcharging.

I'm no longer a member of HBGDA; I refused to renew my membership when the Standards of Care began to allow therapists to require transsexuals to crosslive in order to receive hormones. I consider this a horrible abuse of power and will not rejoin until I the Standards expressly forbid such meddling in the lives of transsexuals. Here's hoping that change comes soon.

At the time this issue went to layout, we had received but two short letters. Letters from our readers will appear in Transgender Tapestry #98, provided you send them—Ed.

I SLEPT WITH PROFESSOR RICHARD GREEN

by Annie Wright, LifeWorks UK



Richard and I woke to the smell of fresh coffee. Breakfast was being served. We had slept well after our exhilarating and exhausting time in Galveston. But it wasn't quite as idyllic as it seemed. He was in seat 22A. I had slumbered on the other side of the cabin in seat 25G. We were returning to Europe from the 2001 XVII HBIGDA symposium.

The program, with three twelve-hour days and a half-day on Sunday, was not for the faint-hearted. The symposium opened with a half-day on the language of gender variance which caused several subsequent speakers to revise their terminology. Female-to-male transsexualism and autogynephilia were the subjects of many debates. Similarly, HIV and STD risks took another half-day. It was decided these are so great that the HIV committee's brief was increased to include all blood-borne diseases. Speakers also emphasized that transsexuals are still at risk from remaining organs from their birth gender. Thus, FTMs must continue checking for breast cancer, as some breast tissue often remains to form the contours of a male chest. MTFs can suffer from prostate cancer if that gland has not been removed. It was concluded that disclosing a full medical history to a primary care physician will ensure tests and treatment appropriate for the body.

The legal sessions included discussions of homophobia in the law and the extent of awareness of transsexuals in the prison population. However, this session was marred by a lawyer who threatened health care professionals with malpractice lawsuits if they complained of defamation by the transgender community. "By the time the malpractice insurance lawyers have gotten through with investigating your past, you will be in trouble." This was not at all a professional approach.

Endocrinologists discussed the side effects of hormonal treatment, including the increased risks of diabetes and venous thromboembolism from oral estrogen use. The MTF surgery sessions concentrated on refining SRS techniques, providing sensate neoclitoris and secondary esthetic refinements in labiaplasty and the vulva. Psychotherapy sessions showed that even those with dissociative disorder could have SRS. Family relationships were discussed in several sessions. One evening was devoted to outreach in a church in Galveston, where

a panel of professionals answered questions before an audience of about 50 transgendered and transsexual Texans.

Incoming President Eli Coleman is proud of the fact that HBIGDA is developing educational contact with the outside world; he discussed the Amicus Brief prepared in the Brandon Teena case and said HBIGDA has advised the U.S. Surgeon General on transsexual issues.

Enduring snippets: Veteran surgeon Stanley Biber telling the story of giving Osama bin Laden SRS before dropping her back with the Taliban; Belgian surgeon Stan Monstrey cycling along Galveston's Seawall Boulevard on a bike he had to buy because he couldn't rent one for the week; looking down a busful of professionals who were bouncing along like happy schoolkids after a gala dinner aboard a 19th century iron barque at the Texas Seaport Museum; meeting IFGE's Alison Laing.

The next symposium will be in 2003 in Gent, Belgium, with a session or two in Amsterdam, Netherlands. Let's hope there's an airline still flying.



Annie Wright is a specialist in construction law and proprietor of Lifeworks UK, selling books on transgendered subjects. She is a member of HBIGDA and was ejected from two separate IFGE Board meetings. "I didn't even get chance to open my mouth," she grins, "but I bear no ANNIEmosity." She believes transgenderism transcends national differences and hopes full acceptance by the mainstream of society is near.



Jessica Xavier and Jamison Green at the XVII HBIGDA Symposium in Galveston, Texas, 31 October to 4 November.

Jessica presented a paper on the people of color needs assessment she conducted in Washington, DC.

Jamison presented several papers, including one with Katherine Rachlin on health care utilization by FTMs in the United States and another with Dallas Denny on respectful language, which helped set the tone for the conference.

COLUMNS

WHAT IS GENDER?

Part 2

by
Miqqi Alicia Gilbert, Ph.D.



Gender is a complex concept that changes depending on your perspective. There is assigned gender—a legal concept that places you in a certain category. There is social gender—the assignment made on you by the people with whom you interact. And there is self-gender, which you feel internally is correct. Difficulties arise, we know all too well, when self-gender and social-gender do not coincide, since one of the most basic rules is that you are one gender, and that gender is the one people can identify. You are supposed to be what you appear to be.

In reality, the gender rules are repressive categories designed to divide the population into two differently empowered groups. Remember that in the majority of modern industrial nations there is a degree of equality and power sharing that has rarely if ever been witnessed before. Legally, women have equal rights, protections, and fair access to everything available to men. This is, of course, nonsense. Because of institutionalized discrimination and longstanding cultural traditions and practice, women are underpaid and disadvantaged in every country.

Gender rules and the strict enforcement of categories are required because of the political, social, and functional differences perceived to exist between the genders. We still see those differences as paramount, and therefore need the categories so we know how to hire, court, interact, and simply exist with the other gender. Certainly, other categories are important as well—notably race, but also class, education, age, and occupation, but gender is crucial because it exists within each of those other categories as well.

No one doubts the importance of gender, but that doesn't say what it is. The answer to that question is gender is a complex and multi-faceted tool of social control used to maintain and perpetuate an existing social order. That's why the most important aspect of gender is the legal one: assigned gender is

what puts you in one category or another, whether or not your outward appearance and/or inward feelings match that category. If they don't, then you are a gender outlaw. If you pass as your self-gender and that is different from your legal-gender, then you may be relatively safe—but you are still an outlaw. If your social gender is

ambiguous, if people are not sure how to categorize you, then you may well be treated as an outlaw, even if you do not want to be one.

Gender, as Judith Butler always reminds us, is essentially a performance. Your appearance, mannerisms, sound, and aura all form the communicative event that is your gender message. Since it's a performance, it can be a good one or a bad one—one that gets approval from fans or carped at by critics—one that is convincing and seems real, or one that is shallow and seems counterfeit. Interestingly enough, there is no one-to-one correlation between one's ability to perform gender well and one's legal-gender: sissies, butch females, and, for that matter, anyone who strays from the fairly rigid paradigms laid on us from childhood on suffer from the slings and arrows sent to gender-diverse people. As transgender folk, we frequently seek to be socially assigned to a gender that is not our legal-gender, and, like everyone else, succeed or fail in varying degree. This is what it means to say that gender is an achievement.

The majority of people don't work at achieving gender; it's something they have been learning and doing since birth and comes "naturally." But someone who is gender diverse must learn to perform gender in a more systematic and self-conscious way. And I don't just mean transgendered people here—the list includes all those, like young gay guys who give off too many effeminate signals or budding butch dykes who do not want to be hassled in high school, who choose not to be punished for being different. Of course, for transgendered folk the regimen is extreme. Wanting your self-gender to be

accepted as your social-gender can be an arduous undertaking, depending on how fortunate you are with respect to the physical aspects of your self-identified gender.

Maybe I'm getting too dense here, so let me try and recap. Gender is a social role, we know that. You're either a boy or a girl, and you're supposed to look and behave accordingly. In order to be safe, most of us learn early and well what the rules are and how to abide by them. That's the performance part—little boys know we have to behave like a boy in order not to be called a sissy and get ostracized or beaten up; little girls know we have to put on a dress at least once in a while for the same reasons. More and more, as we grow older, go through school, are submitted to the incessant socialization processes and virtual gender boot camps many of us barely survived, the gender-diverse fall by the wayside, picking up their cues and becoming members of the norm. Ultimately, it is only those who are driven by the force of their self-gender, driven by the knowledge and insight that their legal-gender is wrong, limiting, or has too many expectations attached to it, that real rebellion takes shape.

Everyone knows it's wrong to violate the gender rules. The little boy who dreams of being a girl knows he must not tell a soul, not share that secret. The little girl who refuses a dress not because they're hard to play in but because she knows she is a boy and oughtn't wear skirts, learns to keep that part to herself. For these people, gender truly is an achievement, because it does not come "naturally." Everyone has to achieve gender, and even the most masculine football player has to be careful about getting too enthusiastic about the ballet in the locker room. We all remember the pre-adolescent trick of asking someone to look at their nails and seeing if they did it in the "right" way. (For you gender trainees, that's an upside-down fist for boys and hands straight out for girls.) But for transgender folk—for cross-dressers, transsexuals, transgenderists—the achievement of gender is extraordinarily complex.

For the majority of people, gender performance is largely unconscious;

indeed, a good part is physical (the width of your hips, facial hair), and therefore unthinking. But for people whose self-gender is different from their legal-gender, the impetus to bring their social-gender into line with their own choices is overwhelming. All right, I'll say that again: if you want people to take you the way you want to be taken, you have to work hard. That's why we use wigs, hip pads, fake mustaches, and a plethora of devices that strongly signal a gender message. Mind you, we're not alone. Many people unsure or even unconsciously uncomfortable with their legal-gender go to great lengths to declare their self-gender unequivocally.

Gender is a basic form of social control that allows no deviation or diversity. The rules of gender are laid down in social, political, and economic terms, and the vast majority of people, including transfolk, work very hard to follow them. But—and this is the saddest thing—the rules are unnecessary. They're relics of history, only with us for unthinking albeit extremely enduring reasons. We could, in theory, allow gender choice to be free, to have self-gender be the only relevant factor—but that won't happen. The system, the cultural matrix this world exists in, is in no way ready to lift the restrictions and limitations that separate producers of zygotes from producers of eggs.

This is it for the foreseeable future. If you want to pass through life without being hassled (or worse), you must convincingly appear to be in one of the two gender categories (Some few major urban neighborhoods excepted).

What is gender? It's a tyranny that dictates behavior, thinking, career choice, family management, and presentation of self. It should die, but it won't.

But then, I'm just a silly girl, so what do I know?

Your feedback is important to me. I need to know you're out there. Hope to see you at IFGE 2002.

Miqqi Alicia Gilbert is a Professor of Philosophy at York University. She can be reached at miqqi@gilbert1.net.

AND THAT'S THE WAY IT IS!

by
Monica F. Helms



This column began taking shape on September 15, 2001, four days after the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. I'm telling you this so you'll know why you're not reading my usual jovial opening. I wanted to put down my thoughts while they were still clear. Consider this my chance to heal, if healing is at all possible.

I'm 50 years old, so I hadn't yet arrived when Pearl Harbor was attacked. I am old enough to remember when an assassin's bullet took President Kennedy's life. We were living in Germany at the time. I remember my mother telling me to go get my father at the high school gym, where he and his friends were setting up for a square dance. It seemed surreal as I hurried through the cold November night. When I arrived at the gym, it was dark and deserted. I had horribly sad news, but no one to tell it to.

What happened on September 11 staggers the imagination of even those who experienced Pearl Harbor firsthand. The terrorists didn't learn from what happened to the Japanese 60 years ago. The sleeping giant called America has once again been awakened. As I write this, the giant doesn't know who the enemy is, but by the time you read this, I'm sure the giant will be in action.

The terrorists united this country in a way we've not seen for more than a half century. Life will not be the same. Activists must be on the alert to insure the government doesn't use the events of 9/11 to take away our liberties in the name of protecting us. The thought of losing my civil rights scares me more than anything the terrorist could do to me.

WE'RE STILL HERE

In the wake of the terrorist attacks, the world scrambled to locate friends and loved ones. The transgender community was no different. The word went out for every TG person in NYC and DC to check in. The activists and artists of our community began networking in an attempt to account for transgendered people known to live and work in the target areas. The community could identify only one person who had died or was missing. Her name was Karen Vix. We learned she died at the World Trade Center.

How many stealth transsexuals and closeted crossdressers were amongst the dead and missing? We'll never know. The relatives of those people may never reveal that information to the public. However, our community has been well-represented in the cleanup and rescue efforts, with transgendered firefighters, police officers, and health care workers on the job. Heck, even His Honor, Mayor Rudy Giuliani, has publicly dressed in drag more than a couple of times. Somehow, that gives me comfort.

BUTTERING UP THE EDITOR

People always try to find ways to get in good with their bosses at work. It's no different here at *Transgender Tapestry*. The writing staff is constantly looking for ways to get on Dallas' good side so she'll give them more space in the magazine. Rumor has it one of the writers went so far as to paint Dallas' entire house. I think that was the issue where my column abruptly ended in mid-sentence.

Not to be outdone, I came up with a plan to ensure a healthy word-count for the next half-dozen issues. It seems that for many years, Dallas has been doing wonderful things for the transgender

community here in Georgia. She's been helping our community so long the documentation has to be translated with the Rosetta Stone.

Since Dallas has done so much for this community, the transgender leaders here in Georgia decided, at my suggestion, to give her an award. The award is called Georgia's Ultimate Transgender Service Award, or GUTS. We decided to give Dallas her GUTS at the activist reception at Southern Comfort.

Georgia is blessed with another who has helped the community for many years. Dr. Erin Swenson, the Chief Executive Officer for the Southern Association for Gender Education (SAGE) is a licensed therapist and a Presbyterian minister. She has helped transgendered Georgians not only with their psychological needs, but also with their spiritual needs. We wanted to give her the GUTS award as well.

In order to ensure Dr. Swenson's attendance at the activist reception, we reminded her that as CEO of SAGE she needed to be there. Dallas wasn't sure she could attend, so I upped the ante by telling her she needed to be there because we were giving an award to Erin. They both showed and were surprised when we gave them their well-deserved awards.

Having given Dallas the award, I'm sure I'll get extra space in the next few issues. In order to make up for it, I understand Miqqi Gilbert's column will be reduced to the size of a limerick. Sorry, Miqqi.

DAY OF REMEMBRANCE 2001

Ten names this year. Ten people taken from us because of hate and intolerance. Ten times did the bells ring in cities across the country. Ten souls touched our hearts, and ten-thousand tears were shed for their passing. We gathered to remember again, as we did last year, and as we will have to do next year. Will it ever end?

There were "only" ten names, down from sixteen last year—but the only number acceptable is ZERO. On November 28, twenty-three cities across the country held ceremonies remembering victims of gender-bias crimes. Four

universities—Penn State, Washington State, the University of Georgia, and Ohio State—held ceremonies on campus to remember the dead. Other candlelight vigils and ceremonies were held at city halls, state capital buildings, churches, community centers, and parks across the country. Transgender-related websites blacked their backgrounds for the day.

Although there were fewer names than last year, the crimes were no less horrible. James Jerome Mack was stabbed, choked, drowned, and set on fire for dating a transgendered woman. Willie Houston was holding his wife's purse while she used the public restroom. A blind friend needed help in the men's room, so Houston offered his arm. When Houston came out of the restroom, he was shot. In Colorado, F.C. Martinez was beaten to death in the small town of Cortez. Martinez was a sixteen-year-old Navajo youth; his killer was only eighteen. Here in Georgia, Robert Martin, a gay crossdresser from the small town of Ashburn, was beaten on the head with a blunt object and lay in a coma in the hospital for three months before he died. His mother never left his side.

It's important that we as a community never forget those who are killed for being gender-different. With each Day of Remembrance, we will continue to educate others so they won't forget either.

"I GOTTA GO PEE!"

Not in Minnesota, you don't. Julienne Goins, a transgendered employee of a publishing company called West Group, was told by a the Minnesota Supreme Court that she did not have legal grounds to sue her former employer for preventing her from using the women's restroom. This from a state which supposedly passed employment protection for gender-different people back in 1993. What the hell is going on there?

Hannah Allam of the Pioneer Press wrote, "The justices took an unusual six months before unanimously ruling that a West Group policy of designating bathrooms by biological gender does not violate the Minnesota Human Rights Act. They also found that the Eagan-based

publishing company did not create a hostile work environment for 28-year-old Julianne Goins, who said co-workers stared, gossiped, and monitored her bathroom use. The ruling was closely watched by advocacy groups for transgendered people, who dress and live as the opposite gender but have not had their bodies surgically altered."

Because of this ruling, West Group can legally designate bathrooms by biological sex. Transsexual employees will either, as Goins was ordered, walk great distances to use a unisex bathroom in another building, or resort to using catheter bags.

Ann DeGroot of OutFront Minnesota sees this as "one court case, one decision. It won't change the state's reputation as a tolerant, safe place for transgendered people to live." However, a line from an old Frank Zappa song keeps coming to my mind "Watch out where the huskies go, and don't you eat that yellow snow." They tell me it snows a lot in Minnesota.

IN NORTH CAROLINA, OF ALL PLACES

"Why, Uncle Jessie! I didn't know you cared!" Jessie Helms *doesn't* care, but a recent survey by Equality North Carolina showed his former constituents do. Equality NC found most North Carolinians feel it's wrong to discriminate against someone based on their gender identity.

The survey, funded in part by the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) and conducted by The Lucas Organization, revealed that 60.7% of the Tarheels polled said it's wrong to discriminate because of sexual orientation in public (government) jobs. An even larger number—68.0%—said it was wrong to discriminate because of gender identity. Gender identity was defined as "exhibiting characteristics usually associated with the opposite gender; that is, either a man who exhibits certain feminine traits or a woman who exhibits

more masculine traits." 26.3% said it should be legal to discriminate based on sexual orientation, while 13.1% said they weren't sure. For gender identity, the numbers were 16.4% and 15.6%, respectively.

When asked about discrimination in the private sector, the numbers dropped, with 56.2% saying "no" to sexual orientation job discrimination and 61.0% saying "no" to gender identity job discrimination.

What does this mean? It means that in North Carolina, of all places, the people say it's wrong to discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. That in itself is a major finding. But the icing on the cake is that more of those wonderful people in the First in Flight State say it's wrong to discriminate on gender expression than sexual orientation.

This brings me to my final thought. What does this do to HRC's argument about keeping gender expression out of the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA)? It seems HRC paid to have itself shot in the foot. Apparently, the massive amount of education they've claimed will be necessary in order to make the words gender expression acceptable in ENDA has slowly and quietly taken place.

Perhaps the survey results will cause HRC to finally put its money where its mouth is. HRC put gender expression in its mission statement, but still finds excuses for keeping it out of ENDA. This survey shows America is ready for a gender-inclusive ENDA. Will HRC hear this message, or will it continue to ignore the obvious pointed out by this survey? Only time will tell.

Hey, HRC. You need to get that foot looked at.

Monica Helms lived most of her life in Arizona. Today, she resides in Marietta, GA. She has two sons living in Arizona, one 19, and the other 17. Arizona was where she started transitioning nearly 5 years ago, and was also where she became activism. Monica is currently involved in transgender activism on both the local and national levels.

THERE IS NO SAFE WAY TO BE TRANSGENDERED

Originally Published in *DaKine*, June 2001

With Hawaii Legislators withholding equal rights and protection from TG men and women, we must work harder together towards a safer society

by
Li Anne W. Taft



May 1st—Lei Day—brought frightening news: Hawaii's Hate Crimes Bill was sent to the Governor with "gender and transgendered" removed from its protected status list. Our legislators had made a poor choice and a biased statement: that gender identity and gender expression were not worthy of government protection.

Such prejudiced legislation could very well put transgendered men and women at greater risk of harm in Hawaii. By excluding gender and transgender from protected status in our islands' laws and public policies, our elected representatives put forth a message: the legislation, the police, and the court system do not value transgendered people.

Present and future attackers and murderers of transgendered men and women in Hawaii motivated by hatred and prejudice can breathe easier now: if convicted, they will not receive increased penalties as in other hate crime cases.

Our legislators seem to have ignored the statistics, the testimony, numerous news reports,

The 1995 story of transwoman Debra Forte describes several 6-inch stab wounds to her chest; any one would have been sufficient to kill her. Debra's murderer is up for parole in nine years after receiving a life sentence for 2nd degree murder.

and Internet postings that describe the vicious assaults and murders of transgendered men and women. One reputable website, the Remembering Our Dead page at www.gender.org, reports that on the average in the U.S., one transgendered man or woman is murdered every month—crimes clearly motivated by hatred and prejudice.

To be transgendered in Hawaii means frequent contact with angry, biased people who give stinkeye, call out derogatory comments, and express a desire to inflict harm. Assault and murder motivated by prejudice and hatred against transgendered men and women will not decrease without protective measures in place to deter and punish the offenders. To remain safe and unharmed in Hawaii, transgendered folks must depend on their own vigilance and defense tactics and not on assistance or protection from police and public officials.

We must not forget those who have been assaulted and/or murdered. Our state legislators need to visit the Remembering Our Dead website and see those killed due to transgender hate and prejudice. Transgendered individuals murdered in Hawaii, including Jill Siedell and Victoria Hall, are listed there.

"We have lost so many in our community to hatred and prejudice, yet the news media calls us freaks," writes the website's creator, Gwendolyn Ann Smith. "It can be all-but-impossible to find honest, reliable media (reports) on the death of a transgendered person," she writes. Ms. Smith reporters mislead their readers and insult the victims by using "names

that the deceased did not own and pronouns that did not fit their reality."

"There is no safe way to be transgendered," warns the website, which lists 200+ men and women reported murdered since 1972 due to hatred and prejudice. The 1995 story of transwoman Debra Forte describes "several 6-inch stab wounds to her chest; any one would have been sufficient to kill her." Debra's murderer is up for parole in nine years after receiving a life sentence for 2nd degree murder.

Debra's niece says her aunt's violent death still greatly affects her family, "I had to lobby Congress for gender inclusion in the Hate Crimes Prevention Act, repeating the same story over and over, only to have it fall on deaf, congressional ears. I was begging these people we vote for, for basic human rights. I seethe with anger, but to no avail."

New legislation has moved forward in several states and cities that provide protective measures for transgendered persons. Rhode Island's House recently voted to extend civil rights protections to transsexuals and crossdressers, and on May 10th, Texas passed a Hate Crimes bill that includes gender along with race, religion, color, disabilities, sexual orientation, age, and national origin. Texas and Rhode Island join Minnesota and Connecticut and several cities, including San Francisco, Seattle, Portland, New Orleans, Atlanta, and Cambridge, with protective laws already in place.

After being a safe haven for diverse people and new ideas for centuries, Hawaii has stumbled. Our current laws and public policies give protected status based on race,

religion, sex, nationality, age, disability, and sexual orientation—but gender and transgender remain off all protective status lists. In light of this injustice, Hawaii's GLBT communities must express their indignation and demand that our government leaders not pick and choose certain groups of people worthy of protection. Our policymakers, police, and courts, sworn to give service and equal protection to all islands residents, need to extend their defense shield to Hawaii's transgendered folks, regardless of the 2001 legislative actions (or lack of such).

Once gender identity and gender expression are protected, our island home will be a safer place for transgendered men and women, adding much credibility to Hawaii as the Land of Aloha and the Geneva of the Pacific.

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Li Anne Taft currently resides in Honolulu. She's been active as a member of Hawaii Transgender Outreach (HTGO), Life Foundation's Transgender Community Action Committee (T-CAC), and guest lectures at area colleges on gender issues. Please email your questions and information about recent TG movies, books, articles, community events and news stories to Lwaioli@cs.com.

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The Journal

Volume II, No. 2—Transgender Tapestry #97

In this issue: PASSING, PART III

ON PASSING

by Robyn Walters

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A central theme of Holly Boswell and Jessica Xavier's thought-provoking articles seems to be that passing is no longer politically correct. Passing is portrayed as a betrayal of the transgender community. Taken in the context of two-spirited people and of complete freedom of gender expression by the gender queer, not wanting or needing to pass makes a certain amount of sense. In the context of a transsexual living life in a manner true to himself or herself, however, it does not.

Holly quoted Leslie Feinberg as saying, "Passing means hiding. Passing means invisibility. Transgendered people should be able to live and express their gender without criticism or threats of violence."

While I certainly agree that anyone who expresses gender beyond the narrow norms of society has the right to do so without fear of ridicule, discrimination, or bodily harm, I don't agree that passing is always a case of hiding. In general, a full-time or post-op transsexual isn't trying to hide; rather, he or she is trying to live the truth of his or her identity in the proper gender. Even so, not all of us who pass go to great lengths to deny our chromosomal history.

Although I pass and don't draw attention to myself in public, I'm open about who I am. Why? Because I feel the need and the obligation to teach the public—often one waitress or salesperson at a time—that transsexuals and crossdressers are real people, not Jerry Springer constructs.

Holly goes on to say, "When we create a false presumption—even unintentionally—we are deceiving others. Passing is a lie." She listed six disadvantages of passing: Deceit, self-betrayal, petty occupations, disconnection, perpetuation of injustice, and overall cost.

A crossdresser who passes for an evening at the club and then returns to his heterosexual male life has indeed deceived those who perceived him as a woman. But what harm has he done, other than con some gentleman into opening a door for him? A full-time or post-op MTF who passes isn't deceiving anyone. People merely see what she truly is—a woman.

Petty occupations and overall cost? Well, a crossdresser may spend lots on sexy outfits for his excursions and primp for hours getting the makeup just right, but the full-time woman

soon learns it ain't the clothes any more, and the need for make-up diminishes rapidly as electrolysis works its admittedly expensive wonders.

Self-betrayal and perpetuation of injustice? A crossdresser's passing does eliminate an opportunity for the public to get used to the idea of a man in a dress. However, under certain circumstances that same crossdresser might reveal his situation and try to educate the public. This happens when 150 transpeople mix with the townspeople of Port Angeles, Washington during *Esprit* each May. Port Angeles is one redneck mill town that has welcomed a crowd of trannies for 12 years.

Disconnection? This is a problem that doesn't limit itself to passing. Most of us who are transgendered have experienced disconnection, whether it be loss of family, friends, or employment. The disconnection phenomenon can be lessened by education and political action, but the impact on a spouse or partner is visceral. For some wives, the knowledge that a husband of 20-plus years is a gender bender or, worse, a woman, creates a fight-or-flight reaction. Her world is destroyed. Some, of course—those who are blessed—grow from the experience and remake their world with their husbands. The same is true in the FTM world.

Holly states, "It's time to move beyond the bipolar model of sex and gender based solely on anatomy." "How much longer," she asks, "will the invitations and licenses to our gender destinies be granted solely on the basis of our genitals? Probably only [until] we stop asking permission from external authorities to become authentically ourselves." Jessica, speaking of passing in terms of the passing privilege of those born to the gender, says, "Transpeople who live full-time know when they begin to pass in their new genders, since gender recognition becomes obvious from the validation of so many social clues. Unfortunately, that awareness has motivated only a few of us to our own privilege—and to fight transphobia as best we can."

Acceptance and tolerance of our gender destinies relies on more than external authorities such as the Standards of Care, counselors, and doctors. It lies in the education of our society, of our religious leaders, of our political leaders, and of our friends and families. Jessica and Holly are correct that we have an obligation to ourselves and to those who come behind us to remove the stigma of being gender blessed. In my opinion, this has little to do with passing and everything to do with education. Some are called to the front lines of activism and advocacy. Others live their lives quietly. But they also serve who stand and wait. It is incumbent on all of us to reach out in some way to show we are

decent human beings worthy of respect.

Holly concludes, “Whether we choose to pass or not pass, what we ideally want is the same [as] everyone else: acceptance, respect, love, and freedom We don’t have an honorable place within our culture. Maybe it’s time to reclaim one.”

I agree. Look for me. I’ll be the conservatively attired older woman marching beside you.

ON WOMEN, MEN, AND NOBODY ELSE (WITH APOLOGIES TO KATE)

by Judy Osborne

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Usually I love strolling along with Holly Boswell and enjoying the wider horizons she brings to my consciousness, but this time I can walk only half way with her. Holly’s “Transgender Revolution” piece seems to be attempting to stuff two unconnected ideas into an unruly theory that simply will not come together for me, no matter how hard I try to make the pieces fit.

The second part of Holly’s essay, subtitled “The Tyranny of Passing,” pairs beautifully with Jessica’s “Passing as Privilege.” Both are enlightened and thoughtful and deserving of a reader’s rapt attention. The problem for me was the tangled path that led through Holly’s “third gender” thicket before I came upon her lovely vista of passing’s tyranny. The two separate issues, the self-diminishing custom of passing, which Holly nails very adequately, and her proposal that the transgender world is capable of creating a third or more genders, even of redefining gender itself, feel falsely conflated and confused in my reading of her logic.

Some years ago I got attached to Riki Wilchins’ similar touting of transgender’s promise to lead society into a “deconstruction of gender” Nirvana—a new world where people could wander down their own unique paths of gender and sexuality; a world in which patriarchy and misogyny no longer could exist because gender no longer

would exist. Riki so inspired me with her clever thoughts that I carried her menacing sword along behind her for a while and spouted her stuff to the diminishing number of people who would listen to me. I got cured, detached, pretty quickly.

I don’t choose, as Holly proposes, “to define [myself] outside the culture and the gender it imposes,” nor do I want to be one of the “transgendered people [who] are redefining gender.” I want to be a woman—as much a woman as I can learn how to be during each and every remaining moment of what I hope will be a long life. I love my women friends and the way we talk, sharing and affirming and checking each other constantly and really listening and rarely interrupting and never one-upping and giving constant feedback that we’re getting what each of us is saying. I love the good cheer that comes to women in casual encounters. I even love having a door held open for me. I don’t like being discounted or interrupted or not being taken seriously or not even being heard by men, but that goes with the territory and I do my best, along with my sisters, to end that rude injustice.

Like many others in the transgender community I don’t want to alter gender traditions. I do what little I can, along with my friends, to pull the two distinct genders into more equal parity in terms of society’s benefits and privileges, but I’m very certain I’m not alone among MTF’s in wishing to be a woman instead of someone “free of gender.”

My wish has come true. I can accept that I don’t have all the qualifications. I never had a girl’s life-changing first period nor the ability to suckle a baby nor the unsettling experience of learning first-hand how power relationships evolve among girls. I’ll always be handicapped. I’m a “third sex” in that sense, I guess. I’m glad various cultures found places for us, often sacred ones. I’m glad too that we’re not offered that same humane provision in our culture because if we were, perhaps I would settle gratefully into a third-gender status and not stretch myself to be who I really want to be—a transgendered woman.

Being a “transgender woman” feels profoundly different to me from

what Holly calls “reinforced sex-role stereotyping” or a “fallacious linkage between biological sex and gender expression.” Lots of my friends and acquaintances going in both directions live as open and out transsexuals here in Seattle, the place I know best. They transition on the job, write articles and letters to editors and politicians about our issues, make speeches, serve on civic committees and commissions, don’t feel shy about going somewhere with one of us who’s not passable. Even my landlady is a transsexual who inspires me daily with her open dealings with irate tenants and leaks and a whole variety of maintenance workers. Every now and then one or a few of these folks take a vacation in Thailand and come back tanned and happy after a month spent mostly at a beach villa on the Straits of Malacca. The revised genitals some bring back as unique Thai souvenirs make very little difference to their new owners subsequent lives, except in bed. Friends never even know anything’s been altered—except for tanned faces glowing in contrast to Seattle’s customary pallor—unless a proud new owner decides to tell. There is no inherent linkage, fallacious or otherwise, between biological sex and gender expression—there never has been.

We who were socialized as boys can be women—happy, swingin’, expressive, nurturing women. It just takes a bit of effort. Typically, parents and cohorts slapped us down pretty hard when we dared to show anything feminine. We did cars and baseball and shoot-em-up games instead of dolls and hopscotch and pajama parties. Now at last we can discover and embrace our femininity—it’s harder to get the hang of it after life’s patterns have settled in, but it’s fun and intensely affirming to bring out the feminine person cloaked inside each of us and help her gain new friends. Lying down in front of a surgeon for a few hours won’t do it.

So how do we begin? We ask questions and start learning to sound and look and act like other women so our every little action won’t constantly remind friends of our differences, but we don’t try to pass or be false to our background. We find joy and rich-

ness in women's company and don't exploit women any more. We study the little cues women constantly give each other. We begin to notice when we're responding in guy ways and stop doing that. We take more and more excursions away from our community's cocoons and gain more original-woman friends and ask for their help and their advice, and eventually we begin to get accepted as women by women. You know when that happens—it's my own personal definition of when we become women. It has to be an honest process. Our prior lives must be part of who we are for our honesty and openness to shine through, but we do become women with women friends and woman activities. That's what my MTF transsexual friends around here seem to want. I don't know anyone who would rather be third gendered.

Our society really is divided into two genders (and I am talking genders, not sexes). My woman friends want no part of being like a man—zero. They're feminists, mostly, some also lesbians, women all the way through. Men—well, you know how they feel about acting the least bit like a woman. All my years in the trans community have convinced me that the transgender world feels much the same way. Our men struggle mightily to be women and our women leap tall buildings into manhood. A very few hardy souls slip gracefully into androgynous roles between the conventional genders. I admire them, but they're the exceptions that prove the rule.

It's wishful thinking to imagine we're going to "redefine gender," "transcend gender," or, in Riki's words, "deconstruct gender." Transgender peccadilloes and persecutions occasionally do result in something fun and sweet like enabling two women to get married legally in Texas. Still, newsworthy events like these are but tiny blips in society's gender traditions, and they usually cost us dearly. Society loves gender as it is. Even from hundreds of yards away, our gender presentations signal our roles in the mating dance of life, and that's fun—we love it—as a society, we're not about to give up that joy or alter those traditions. To suggest the transgender community can pull off

such a revolution is giving ourselves far too much importance.

Passing? No I don't want to pass, but I am a woman, a transgender woman, and I'm proud of that! A person can go as far into the traditions of the other gender as she or he wishes and still be real and honest and open about being transgender. Being out and being a third gender are two different issues.

I love knowing about the two-spirit and third-gender traditions in lots of societies. I admire the tolerance, the understanding, and the spiritual respect for the individual that created such roles. I admire even more the beautiful way in which Holly brings this and other aspects of our spirituality into our lives. Perhaps if I had been born into such a society I could accept a third-gender role and love it. I wasn't, and my struggle to carve out a place for myself in this dualistic society is a journey within what I know about gender and my own need to fit into its existing order. That's all I can do. I pretty sure it's all the community can do.

TO PASS OR NOT TO PASS: THAT IS THE QUESTION

by Virginia Stephenson

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October 24 was my last day at work as a guy. I had Thursday and Friday off and returned to work on Monday the 29th as a woman. I had looked forward to this day for some time, and had planned it carefully to make it a life event. Now that it was upon me, it was all I thought it would be, and more.

With each new step along the way, I feel more free, not a captive of anything other than my decisions. The world opens up, possibilities become infinite, and life becomes magical. With every person I meet, I feel it is a universally appointed time to touch another in some way, and I know what Quinten Crisp meant when he said the whole world was his stage.

The look I've cultivated over the years is in place. I look professional, put together, feminine. Few will

decide I'm a nontransgendered woman. Most will look at me with wonder and curiosity, which is just what I want, because I feel I'm a special person and have something to offer everyone I meet—a view of the world that is a little different, a different way of looking at gender roles or at our culture in general. I may even be entertaining.

If I was 5'7" (I happen to be 6'4") and could pass as well as the next woman on the street, look at all I would be missing. I would be blending in. I would have to work to be the center of attention, to distinguish myself in dress or behavior or speech.

There was a Centaur in mythology, called Chiron. Chiron was half man and half horse. The Centaurs were a fun-loving group; in fact, they had a rowdy and bawdy reputation. But Chiron was different. He was a healer and a teacher, and was sought out by the people of the age for his wisdom. He looked different from all other folk, but that made him special. Rather than use his great frame and size to harm, he used his specialness to help, teach, heal, and counsel the people. His difference became a vehicle for his gifts to shine and change his world.

The drive to pass has become the Holy Grail of the transgender community. Could it be we are settling for second-best? Several months ago, I had scheduled cosmetic surgery. A week before the surgery I asked myself, "Why do you want to have this surgery?" Some of the old answers came to me: I would look more like a woman; I would be making my body like my inner self; I would look more beautiful; I would be more passable. These all seemed reasonable. With two days to go, I looked in the mirror and tried to imagine what I would look like and mentally compared the look to my life goals. I asked myself, "Is this necessary?" The next day I called and cancelled the surgery.

Am I saying we're wrong to have cosmetic surgery or SRS? Absolutely not—but I am saying we'll be more sure in grasping what our lives are all about if we will accept ourselves the way we are without surgery, and love ourselves, and walk with our heads high, and be proud of who we are. If

we find that place, then we can handle and rejoice and find peace in all the surgeries we want.

I've been in the transgender community for a relatively short time, just five years. In that time I've seen transnie after transnie go into surgery or strive for the passing look, or transition, or whatever, with the fairytale notion that on the other side things would be better, problems would cease, life would be wonderful, and their hose would not run. Well, folks, it doesn't work like that!

We're a part of a grand and wonderful evolutionary jump our culture is taking away from the old failed patriarchal society and toward a future of sharing and rejoicing and embracing variance and difference rather than fearing it. To be a part of this wonderful adventure, we need to think differently. We must realize we're a part of something larger than ourselves and our community, and embrace our specialness—not try to hide it.

To pass or not to pass? I've made my decision.

STEALTH AND PASSING

by Susan Blewitt

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I cannot understand the choice of so many transsexuals to live in stealth. Who wants to live in untruth? I certainly don't, and I fail to understand how anyone in his or her right mind could, assuming that he or she was mature and of good character.

It's true I don't pass well. However, my attitude toward stealth is not a rationalization. Thanks to Dr. Ousterhout's work on my face, coupled with the fact that at 5'8" and 135 pounds I have a body favorable for female presentation, I get feedback from mainstream people to the effect that I make an attractive lady. I think it possible that within a couple of years I'll be able to pass fairly well, for the cause of my inability to pass is not pronounced male physical qualities, but voice and behavior, which can be learned. I'm quite new at female presentation, having done it for the first time on an airline flight last January,

when I flew from Chicago to San Francisco for a surgery date with Dr. Ousterhout. Thus, while I'm lousy at passing, I'm not resigned to the fact that this will always be the case.

If I become passable—which is not terribly unlikely—I will want everyone who knows me, even casual acquaintances, to know I'm a transsexual woman. I'll want this primarily because in a general way I prefer living in truth, and secondarily, though still importantly, because I feel I owe this particular truth to others. I feel it would be disrespectful to others to allow their false belief that I was nontranssexual to go uncorrected. I feel it would be a betrayal of their trust.

I know that having people think I was nontranssexual and being treated as such would be pleasing to my ego. I've passed often enough to be acquainted with this pleasure. But the pleasure stealth would provide wouldn't be worth the lessening of my character it would entail. I would lose self-esteem. I wouldn't love myself as much. In my relationships with others, I want to be regarded as a person who has a sense of honor, a person who can be counted upon. Thus, the pleasure I stand to gain is weighed against what I would lose. The intelligent choice is clear.

Thirty years ago, when "impersonating a woman" was a crime in every state, when being clocked would likely mean a trip to the county jail, the choice of living in stealth was rational. But public attitudes have changed enormously since then. Thirty years ago it was excusable for a transsexual to keep his or her friends in the dark about the past. If friends were to learn the truth, they would not feel betrayed, for they would understand the powerful social forces that made the betrayal necessary. Today those social forces are not so strong as to render stealth behavior excusable. Today most mainstream people would feel their trust had been betrayed, and their esteem of the transsexual's character would drop.

I think in large measure the thinking of the transgender community regarding passing, and especially towards stealth, was formed in earlier times, when there was powerful stigma to contend with. This thinking hasn't

caught up with the better social conditions of the present today. Apart from that consideration, I can't understand the choice of so many transsexuals to live in stealth. I assure you, I personally have no such desire.

PASSING TRANSSEXUAL

by Dallas Denny

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I am a passing transsexual. That means that wherever I go, in whatever situation, whether I'm getting my car repaired or giving a presentation at work or sharing a hotel room with a co-worker, whether I'm all dressed up or hot and sweaty in a t-shirt with no makeup, people don't read me as transsexual, but believe me to be and accept me as nontranssexual. Neither my appearance nor my voice nor my mannerisms tell them I'm transsexual.

Unlike some transsexuals, I don't really care who knows about my past. I just live my life, surrounded by those who don't know, those to whom I've disclosed, and those who have learned of my transsexualism from others or from my various activities and writings in the transgender community. Whatever happens, happens, and is just fine with me. No one can hurt me by outing me, yet because I can pass I'm able to participate fully in life's rich banquet without fear of finding myself in a dangerous or uncomfortable situation because I've been read as transsexual. Unlike many of my friends, I don't have to survey the environment to see if I'm in a "transsexual danger zone." With equal ease, I can hike the Appalachian Trail, go to the corner grocery store, wander into a seedy country bar, apply for a job, or dine in a fine restaurant, never having to wonder if anyone "knows" or if those people at the corner table are laughing about me. Indeed, as I go about my business, even when I'm passionately advocating about gender issues, I rarely think about my own transsexualism, for I'm not reminded of it by the actions or words of others or by my own body. My life is, from

moment to moment, very little different than that of a nontranssexual woman of a like age. I find I prefer it that way, for as out as I am, I've no real desire to do gender education and outreach every time I go to the supermarket. I don't have the energy, time, or patience to primp and survey my appearance before stepping out—nor do I need the drama of being clocked; I just want to grab the milk and eggs and bread and go home and make french toast.

Now, I'm not claiming to pass at all times and under all conditions. Because my name has been widely linked to gender issues in print and on the Internet and because I've frequently left copies of trans-related material on the copier at work, I often have no idea who knows and who doesn't, or if anyone knows at all. If anyone wonders or has figured it out they aren't talking about it, which is just fine by me, for I don't want it to be all about my own transsexualism, but about gender issues in general. The result is the same, whether my transsexualism is not known or just not talked about. I'm in control. I decide when and to whom to disclose. And that's the way, uh huh, uh huh, I like it.

I'M JUST LUCKY THAT WAY

Although I'm glad I pass, I don't ascribe it to any particular virtue on my part. My passing has nothing to do with my inner goodness. I pass because my most predominant masculine characteristics were amenable to change, and I changed them. I had facial hair, for which an effective removal technology existed, and a body which produced testosterone, for which an effective opposing technology existed. I was lucky, for I had no physical features which would have made it especially difficult to pass. I wasn't overly tall, I had no adam's apple, my voice wasn't particularly deep, I hadn't lost my hair, I had little body hair, I didn't have a thin upper lip or heavy brows or a square jaw, I wasn't overly tall, my hands and feet were on the small side for my height. Those are features which were determined by chance, in a game of genetic roulette, when sperm met

ovum. I was fortunate; although I had my share of male characteristics, the game of life happened to give me a body which could be whipped into shape without too much expense or effort.

At one time, I was proud of my ability to pass, but I eventually disabused myself of that notion. Now I'm merely grateful, for it makes my life easy and safe. I know I pass only because of chance, and I recognize my ability to pass doesn't make me superior in any way. I'm not "more" transsexual than others because I happen to lack secondary sex characteristics for which medical science hasn't devised effective treatments—but I am, as I've said, grateful that by a combination of luck and technology I've an appearance which causes others to respond to me in ways which generally help rather than hinder me as I go through life. It's convenient and comfortable to have the option of telling others rather than having them inevitably figure it out for themselves, for when people know, interactions change subtly; everything they say and so and everything I say and do is influenced by the transsexual issue.

I feel for those who, despite their best efforts, don't pass, but however much I sympathize with their predicament, I'm not ashamed because I happen to pass. I'm not at fault because I can pass any more than they are at fault because they can't. I've no obligation to render myself nonpassable for their sake. On the other hand, I wouldn't be much of a human being if I turned my back on them—not because they're unlucky and I'm lucky—that's merely a matter of perspective; I might in fact be the unlucky one because my life is more of a deception—but because the thing that drives us is the same. We come from a common place, and our issues and enemies are the same. People who give those who don't pass a hard time would give me a hard time too, if only they knew I was transsexual; they don't like me any better, they merely assume I have a history which in fact I did not have. Those who deny employment to those who don't pass would deny

me a job, too, and those who would be happy to kill them would be as happy or even more happy to murder me. I would be a fool if I ignored this, if I permitted myself to believe the evil people out there love me because I pass. They don't. It's for that reason I've spent the past 15 years as an activist. It's for this reason I don't choose my friends for their ability to pass, why I don't mind being seen in public with those less passable than myself.

Non-passable transsexuals face tremendous rejection and have great difficulty in finding or keeping employment. Obviously, a post-transition life characterized by discrimination and hostility from others is far different from a life in which one gets a job and is treated with consideration. It's difficult not to be impacted when one's life contains a large measure of unpleasantness. A few of my non-passable acquaintances have become cynical, pessimistic, aggressive, beaten-down, and just generally nasty because of the way they have been treated. This exacerbates their problems. A pleasant personality can defuse difficult situations and can result in acceptance whether one passes or not; on the other hand, no one wants to be around someone who is unpleasant, whether they pass or not. The world being as it is, those who don't pass and walk around with a chip on their shoulder because of it tend to find life doubly difficult. But of course, the world being as it is, the most personable and pleasant nonpassable transsexual may wind up jobless.

Those who pass can easily put it all behind them, choosing to deny their history and experience and avoid those they consider less passable than themselves. Many do, and a few go to great lengths to reconstruct their lives in such a way that they completely disavow their transsexualism. This is of course intellectually dishonest, but more than that, it's dangerous, for they enter what I've called "the closet at the end of the rainbow," building relationships and careers which can come to an abrupt end if and when (and it's usually when) they're outed or discovered. They base their lives on the lie

that they're nontranssexual, and forevermore must spend their time and energy patrolling the ramparts. They live in a state of hypervigilance, filtering everything that happens to determine if they're in danger of being revealed. Who among us hasn't run into one of these deep-in-the-wood-work transsexuals in public and watched them freeze in their tracks, shrinking within themselves as they

pray we don't notice them, and that if we do, we won't speak.

I've little patience with those who consider themselves superior because they can pass. I've even less with those who consider themselves superior because they don't. Both viewpoints are merely constructions of subjective realities which conform to the genetic hand dealt in the poker game of life. We are each working from an *n* of one. Our

experiences speak about our individual lives, and have no meaning when applied to others who, after all, have their own experiences.

We're real transsexuals, and our lives are equally valid, regardless of whether we pass.

HOW YOUR EDITOR FEELS ABOUT THE POLITICS OF PASSING

Whether we're happy with the idea or not, we live in a society with a binary gender system. As gender activists, we're expected to challenge, undermine, and tear it down because of its restrictiveness. This is healthy because among other things, it calls into question our community's unhealthy obsession with passing—but it is at best an interesting philosophical exercise that doesn't translate well to reality. Most transgender activists take pains to pass in public as members of one sex or the other; it's a matter of safety.

Here's a confession: I like the binary system. Life would be pretty darned dull without it. I can't even begin to imagine the film "Casablanca" with a 3rd-gender Bogart and a two-spirit Ingrid Bergman. What I do find offensive is the system's unwillingness to let people choose their place within it. As far as I'm concerned, the system needs an overhaul so it will value Alan Alda as much as John Wayne and k.d. lang as much as Marilyn Monroe, but it doesn't need to be scrapped altogether—a goal of some transgender activists, but certainly not this one.

Like other transsexuals, my gender identity isn't somewhere in the middle of the continuum, but at or close to the end opposite the one I was assigned at birth. Kudos to those who like it somewhere in the middle. I'm happy for you—but if you're one of those who are trying to get everybody else to join you, please stop claiming we transsexuals are singlehandedly responsible for the perpetuation of the binary system. We're tired of your insistence that if we could only share your special enlightenment we would, like you, seek the middle ground. With all due respect, you have no idea what it's like to be transsexual. Please stop patronizing us. We're not impaired. We know exactly where we want to be, and it's not stuck in the middle with you.

DISCLOSURE IS A COMPLEX ISSUE. Should one inform others of one's transgender status? If so, then when, how much, to whom, and under what conditions? Should one tell all even if it can wreck a friendship? Effect employment? Make it unsafe to live in the neighborhood?

It's a difficult onion to peel. What about crossdressers? Is a post-transition transsexual under a special obligation? What of stealth crossdressers? Are they exempted-- and if so, why? Which is the *real* lie-- to not mention the fact of a past that was itself a lie, or to hide the fact of one's secret cross-dressing from family, friends, neighbors, and employers?

The disclosure issue runs deeper than gender. Should one disclose a 2-year stretch in the slammer? When, and to whom? When you first meet someone? ("Hi there. I'm Dallas. Once upon a time I did a dime stretch in Sing-Sing. I didn't mean to hit him that hard. Hey, come back!") When it becomes important in a relationship? ("Please marry me. But before you do, there's something I want to tell you. My real name is Ted Bundy.") Should you tell your boss you had a conflict with your last two supervisors? What about you-- yes, you-- the person who stole a car and knocked over a mini-mart and were lucky enough to get away with it? Are you living any less a lie than a stealth transsexual?

Peel the onion. When and under what circumstances should I reveal my left-handedness? Certainly until I do others will assume I'm right-handed. I'll be living in a state of imperfection, of deceit. All right, *Tapestry* readers, I'm coming clean! I'm tellin' you now, I'm left-handed, see. I'm a left-hander who has been living in these pages as a presumably right-handed editor. I apologize for not telling you. I guess I'm just a moral weakling. Please find it in your hearts to forgive me. Please keep reading the magazine.

Disclosure, as I said, is a complex issue, and one best left up to each individual.

TRANSSEXUAL INMATE TREATMENT ISSUES

by Gianna E. Israel

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This article was reviewed and edited by Barbara Anderson, Ph.D., Dee Deidre Farmer, Attorney Ann Grogan, and Sheila Kirk, M.D.

Not surprisingly, many people believe those who are imprisoned deserve what they get. Among law-abiding citizens, a prevailing attitude exists that wrongdoers must be punished. However, what becomes lost to moral argument is the pattern of victimization experienced by transsexual and other transgendered inmates—treatment which has no place in a progressive, ethical society.

Of all the hardships to befall transsexual persons, few compare to imprisonment. Male-to-female transsexuals are in a unique situation. Born with male genitalia, they have a female gender identity, and many have lived as women for years—yet they are routinely incarcerated in mens' prisons. They are at special risk because they lack a masculine gender identity; their placement within a highly aggressive segment of the population (male inmates) sets them up for victimization. Transsexual women experience the worst of the worst treatment at the hands of prison officials and prisoners. Typically, the manner in which they are treated has no correctional justification or penalogical function.

In California, Hawaii, and other states, some prisons house transsexual inmates with gay males, separate from the general male inmate population. The only other protective option is to place typically non-violent MTF persons in 24-hour-a-day custody in security housing units (SHUs) designed for the prison's most violent and dangerous inmates. However, in SHUs, transsexuals usually don't have access to rehabilitative programs available to inmates within the general population. Most prisons do not address housing and treatment issues of transsexual inmates, and some go to great lengths to avoid providing treatment.

What does this mean in lay terms? Transsexual inmates are more likely than any other inmate group to be assaulted or raped by correctional officers and inmates. They are the least likely to receive medical or psychiatric care for grave illnesses. They are frequently denied access to rehabilitative programs available to other prisoners. They live in a prison-

within-a-prison, often without the basic human rights afforded to other inmates. Only one other group—inmates with HIV/AIDS—experiences a comparable violation of their human rights.

DELIBERATE INDIFFERENCE

The term *deliberate indifference* means just what it says—a wanton disregard or informed failure to provide something which is required, such as medical treatment. Within the context of combined medical and legal issues, our definition becomes more focused. It means a physician or responsible party has failed to provide medical care to a patient with an established medical need and has withheld treatment, knowing that his or her inaction will result in a worsening of the patient's condition and may cause significant damage. In a legal context, deliberate indifference also means that a professional recognizes that a failure to provide medical treatment is breaking the law by violating a person's civil rights.

When examining laws and rights pertaining to the medical treatment of transsexuals and other inmates in the United States, we look primarily to federal law, since most prisons operated by the states and the federal government fall within federal legal jurisdiction. The Eighth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution states that prisoners shall be free from cruel and unusual punishment. The phrase deliberate indifference often applies to this civil right. Based on information I have gathered, I find it reasonable to conclude that many prisons and courts are *deliberately indifferent* to the medical needs of transsexual patients.

Courts are becoming more interested in issues of deliberate indifference, partially because organizations like Amnesty International have raised charges of human rights abuses in the United States for the condition of its prisons. Article 5 of the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights states "No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment." Hopefully, those persons involved in the treatment decisions of inmates will see that a repeated failure to provide medical treatment to transsexuals

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constitutes civil and human rights violations.

TREATMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Prison officials have access to recommendations for the care of transsexual inmates. The Standards of Care of the Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association (HBI-GDA) state:

Patients who are receiving hormonal treatment as part of a medically monitored program of gender transition should continue to receive such treatment while incarcerated to prevent emotional lability, reversibility of physical effects, and the sense of desperation that may include depression and suicidality.

—HBI-GDA, 5th Ver. Pg. 35

The Standards of Care also include a policy on harm reduction, in which persons who are at risk can receive hormones without the usual requirements.

Israel & Tarver (1998) concluded that the administration of sex hormones is medically necessary in treating transsexuals. In regard to inmate issues, they wrote:

The symptoms and behaviors accompanying both gender dysphoria and hormone withdrawal in a previously established transgender individual are frequently perceived by prison staff as a manipulative gesture on their part. In fact, malingering and misrepresentation by transgender persons is rare.

Israel & Tarver recommend a three-month assessment period during which physicians can determine an individual's appropriateness for hormone administration. This would include "those who have in the preceding three months consistently expressed interest in the permanent physical changes brought on by hormones, to bring the body in line with an intended masculine, feminine or androgynous appearance" (1998, 71).

DENIAL OF TREATMENT: THE CONSEQUENCES

The consequences of denial of treatment can be serious. Transsexual women tell of feeling fear every minute, day and night, when placement and treatment issues are not addressed by prison officials. Accounts include descriptions of

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constant desire to commit suicide and unremitting depression as transsexual women's bodies remain incongruent or deteriorate into incongruence as hormones are denied. Letters also reveal transsexual inmates who for years have maintained women's names and identities struggling to maintain a rudimentary form of female presentation.

Standards of care exist in order to insure that all patients, irrespective of their legal standing, receive treatment for medical and mental conditions which if left untreated would have a permanent, devastating impact, often causing a severe worsening of their conditions. Standards of care also apply to persons afflicted with Gender Identity Disorder. Yet a review of letters from inmates clearly demonstrates standards of care are not being followed by prison physicians. As a consequence, those who remain untreated risk higher incidence of severely deteriorating mental health. An institution's failure to provide treatment for easily-recognizable disorders is unacceptable and one of the most glaring examples of our failure as a society to provide treatment for those who most need it.

—Barbara Anderson, Ph.D.,
personal communication

DENIAL OF TREATMENT: THE REALITY

Most prisons do not provide hormones, and some go to great lengths to avoid providing any treatment to transsexual inmates. Most transsexual inmates are not receiving appropriate medical and psychological care. Many repeatedly seek medical treatment, often for years, while enduring administrative harassment and difficult court battles in the pursuit of basic medical and civil rights.

Prisons that do provide treatment frequently have policies which allow for treatment of those who were treated prior to incarceration, but fail to address the

medical needs of those who develop Gender Identity Disorder during incarceration or who have no documented proof of their pre-incarceration transsexualism. Officials often claim that only those inmates who were diagnosed with Gender Identity Disorder and placed on hormones before incarceration are eligible for hormones in prison. They sometimes maintain that the prison does not afford the opportunity for the real life experience required by the Standards of Care—conveniently ignoring the fact that many MTF transsexual inmates consistently maintain their female identity year after year in an all-male facility.

Socioeconomic factors are another common reason given for denying medical treatment. Many transsexual persons cannot afford to seek treatment for Gender Identity Disorder while in the community—the more so since community treatment programs are scarce. As a consequence, they are often forced to seek dangerous black market hormones and even surgical procedures. Transsexual inmates then discover their inability to secure community treatment outside the prison translates into an inability to produce the documentation needed to secure treatment while incarcerated. Repeatedly, I've found this to be so, even for MTF transsexuals who have obvious hormone-enhanced feminine characteristics and have lived as women for years.

Prison officials may state that because an inmate has a history of prostitution he or she doesn't need treatment. This is shortsighted, particularly since the vast majority of transsexual inmates who become involved in prostitution do so because of reduced opportunities for employment and education. Where is an undereducated, impoverished transsexual without marketable skills to find employment and community resources? Racial makeup also can exacerbate this situation; persons of color are incarcerated in disproportionate numbers.

Transsexual inmates are sometimes denied hormone treatment because prison officials contend they are homosexual. Recently, a MTF transsexual with a significant amount of experience living as a woman was denied hormones for this reason. An AASECT-certified psychologist testified that earlier a medical doctor unfamiliar with Gender

Identity Disorder had wrongly classified the transsexual individual as gay; thus, the witness testified, the transsexual certainly must be so.

I concluded that the expert witness for the prison had either intentionally misdiagnosed the transsexual woman or was incompetent. Any care provider familiar with the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-IVTR) of the American Psychiatric Association should be able to recognize that there is a specific distinction between a person's gender identity and sexual orientation. Gender identity refers to the way a person experiences and presents him or herself to the world. It is a construct of self-identity. Sexual orientation refers to those whom a person finds sexually arousing or attractive. Those who persistently and consistently state that they are suffering symptoms of gender dysphoria and continuously implore physicians to provide hormone treatment are in all likelihood transsexual. Differential diagnosis between transsexuals and gay males is possible by referring to the *DSM-IV*, HBGDA Standards of Care, *Transgender Care*, and other easily obtainable resources.

Many times prison officials will claim Gender Identity Disorder simply does not exist at all. However, even a cursory examination of inmate medical records will reveal patients who are suffering tremendously and who have made repeated cries for medical treatment. Left untreated, Gender Identity Disorder can become so severe that transsexual inmates will show severe depression, suicidal ideation, self-mutilation, and even psychosis.

Regrettably, many doctors who fail to treat Gender Identity Disorder also fail to treat associated mental health disorders requiring psychotropic medication. A physician's failure to evaluate, diagnose and provide treatment when it is medically necessary, as in these instances, is behaving unethically and is in violation of human and civil rights.

Prison officials often contend transsexuals start and then stop treatment regimens. Medication compliance in inmates with medical and mental illnesses has long been an issue familiar to prison officials and physicians. This is first dealt with by treating those with the most need, then providing to those who ask for medications, and finally, by addressing the medication needs of the non-compliant. Given

the severity of symptoms associated with Gender Identity Disorder, any ethical care provider should ascertain that a need exists which outweighs less important issues such as potential noncompliance.

At their heart, policies which deny treatment of transsexuals and the expert witnesses who support them represent the insidious evil which so characterizes deliberate indifference. Prison officials have the knowledge that treatment is medically necessary, but create barriers to prevent the most needy from getting it.

LEGAL REMEDIES

Most civil actions filed by or on behalf of inmates never reach courts. This is because civil action complaints are eliminated through a strict selection process based on legal merit. More often than not, transsexual inmates simply don't have the resources and sophistication to navigate their way through the maze. Moreover, prison officials and their medical experts will do everything possible to prevent a case from being heard, even going so far as to promulgate incorrect or unethical information. I recently reviewed a case filed in federal court, to discover that in an effort to have the case dismissed and continue denying treatment to the inmates, the prison's medical experts had filed medical statements which repeatedly exploited stereotypes about transsexual persons.

Transsexuals and their legal counsel should be certain their case has legal merit and the parties involved are actually accountable. Otherwise, there is risk of wasting time and resources. Recently, during my review of a transsexual inmate medication case on appeal, I observed that the justices had ruled that the transsexual was not entitled to her day in court because a medical director was not directly responsible for the woman's actual treatment. A medical director by definition, is responsible for enforcing and developing policies which address the medical needs of his or her charges. However, the court did not find the medical director to be individually responsible.

Those interested in pursuing a deliberate indifference case should consult an attorney or law library. Proper legal resources can provide instruction on the use of medical declarations and compilation of evidence in cases. Inmates should always use certified mail when sending

correspondence to document medication requests, and should store copies of their records with a reliable family member or friend in the outside community.

Clearly, pursuing medical treatments by way of the courts is not always effective; however for desperate persons affected with Gender Identity Disorder, judges need to be aware that those seeking treatment are appealing to the court of last resort.

The ease with which hormone administration can be provided and the refusal of prison officials to provide it raises an important question: Is the lack of medical treatment of transsexual inmates a case of deliberate indifference? I and other care providers are outraged by the degree to which prison officials will ignore their own policies, circumvent the law, and invest enormous resources to prevent transsexual inmates from receiving medical treatment. We believe this is deliberate indifference.

Unless we strive to protect the human and civil rights of our most neglected and disempowered citizens, we risk a corrupt society which provides for and protects only those in power.

▼
Gianna Israel has provided telephone consultation, individual counseling, and gender-specialized evaluations and recommendations since 1988. She also provides expert services in child-custody and legal-forensic mental health cases. Ms. Israel is principal author of Transgender Care and a regular contributor to TG-Forum.com and Transgender Tapestry. She is a HBGDA member. Contact her at 415/558-8058, P.O. Box 424447, San Francisco, CA 94142, or via e-mail at Gianna@counselsuite.com. A library of her writings can be found at <http://www.counselsuite.com>.

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CASE LAW SUPPORTING TRANSEXUAL INMATE MEDICATION AND PLACEMENT ISSUES

Farmer v. Brennan, 128 L. Ed.2d 811 (1994). U.S. Supreme Court held that prison officials could be held liable for exposing transsexual inmate to excessive risk of sexual assault. This case also further defines the legal definition of deliberate indifference.

South v. Gomez, (US District Court, Sacramento, 1999 No. S-951070DFL-DAD). Appeals Court upheld earlier federal court findings which concluded that California Department of Corrections officials had violated a transsexual plaintiff's constitutional right to be free of cruel and unusual punishment by deliberately withholding necessary medical care. Case shows instance of one CDC facility withholding hormonal medication after inmate had been receiving such from another CDC facility.

Phillips v. Michigan, Department of Corrections (US District Court, Michigan, 1990 No. G88-693CA1). Court found in favor of transsexual plaintiff, and held that the inmate suffered from "serious medical need," within meaning of Eighth Amendment prohibition against cruel and unusual punishment, and went on to order a preliminary injunctions ordering correctional officials to provide her estrogen therapy.

Meriwether v. Faulkner, (7th Circuit 1987). Court found transsexual inmate entitled to medical treatment, and transsexuals were distinguishable from homosexuals and transvestites.

Estelle v. Gamble, (US Supreme Court). An important case in which the court warned that "the denial of medical care can result in physical torture or pain without a penalogical purpose."

Supre v. Rickets, (US Court of Appeals 10th circuit, 1986). Unusual case in which background information demonstrated that prison authorities provided plaintiff castration after self-mutilation and injury resulting from Gender Identity Disorder. No specific court findings appear of interest.

PROTOCOL FOR HORMONE ADMINISTRATION

What is the appropriate protocol for hormone administration for inmates with Gender Identity Disorder? In male-to-female (MTF) transsexuals, hormone administration consists of a carefully-selected regimen of estrogen or estradiol and an anti-androgenizing progesterone, and in some cases an anti-androgen. According to Israel & Tarver (1998), sample regimens include conjugated estrogen (Premarin 2.5 - 7.5 mg/day) or Ethinyl Estradiol (0.1 - 0.5 mg/day) and medroxyprogesterone (Provera 2.5 - 10 mg/day). MTF patients over age 40 should receive the Estradiol or Estraderm patch product as a replacement for conjugated Estrogen (Premarin) to reduce the possibility of thrombosis (Estraderm 50 - 100 mg applied to skin twice weekly).

Hormone administration in female-to-male (FTM) transsexuals consists of injectable testosterone cypionate or testosterone enanthate (200mg/ twice monthly). Alternatively, FTM individuals can receive transdermal testosterone (two patches providing 5.0 mgs of testosterone daily).

FTM inmates receive hormones even less often than MTF transsexuals. It would seem that prisons don't wish to masculinize inmates, as if this would encourage behavioral problems. However, correct hormone administration with FTM inmates would most likely reduce

behavioral problems, since correct treatment of Gender Identity Disorder promotes the stabilization of mental equilibrium and gender identity.

The preceding regimens are conservative in terms of dosage and expense. Contraindications are no greater than those of other standard medical prescriptions, with correct monitoring of patient health and routine blood laboratory testing. Physicians are reminded to refer to the manufacturer's label for updates (see Israel & Tarver, 1998, pp. 62-65, 67).

In providing hormones to transsexual inmates, prison officials may at times fall victim to the belief that the blood laboratory testing which accompanies a carefully selected regimen is too complicated for physicians. However, such testing in transsexuals is no more complicated than that associated with medications such as lithium, insulin, or antiviral administration. The prescription of hormones to transsexuals and accompanying periodic blood testing are routine medical procedures that can be provided by a general practice physician, endocrinologist, or psychiatrist. All physicians are trained in reading blood laboratory test results and are capable of determining when a MTF's hormone levels have been adjusted to therapeutic ranges found in pre-menopausal nontranssexual women (estrogen 400 - 800 pg/ml, testosterone 25 - 95 ng/dl); or when an FTM's hormone levels have been adjusted to ranges found in nontranssexual males (testosterone 225 - 900 ng/dl - estrogen, 40 pg/ml).

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The one thing I thought I would never ever be able to laugh about was my transvestism . . .

Christine-Jane Wilson's TV-themed cartoons have appeared for years in crossdressing magazines in the U.S. and U.K., and in the pages of this publication as well. Christine was good enough to send us the following and a sampling of cartoons, some of which she drew up especially for us—Ed.

I don't know at what age I started to crossdress, but it was before my 10th birthday, years before I became sexually aware (we were slow starters then). Later, crossdressing became a big turn-on. I had a couple of slips my mother had discarded and a pair of silky French knickers with a button-waist fastening. I would play in them when I was alone in the house, and often wore them to bed.

This was during World War II, when men were expected to be not only men, but brave fighting men. Consequently, I grew up with the usual feelings of guilt. I went through all the normal school and work traumas: examinations, an engineering apprenticeship, two years in the army, design and planning offices, technical journalism, printing, good and lousy jobs—and also the ordinary life traumas of family, friends, and unrequited love. By age 15 I had bought several pairs of panties. Later, as a grownup, I kept a hoard of undies and wore them (and still do) under my male clothes.

Many of my colleagues would have been astonished had they known of the lacy confections lurking under my suits.

Every so often I would grow ashamed of myself and discard my undies, swearing never to dress up again—but like most crossdressers, as soon as I became depressed or uptight, I would find myself shopping for replacement stock.

The one thing I thought I would never ever be able to laugh about was my transvestism. Fearing ridicule and rejection, I was terrified less someone even suspect—let alone know about—my secret. For the better part of 40 years I lived with this constant underlying tension.

In 1993 I called the London Gay Switchboard—not that I was gay, but it was a start. To my surprise, they gave me another number to call—and that is when I first made contact with

Yvonne Sinclair and the London TV/TS Support Group.

The group did wonderful work. It was a registered charity, and to the best of my knowledge the only transgender group in the UK to own its own building. It's a shame it's now closed, but there are now many other venues in London which welcome crossdressers.

I began attending support group meetings. To my relief, I found I was not alone, not perverted, not a nut. I discovered “we” are all types of people, from dukes to dustmen, from intelligent to thick-as-two-planks. Before long I found myself the editor of the group's journal, *The Glad Rad*—this happened

because I owned a small printing shop and had experience as an editor of engineering journals.

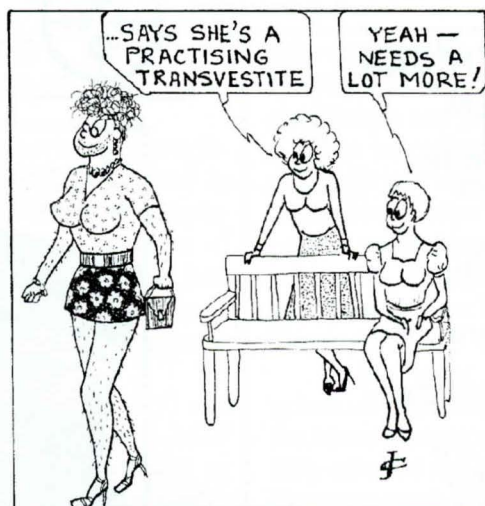
I found myself in a complicated situation. I was going to group meetings, had discovered I would be able to get away with crossdressing in public, but my wife knew nothing of my activities. Certain she would never accept my transvestism, I feared for the future of an otherwise happy marriage. Eventually, during a row with Helene, certain we had reached the end of the road, I told her I was a crossdresser.

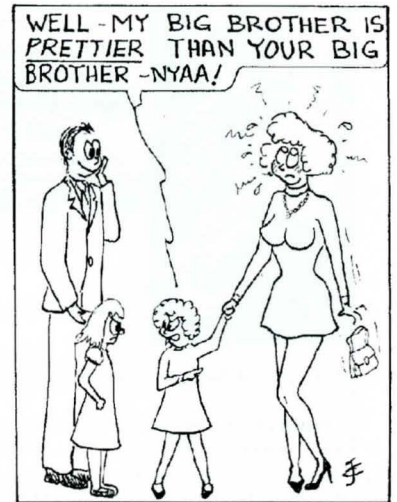
To my surprise, I wasn't met with an explosion, but with dead silence. She told me later my revelation made sense

of all sorts of little unexplained happenings. She came with me to a group meeting, became involved, and soon we had the partner's help line in our house. She would talk to wives and girlfriends who rang in with their troubles.

I eventually became one of the directors of the TV/TS Support Group. For several years, Helene and I were in charge on Sunday evenings, opening up the center and making it available for members to visit. I would spend hours on the hotline while Helene was at the reception desk. We met some wonderful people and troubled people, and we made a lot of friends.

During 1984 I sat the MENSA test—as Christine-Jane—and passed it. I've since been a member of UK MENSA as Christine-Jane Wilson. I've had two articles published in *The UK MENSA Magazine*, both of which resulted in large numbers of let-





ters from other members. Most were supportive.

Over the past four or five years I've often spent Saturdays at work dressed. Many of my customers have met me in both male and female presentations. I've been surprised and pleased that there has never been an adverse reaction; most people seem to be prepared to accept it. If they're interested and ask questions, that's good, because hopefully they'll go away knowing more about the subject.

I'm known as a crossdresser at local shops and in several restaurants. Most of our friends know, although not all have actually met me as Christine-Jane. My crossdressing has caused no problems at all. Crazy, isn't it? You spend half your life in a state of terror that people might find out, and when they do, it doesn't bother them at all!

I've only one small regret about coming out—and that is that had I but known at an earlier time, I could have dressed young and looked pretty! Instead, I have to dress my age. Although clothing for women my age is prettier than male clothing, isn't as nice as it might have been. Mind you, I've some beautiful undies and wear them most of the time. I know it's ridiculous, but I'm sure many of us do it—and isn't it nice just to know they're there?

Why do I keep on crossdressing? At first it was an almost manic compulsion, but now I do it regularly and openly, it's become a relaxation and a pleasure. It's become part of my everyday life. It has become fun!



I'm always conscious of my 40 years of mental turmoil. I know there are still thousands out there in the closet, chewing their fingernails to the knuckles. That's why I'm always anxious to educate. I'm pleased to say I've been able to help many people over the years and hope to continue to do so, although I'm no longer actively involved in the scene.

All my life, the main savior of my sanity has been my sense of humor. When I grew depressed, if I feared ridicule or rejection, eventually the funny side would hit me and I'd be able to laugh and climb out of the depression. Now, at last, I was able to find humor in being a transvestite. I've produced several books of cartoons on the subject. It's not that I regard crossdressing as an entirely humorous activity—I spent long enough in the closet to appreciate the worry, tension, and terror—but my crossdressing has now become enjoyable, and I've learned crossdressing can be very funny once you've accepted who and what you really are. While I realize it's a sensitive and serious subject, I think we can sometimes be a little too serious about it. Surely there's room for a few laughs.

I hope my cartoons do a little to brighten things up; if we can laugh at ourselves, it can only be good for us. If I give others a laugh about something they thought they would never be able to laugh at, perhaps I will have achieved something after all!



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W

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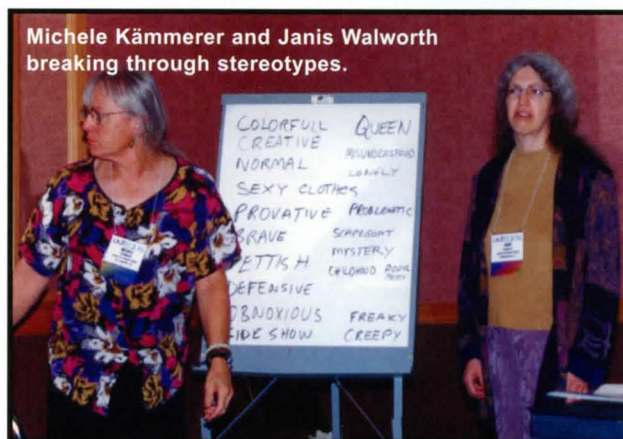
by Janis Walworth

In past years the annual Out and Equal Workplace Summit has included workshops on transgender issues, but never as many as at the most recent conference, which was held the first weekend of October 2001. The Summit, which addresses lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) issues in the workplace, brings together LGBT employees, Human Resource (HR) and Diversity professionals, union advocates, and others who want to create safe and equitable work environments for LGBT people.

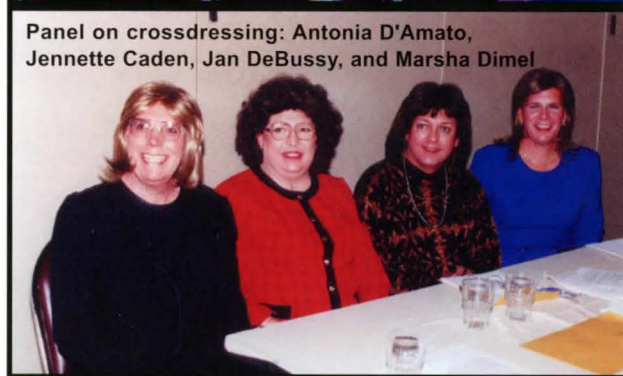
The conference, held just across the Ohio River from Cincinnati in Erlanger, Kentucky, was smaller than expected due to slashed budgets and fear of flying in the wake of September's terrorist attack. Nonetheless, a full schedule of workshops was presented to an enthusiastic audience from all over the country. Six of the 45 workshops offered during the three-day conference were about transgender issues.

Jamison Green led off the transgender workshops Friday morning with "Doing Effective (Trans)Gender Education." Jamison, the Chair of Gender Education & Advocacy (GEA), has been doing transgender awareness training since 1990. Although his presentation got a late start because the morning plenary session ran late, Jamison packed a lot of information into the time available. Engaging and approachable as always, he presented a model of gender education that LGBT advocates can use to help demystify transgender experience. Jamison included handouts from the GEA and Transgender at Work websites (see resources below). His session was well-attended and enthusiastically received.

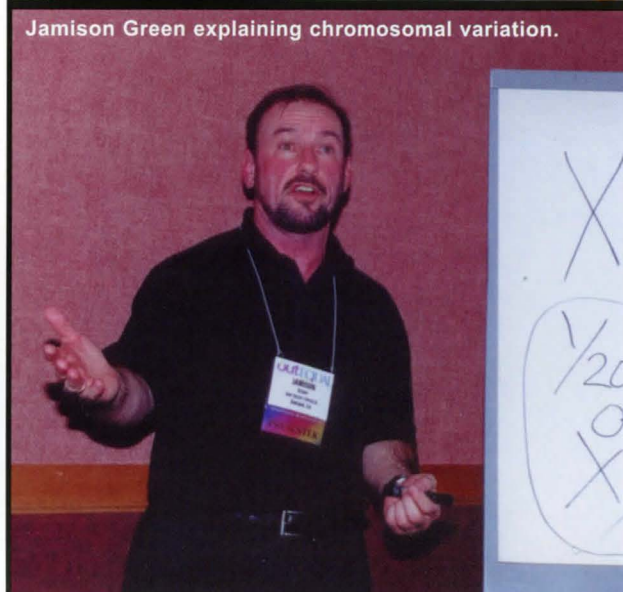
Friday afternoon, Janis Walworth and Michele Kämmerer of the Center for Gender Sanity, who had offered workshops at three prior Out and Equal conferences, gave a workshop called "Transgendered Workers: An Untapped Resource." In a departure from their previous workshops, which focused on how to manage transition in the workplace, this presentation informed HR professionals about the advantages of hiring and retaining transgendered people. Michele's story of her transition as a captain in the Los



Michele Kämmerer and Janis Walworth breaking through stereotypes.



Panel on crossdressing: Antonia D'Amato, Jennette Caden, Jan DeBussy, and Marsha Dimel



Jamison Green explaining chromosomal variation.



Sarah Rook talking about her transition at Shell Oil.

Angeles Fire Department helped participants look beyond stereotypical ideas about transsexuals and see that transgendered people may have many qualities that are desirable in an employee.

Janis and Michele's workshop was followed by "Embracing Transgender Employees in the Workplace" by Tim Frost, who transitioned from female to male on his job as a technician for a communications company in Cleveland. Tim's story is notable for the fact that he was able to obtain full reimbursement for his reassignment surgeries from his insurance company. Besides giving basic transgender information, Tim discussed guidelines for employers, rights for transitioning employees, and ways to show support for transgendered workers.

On Saturday, Sarah Rook, Senior Technical Associate at Shell Oil, offered "Gender Identity: Transition Issues in the Workplace" with Bob Stanfield, her supervisor, and Donna Zimmer, a Diversity Consultant for Shell. This unique presentation showed a workplace transition from the perspective of a transitioning employee, through the eyes of a supervisor, and from an HR viewpoint. Some of the factors the Shell team cited as contributing to Sarah's successful transition were: diversity training, the commitment and education of senior management, the willingness of the employee to educate and work with the company, having a committed HR representative, and the utilization of external consultants to help train and advise.

Another first for this conference was a presentation on cross-dressers in the workplace. This workshop, entitled "Is There a Crossdresser in Your Workplace? Does it Matter?," was presented by a panel of four crossdressers: Jennette Caden, Antonia D'Amato, Jan DeBussy, and Marsha Dimel, all members of Crossport. Many participants had never knowingly met a crossdresser before or heard them speak about their issues, and they asked questions about all aspects of crossdressing. Panelists discussed the possibility of crossdressing on the job, addressing questions of why a company would want to allow an employee to crossdress, ways to deal with business issues raised by crossdressing, and how to create a transgender-friendly workplace.

The final transgender workshop of the conference was a panel consisting of Michele Kämmerer, Jamison Green, Mary Ann Horton, and Janis Walworth. The panelists, all experts on transgender issues in the workplace, spoke from their personal perspectives as a male-to-female transsexual, a female-to-male transsexual, a crossdresser, and a partner of a transsexual, respectively. After introducing themselves, panelists answered wide-ranging questions from an audience that overflowed the room. The workshop provided participants with an opportunity to ask about issues that had been brought up during the conference, as well as other workplace and personal issues.

The Entertainment Committee, chaired by local transgender activist Paula Ison, arranged a riverboat cruise on Friday evening, complete with a transgendered honky tonk piano player, Vicki D'Salle of Cincinnati. Paula, who is active in both the Mormon and Metropolitan Community (MCC) churches, was co-presenter of a workshop titled "Gays, God, and the Workplace," which has been a popular presentation at the Out and Equal conference for several years.

On Saturday night, a banquet was held and awards were given to individuals and organizations that have helped create workplaces that support LGBT employees. Awards were presented to IBM, Motorola, and PRIDE, the employee resource group at Walt Disney.



Tim Frost discussing transition in the workplace.

CENTER FOR GENDER SANITY

Janis Walworth
Michele Kämmerer
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www.gendersanity.com

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jamisong@aol.com
www.jamisongreen.com

MARY ANN HORTON

mah@tgender.net
www.tgender.net/~mah

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available from *Center for Gender Sanity*

TIM FROST

timfrost@ameritech.net

TRANSGENDER AT WORK

www.tgender.net/taw

Two Kodak employees shared the award for a straight ally who has furthered equal treatment of LGBT employees. Finally, the Trailblazer Award, honoring an LGBT person who has made a significant contribution to advancing workplace equity, was given to transgender activist Mary Ann Horton.

Mary Ann, recently retired from her position as Tech Manager at Avaya and formerly an employee at Lucent Technologies, led a successful effort at Lucent to obtain transgender inclusion in nondiscrimination policy, insurance coverage for transsexual medical needs, and workplace education on transgender issues. She pioneered the concept of occasional crossdressing at work without a full-time transition, successfully crossdressing from time to time at both Lucent and Avaya. Mary Ann chairs Transgender at Work, a project that helps employers and employees improve their workplaces to enable their transgendered employees to perform at their full potential. Mary Ann's wife Beth was present at the awards ceremony.

Another highlight for transgendered conference participants was the screening of "No Dumb Questions," a 24-minute documentary that won an award for best short film at the 2001 San Francisco Lesbian and Gay Film Festival. In this film, three sisters, ages six, nine, and eleven, ponder the fact that their Uncle Bill is becoming Aunt Barbara. The film takes us from the girls' first questions through their meeting Barbara to their reflections on their experience. The fact that children, particularly young children, can handle and even be enriched by knowing a transgendered person is powerfully demonstrated in this film.

Transgendered participants came to the Out and Equal Summit from as close as Cincinnati and as far away as Los Angeles. Non-transgendered participants, whether they were HR professionals, leaders of employee resource groups, or employees at major corporations, were eager to learn about transgender issues. The transgender workshops complemented and reinforced each other, and some common themes emerged: Transgendered people can be valuable employees; companies can handle transition on the job and even permit occasional crossdressing without catastrophic consequences; educating

people in the workplace is of primary importance; and transgendered people should use the restroom appropriate for their appearance, a principle Mary Ann Horton calls "the principle of least astonishment."

Janis Walworth is cofounder and Director of the Center for Gender Sanity. She and her partner, Michele Kämmerer, consult with employers regarding transition on the job and offer sensitivity training about transgender issues. They can be reached at info@gendersanity.com or 310-670-2222.

WELL-DESERVED, MARY ANN!

The Out & Equal Trailblazer Award is given annually to an LGBT person who has made a significant contribution to advancing workplace equality. This individual's activities will have made a marked improvement in their own workplace or have contributed to equality nationally.

The 2001 Trailblazer Award was given to Mary Ann Horton, a transgender activist who has been involved in many causes and organizations. Some of Mary Ann's significant accomplishments and activities include:



—Established a national forum called Transgender at Work, whose first major achievement, as of 10/1/97, was to successfully lobby Lucent Technologies to amend its EEO policy to prohibit discrimination against the transgendered, thus preventing workplace discrimination or harassment based on "gender identity, characteristics, or expression."

—Established a network of twenty-five transgendered Lucent/Avaya associates across the country and helped to develop a course called "Understanding Transgendered Workers" for corporate education about transgender workplace issues, first offered on June 23, 1999 in Columbus.

—National Vice-President of EQUAL! at Avaya, former national Vice-President of EQUAL! at Lucent Technologies, and an active participant in local EQUAL! chapter activities.

—Successfully campaigned at Lucent and Avaya for medical coverage of transsexual health needs, including therapy, hormones, lab visits, and surgery. Coverage was in place in the spring of 2000.

—On October 9, 1998, Mary Ann became the first employee of a large corporation to occasionally crossdress on the job with the full support of her employer, Lucent Technologies.

—Web-hosts the tgender.net domain, and donates web space and e-mail services to gender-friendly organizations.

—Treasurer and former vice-president of the Columbus chapter of NOW, the National Organization for Women.

—Founding member of the Crystal Club, a support group for crossdressers, transvestites, transsexuals, and their families.

—Founding member and former Chair of It's Time, Ohio!

Some Reflections on Why Transgenderism is a Gift of the Holy Spirit

by
Shirley Boughton

What makes us transgendered? Why are we transgendered? Is it a blessing or a curse? These are questions I have struggled with for a lifetime. The answers seem somehow critical to my very survival as well as my ability to accept myself as a transgendered person. My personality drives me to dig deeply into who I am and why.

The question for many of us who are transgendered is whether our transgender nature is a result of a mistake of nature (akin to a club foot) which should be fixed, or whether we have been deliberately designed by the divine creator for a special spiritual purpose. Do we need to seek medical assistance to conform our bodies to match our brain patterns so we can better fit into a two-gender society, or do we represent a third gender with a specific role to play? Do we shape our bodies and our forms of dress to fit gender stereotypes, or do we do these things to achieve harmony with our soul? I have now come to believe my transgenderism was hard-wired before I was born, and that the divine architect intended this for a reason.

A relatively small number of us have begun to address the spiritual implications inherent in the existence of transgendered individuals. I believe our individual spirituality is deeply connected to and flows from our biologic reality and is shaped by the particular culture into which we are born. Scripture tells us, "Truly you have formed my inmost being; you knit me in my mother's womb. I give you thanks that I am fearfully, wonderfully made; wonderful are your works." [Psalms 139:13-14] Or, drawing from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah, "The Lord called me from birth, from my mother's womb he gave me my

name." [Isaiah 49:1] As a transgendered person, I am a child of God and I am wonderfully made.

A NATIVE AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE

Holly Boswell has been one of the leaders in exploring transgender spirituality. She and her partner, Zantui Rose, sponsor spiritual retreats for transgendered persons at their retreat center in the mountains near Asheville, N.C. Holly's paper "The Spirit of Transgender" can be accessed through a link on the Kindred Spirits website <www.TransSpirits.org>. One of Holly's references is an anthropological study by Will Roscoe entitled *The Zuni Man-Woman*, which describes the role of transgendered persons amongst the Zuni people, a native North American tribe.

Since there is no recognition of a legitimate transgender role in the society in which we live, it is instructive to look to other cultures and other times for clues to our spiritual identity. Roscoe's book focuses on the life of a transgendered Zuni from the late 19th Century. We'wha was a biologic male and a recognized and respected member of his tribe who lived, worked and dressed as a Zuni woman from early childhood until death near the age of 50.

Zuni society is a matriarchy in which men and women have distinct roles based upon mutuality and respect for all aspects of creation. They strive to live in the middle place, between extremes of any kind, including those of gender, which is the most fundamental rift that divides human from human. Their origin myths and religion have this balance as a central tenet, and one of their most prominent gods is transgendered. The role of this god was to contribute a corrective influence upon the ruptures of social specialization. All Zunis were to strive for a balance between their feminine and masculine

Photograph by Mariette Pathy Allen

selves, but the transgendered persons among them served as concrete examples by freely moving in both male and female social worlds. They helped both men and women reach a greater understanding of each other and themselves. The Zunis attributed transgendered individuals with multidimensional personalities that express important aspects of an archetype of wholeness. The transgender identity, once crystallized, was as strong as that of male or female identity, entailing a complete constellation of skills, attitudes and behaviors. In short, the Zuni transgendered functioned as a third gender, neither male nor female but, encompassing aspects of both.

A VIEW OF THE TRANSGENDER PERSONALITY

Karl Jung described the transgender personality type, which he categorized as a form of homosexuality, as having

... a great capacity for friendship, which often creates ties of astonishing tenderness between men and may even rescue friendship between the sexes from the limbo of the impossible. He may have good taste and an aesthetic sense which are fostered by the presence of a feminine streak. Then he may be supremely gifted as a teacher because of almost feminine insight and tact. He is likely to have a feeling for history, and to be conservative in the best sense and cherish the values of the past. Often he is endowed with a wealth of religious feelings, which help bring the ecclesia spiritualis into reality; and a spiritual receptivity which makes him responsive to revelation.

This descriptor seems to fit many in the transgender community. What has Western civilization lost by crushing its transgender spirits? Our society not only wastes individual potential by viewing its transgendered as deviants to be criminalized and stigmatized, but loses potential guides to bring both men and women from the extremes of gender separation to an intermediate position. Without the transgender spirit, can we ever achieve mutuality and wholeness in our society?

IS TRANSGENDER SPIRITUALITY COMPATIBLE WITH WESTERN CHRISTIANITY? WITH THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS?

I believe we must find a way to achieve gender balance in our society based upon our own traditions and adapt a spirituality that is appropriate to our time and place in the world. We who are transgendered, who occupy a middle position by nature of our biology, are called to help guide this process. We do not necessarily need to reject Christianity. I do have a real problem, though, accepting the Western patriarchal society and religious hierarchies that have been established using the Judeo-Christian tradition as their legitimizing basis. Jesus warned explicitly against the establishment of a hierarchical church and even washed the feet of his own disciples as an example to them of how they must lead by serving. Was Jesus perhaps transgendered?

The early Christians were egalitarian and inclusive of both men and women in leadership roles. It was only when Christianity became the state religion of the Roman Empire that it adopted the male-dominated hierarchical form and subse-

quently ran roughshod over all other cultures and forms of worship. My own ethnic roots are predominately Celtic, and this deeply informs my spiritual sensibilities. The Celtic Christian Church, too, was democratic and inclusive in the years immediately following Patrick's conversion of Ireland in the Fifth Century A.D. Patrick adapted the teachings of Jesus to fit the spirituality and mythology of the Celtic peoples, which emphasized a fundamental connectedness with the Earth, the universe, and all living things. As a result, the Celts enthusiastically embraced Christianity and, inspired by the Holy Spirit, zealously carried the Gospel message back into Europe following the collapse of the Roman Empire. This Celtic enthusiasm gradually died out after the Celtic Church came under the heel of the Roman Catholic hierarchy in the Seventh Century A.D.

I cannot view God as being strictly a male figure. The word "father" in historical context means the one who begets ... the one who creates. Until the 19th Century, when the ovum was discovered, the prevailing understanding was that a man's sperm contained everything needed for human life. A woman was considered to be little more than a piece of fertile ground into which a man's seed could be planted. We now know the ovum contains half of the genetic material needed for human formation, and the environment within a woman's womb strongly influences the development of the embryo. In this sense, a woman is more involved in the creative process than a man. From the biblical story of creation in the Book of Genesis, God creates the earth, the sky, the oceans, all plant life, fish, birds and animals before he creates human beings from the union of God's spirit with the clay of the earth (Genesis 2:7). God created humankind in the divine image ... both male and female (Genesis 1:27). So God as Creator is both father and mother. God is both male and female. God is fully androgynous. It is also interesting to note that much of our genetic code is shared by the other life forms on this planet. This fact underscores our fundamental connectedness with the earth and the need to develop a consistent ethic of life—i.e., a respect and reverence for all life in all its stages from conception to the grave and beyond. This earth-connectedness parallels the core concepts held by the so-called primitive spiritual worldviews that include traditions like Wicca, Taoism, shamanism, and many Native American cultures. It is the key to understanding Celtic spirituality. It is also a fundamental part of Jesus' teaching and life example.

The central message of Jesus' ministry is to love God as the universal creator, to love God as manifested in others, and to love God as contained within ourselves. In a very real sense our souls—our spirits—are extensions of God, and as such we are intimately connected to all aspects of God's created universe. Each human person is a unique and gifted creation of God, and each contains the Spirit of God. Therefore, all persons, since they contain the Spirit of God, should be treated with reverence and respect. We are meant to be as we have been created. There is an infinite variety in God's garden; there are no weeds. Each of us has the potential to add value to the community into which we have been born. We have been created by God to cooperate with Her/Him in finishing the work of creation here on Earth. Each of us is a child of God, and each of us will ultimately return to God as heirs of the promise.

I believe that we as transgendered persons can be considered to be special gifts of the Holy Spirit to the people of God.

Because we are different and don't fit within normally accepted societal gender categories, because we are rejected by the leaders of most organized religions, simply to survive we are forced to look deeper into the meaning of life than the average person. Our rejection by mainstream religions causes many of us to question the basic tenets of these religions in order to determine what fits and what does not. This in turn can result in a higher level of spiritual consciousness for transgendered persons. The average churchgoing person rarely challenges the doctrines and dogmas of the faith or culture into which he or she has been born. Because our very survival depends on it, we who are different must question all these things. As survivors of this painful process, we are perhaps better able to tap into the true nature of God and the intended relationship of humanity with God. If accepted by the main body of the church, we can act as leaven to raise the spiritual consciousness of all humanity. Unfortunately, most churchmen and others who enjoy positions of power within society don't embrace criticism or any other form that questions or challenges their authority. Our mere existence as transgendered persons is perceived as a threat to the existing order. We are subject to ridicule, hostility and sometimes outright persecution. Most hope we will simply disappear. Many of us do disappear through suicide or attempts to force-fit ourselves into established gender stereotypes. I myself attempted for many years to excise my feminine side, to stuff myself into the male mold dictated by my genitalia. My soul rebelled by acting out in ways that nearly destroyed me. I have suffered the ravages of HIV/AIDS (I am now a 19-year survivor), have been arrested and publicly humiliated, have been cast aside by "friends" and my faith community, and have been driven out of my chosen profession. My soul has finally caught my full attention, and no longer choose to abandon it. Indeed, I cannot, or I will surely die.

MY SPIRITUAL PATH

I choose now to fully honor who I am. This will not be an easy path, but my options are limited. Based upon available testing, reflection on my own history as compared to other transgendered persons, intense psychotherapy, and prayer, I believe I am fairly well out on the transsexual end of the transgender continuum. Many who are like me have chosen to live out their lives as more completely female, some opting for sex reassignment surgery and intense hormone replacement therapy, some not. My conclusion is that for me it is not really possible to ever become fully female. Even with SRS and intense HRT, I would never have the internal parts to be a complete woman. My bone structure and other physical features would make it difficult for me to pass well in public as a woman. I am in a loving and fully committed relationship with my wife of 25 years, and I have a family, a male history, and a community life I would find difficult to abandon. These practical considerations aside, I question the spiritual basis for wanting to shift from one rigid gender box to another. I believe I was born as a T person to be in a middle position between the gender extremes. As in the Zuni culture, I want to be able to move freely between the anima and the animus. I want to be able to fully embrace both the male and the female aspects of my soul. It is not yet clear to me how to go about this in our culture.

Good models are difficult to find. I have chosen to make minimal physical adjustments, to limit the feminization of my body. I have begun laser treatments to remove the hair on my chin and upper lips. I am also taking estrogen at about one-half the dosage normal for someone who is fully transitioning. The concept here is to flood the receptors in the brain with the estrogen for which they have thirsted since puberty.

I have already noticed improvement in my mood and emotional balance. At last I have been able to stop antidepressant therapy without deepening existing depression. I choose to wear more brightly colored and decorative clothing most of the time, but limit full crossdressing to appropriate occasions. My wife and I have participated on transgendered panels for university classes in both the Northwest and South Florida. I openly declare myself as transgendered person in public forums when it makes sense to do so.

Will I be able to sustain this level of "transition" forever? Who knows? For now it seems to be enough.

As a transgendered Celtic Christian soul, I feel I am called to challenge, as best I can, the current dogmas and doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church and the Western patriarchal culture into which I have been born. I feel I am called by the Holy Spirit to openly challenge the teachings and attitudes that serve to enslave both men and women in rigid gender boxes, that prevent most human persons from fully embracing both the male and the female aspects of their souls, that prevent most from becoming whole in the true image and likeness of an androgynous God. I believe this can be done best through education and one-on-one discussions with people who are willing to open their minds. As Jesus said to his disciples: "Do not give what is holy to dogs or toss pearls before swine. They will trample them under foot, at best, and perhaps tear you to shreds." [Matthew 7:6]

In my view, it is important that some of us be willing to put a face on transgenderism by openly embracing our reality as transgendered persons. From the Gospel of Matthew: "The gift you have received, give as a gift." [Matthew 10:7-8]

If we are open about who we are, then, based upon the model of Jesus' life, we can expect persecution. Quoting from Matthew's version of the Beatitudes: "Blest are those persecuted for holiness' sake; the reign of God is theirs. Blest are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of slander against you because of me. Be glad and rejoice, for your reward in heaven is great; they persecuted the prophets before you in the very same way."

If we accept the teachings of Jesus and the model of his life, we must also be willing to be patient and to avoid direct confrontation with our enemies in spite of this persecution. "But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you ..." [Matthew 5:44]. After all, our enemies, too, contain the Spirit of God. We have a right as children of God to exist on this planet ... but so do they. They shall know we are Christians by our love! We can afford to be generous because ultimately we know that we bear God's truth.

I offer these conclusions, not as a manifesto for all transgendered persons, but merely as my attempt to find meaning and purpose for my own life.

HISTORIC UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST TRANSGENDER CONSULTATION

by Pat Conover

The United Church of Christ created a bit of transgender and Christian history when it sponsored and paid for a consultation of transgendered members, November 15-18, 2001, to give guidance to the denomination on relating to its transgendered members and clergy and to the importance of supporting human and civil rights for all transgendered people. Eleven people were chosen for this consultation, representing the wide diversity of transgendered people: man-to-woman and woman-to-man, transsexual and other varieties of transgendered people, laity and clergy, and a diversity of race, class, urban and rural, and region of the United States. Vanessa Sheridan and Pat Conover, both of whom have previously written for *Transgender Tapestry*, were among the participants. Pat served as liaison to the religious community for the IFGE Board of Directors for 5 years in the 1990's.

The United Church of Christ has 1.4 million members in 6000 congregations and has long led the Protestant denominations in the affirmation of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered members. It has welcomed the gifts of clergy and laity both as pastors of local congregations and in national leadership. Pat Conover is Legislative Director for Justice and Witness Ministries of the national UCC and has served in the Washington Office for 15 years. The United Church of Christ Coalition for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Concerns is the only such coalition in a Protestant denomination to officially name and include transgendered people. Since the Coalition is officially recognized by the UCC, with seats on various governing Boards of Directors, transgendered people are recognized in the constitution of the denomination and welcomed to participate in overall governance.

The consultation participants had a long meeting with John Thomas, President and General Minister of the United Church of Christ, and with other national leaders and staff. The meeting was not merely historic—it was a tender and significant moment. Many stories of pain and joy were shared. The difficulty of being out in a local congregation, even when there is official welcome and good intentions, was made clear. John Thomas responded with great depth to what he heard, sharing his feeling that the UCC must provide opportunities for listening to what transgendered people have to share and must make sure it does not squander any of the gifts transgendered people bring into the life of the church.

Part of the work of the consultation was contributing to the first stage of the development of a fully-funded professional video that will be made available to local congrega-

tions and public television stations. The video is part of a transgender resource packet being developed by Wider Church Ministries of the UCC, under the leadership of Bill Johnson. Bill was responsible for managing the funding of the consultation and is similarly managing the funding for the video and the resource packet. Bill made history 30 years ago as the first openly gay clergy person to be ordained in the UCC and a scholarship fund to support the seminary training of sexual and gender minority has been created in his name.

We gathered to worship as transgendered Christians, creating a sacred space by the welcoming of God's presence, a safe space in which our tears could flow and the exchanges of pastoral support and celebration was deeply known. We gathered to share our personal stories and to tell of our ministries. We were all moved when we heard of the life-giving work of the Arc of Refuge ministry of the City of Refuge UCC in San Francisco. This church has a long history of working with street people in San Francisco, including transgendered sex workers, many of whom were thrown out of their Christian families when they didn't conform to those families' understanding of the Christian message. Now they have a Christian home where the good news of God's acceptance and love is made known in word and deed. These transgendered sisters and brothers not only have a home, they have what may be the only local church gospel choir of transgendered singers.

One of the joys we celebrated together was the publication of Vanessa Sheridan's new book, *Crossing Over: Liberating the Transgendered Christian*. This book is one of several recent Pilgrim Press publications that include transgender concerns. It has the honor of being the first book by an openly transgendered author published by a press affiliated with a Protestant denomination.

Historic or not, there was never any doubt among the participants that the work to create understanding and acceptance for transgendered people within the United Church of Christ is just beginning. Doors have been cracked open, but there is a lot of sharing and meeting and praying still before us. Pat Conover, who has been an ordained minister in the UCC for 36 years, led the participants in a prayer of confession that names both spiritual grounding and challenges for the ongoing work.

Loving God,

**It is time to lay down confusion, for you give us
beacons and guiding stars.**

**It is time to lay down our quest for identity,
for you know our true name.**

**It is time to lay down our alienation,
for you reach across all barriers to find us.**

Easier said than done.





SOUTHERN

COMFORT



All Photography by Mariette Pathy Allen

Scheduled less than two weeks after the tragic events of 11 September, Southern Comfort went on as scheduled when organizers decided they would not be deterred by terrorism. Attendance was a bit lower than in 2000, but not much—Ed.

PERSONAL INTEGRATION

BY CARL TRIPP

This is the text of a speech given at Southern Comfort Convention 2001—Ed.

In the summer of 1993, I was on a quest for balance. I had just finished reading Leslie Feinberg's *Stone Butch Blues*, a novel about a male-identified transgender person in the 50s and 60s. Although it was a novel, *Stone Butch Blues* was based on Leslie's life. I respected and admired Leslie's struggle and eventual acceptance of herself as an individual who embodied both genders. From my perspective, Leslie was someone who could live at peace right in the middle of the gender continuum. I elevated this unique individual to hero status. I thought perhaps I could do the same thing, integrating maleness into my identity while remaining female. It's interesting to note that although I aspired to this middle ground, as I look back I was slowly but surely creeping closer to the male end of the gender continuum, leaving my femaleness behind. In the name of balance, I minimized my femaleness as much as possible. My struggle with personal integration was already beginning.

In the fall of 1994, I had a chance encounter with two members of the Atlanta Gender Explorations support group at, of all places, a Leslie Feinberg book reading. They told me about the group. I didn't attend meetings right away; I was determined to find that middle ground, even as I discussed the possibility of transition with the woman I was dating. I wore men's clothing exclusively and cut my hair short as I attempted to push the boundaries of male gender expression in a female body.

As the year wore on, I realized the balancing act wasn't working and I began to explore transition options more seriously. It was at this time that I met Dallas Denny, who at the time was the brains behind AEGIS [and is now the lovely and ever-talented editor of this magazine!—Ed]. She talked about the history of transgendered people. I listened as she spoke of how in the past people who transitioned had to truncate their lives. So much had to be changed or recreated in order

to make a successful gender transition. But she also talked about how a more integrated model was being accepted by the doctors and therapists who dealt with our community. It seemed the community was at a crossroads: either model of transition was acceptable at that point, with people making choices that depended both on preference and the providers that were guiding them. I remember feeling sad for those who had given up so much of themselves to reach their goals—but I was also relieved there was a model that would allow me to transition with my life basically intact.

I remember being focused on what it meant to be a man, and what kind of man I would become. I said I wouldn't transition until I could figure that out. I studied men, mostly by watching and listening, picking and choosing the traits I thought were admirable and discarding what I believed distasteful. I had a clear vision of incorporating these characteristics into who I already was.

I became consumed, as were many transgendered people around me, by the details of masculinity and maleness. I bothered my trans-sisters and brothers for information about men—how they walked, talked, interacted, thought. What had started as a search for the characteristics of a gentleman had become an obsession to embody the perfect male.

I now believed I had to re-create myself in order to pass successfully and take my place in the world of men. My desire was to move as close to male on the gender continuum as possible, given the limitations of surgery. My obsession was fueled by supportive comments from friends, who told me I was being "just like a man." Integration was out; a new me was in.

Internally, I was full of conflict. I didn't really want to erase who I already was in the name of becoming, but I desperately wanted to pass and be seen as a man. The strongest conundrum I faced was with my daughter. As I began transition, I assured her I was not going to change on the inside, only

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on the outside. But in private moments alone, I found the concept of motherhood and manhood so incongruous that I opted out of motherhood except in name only. I acted more like an uncle or family friend. Many people around me didn't know I had a daughter, and were shocked when they heard I did.

In the summer of 1997, I made two new friends. One was an FTM and the other his partner. One evening I was discussing a particularly distressing situation I found myself trying to resolve. I remember asking them, "How would a man handle this situation? What would he do?" My friend Alex looked at me and said, "How you choose to handle it is exactly how a man would handle it."

Not only was my friend affirming my maleness, but his words were reminiscent of the place from which I had started my journey. Unfortunately, I was unable to assimilate them and put them to good use. Such was my obsession at the time.

Two events in late 1998 gave me reason to step back and reevaluate the journey I was making. The first was meeting a heterosexual woman who became my girlfriend for a time. Kate had little knowledge of transgendered people and our community, but she was interested in me and willing to take a chance. She often told me one of the things that attracted her to me was the blend of maleness and femaleness I exhibited.

Believe me, that was not what I wanted to hear. I wanted her to tell me that I was just like the other guys she had been with and that I had the whole package down just right.

Kate's ability to see my femaleness in my masculine presentation was of course not a criticism, but a complement. In her eyes, this was the full package. Although she had some issues with my body and difficulty adjusting to being with a different kind of man, she continually affirmed that retaining these traits was a good thing. After all, they were a part of who I was becoming. I pondered this a great deal. Again, it brought me to the place from which I had started.

The second event was chest reconstruction surgery. I had been large-breasted, and even tight binding didn't hide the bulk. It was sometimes difficult to pass because of my breasts. I felt I had to overaccentuate as many male traits as possible to compensate for a body shape that was most definitely not male. But after surgery, the issue of passing became moot. I no longer feared being clocked. Because I could pass successfully, I began to reassess my need to exhibit extreme male characteristics. The question I now began to ask myself was "What does it mean to me to be a man in this body?" A simple restating of the original question, to be sure, but it gave me a fresh perspective on integrating who I had been with who I was in the present.

As a means of learning about men, I had been reading books written by men involved in the men's movement, but it wasn't until I read an anthology of essays that the big picture of per-

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sonal integration began to become clear to for me. I was drawn to passages written by non-trans men who were searching for ways to integrate their feminine side as a means of becoming whole, complete. I began to understand how integrating gender characteristics was not limited to transgendered people, but is a human condition, one many people are struggling with. I discovered that my original vision of integration was valid and necessary if I was to live a whole and healthy life.

Last year my 14-year-old daughter came home from Germany. I had not seen her for two years. I had a chance to spend time with her, and I was hit, as powerful as a thunderbolt, with an understanding of my role. It finally became clear that what my daughter needed from me—she needed me to fulfill the promise I had made to her when I began transition: to be her mother, to teach her the things a mother should, and do things with her that mothers do. This was, for me, a huge discovery, and one I want to affirm today with all of you. Today I stand with pride before you as both a mother and a man.

My journey has shown me that finding peace as an integrated self is a vital and ongoing process. Almost daily, I find myself measuring my concept of maleness against other men and the impossible stereotypes of masculinity our culture supports. I often get defensive when my friends tease me about being a mother hen, a Martha Stewart, or, as my roommate says, the woman of the house—but I know I cannot live a healthy life at the extreme end of the continuum, denying parts of myself as a means of achieving manhood. It's my firm belief that personal integration is relevant to all of us in the community, regardless of the scope of the journey we undertake.

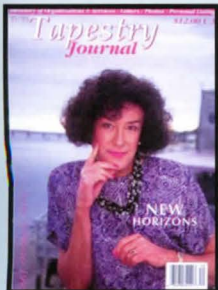
I'd like to conclude by asking three questions. I hope each of you will take a few moments to ponder these questions and their meaning in your life.

- 1. Can those of you who identify as crossdressers find ways to integrate aspects of your alternate gender into your daily life?**
- 2. Can those of you who are on a journey of physical transition consider that going to one extreme end of the gender spectrum can be as oppressive and unhealthy as denying and repressing your desire to become the other gender?**
- 3. Can we as a community be more supportive of those who are looking for a place of comfort in the middle of the continuum?**

Thank you.



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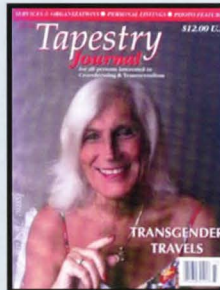
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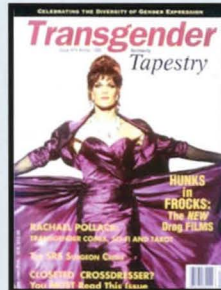
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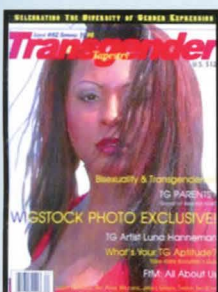
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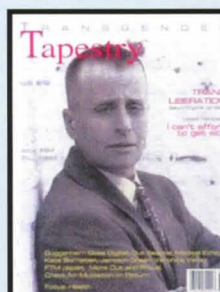
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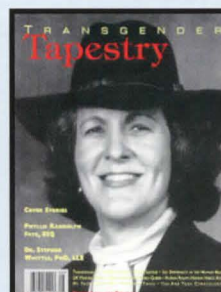
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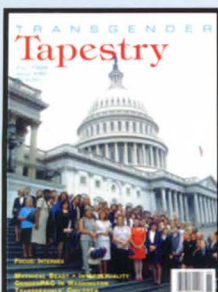
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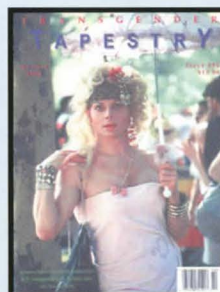
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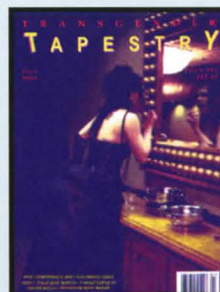
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INTERSEX

AND ENGLISH LAW REFORM



TRANSGENDER

by Andrew N. Sharpe

This article considers and situates within the context of English transgender jurisprudence a recent decision of the Family Division of the High Court, *W. v. W.* The decision, which recognized the sex claims of an intersex person for marriage purposes, is significant in that it departs from the legal test for determining sex enunciated by Justice Ormrod in *Corbett v. Corbett*. However, while the decision might be viewed as representing something of a thaw in English judicial approach toward transgendered people, it will become clear that the judgment of Justice Charles tends to bolster the underlying legal reasoning in *Corbett*—a decision which has for over 30 years now stood between transgendered people and legal reform. Of course, *W. v. W.* is not the first case to bolster *Corbett*. There is an entire line of English cases decided in its wake which do that, including, most recently, *Bellinger v. Bellinger* and another case. Nevertheless, *W. v. W.* is of particular significance because it consolidates *Corbett* even and precisely at a moment of reform, and serves to redraw our attention to what is really at stake in transgender cases in the English context, especially those involving issues of marriage.

The facts of the case were that the applicant, Mr. W., sought a decree of nullity in respect to his marriage of three years duration to the respondent, Mrs. W., an intersex person who had undergone sex reassignment surgery, on the ground that at the date of the marriage he and the respondent were not respectively male and female. In deciding the case, Justice Charles noted that the facts and the body of Mrs. W. exceeded the legal test enunciated by Justice Ormrod in *Corbett v. Corbett*. In *Corbett*—a case concerning the validity of a marriage between a biological male petitioner (Arthur Corbett) and April Ashley, a male-to-female transgendered respondent—Ormrod held “sex is determined at birth” and, crucially for present purposes, by a congruence of chromosomal, gonadal and genital factors. Accordingly, April Ashley, whose chromosomes, gonads, and genitalia were congruent at birth, was determined to be a male person.

By way of contrast, Mrs. W.’s chromosomes, gonads, and genitalia lacked “congruence” in terms of a binary understand-

ing of sex. It is precisely this fact which distinguishes, and as we shall see, links, *W. v. W.* to *Corbett*.

In order to understand fully the reasoning of the court, it is necessary to specify precisely the nature of Mrs. W.’s body. According to the medical evidence, which Justice Charles accepted, she had XY (male) chromosomes. In relation to the other two factors in Ormrod triumvirate, it proved “extremely difficult to be conclusive,” given a lack of medical records and the fact of subsequent sex reassignment surgery. Nevertheless, on the basis of the medical evidence, it was concluded that Mrs. W.’s gonadal sex was likely to have been male and her genitalia ambiguous at birth. In other words, it was the genital factor that placed the facts of *W. v. W.* and the body of Mrs. W. beyond Ormrod test.

Indeed, considerable attention was paid to Mrs. W.’s genitalia in the judgment of Justice Charles. Thus, we learn her external genitalia prior to surgery were “extremely small,” her “penis” was “definitely abnormal,” and she had “no vaginal opening.” Indeed, in giving evidence as to the pre-surgical state of Mrs. W.’s genitalia, Dr. Conway expressed the view that it was “a close call” as to whether the flap of skin that existed should be described as “a micropenis or a mini clitoris.” He concluded that if he had to classify Mrs. W.’s genitalia as either male or female, he would locate them on the male side. The medical evidence also indicated “some spontaneous female breast development” and tended toward a diagnosis of partial androgen insensitivity.

It’s clear from the judgment that Ormrod’s test couldn’t resolve the question of Mrs. W.’s sex at the moment of birth. However, in formulating his triumvirate test, Ormrod had alluded to the possibility of “incongruence.” In a move that evinces a concern to limit departure from *Corbett*, Charles turned to the obiter, as well as subsequent extra-judicial statements of Ormrod. In his judgment, Ormrod expressed the view that:

[t]he real difficulties, of course, will occur if these criteria [gonadal, chromosomal and genital] are not congruent. This question does not arise in the present case and I must not anticipate, but it would seem to follow from what I have said

that the greater weight would probably be given to the genital criteria than to the other two.

Later, in an address to the Medico-Legal Society, Ormrod elaborated:

I was fortunate enough to find myself faced with a transsexual ... the difficulty would be acute in the cases of testicular feminization and testicular failure. In these cases, the genital sex is unalterably female or approaching female in character, yet the gonads and the chromosomes are male ... If the decision ever had to be made in a matrimonial situation, I think that the genital sex would probably be decisive.

Each of these passages and the interpretation placed on them by Charles is significant. First, it seems clear from Ormrod's reasoning that any warrant for characterizing as female a person whose chromosomes and gonads are male is dependent on the presence of genitalia that are "unalterably female or approaching female in character." The importance of these words seems to be underscored by Ormrod's distinction between an "abnormal" vagina and its absence at birth. Yet it is far from clear that Mrs. W.'s genitalia, the pre-surgical state of which was traced to partial androgen insensitivity, met this test. Rather than requiring medical assessment of genitalia as female, Charles preferred to reason from the "fact" of ambiguity, expressing the view that "to determine the sex of [Mrs. W.] for the purpose of marriage by reference to the fact that [her] ambiguous genital sex prior to the operation fell on the male side of the line" would be "an incorrect application of [Ormrod's] test". In other words, the ambiguity of genitalia on this account trumps the fact that the medical evidence located Mrs. W.'s genitalia on the male side.

In privileging genitalia over other factors in the event of incongruence, *W. v. W.* represents something of a departure from the analysis undertaken by Ormrod. In effect, the decision appears to be authority for the proposition that law will endorse the fact of sex reassignment surgery in determining sex where genitalia are ambiguous at birth. In this regard, gonadal and chromosomal factors become superfluous. The decision, as it affects intersex people, and to the extent that it eschews fidelity to Corbett, is to be welcomed. However, the legal reasoning adopted by Charles in *W. v. W.* effectively instantiates an intersex/transgender dyad whereby transgendered persons are located beyond the limits of reform. This occurs through de-emphasis of hormones—a factor which potentially provides a bridge between intersex and transgender—and most importantly as a result of a concern over "natural" heterosexual intercourse in the marriage context.

The references to testicular feminization and testicular failure by Ormrod and the diagnosis of Mrs. W. as being partially androgen insensitive are of interest because they direct our attention to hormonal factors. The fact that Ormrod envisaged the resexing of bodies in cases of testicular feminization and testicular failure and that Charles resexed the body of a partially androgen-insensitive person in *W. v. W.*, might be viewed as providing a link between these cases and transgender law reform. Indeed, in *S-T (formerly J) v J*, Justice Ward, while refusing to recognise the sex claims of a pre-operative female-to-male transgendered person, placed particular emphasis on "new insight into the etiology of transsexualism" in con-

cluding "Corbett v Corbett would bear re-examination at some appropriate time." In particular, Ward placed weight on contemporary scientific studies conducted postmortem on male-to-female transgendered bodies that contend genetically male transgendered persons possess a female brain structure. Such studies support the hypothesis that gender identity develops as a result of an interaction of the developing brain and sex hormones. Such a view serves to problematize Ormrod's analysis, predicated as it is on the reduction of sex to a triumvirate of chromosomes, gonads and genitalia and the rejection of the view that transgenderism might have an organic basis. Thus, hormonal factors may help to explain gender identity and the desire for sex reassignment surgery in the case of both intersex and transgendered people. That is, an emphasis on hormones perhaps serves to undermine the clarity of any distinction between intersex and transgender. On this account, any distinction becomes an effect of the degree, nature, manifestation, and temporality of the influence of sex hormones.

However, it is precisely at the moment of recognizing this potential continuity—one which might strengthen the prospects for transgender law reform—and its deemphasis in *W. v. W.* that it becomes clear the decisions in *W. v. W.* and *Corbett* as to "legal sex" have little or nothing to do with the development of the human body and its scientific verification. On the contrary, the concern over (bio)logic evident in these decisions proves to be a rhetorical device serving to mask what is really at stake in these marriage cases. The fact that Ormrod privileges the genital factor in determining sex in the event of incongruence and that Charles builds his judgment around that moment is to be accounted for by reference to the fact that both cases concerned issues of marriage. The crux of the matter is captured by Ormrod:

Sex is clearly an essential determinant of the relationship called marriage, because it is and always has been recognised as the union of man and woman. It is the institution on which the family is built, and in which the capacity for natural heterosexual intercourse is an essential element. It has, of course, many other characteristics, of which companionship and mutual support is an important one, but the characteristics which distinguish it from all other relationships can only be met by two persons of opposite sex.... Having regard to the essentially heterosexual character of the relationship which is called marriage, the criteria must, in my judgment, be biological, for even the most extreme degree of transsexualism in a male ... cannot reproduce a person who is naturally capable of performing the essential role of a woman in marriage.

It is a concern over the "naturalness" of heterosexual capacity that lies at the heart of this passage. In short, Ormrod's and Charles', who followed Ormrod, underlying reasoning seeks to ensure that persons to be characterized as female have genitalia at birth that are in some important sense opposite and therefore "complementary" to the penis. It is this concern that led to considerable scrutiny and speculation about the genital region of April Ashley's and Mrs. W.'s bodies at birth. For Ormrod, the "naturalness" of heterosexual intercourse with a man seems to require at the very least genitalia that are "unalterably female or approaching female in character." For Charles, the mere 'fact' of genital ambiguity at birth, despite the absence of a vagina, appears sufficient. While the two judgments differ by degree, they share a concern to distinguish the "natural" from the "unnatural" and to insulate the institution of marriage from the realm of

the “unnatural.” It is especially significant that in both judgments thinking about “natural” heterosexual intercourse leads to the invocation of an intersex/transgender dyad. It’s curious why this distinction is insisted upon. After all, the heterosexual liaison that Ormrod and Charles imagine is only possible on the facts of Corbett and *W. v. W.* after sex reassignment surgery. The difference appears to lie in the relationship between sex reassignment surgery and nature as it is constructed in the two decisions. Thus, the willingness to characterise Mrs. W.’s post-operative genitalia as “natural” arises out of viewing her surgery in terms of a process of naturalization, to be contrasted with the process of denaturalisation that culminated in the construction of April Ashley’s vagina. This move is possible only through viewing intersex bodies as nature’s “mistake.”

In this regard, recognition of the sex claims of Mrs. W., in addition to being a setback for transgender law reform, proves highly problematic for an intersex politics.

CONCLUSION

While representing a step forward for intersex persons, the decision in *W. v. W.* renders clear the nature of judicial opposition to transgender law reform in the UK context. While formulating a new test for persons who lack chromosomal, gonadal, and genital congruence, Charles enshrines birth as the moment for determining legal sex. The effect of this is to render irrelevant subsequent gonadal (removal), genital (reconstruction), hormonal, and/or psychological change, thereby locating transgendered people beyond the limit of reform.

Moreover, given the irrelevance of gonads and chromosomes in the legal determination of Mrs. W.’s sex, the insistence on the birth moment as critical reveals a concern over the relationship between nature and genitalia. It is in the final analysis “unnatural” genitalia that undermine sex claims, especially those regarding marriage—which, of course, provides the context for both *W. v. W.* and Corbett. It is the characterization of the genitalia of post-operative transgendered persons as “unnatural” that underscores Charles’ judgment and continues to be the most significant barrier to transgender law reform in the English judicial context.

Andrew N. Sharpe, LLB, LLM, Barrister, is a senior lecturer in Law at Macquarie University in Sydney, Australia. Andrew has been writing in the field of transgender law for over six years, and has been involved in transgender law reform. His new book is *Transgender Jurisprudence: Dysphoric Bodies of Law* (Cavendish Publishing, 2001).



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CHANGING YOUR NAME

by D.L. Hawley

A person's name is important; it is a part of self image, a reflection of a social or ethnic group, or a connection to a relative or famous person. For transsexuals, a name may be a betrayal of true self or a reminder of family, employer, or friend's denial of change.

For transsexuals, adopting a new name is important. A gender-specific name is an significant element in being recognized as a member of a gender by the public. A new name enhances self-identity and sets a person apart from their old identity.

THE LEGAL ISSUES

Anyone can assume a different name, so long as it's not for fraudulent purposes. However, assuming a name doesn't result in a change on documents. The only way to adopt a new name that will result in it being changed on documents is to apply for a legal change of name under state law.

Every state allows people to legally change their name. States vary in the procedure and cost, but the results are the same. There are basic requirements for a legal name change, including:

- (1) it must not be for a fraudulent purpose;
- (2) it must not be to avoid financial obligations;
- (3) the application and evidence must meet all statutory requirements;
- (4) the new name must be ordinary—for example, not that of a famous real life or fictional person or a number.

Upon meeting these criteria a legal name change should be approved. This has not always been the case, however. In the 1970s, some courts refused a name change for transsexuals until they had completed sex reassignment surgery. Some courts were opposed to assisting people in transition. One court stated: "We can think of nothing which might be more deceptive to the public than to allow a male to use a female name" (In re Richardson, 23 Pa. D. & C.3d 199, 1982.)

Fortunately, courts today are more educated about transsexuals and are willing to assist individuals in their transition (but see editor's note, below). Courts now recognize that specific surgical procedures are not a prerequisite to a name change; that financial constraints may make SRS unavailable; that a name change should be granted without probing into the applicant's sex or desire to express him or herself in any manner; that individuals living full-time in their desired gender encounter problems when required to present official identification, and a name change can prevent these problems; that a male (or female) has assumed a female (or male) identity in

manner and dress is of no concern to the court and has no bearing on a simple name change application; and applications should be decided on a case-by-case basis (In re McIntyre, 715 A.2d 400, 1998); In re Harris, 707 A.2d 225, 1997).

One court stated:

Absent fraud or other improper purpose a person has a right to a name change whether he or she has undergone or intends to undergo a sex change through surgery, has received hormonal injections to induce physical change, is a transvestite, or simply wants to change from a traditional "male" first name to a traditionally "female," or vice versa. Many first names are gender interchangeable—e.g. Adrian, Evelyn, Erin, Leslie, Lynn, Marion, Robin—and judges should be wary about interfering with a person's choice of a first name" (In re Eck, 584 A.2d 859, 1991.)

MAKING THE CHANGE

Obtaining a legal name change is only the first step. Next is changing your name on all official identification and in every document and database that contains your name. Some places require your original name change document (e.g. Social Security Administration), others accept a photocopy (e.g. motor vehicle department), and some just take your word for it (doctor's office) [*It's a good idea to purchase a good half-dozen or so official documents, since some agencies want to keep them—Ed*]. In some cases it's easiest to just get a new document (e.g. library card, video store card, voter registration).

As time passes, you'll find additional places to change your name. Keep a photocopy of your change of name document in your wallet so you'll be ready for these as they arise.

You should to encourage and help your family, co-workers, and friends to use your new name. This may take time and patience, but it will pay off in the end.

D.L. Hawley is an anthropologist whose primary area of interest is the interrelationship between social change and legal change in two American populations—transgendered people and gay and lesbian people. She has an M.A. in anthropology and a law degree.

Editor's Note: It's still not unheard of for a transsexual to be denied a change of name—fortunately, it happens relatively rarely. Your editor knows of several transsexual women who were denied name changes in her home state of Georgia—most recently in 1999. In that case, the trans advocacy group Georgia Gender Education & Advocacy (now Trans=Action) was able to arrange an in-service for all Georgia judges.

For more information on name change, you can consult these resources:

Bergstedt, S. (1997). *Translegalities: A legal guide for MTF's: Male to female transsexuals.*

Bergstedt, S. (1997). *Translegalities: A legal guide for FTM's: Female to male transsexuals.* Spencer Bergstedt, 1211 Smith Tower, 506 Second Avenue, Seattle, WA 98104 <MstrSpence@aol.com>.

Denny, D. (1994). *Identity Management in Transsexualism.* King of Prussia, PA: Creative Design Services. Available from the IFGE bookstore, Creative Design Services, and www.amazon.com.

Elizabeth, Sr. M. (1990). *Legal Aspects of Transsexualism: 1990 edition.* Wayland, MA: International Foundation for Gender Education. Available from the IFGE bookstore.

Kirk, S., & Rothblatt, M. (1995). *Medical, legal, and workplace issues for the transsexual.* Watertown, MA: Together Lifeworks. Available from the IFGE bookstore.

Solomon, S.L. (1995). *Exploring the paper trail.* Ronkonkoma, NY: TransAgenda.

**WHERE DO YOU NEED TO CHANGE YOUR NAME?
HERE ARE SOME DOCUMENTS AND PLACES:**

- Social security card
- IRS
- Passport
- Birth certificate
- Driver's license
- Car title
- Car lease
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- Recreational vehicle and boat titles
- Storage facilities
- Deed or title to real estate
- Real estate mortgage
- Real estate tax agency
- Apartment lease
- Post office box
- Credit cards
- Bank accounts
- Bank loans
- New checks for checking account
- Investment documents
- Doctor office records
- Hospital records
- College degrees
- College transcript records
- Work employee records
- Employer identification card
- Former employer personnel records (for job references)
- Marriage or divorce certificate
- Military records
- Your will
- Other legal documents (durable power of attorney, contracts, wills in which you are a beneficiary)
- Voter registration
- Ongoing contractual expenses (internet service provider)
- Telephone company records, bill and directory listing
- Electric bill
- Water bill
- Gas bill
- Memberships
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DISCLOSURE

“Janet, this is Cassandra; Cassandra, This is Janet”

by Steph

In the spring of 1993, at a Chi meeting in Chicago, I met a special person; her name was Janet. All my life, I had known her masculine side. That's because I had known her only as Dan, my older brother. Until that moment, Dan had known me only as Steve, his younger brother.

ROOTS OF SILENCE

In our family it was acknowledged that Dan was a little different, that he had taken to wearing womens' clothes. It wasn't discussed openly—nor was it well-received. Dan's treatment didn't encourage me to share the fact of my own crossdressing. I carried that well-guarded secret with me when I left home to go to college.

The first person I shared my secret with was a girlfriend. It was 1984. First, I told her I had a brother who liked to crossdress, using that admission to gauge her reaction. After she expressed her displeasure with his crossdressing, I told her I also had a history of crossdressing, but it was in the past. I believed that.

Having convinced myself my crossdressing was firmly behind me, I believed I could be satisfied vicariously by her femininity. For a while that was true. We were married in 1985, and the subject was buried, smoldering for several years.

In May 1991 I took my first step out of the darkness. Tearfully, I opened up to my wife, telling her I had resumed crossdressing and that the episodes had grown in intensity and frequency. Despite her shock at this revelation, she took my admission as a guilty plea to change course—as it mostly was. She didn't want me to go down the same path as my notorious crossdressing brother, and I didn't want her to lose her affection for me.

The more I tried to be “normal,” the more disillusioned I became with our relationship. We had met at Bible college at a time when we shared conservative values. By the time I acknowledged my return to crossdressing, I had become disillusioned with institutional Christianity. We sought marital counseling with an ex-gay Christian who couldn't understand my motivation to dress up. I was finding an appreciation of my brother's animosity toward Christianity. Now I could realize why, when I came out as born-again Christian in 1977, Dan didn't have much to do with me.

In August 1992, I took a trip to my home state, where I found the nerve to reveal my secret to my sister. She, too, had recently been through marriage counseling, coming to terms with a painful secret in her past. When I told her Dan wasn't the only crossdresser in the family, she was calmly accepting. Later

that day, we bumped into Dan. I wasn't ready to tell him, but I knew the day would soon come.

BREAKING FREE FROM USELESS SHAME

As I was returning home that weekend, I stopped at an adult bookstore, hoping to find information about crossdressing. I came across a CDS publication which opened the door for me to understand my gender issues. Once home, I wrote to the Tri-Ess address listed and joined.

I read everything I could find about transgenderism. To my amazement, I learned there was a support community for the very thing I was trying to run away from. I learned about coming out, about the dangers and joys of going out in public as my transgender self. Most of all, I learned about embracing my true self, about breaking free from the useless shame that was hindering my relationships—even the relationship I once enjoyed with my brother.

By February 1993, my wife and I had separated. I wrote to Dan, sharing, finally, what we had in common. We began a dialogue, racking up the phone bills. To my surprise, Dan wasn't aware of the support network I had discovered.

In May, we met and drove to a Chi meeting in Chicago. As the meeting got underway, we went in the changing room to dress. There, for the first time, we met one another's feminine side. Dan became Janet, and I became Cassandra. Janet captured the moment by commenting, “Well, this really changes the family structure a bit!”

IT SEEMED LIKE A GOOD IDEA AT THE TIME

A month later, it was set for Janet to move in with me. After spending most of Saturday at the Be-All in Chicago, we moved all her stuff into my apartment. To cement our connection, to demonstrate that I was no longer the archconservative Christian she had known, I wrote the following polemic:

To All You “Straight” Queers Out There!

You don't know me as the guy who appreciates women so much, don't know that I adore their womanhood, even to the point of emulating them in every way. You see me in a dress and immediately feel that masculinity is diametrically opposed to femininity. You feel an imbalance that I don't. And you have the audacity to say you are “straight”?!

To make it easier on yourself, you label me queer. I don't know if I should take that as an insult or a compliment. If being queer means being different from those with your narrow-mindedness, then queer I happily am. I'm not afraid of homosexuality, even though I'm heterosexual, and I'm not afraid of myself. You see, to me, you're the queer.

It seems strange to me that you think your macho behavior of treating girls as conquests could be attractive to them. How

queer! It seems strange to me that you view girls as beneath you, so low it disgusts you to consider wearing anything they wear. How queer!

It seems strange to me that you view the kindness and tenderness so typical of the gay person as a threat to your image of power and glory. How queer to think power is devoid of kindness! How queer to repress feelings of tenderness! How queer to judge sex as bad if it's done any way other than the way you do it! How queer to invoke the Bible, which admonishes us not to judge others, but to love one another, saying there is no fear in love!

How queer to be afraid of yourself and think it normal! How queer to glorify your own fears, manipulating others to be as afraid as you! How queer to claim justice is for all while wishing to deprive those you do not understand of justice. How queer to assume your anxiety is normal! How queer that you expect others to lower themselves to your level! How queer that you can't see how life and liberty is for all. What part of all don't you understand?

—Cassandra Trisch

This diatribe was my way of building a bridge to Janet; it was never meant for publication. But before the ink could dry, our lives were turned upside-down.

THEN ALL HELL BROKE LOOSE

Less than four weeks after Janet moved in with me, she drew the curious attention of a neighborhood girl. Apparently she wasn't aware of the necessity of being cautious around pre-teen girls. The young girl took the liberty of gazing into our front window to look at "a man with lipstick."

Janet tried to cope with this unwelcome attention. She tried shooing the girl away, to no avail. Then, as I slept in the back room, she courted disaster, allowing the girl into our apartment. Janet thought she could quench the girl's curiosity so she would leave her to her privacy.

About 4 p.m. on July 7, I awoke to voices in the living room. To my surprise and ire, I found my sister Janet entertaining a girl I had never met. Neither acknowledged my presence as I went into the kitchen for a glass of water. Perplexed, I left the apartment to discuss the situation with my estranged wife. She wasn't home, so I returned to the apartment. By then the girl had left. I brought the matter up to Janet, who wasn't ready to talk about it.

Some minutes later there was a commotion outside the apartment. An irate mother was demanding to know why her daughter had been in a stranger's apartment. Accusations flew, and the police were summoned.

To my shock, Janet and I were arrested on charges of criminal sexual conduct. Later, I learned the girl was being encouraged to tell stories of bizarre sexual encounters. She claimed I had touched her breasts and posed in a staged photograph of her stabbing me with a jelly-stained butter knife. But there was no photograph, no butter knife. And why in the world would I touch

her breasts? The fact that her allegations were taken seriously by the authorities only added to my shock. My fears about the consequences of coming out were being painfully realized.

Janet and I were held without bond in the county jail. As we prepared to go to trial, we believed we would be exonerated by a jury. We weren't.

Ironically, among the items confiscated for evidential purposes was a copy of the above polemic. Our lives now resonated the line, "How queer to claim justice is for all, while wishing to deprive those you do not understand of justice."

I was shocked further when my attorney told me the law allowed for conviction of criminal sexual conduct without corroborating evidence. The allegations, improbable and inconsistent as they were, would be enough for a conviction. With our crossdressing lives demonized by the prosecutrix, there was little hope for acquittal.

I couldn't even relate to the allegations. All my life I tended to play it safe. Hence, I developed conservative values early in life. I didn't even start dating until I was in college. I missed

the sleeping around experience of the sexual revolution and married the first girlfriend I ever had. I was accused of things I had never heard of, never realized people actually did.

Still, the outcome was predictable; we were both declared guilty and given lengthy sentences. I received 15 to 30 years (later reduced to 10 to 15 years). Janet was convicted as a habitual offender (she had past offenses of which I had been unaware) and given 30 to 50 years.

I was now regretting having come out. I was in retreat, seeing little benefit in being an out crossdresser in the base environment of prison.

SINCE THEN...

Eight years later, it's still difficult to write this. But I'm thankful I came to terms with my gender issues. The emotional prison of being locked out of my own identity was far worse than being locked in this physical prison.

Janet and I challenged our convictions in the court, but what a struggle it proved to be! I soon learned that along with my freedom I had lost my credibility. My assertions of innocence were dismissed, as if I was stuck in denial. Denial was the state I was in before I came out of the closet—not after!

I quickly lost my support network. Gradually, day-to-day survival became more important than my gender needs. Was I slipping into denial under duress? If I could remain aware of the question, I knew I wasn't beyond hope.

DEPARTURE

In September, on her 44th birthday, Janet was diagnosed with late-stage lung cancer. Early in the morning of 9 October, 2001, she passed on to transheaven.

I couldn't even relate to the allegations. All my life I tended to play it safe. Hence, I developed conservative values early in life... I was accused of things I had never heard of, never realized people actually did.

My last message to Janet was my commitment to share our story. I pledged to her that our misplaced lives would not be in vain. She received the letter on 8 October, the day before she died.

"Janet," I wrote, "hang on to hope, even as you pass on to the afterlife. May you see your life as a gift to the mountain of love and hope. May you see your life as a contribution to the hope that this world will soon be a gender-friendly place for all. And may you depart into the peace of knowing that where you're going is already gender-friendly.

"Thank you, Janet, for being gender-friendly to me. You will always be in my heart as my sister and my friend. This is only a temporary goodbye."

Yes, Janet, this really does change the family structure a bit.

Steph identifies as androgynous. Her biological brother Janet identified as transsexual. Both also identified with their Native American heritage. They were incarcerated on 7 July, 1993 and struggled to clear their names. Steph is an accomplished writer and occasional editor. She currently serves as the congregational leader of a prison church and works as a computer lab tutor. She expects to be free by 2005.

There Are Some Really Nice People Here

by Quinn

I guess I'm what some would call a butch dyke. I've never thought I had a particularly masculine face; in fact I felt I had the ivory-girl / girl-next-door look as a teenager, before I cut my long, straight hair. I hated that image. I tried to cultivate a hard-boiled, smoking, drinking, bad-girl ambiance as a counterpoint, and got quite good at it before I finally got my first buzz-cut right out of college. Suddenly, the world went silent. The catcalls, the come-ons, the heckling, the hooting, the "Whee-oo, gimme some o' that, baby!" I'd come to resentfully accept as the background noise to being female stopped dead. It was blissfully refreshing, like suddenly being cured of tinnitus.

I no longer had to smoke or drink. And though I was now tall, thin and crewcut and sometimes mistaken for a boy, it always surprised me. I never considered myself male-looking. I felt like me. Butch? I guess so. I prefer "Fierce."

I'm a survivor of many things, but the one that seems the most suffocating, the one that's grinding me down and wearing me to shreds, the one I still haven't actually survived—that is to say, made it to the other side of—is poverty. Poverty has left me at times crushingly despondent and unbearably lonely. It once forced me to move four times in one year, at the whims and fancies of other people. My friends and acquaintances have come to unquestioningly accept my poverty in a way I still can't.

It's not that I came from anything and then went down; it's just that I had high expectations that haven't panned out.

And so it hurts that my friends simply accept that I don't get included when they're going to a concert. They accept and don't even ask me to go to the benefit, or to the movies, or to dinner with the gang. They accept without a thought that they'll see me at free events and gatherings, but never anywhere else. They're happy to see me, and we dance or chat, depending on the event, yet it never goes deeper than that, since there's so

much I can't share in.

But I *am* fierce. I try to show up to what I can, just for the sake of socializing. Usually, I'm able to wear my increasingly worn clothes with a swagger and a grin. The 12-year-old motorcycle jacket I saved two years for back in the day when I had a little something has only improved with age, right? Worn jeans are timeless. And the scuffed motorcycle boots a friend found in the closet of an apartment she moved into, they only complete the look. It's a look of fierceness, born of necessity.

I'm usually able to insist, jokingly, that I'm "watching my figure" if I sit with people in a restaurant watching them eat obscenely bulging burritos bedecked with sides of sour cream and creamy guacamole, or steaming calzones glistening with thick red sauce, or countless tiny bowls of Thai delicacies wafting exotic smells over my cup o' joe. "I couldn't eat one bite," I tell them, knowing that if I did I couldn't stop eating this and that off of everyone's plate to the point of embarrassment for all of us, and I laugh loudly to cover the sound of my stomach growling.

I'm usually able to pull it off—but sometimes it catches me unawares. Sometimes when I'm alone. Sometimes when I'm walking down the sidewalk, sometimes when I'm sitting in my apartment. Sometimes, I'm overcome by a sudden torrent, a flood of tears of rage and loneliness that seem to come from nowhere.

It happened the other day. Driving my ancient, battle-scarred hatchback, I'd been reflecting on my new 'do.' Friends had been chiding me that I'd begun to look like a soccer-mom in my cotton K-mart bike pants and sneakers because I had grown my hair out. Straight, shoulder-length, and tucked behind my ears, it was a desperate, conciliatory attempt to look more like "them" for a job interview, a self-loathing bid to sell out my real identity for the dream of dental care and "a room of one's own," an emblem of, not everything I was, like Achilles, but of everything I was losing, as it grew ever longer, swallowing me. Men had begun smiling at me over their grocery carts and holding the door open at the convenience store. The first time it happened, I stopped and looked over my shoulder to see she to whom they were reacting.

On the road, my thoughts wandered; I wasn't really aware of them. I was in the familiar, hip, seedy/artsy part of the city when out of the blue a tears exploded, like a dam breaking. Wracking sobs wrenched my body, so shocking me that part of me felt like an observer.

This thing was filling the vehicle, taking over my body; I sensed that I'd better pull over. I pulled into the large empty parking lot of an abandoned store and put the car in park; traffic poured past me. Over and over I screamed at the top of my lungs. I pounded the door, the seat, the steering wheel, in rage.

For a time I was completely unaware of the world outside the car. I was even almost unaware of what was going on inside the car. I watched my arms thrashing, flailing, witnessed the frightening noises of naked despair. Finally, after I don't know how long, the cacophony seemed to wane, the storm to wear itself out. Finally, I grew slowly back into my arms and gained control of my face. I began to draw breath again, though it came in irregular gasps. I leaned forward into the steering wheel, my head in my arm, my shoulders still shaking. And as I did, I saw a ragged black man emerge from the side of the abandoned building and move towards my car. "Not now!" I thought. I tried to wave him off, but he came to the driver's side window.

I waved him off again, thinking “How could he possibly expect me to have spare change?” He persisted. He stood there.

At last I rolled down my window and looked at him, shaking my head and still waving a “no” with my hand. He leaned down into the window. “It’s gonna be aw-right, brother,” he said. “It’s gonna be aw-right.” He nodded his head in serious affirmation, and then walked away. I sat in stunned silence, then took one last gasp for air and laughed out loud. And I thought, “You know, I will never fit in on this planet, but there are some really nice people here.”

FTM Breast Cancer

by Julian Wolfe

One would think that after thirty years on testosterone, a bilateral mastectomy, and a total hysterectomy, one would be immune from breast cancer. Not! Just as males aren’t immune, neither are we. We may be at low risk, but we’re still at risk. So be forewarned.

Help wasn’t hard to find. I have a professional job and can afford high option Blue Cross Blue Shield health insurance, so I get to select my physicians. I should say here that all my doctors here in Atlanta have been respectful and supportive of my gender issues. They’ve shown great sensitivity. Although they’re not necessarily well-informed, they seem to know the basics.

Over the years I’ve had regular physicals every two years. My long-time GP doctor told me I could still get breast cancer after having a mastectomy and always did an exam. He never recommended a mammogram, which isn’t unusual absent a family history of cancer.

Then my good doctor retired. I had moved to a less transgender friendly town, so it was about three years before I had had a complete physical. I don’t recall whether my new physician did a breast exam. Then he also retired.

It wasn’t until 2001 that I got a new endocrinologist and primary care physician, neither of whom did a breast exam. However, it’s my habit to examine myself. Thank God! When I detected an unfamiliar lump, I immediately made an appointment with my primary care physician. After the exam, I was referred to a general surgeon, who did a biopsy in his office. He used an ultrasound machine and a probe which took three samples of the tissue. He ordered a mammogram and X-ray to confirm his diagnosis, and asked me to call in 3-4 days. When I phoned, he told me it was a malignant tumor, stage 2, cm in diameter. His first recommendation was a radical mastectomy, which would remove all the breast tissue, including the nipple and some lymph nodes. That went over like a lead balloon. My main objection was the scarring. Although almost nobody sees my chest but me, I’m self-conscious about it. I had a keyhole mastectomy the first time and had been contemplating a revision to make it less saggy and more manly, but there was no visible scarring. Also, removing the lymph nodes weakens your arm significantly. I asked about the less radical lumpectomy. He said I was a good candidate for that. With the lumpectomy, the incisions would be smaller, the nipple left intact, and fewer lymph nodes would be harvested for testing. After discussing my

options, we scheduled lumpectomy surgery about 3 weeks later.

It was outpatient surgery. Although I was scheduled to spend the night, I went home early that afternoon. I had a friend drive me to and from the hospital and stay with me for the first 24 hours. The most uncomfortable incision was where the lymph nodes were removed. The surgeon removed five. They were negative for cancer cells, as was the tissue excised around the tumor.

By the next day, I was ready to go out and about within reason, which I did. Exercising the arm after surgery is key to preserving a full range of motion.

On my follow-up visit a week later, we discussed the surgery in general terms. The surgeon said I was healing well and referred me to an oncologist. That was surprising to me. Before surgery, he had said radiation was necessary with a lumpectomy; he hadn’t mentioned chemo.

A few days later, I saw the oncologist, a thin, middle-aged, soft-spoken man with a friendly smile. We talked a little. He examined me, then we moved to his office and talked some more. After reviewing the surgeon’s notes and the pathology report, his recommendation was four treatments of chemo using two drugs. Treatments would be every three weeks. I wasn’t a happy camper, especially about the prospect of going bald and losing my facial hair. (I’m keeping my hair cut short and buying a hat. My wig investigation was disappointing, both for cost and for appearance.) I asked for more information, which he gave me.

By the weekend I was able to get my laptop out of repair and do a web search. I found a great deal of information on breast cancer, including male breast cancer. There’s even a male breast cancer website. Treatments are nearly the same as with female breast cancer. I found information on alternative treatments using vitamins and minerals, with claims of outstanding results. No one claimed a cure.

Doctors can’t recommend treatments not endorsed by the Food & Drug Administration. The FDA is notoriously slow to endorse new therapies and often works hand-in-hand with the drug companies, whose bottom line is profit. However, doctors will speak up if they know a treatment is harmful. It’s good to confide in them and carefully listen.

With all this new information, I had more questions. I made an appointment with the radiologist, a young, attractive Afro-American woman who won my trust with her openness and willingness to go over my case, answer my questions, and give me a copy of my reports. She explained to me why chemotherapy was recommended and should be effective in my case. She also said I could take the vitamins during treatment. I saw the oncologist again and rescheduled my treatment.

My first treatment was yesterday. It went well, comfort-wise, although it took four hours out of my day. They gave me medicine via IV for nausea and two prescriptions for the same. I was able to drive myself to and from the doctor’s office, which had been a concern. On the way home, I stopped by the pharmacy and picked up the cheaper nausea medicine. The other wasn’t in stock and cost \$66 for 5 pills. Fortunately, I had told the nurse I was broke until payday and she had given me samples of the expensive medication.

So far, I’ve not experienced nausea. I prepared a dinner of rice, meatballs and green beans, which tasted good and went down well. Later I had a dessert of apple-cranberry pie la mode. I drank plenty of liquids, mostly water—a liter of water that morning before treatment,

and 2 liters after treatment, plus juice and coffee. It's important to flush the poisons out of your kidneys. I slept well and felt fine this morning. I'm an early bird, and got up as usual around 5 am.

The chemo will be repeated three more times. Then I'll begin radiation of the local area. The good news is that I'll get to see the pretty doctor again. Maybe I'll be back to normal by the time you read this.

I should add that for a week prior to treatment I was taking all the recommended vitamins: vitamin C, E, D, MGN3, and melatonin. This regimen is said to reduce the side effects of chemo and increase the number of healthy white blood cells, some of which naturally fight cancer in the body. Sometimes you get to keep your hair. Dare I hope?

I thought it important to share this information with my brothers. We go through a lot to achieve a life that is livable. We shouldn't overlook the health basics, which can prolong and enhance our living: diet, exercise, and not increasing risk factors with smoking, alcohol, social drugs, and unsafe sexual practices. Even so, there are no preventive measures to take for breast cancer.

I was at low risk, with no family history. The doctors have no explanation for why I got cancer. For 20-odd years, I had had no significant estrogen in my system—nor was taking testosterone all those years a risk factor. In fact, the oncologist told me it used to be routine to prescribe T to women with breast cancer. No one has recommended that I alter my T regimen—a good thing, because that would be seriously depressing.

I believe we should look to the environment for increased rates of cancer. Our immune systems are compromised by pollution and the soil is depleted of minerals, which are then lacking in our fruits and vegetables. We're not eating as well as our grandparents, or even our parents. We're overfed but undernourished. That's the best explanation I've read to account for the rise in cancer rates over the last 40 or so years.

Early detection is key to longer survival. Check yourself regularly. Make a breast exam part of your regular physical. Make a positive contribution to life every day.

The Dress

by Robyn Sondra Wills

During grade school, I was living in suburbia, the "Styx" of Chicago. My recollections of those days are vague at best—nearly forty years have passed—but one memory is crystal clear.

I was sick with pneumonia. The doctors ordered me home from school, where I stayed for almost a month—not that I minded, for school was a place where I was consistently on trial. I knew I was different. At that age, any boy who wished to play with girls suffered greatly at the hands of the other boys. Not even the girls understood. At home for a month, I didn't have to worry about the bullies.

Catalogs the size of the Chicago phone book were lying

About seven years ago,
I told my mother her son
was really her only
daughter. It was a shock
to find she already knew.
That night, we talked as
we never had before.
She proved to be more
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would have ever credited.

about the house. Since it was that time of year, fancy Christmas catalogs, printed in full color, added to the fair. It was into these, in my pre-puberty femininity, I would retreat when I was alone. That month, I was alone a lot.

My way of hiding was to keep a finger in a more "appropriate" section of the catalog so, if someone entered the room, I could quickly turn to a section my mother would find more acceptable. I feared my mother's

wrath, but the beating I would get from my father was too terrifying to consider! I would drool for hours over dolls, stuffed animals, bedroom sets in pastels, jewelry, dresses.

I remember in particular a plaid jumper with a blue/green tartan. I must have stared at it for hours at a time. The model wore a white, ruffled blouse with the jumper. I think it's perhaps more a trick of my memory than a reality, but I remember the model's hair was nearly the color of my all-too-short fuzz. I could picture myself as her, in that jumper, going somewhere with my parents, my mother proud of her daughter.

About seven years ago, I told my mother her son was really her only daughter. It was a shock to find she already knew. That night, we talked as we never had before. She proved to be more understanding than I would have ever credited. I even told her about a dress I saw while we were on vacation in Hawaii. As we stood in front of the shop, she asked if there was anything I really wanted. Still fearful in those days, my answer was of course "No!" I got a shock when she described the dress!

Several days later, my mother met her daughter Robyn for the first time. Her words, not mine: "I think you would have made a very good-looking woman."

Sadly, the mother-daughter relationship would go not further. At eighty-one years of age, her mind was rapidly degenerating. The mother-daughter relationship I dreamed of was gone.

I still remember her talking about the time I was home sick from school. She said she had entered the living room and seen me staring at the dress. From that moment on, she said, she had wished I would talk to her about the feelings stirring within me. This woman—who more than once intimidated men twice her size—was afraid I would clam up and say nothing. It's strange how fear kept us apart for so long.

I was sitting, she said, looking at the catalog—my finger just below the jumper. Thirty-some-odd years later, she could still remember me saying, "I wish I could have that dress ..."

Robyn Sondra Wills was born in Chicago. A male-to-female transsexual and a strange duck in any pond, she traveled the world as both a child and an adult. She is a 15-year veteran of the U. S. Navy, and has been married, widowed, remarried, and divorced. She is the *Fantasy and Poetry* Editor of *Alternate Realities* Webzine. Robyn lives in Portland, Oregon.

FICTION

Encounter

by AprilRose Schneider

As a “mature” transsexual, I can claim the dubious honor of having seen the best and worst of both sexes. I’m fifty now, a late bloomer, to be sure. But despite what I regard as a qualified sort of worldliness about myself, there was nothing—and I do mean NOTHING—that could have prepared me for the social, psychological and practical adjustments that awaited me as I began my transition at the age of forty-four.

The early days of my transition provided some of the most intense emotional experiences I’ve ever had. Anyone foolish or brave enough to want a more personal understanding of the meaning of “intense emotional experience” should go to the nearest Wal-Mart at the busiest time of day and take their clothes off, preferably in the vicinity of the customer service booth. Then, as you stand there in your naked glory and enjoy your fifteen seconds of infamy, you will know precisely how I felt the first time I went there in a dress. But as revealing as that experience was, it paled in comparison to a lesson in sexism visited upon me in the summer of 1999.

It was the last day of June, and the searing New Mexico sun promised to push the mercury up past one hundred degrees. Unemployed, as I frequently was, I sought the anonymity of the local theatre for a mid-day matinee. It was a remake of the classic “The Out-of-Towners.” Having consumed every last morsel of contraband candy I had smuggled into the theatre, I sat in dread of the approaching end of the movie. The murderous heat of a dry sauna was awaiting my exit from the cool confines of the theatre.

The movie ended. As the audience filtered out toward the exits, I reluctantly gathered my purse, tugged at the hem of my sundress and fell in line.

Slightly claustrophobic, I broke from the crowd and turned left, opting for a longer, more relaxed pace through the side lot. I heaved on the theater door and immediately regretted my decision to go out, for the midday heat sucked the breath out of me. For a few steps I could manage no more than a zombie shuffle.

My reverie was cut short by a sensation so bizarre I had nothing in my memory banks to use for comparison. It came suddenly and without warning, like a thief in the night. Unseen and unbidden, a hand deftly lifted the bottom rear hem of the

aforementioned sundress and rather gently and gracefully stroked the most posterior aspect of my gluteus maximus, with one errant yet talented finger venturing ever so slightly toward the panty-covered inner sanctum.

Time slowed to a crawl, as it often does during moments of great import. Thoughts raced through my head in a jumble. I searched for some way to comprehend what had just happened. There came then a sort of crazy, mad convergence as I shuffled to a stop, groping desperately for understanding. “Oh, it’s probably someone I know!” Then, just as quickly, came the realization that even coming from a friend, the thing would be no less unpalatable.

In the next second, a mysterious presence glided by like a specter, lingering only long enough to whisper in my ear, “You are so gorgeous.” There, in that weird dream state, I remained motionless—suspended—as I watched a swarthy, thirtyish man with excellent taste in posteriors walk briskly down the sidewalk. Sexism had come calling.

Assisted by adrenaline, my senses returned. I tried to formulate some sort of response. As I stood there in shock, one of my many alter egos, the one as needy as a motherless kitten and wanton as a depraved transsexual, spoke up and in true southern belle fashion said, “Why thank, you kind sir, you say the nicest things.” But my fantasy was shattered as the brazen stranger paused some fifty feet ahead and turned to leer at his victim one more time. That did it! I was finally snapped back into some sort of functional state of being and overcome by a brief but powerful sense of self-righteous anger. For one shining moment I was imbued with the special sort of uplifting, justifiable, empowering rage only a transsexual really knows.

As the impudent stranger quickened his pace down the sidewalk, he turned left and headed for the main parking lot. Just before disappearing behind the front wall of the theater, he turned towards me once more and leered, a perverted grin plastered on his face. His demeanor screamed “Gotcha!”

I felt violated—used and abused, defiled and deflowered, like some cheap sex object. Sadly, I also had gained a more intimate knowledge of how it felt to be a woman in a male-dominated society. I realized with grave conviction the immensity of my vulnerability. This worm in a man’s disguise could have done practically anything he wanted to me. It came as a startling realization to realize how very far this transition had brought me.

An evil plan of retribution began to formulate in my now

vindictive psyche. He was still close enough to me, in his haughty overconfidence, and I could use the element of surprise. I would simply remove my high heels and chase him down on foot. His smugness would cause him to run at half-speed. I would tackle him in the parking lot. Then as he lay there in shock, the rictus of fear on his lips, I would create an indelible impression, an impression guaranteed to remain lodged in his sex-offender brain for the rest of his short, pitiful life. In the videotape player of my imagination, to the animal sounds of the crowd that had gathered around us in the parking lot to cheer me on, I took my revenge. And, lawdamighty, was it sweet!

I paused for a moment to savor my victory. Then, standing over the sad, stunned lecher, I placed my foot on his throat, pulled up my dress, pulled down my panties and, smiling just as sweetly as possible, revealing the one thing about me that he could never anticipate, the thing that would ruin his day. As he stared open-mouthed at the object of his undoing, I would kneel beside him and end his days of perversion by delivering a deathblow to his septum. Now that's what I call pure transexual anger.

I snapped out of my sun-baked reverie, realizing I was standing in a daze on a sidewalk outside the theater. Not knowing if the incident had attracted any attention, I kept my eyes to the ground and tried to appear as nonchalant as possible, as if I were not a transexual who had just been groped for the first time. My steps quickened as I angled toward the safety of my Blazer.

I had no sooner put the key into the lock than I was distracted by the sound of an approaching bicycle. I chanced a glance in the direction of the sound and was aghast to see my friendly local pervert smile and wave as he rode casually by. Still rooted to the spot, slack-jawed, I continued to watch as he rode to the far end of the parking lot. He then dismounted and stood leering at me.

I threw myself into my car with every intention of serving justice upon his person. "Ha! This idiot is on a bike, and I'm driving a SUV. What is he, suicidal?"

Then, an epiphany. I realized in a moment of satori that I had misjudged the entire episode. He was obviously a lonely, dysfunctional wretch of a man who needed love, or at least reassurance. Of course. That was it! How could I have been so blind? As we stared at each other from opposite ends of the blacktop, I began to feel a curious mixture of nurturance and curiosity.

My mood turned conciliatory. After all, his grope was a gentle one, and I never really felt threatened. In reality, he could have done much worse—like stealing my purse or jewelry. And he definitely wasn't ugly. "I'll bet he just needs someone to talk to. In fact I'll bet if I just go over there and tell him that I'm not upset with him he'll be relieved just to know someone cares."

My motivation to heal gaining strength, I smiled at him as I started the car. In a split second his self-confident grin began to fade and was replaced by genuine perplexity. Holding his gaze, I backed the car out the parking space and slowly aimed the car in his direction. Halfway across the parking lot, I was close enough to see his look of perplexity was slowly fading and being replaced with one of fearful anticipation. I forced myself to smile to put him at ease, but I must have appeared

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crazed and demonic, for he mounted his bike. Anxious to meet and console my mysterious admirer, I accelerated toward him.

He threw a pained grimace in my direction and began peddling furiously away from his psycho gropee. We bounced in unison over a couple of parking bumpers and plowed through a small gravel lot, barely missing a couple of mailboxes. We hit the pavement of the main thoroughfare, he pedalling furiously and casting frantic fearful looks over his shoulder. I considered grabbing pencil and paper to scratch out a calming phrase, but opted to pull alongside him and reassure him in person. In an instant, we were side by side, hurtling down the two lane highway. The poor man looked as if he would have rather been swimming with piranha.

I leaned out of my window at forty miles an hour and screamed at the top of my lungs, "Stop, let's talk. I just want to help!" Unfortunately, in the act of leaning out of the window, I edged out of my lane and into his. Mere feet separated us. A look of horror was on his face as he realized he had bitten off more than he would ever want to chew.

In an effort to be heard, I edged even closer and screamed, "Hey, c'mon, let's go somewhere and talk. I can help." Staring and pedaling wildly, he screamed back, "You go to hell, lady!"

And then, whether by cruel fate or simple misadventure, he drifted too far crossed the center line and was himself groped by an eighty-ton Mack truck.

I didn't stop to investigate. There was simply no way to explain what had just transpired. Some things are better left to the imagination.

I still go to the same theater on occasion. Inevitably, I find myself sauntering slowly through the same familiar exit, pausing just for a moment on the sidewalk outside, waiting, watching. After all, he did say I was gorgeous, didn't he?

We placed AprilRose's piece in the fiction section because, we hope, Mr. Groper's encounter with the Mack truck was wishful thinking—Ed.

AprilRose Schneider resides in New Mexico, where she operates a housekeeping service.

Johnny

by Shawn Williams

Ruggedly handsome, with dark eyes that could see deep beyond the organic structures. Well-defined musculature that provided a hint upon first encounter of the power and energy packed into that small frame. Subsequent encounters revealed characteristics that were even more appealing. There was an

**“I DIDN'T KNOW YOU WUZ LIKE YOU WUZ.
SOMEBODY SHOULD HAVE TOLD ME.”**

intellectual side balanced with an intriguing creative talent. Mechanical and carpentry skills were enhanced by a sense of style and design. Lying beneath a wonderful sense of humor was a quiet wisdom. Some of us who got closer discovered a gentleness and sensitivity that balanced the strength and toughness. When we were together, I always felt safe. Johnnie was someone I could depend on. Someone I could trust.

I can remember people staring when we went out. It used to make me laugh sometimes because my heels made me so much taller. So, I was taller and 25 years younger. What those hollow people behind the stares didn't realize is just how tall Johnnie seemed to me. And, why was it so important to everyone else that I happened to be taller? How odd to put such restrictions in place for dating and mating rituals. Weren't other things more important than physical attributes?

Johnnie's mother was very dear. We used to go over to her house for dinner every Friday night. There was a strong love between them. And I was always treated like family. She never displayed any of that silly jealousy that mothers often have. You know, that attitude that no one is good enough for my child. Never any of that. I grew to love this woman, Johnnie's mother.

One day the phone rang. It was Johnnie. A family member had died. A relative and his family were coming in from

Oklahoma. No one had seen them in years. They would be at the funeral home that evening. I needed to be ready by 6:30 p.m. so we could arrive by 7:00 p.m.

We made it through the visitation that evening. Lots of people came to pay their respects. Finally, the only ones left besides Johnnie's mother and us were the long-lost relatives. The resemblance was striking. He even had a small stature just like Johnnie. His wife was shorter and always stood just a little behind him. They had stared at us all night. I was kind of

used to it, even though it did surprise me that a relative would be so blatant. They probably didn't like it that I was treated as an equal. We stood side by side, and the mutual respect between us showed.

Johnnie asked the relatives to join us for dinner. He stared coldly from under his cowboy hat and said, "I didn't know you wuz like you wuz. Somebody should have told me. No, I don't think we'll be going to dinner with you." Johnnie just smiled and shrugged, "Well, you're sure going to miss some good home cookin'. We'll see you tomorrow at the funeral."

Johnnie, her mother, and I had a wonderful dinner together that night.

Shawn Williams says, "I am studying for a Ph.D. in clinical psychology. My area of special interest is gender identity. The rigid roles dictated by eurocentric cultures, especially the United States, cause countless difficulties for those who do not fit easily into the "either/or" requirement."



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POETRY

TAPESTRY'S 2001 POETRY CONTEST

FIRST PLACE

To the Gift of My Body I Give

by Tucker Lieberman

To the gift of my body I give
More and more podules of sunlight!
Raiments of wax cells hold tight
To the gift of my body. I give
Frothings of cardinal madtrack,
Eucalyptus and gold, all flowing back
To the gift. Of my body I give
One great eliminix birthhorse
Heave; one jump from a grand spiral force
To the gift of my body I give.



Tucker Lieberman is a 21-year-old FTM living in Providence, RI. He will graduate from Brown University with the Class of 2002.

SECOND PLACE

A Psalm to Our Selves

by Vernon Maylsby

We try to sing our own songs
in the language of our oppressors
Fracture our fragile identity alliance
Along lines of race and class
as taught by our oppressors
We try to define ourselves
with words written by another kind
We see ourselves, distorted, unclear
Through the lens of our oppressors
To sing our songs, to our own souls
We need to see ourselves as we are
A unique and special people, whose seeds

are scattered all over the society spectrum
We are a people represented throughout time
We need wordsmiths, of our kind
To midwife our visions, our definitions
So our speech will speak to us, our hearts
To heal our souls, as we sing our songs.

THIRD PLACE

Someone Else's Words

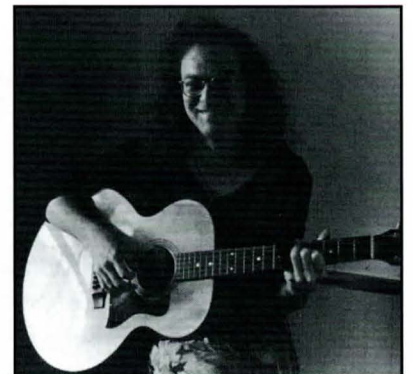
by Zythyra Basha

Call me Sir, Madam
Mr., Ms.
Boy, Girl
Man, Woman
Dude, Chic
Whatever you need to see
It's all the same to me
Someone else's words
That cannot begin to describe my reality

Transvestite, Transsexual
Cross-dresser, Gender-bender
Drag Queen, Female Impersonator
Berdache, Androgyne
Whatever you think you see
Doesn't look that way to me
Someone else's words...

How many genders are there?
Does anyone really know?
Does it even matter?
I don't think so

There are many places to live
Between the boxes labeled
Male
and
Female



Zythyra Basha is a long-time acoustic musician, writer, teacher and activist. Zythyra and partner are co-founders of *It's Time, NH!*, a statewide chapter of *It's Time, America!*, a national organization devoted to advocacy and education for gender-variant persons and their allies. Zythyra was also a board member of PFLAG-NH for a two year tenure. Zythyra identifies as M2F2? (at least for this week), likes to cook vegetarian food, prefers to not use gender pronouns and resides in the lakes region of NH with partner, child and cat.

EDITORIAL



Photograph by Mariette Pathy Allen

42 Aspects of Gender June 17-23, 2001

Now Deceased.

May He/she, She/he Rest in Peace

by Paedra / Peter Bramhall

Hey, you out there! You brothers and sisters. You in the community who are transgendered and transgifted. **WHERE WERE YOU?** If you were not going to come, perhaps you should have thought to send flowers, like to a funeral. That, at least, would have shown you cared. That would have been an art happening in itself. All these great bouquets of flowers with best wishes from all these one-named people. It would have made those of us there, those very, very few of us who were there at the Fulton Street Gallery, know someone around the greater Albany/Schenectady/Troy acreage cared about art, cared about a unique event by members of their community.

Maybe this is not really so. Maybe most of you really have no interest in art. Maybe there are things of greater interest than art because art is a woman's interest. Oops! Am I stepping my high-heel on someone's toes? Well, I hope so, because what I

have seen so far has not proven anything different. Quite frankly, I think most of you care more about what color your socks or stockings are than about art. After all, it's just a hobby, isn't it? Not a real profession. Not something you can make a living from.

Am I getting your attention? I hope so. Back to the Fulton Street Gallery Show. A lot of work went into that show.

But, but, but, perhaps the concept was wrong in the first place.

Art has to be out, out there and public. Out there aggressively publicized. You use any and whatever hook you can to get the attention of the media and the public. That means publicity, and lots of it—which for this show, alas, there wasn't much beyond our community, which didn't respond and didn't attend.

And a gallery show in one's own home town. That's a threat to one's privacy. That means a greater chance of being publicly exposed as transgendered. That is the exact opposite of

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what many of us want. That is why we go away to conferences and weekends to the tip of Cape Cod or wherever.

This art show was a very good idea. It was a beginning point. It was a first! Wow! But in the future, it needs to be held in a high-visibility space/gallery/museum in a city that celebrates art and diversity, where it can be well-publicized, where an art-loving, art-interested public will come. Where the show can get the attention of the media and provoke conversation and controversy.

This I come to another point. How do we support each other? Openly? In our businesses? In the arts? This is life beyond our problems!

Attention, sisters and brothers. Since the long story about me in *Transgender Tapestry* nearly four years ago, I have not received a single inquiry about my art glass, not for home, not for your office, not for a wedding or holiday gift. Oh, hell, I know you're more interested in how big your chest is or how flat your chest is now.

Hey! We need to be more interested, now more than ever, in each other. Perhaps *Tapestry* could put together a list of those business run by those who are transgendered and out and proud so we can purposefully support them. We need to support each other. We need to be in contact. And we need to support our business and our artists.

Let's be truly proud of our transgenderedness. It is a gift. We can and do see differently than much of the world. Let us celebrate that difference. Let us get out of our damn closets and award the world with our goodness, our giftedness, our caring, our love, and our diversity.

The next time you hear of a transgender art show in your town, in your back yard, send flowers and condolences to TARIP (Transgender Art Rest in Peace).

Paedra Bramhall can be reached at P.O. Box 18, Bridgewater, VT 05034.

Some years ago an editor of a community publication spent a great deal of time and energy blaming others for their lack of interest in her product. Eventually the magazine folded and she went off into the sunset, where, one hopes, she found happiness. Perhaps, if the interest isn't there for our products, we should take it as a lesson from the universe and not blame others. We're happy to have featured the gallery show *42 Aspects of Gender* in *Transgender Tapestry* #96—Ed.



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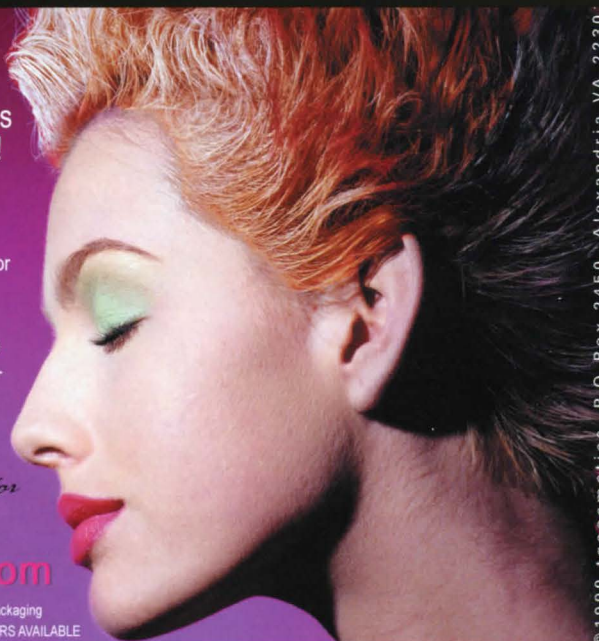
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REVIEWS

Because your editor had a negative reaction to a book treasured by many in the community, we're featuring a contrasting review by our own Miqqi Alicia. Those interested in another viewpoint should see Transgender Tapestry #92—Ed.

Review by Miqqi Alicia Gilbert

Bohjalian, Chris. *Trans-Sister Radio*. 2001. New York: Vintage Contemporaries. Pb. 344 pp., US \$14. ISBN: 0375705171.

Trans-Sister Radio is a wonderful, moving, exquisitely written, and amazingly authentic novel. I urge every member of the T-community to read it, and venture that many of you will pass it on to partners and friends. In a way, I'd love to stop now and hope that you'd go out and read the book just because Miqqi Alicia says so, but that's asking a lot. So, here goes.

The action takes place in a modest-sized town in Vermont. There are four main characters, each of whom speaks in turn in separate chapters. The central characters are Allison, a grade-school teacher who resides in an old New England home in the center of town. She is divorced and, as the story opens, lives with her daughter, Carly, who is shortly to head out to college. Carly is another character with a voice. An intelligent and warm young woman, her insights allow us a view from the eyes of another generation. The sine qua non character is Dana, a college English professor who begins the novel as a man, and ends it as a woman. Finally, there is Will, Allison's ex-husband and Carly's dad, who still carries a torch for his ex.

These four, along with a broad and far-ranging cast of supporting characters, become embroiled in the emotional and social politics of Dana's sex change. Of course, Allison and Dana meet and fairly quickly become lovers as Dana desperately tries to find the right moment to tell Allison that the lover she thinks is a man is really a woman—and soon to do something about it. Every issue you might imagine arises. The school where Allison works suddenly has a petition on its doorstep: how can a woman who teaches young children live in the center of town with a transsexual? What will Will, director of the local NPR station, think and do? His own marriage is in bad shape; now he has to cope with his ex-wife's man-into-woman boy-girlfriend. And Carly, who really liked Dana—was she fooled, tricked? If her mother stays with Dana, does that mean she's a lesbian?

All of this makes it sound familiar, and that's what I wanted to avoid. Yes, there is a certain amount of familiarity, but there's nothing trite or pat about Dana's story, because the book is not about Dana alone. Each of the characters has a truly independent point of view, distinct needs, fears, desires, temptations

and crises. Dana and her sex change is the catalyst that brings everything together, but each of the characters goes through explorations and changes particular to them. Allison's struggle with her love for Dana, her confusion about her sexuality, and her puzzle over just how those two things—love and sexuality—combine and separate are real, not mere sidelines for Dana's process. And that's what makes the book so wonderful—Bohjalian does not take easy ways

out. There are real issues for the partner of a transsexual, and they are explored not only in a splendidly real and sensitive way, but also with humor and a kind of fatalistic sympathy that seems to capture the unending confusion we T-folk inevitably cause the straight world.

Here's a lovely snippet from early in the book. It's Dana speaking and thinking. [S]he's already told Allison of his appointment for SRS in the not too distant future. In this scene they are in bed, Dana still gets erections, and Allison asks about the necessity of the surgery.

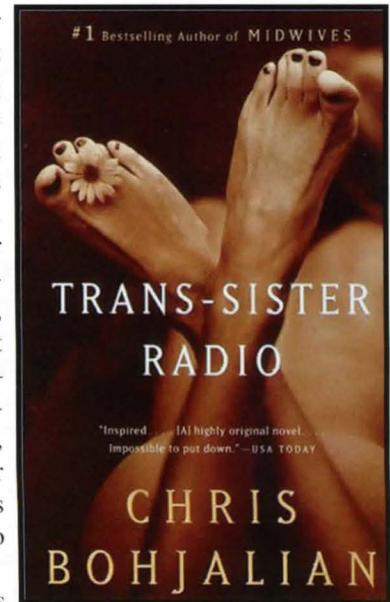
"Why?" Allison asked me again.

"Because," I told her, "I'm a woman. And a woman isn't supposed to have a penis. I'll be much happier when it's gone."

She stopped fondling me and kicked off the lone sheet that was resting upon us. For a moment I feared we were going to have a fight, or a scene like the one we'd had when I first broke the news to her. But then I understood she was simply going to show me, once more, that she loved my penis enough for both of us, and was about to give me the blow job of the millennium.

Bohjalian has an ability to portray everyone's feelings with a legitimacy that speaks truly because they come from the speaker's location in the world, from their emotional center. Even the supporting characters we meet along the way, from Dana's family, Allison's boss the school principal, and the characters in Colorado where Dana has her operation, have a fleeting reality which enables us to believe, understand and, in most cases, sympathize with them.

For many of us in this community, there are special resonances and even identities. We've heard of Trinidad, Colorado,



and we'll know the convention of something that sound suspiciously like IFGE took place in Toronto and not Montreal. But unlike so many T-autobiographies, the real, hard, thorny issues and costs to all those involved are put on the table: fears, prejudices, insecurities, self-doubts, warts and all, for us to see and experience. In the end, it is both Bohjalian's amazing ability to get inside a transsexual's head and body and at the same time present the storms that abound in those around her, that make this such a remarkable and worthwhile read. Do it. Read it. Miqqi Alicia tells you to.

Review by Andrew Matzner

Denny, Dallas. (1994). *Gender Dysphoria: A Guide to Research*. New York: Garland Publishers. Hb. 650+ pp., \$30 U.S. ISBN: 081530840X

Imagine trying to collect between two covers the citation for every book, book chapter, academic and popular press article, and legal case that ever dealt with transgenderism. Today it seems like an impossible project, considering the mountain of information which has appeared over the last six or seven years. Yet in the early 1990s Dallas Denny set about to do just that, and nearly succeeded. At that time the task was manageable; a substantial amount had been written about transgenderism, but not so much that a person couldn't get a handle on the literature. A similar project of consolidation attempted today would be impossible—too much has been written.

As it stands, *Gender Dysphoria: A Guide to Research* is an invaluable research tool for anyone interested in learning about any aspect of transgenderism. By collecting and then annotating and indexing citations from the past hundred years, Dallas has provided a gold mine of information.

Perhaps the most useful portion of the book is the topic index, which lists authors under specific subject matter, which range from Intersexuality, secondary to Turner's Syndrome, to Androgyny, from Medical Problems Occurring After Vaginoplasty to Injectable Silicone, from Legal Issues in Gender Dysphoria to Clinical Studies, and beyond. However, the most interesting part of the book is its body, in which the citations are listed. It's fun just to open up in the middle to browse—and read Dallas' comments on this or that particular piece of writing.

Dallas makes clear both in her preface and afterword—and in many of her annotated comments—that she is critical of much of the so-called “scientific” research done with transgendered subjects and issues. Scientists and academics are regarded as authorities in our society, and lay people often believe their writings to contain “The Truth.” Dallas encourages us to be skeptical, and rightly so—for these “authorities” are only human, subject to the same biases, carelessness, and aversion to the sloppiness of reality that can afflict people in general. Thus, in one sense Dallas has collected much of what she did in order to provide future writers and researchers with examples of how not to treat transgender issues.

Indeed, in addition to being a useful reference book, *Gender Dysphoria* is still very much relevant today because it

shows us where writing on transgenderism has been and puts what came next into perspective—for Dallas' penetrating conclusion still rings true: “[We should] take the time to learn what transsexual people are like before soaring off into the delirious heights of theory.”

Thankfully, more and more transgendered people are writing from their experiences, are becoming part of the discourse which formerly excluded them. Unscientific and unsympathetic journal articles, books, and mass media articles continue to be written, but a read through *Gender Dysphoria* will quickly tell you that the times sure have changed—and for the better.

Review by J. Utschig

Siegel, Laura, and Olson, Nancy Lamkin (Eds.) *Out of the Closet Into Our Hearts: Celebrating Our Gay/Lesbian Family Members*. Pb. 157pp. \$15.95 Leyland Publications ISBN: 0943595843.

This is a collection of essays and poems written from the heart of those who live with, love, and nurture a population of kindred souls who survive outside of the mainstream. It is an anthology that speaks to the issues that gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered people face. Each selection echoes the same emotion and tone. It is a tone of pride, love and acceptance, and often frustrations. The purpose of the book is to celebrate diversity.

Each author offers their personal experience and perspective of living with and loving a person with an alternative lifestyle. Common emotions are outrage, pride and unconditional love. The outrage is for the social injustices their loved ones suffer. The pride is in the strength and perseverance each demonstrates when standing up for their rights. The unconditional love is the driving force of each relationship.

Many of the pieces focus on the strength of community and the need to take action. Parents and grandparents participate in their child's life, becoming advocates, educators and picketers. Thus, the impetus for this book is people joining together to get their message out to the public. In that respect, the book is successful.

This collection of readings is appropriate for people who are searching for understanding. Each article is affirming and can assuage the pain and anticipation for those new to the world outside the mainstream. Most pieces offer the reader a sense of camaraderie and support, and since each piece is a personal perspective, a wide range of experiences and thoughts are presented, including extremes on the broad spectrum of the topic. Readers may take from the book what is germane and useful to their own issues and parameters. Though each writer shares a commonality, each is unique and individual. Such is the journey for everyone.



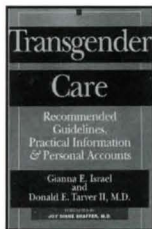
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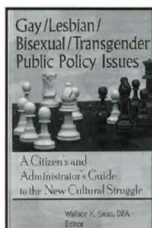
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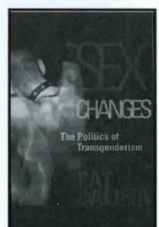
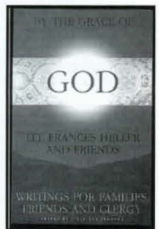
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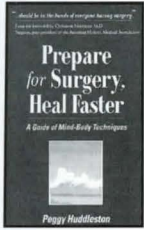
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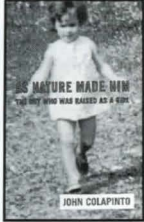
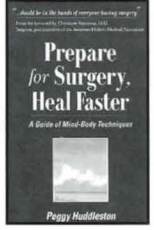
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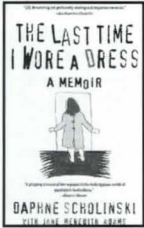
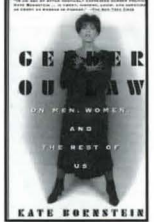


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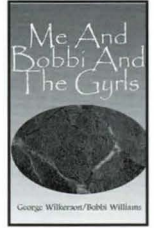


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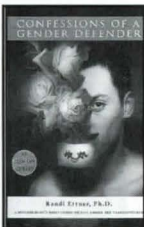


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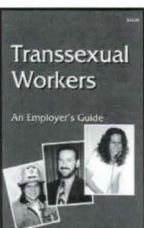
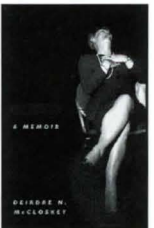


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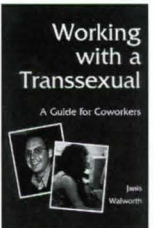
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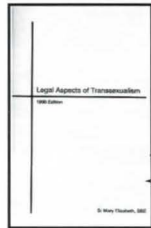
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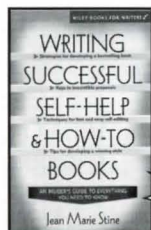
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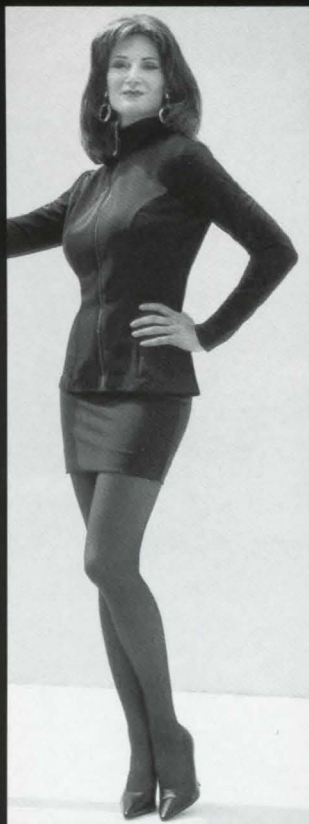
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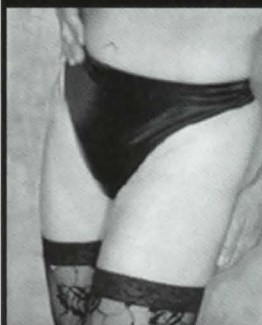
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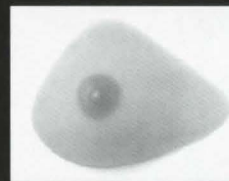
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