

# AEGIS NEWS

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## XV HBIGDA Conference Highlights

The 15th meeting of the Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association was held 10-13 September, 1997 in Vancouver, British Columbia; the host organization was the Gender Identity Program at Vancouver General Hospital.

HBIGDA is a worldwide organization for professionals who work with transsexuals. Named after the pioneering endocrinologist Harry Benjamin, M.D., it was founded in the late 1970s. HBIGDA is perhaps best known for its Standards of Care, a document which establishes minimal guidelines for the provision of hormones and surgery to transsexual people.

The conference, which was held at the rather expensive Sutton Place Hotel (\$269 per night Canadian), had more than 200 registrants, quite a few of whom were not only professionals, but transsexual as well. The local population of transsexuals and transgendered people was represented. Some registered for the conference, and some staged a protest during the Thursday morning plenary, complaining of the high cost of the conference and demanding access to the seminars. HBIGDA

decided to allow protesters to attend sessions without charge, and several did so.

At the 1993 HBIGDA conference in New York City, trans members of HBIGDA were very low key, wearing their "We're all Professionals Here" hats. The unspoken presumption at the conference was that transsexuals are marginal individuals; this atmosphere was also reportedly present at the 1995 conference in Bavaria, which I did not attend. 1997 was different: transsexual and transgendered folk were out and proud and very much a part of the proceedings. Valerie Harvey, Dr. Becky Allison, Dr. Sheila Kirk and Dallas Denny had the opportunity to address the entire assembly at a plenary on Saturday. Many transpeople, including Jamison Green, Marsha Botzer, Dr. Tarryn Whitten, Christine Burnham, Stephanie Castle, Dr. Rebecca Auge, Jude Patton, Rosalynne Blumenstein, Tracie O'Keefe, and Dr. Anne Lawrence presented papers or posters. There was a roster of surgeons, including Drs. Eugene Schrang, Donald Laub, Sr., J. Joris Hage, Toby Meltzer, Stan Monstrey, and Refaat B. Karim;

other physicians, including Drs. Rosemary Basson, Stacy Elliott, Louis Gooren, and Bengt Lundstrom; attorneys Louis Schwartz and Richard Green, who is also a psychiatrist; and a variety of social scientists, including Drs. George Brown, Sandra Cole, Walter Bockting, Eli Coleman, Lee Emory, Collier Cole, George Meyer, Randi Ettner, Leah Schaefer, Milton Diamond, and Bonnie Saks. We're stopping right here; we realize we left out about 90% of the presenters, but if we continue with the listing, there will be no article!

The conference was kicked off by a talk on sexual differentiation of the brain by Dr. Roger Gorski. Following was a plenary. Dr. Marilyn Wilchesky of the gender program in Ottawa led with a paper about psychoanalytic theories of transsexualism (the same old stuff— separation and individuation, weak fathers, narcissistic mothers). Dr. Wilchesky was followed by Dr. Holly Devor, who set the tone for the conference by presenting a multi-factorial model of female-to-male gender variance and pointing out that gender variability is not prima facie evidence for psychopathology, but

can be a healthy adjustment to restrictive gender roles. Dr. Devor brought many attendees to their feet when she called for HBIGDA to acknowledge and serve the many kinds of gender-variant people rather than dividing the world into transsexuals and nontranssexuals.

Dr. Devor was followed by Dr. Walter Williams, who spoke about models of pathology and how they vary with the cultural zeitgeist. He gave an example of a Native American culture in which twins and the mother who bore them were exiled to a "Twin Town," and an example from Western culture, pointing out that at one time women who pursued an education were considered deviant. He reiterated Dr. Devor's point that it is time for us to stop looking at gender variance as an illness and celebrate it as a natural form of human difference.

After this plenary, the talk was all about continua and variability; the transgender revolution had finally come home to roost at HBIGDA. There were a few dour faces, which was only to be expected; HBIGDA's world had just turned upside down. One member suggested that if there is nothing wrong with transsexuals, the organization simply disband. In my talk on Saturday, I noted that the change of viewpoint means that the organization is more needed than ever before; if it concerns itself with the use of medical technology to transform human bodies rather than the perhaps artificial notion of transsexualism, it will reach people, like heterosexual crossdressers, some of whom do the same things to their bodies as transsexuals, but have heretofore escaped the safety web cast by HBIGDA because they are not "transsexual." This new way of thinking was apparent at a plenary on intersexuality on Friday; it was clear that the HBIGDA membership has concerns about the surgical reassignment of infants with unusual genitalia. Previously, there is little doubt that most members would have endorsed the prevailing practice of operating on infants to make their genitals "normal."

A logical consequence of the ideological rollover was a realization that data are needed, especially to justify the Standards of Care. Valerie Harvey and

Dr. Becky Allison made this explicit at a Saturday plenary in which they noted that those who access medical technology will not tolerate gatekeeping from the professional community unless data exist to justify that gatekeeping. As part of the same plenary, Dr. Sheila Kirk spoke about how she had come to realize that hormonal therapy can be appropriate for those who are not inclined toward genital surgery. Dallas Denny followed Dr. Kirk, stating baldly that the classical model of transsexualism propels people to a surgery they may neither want nor need; the transgender community has come to realize that while surgery is necessary for many, it is not for all, there are all degrees of gender variance, and a one-size-fits-all approach is not only unhelpful, but can be damaging

In contrast to all this talk of variability, Saturday afternoon saw Dr. Stephen Levine presenting the proposed Standards of Care to the assembled members. The Standards do away with the numbered Standards and Principles format of previous versions in favor of a much more understandable descriptive prose style. Unfortunately, they also call for a period of either psychotherapy or real-life test before initiation of hormonal therapy; this is in addition to the 90-day evaluation period now in effect.

Discussion of the proposed Standards was heated. While it was obvious that the Standards Committee had put a lot of work into the document, members took exception to various provisions and to the deletion of material from previous versions.

The Standards of Care will now go back to committee, and, after one more revision, will then be taken to the membership for vote.

The conference ended with a speech by Dr. Richard Green, the incoming President and the announcement of the results of the recent election. Alice Webb, who was forced to resign from her Executive Director job last year by then-president Friedemann Pfafflin, was installed as President-Elect, and new Board members were announced; this included two out transfolk, Sheila Kirk and Jude Patton.

The next HBIGDA meeting will be held in two years in London.

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# Roberts' Rules

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## Cross Dresser

*Shelly Roberts is an internationally syndicated columnist and the author of the new best-selling Roberts' Rules of Lesbian Break Ups.*

Your jaw would have dropped into your corsage, too. AD wore a dress to the dance!

I don't know AD all that well. We nod at each other at parties and board meetings. We'd have the same conversation every time. You could push the tape recorder on our old conversation and the voice print would give you an exact match.

"Hey."

"Hey."

"How's work?"

"Great."

"How's writing?"

"Great."

*(Meeting Version:)* "Fund raising on the agenda tonight?"

"What else?"

*(Party Version:)* "I'd skip the herring and peanut butter pate."

"Good thought."

AD isn't her real name. Not even close. Not Anna Diane. Or Alice

Denise. Not even Angel Darling left behind in some romantic aftermath.

Rumor has it it stands for "Absolute Dyke." It's all I've ever called her.

We're not chest-to-chest chums, but we're so consistently at the same functions that you can feel a difference in the room temperature if one of us is missing. But even if she weren't in the room, with AD, you always knew who she would have been if she showed up: A lesbian in pants. A six-to-eight on the B side of the Butch/Femme scale. Not a stereotype. No jeans belted under

beer belly. No leather jacket and Harley listing to port in the ladies' bar parking lot. Just Yuppie dressed to the nines. A corporate type who always made drag seem like fashion. Or the other way around. Expensive. Tailored. Pleated wool pants. Silk Shirts. Blazers. Could fit in just fine at a client meeting or a committee meeting.

Last Holiday Dinner she wore a 3 piece man's suit. Shirt and tie. It was New York fashion that particular instant. So you could tell it wasn't about doing anybody's impersonation. Just AD unleashing her Amex card in Lord & Taylor, in her wicked idea of irony. She could walk the edge of Fashion Plaza without either climbing into cliché or engendering dyke derision, and get away with it.

But, of course, she always did it in pants.

Then she wore a dress to the dance.

What else can I tell you? Oh, of course. About the divorce. AD was suddenly single. So that must have had something to do with the make-over. Still, it didn't fully explain the dress. It wasn't something she just happened to find in the back of the closet, saved for Congressional confirmation hearings or anything. Definitely not anything you'd expect to see on Janet Reno.

It was red. And it made the pheromones fly. Cut up to the knees, and down way below caution. It actually swirled. Everybody could see AD had legs. And make-up. Something different about the hair. Perfume, without the faintest evanescence of eau de Brut. And an electric smile in the on position, studied in the back pages of Penthouse. It made whole parts of normally immune people suddenly pointy.

I've only seen it once before. A long time ago at an LA party when I'd been out for mere minutes. Elsie was the butch lady I'd met in my six months of active observation. I had lots of time

to watch and learn what it was that I was expected to be if I were planning to be a lesbian when I grew up. I watched Elsie. And her steady stream of ultra-eyelashed beauties. She ranked right up there on the scale in the eight-nine's. She was lighting cigarettes left and right, opening doors, and dancing forwards till hell wouldn't have it.

Then Françoise strode in the door from Paris. "Butch" defined by Cary Grant and Natalie Barnie. A lady I'd read about in books I had to go into bad parts of town to buy. When she passed, your shoelaces melted. So did Elsie's body language. Her hips widened. Breasts pushed a little outer. Shoulders tilted and eyes did a perfect Lauren Bacall.

She extracted a Marlboro, and offered it up for sacrifice to Françoise's silver Dunhill. It was a ritual dance between two old never-been lovers. A tease. An unfulfilled flirt. Its transformation took seconds. The shock of watching it lasted my lifetime. Then Françoise surged into the next room, and Elsie's body settled squarely back onto her stolid hips, swagger restored. And I removed my jaw from my scotch glass.

It was the kind of transformation I thought of when I saw AD flow onto the dance floor in that dress. The red one. Cut above the knee and plunging open to all the possibilities.

Married ladies more than subtly escorted mates in the other direction, out of harm's way just in case. Women you knew who never acted that way, blushed deep into their cowboy shirts and drifted closer.

AD had had an amazing clothes-change operation.

I began to wonder where I could get a dress like that.

And if I wore it to a dance, whether my friends would be so surprised.



# Back Into the Future

© 1997 by Warren J. Blumenfeld

Warren J. Blumenfeld ([blumenfeld@educ.umass.edu](mailto:blumenfeld@educ.umass.edu)) is the author of *Homophobia: How We All Pay the Price*

I am a gay man and my name is Warren Blumenfeld, or as my friends affectionately like to call me, Estelle Abrams, honorary Jewish bisexual woman from Brooklyn. Seriously, though, Estelle embodies the feminine side of my soul — my joyous, playful self, the creative, spontaneous, sensitive spirit that I have come to treasure and genuinely love. But this wasn't always the case.

When I was quite young, long before I learned what were considered the proper rules of conduct, I naively introduced Estelle to the world. Others, I was quick to discover, feared and even despised her. Children called her names like queer, sissy, fairy, pansy, faggot, "little girl," with an incredible vehemence and malice that I did not understand.

Adults hated her too. Soon after I introduced Estelle to my parents, they sent me to a child psychiatrist when I was only five years old and continuing over the next eight years, in their attempt to kill Estelle, to exorcise her in the hope of forever eliminating all contact, all vestiges, all memory of her ever being a part of me.

All this taught me to cloak her from the sun's exposing rays, to keep her well concealed deep within my consciousness, to summons her only during those rare but precious moments of tranquil and safe solitude.

The forces that set out to kill Estelle — those societal battalions bent on destroying all signs of femininity in every male— nearly succeeded in coercing me into denouncing her, but through some power more potent than they, Estelle was victorious in fending off their attacks. Being mightier and more willful, she stayed with me through times of torment and times of treatment. Even when I began to lose trust and to doubt her, she never gave up on me.

The good news is that Estelle not only survived, but she thrives in me today. Each day I am alive, I thank her for the extraordinary gifts she gives to me. Her presence not only enriches me, but also gives special meaning to my life, and for that I am truly lucky.

Some have asked me, "What was that energy, that force empowering Estelle to repel her would-be executioners?" Quite

simply, it was a vision— vision of social transformation articulated by feminists and later by early gay liberationists during Estelle's youth.

Earlier (much earlier) in the Middle Ages, the fairies — those men accused of same-sex eroticism — were rounded up, bound, tossed on the ground as if kindling, and set ablaze, igniting women accused of witchcraft who were secured above. Later, the reverse would be true. Catching the spark of feminist thought and theory, fairies joined together exploding conventional notions of gender, most notably definitions of masculinity.

In 1993, during the National March for Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Rights in Washington, D.C., I attended a reunion of the Gay Liberation Front, D.C., which, over twenty-three years prior, formed the leading edge of a movement rising like a phoenix from the ashes of the Stonewall Inn in New York City.

We held early meetings at Grace Church, the Washington Free Clinic in Georgetown, and All Souls Church on 16th Street, until we rented a brownstone on S Street, in Northwest for the establishment of a Gay Liberation Front living collective.

Meetings provided a space for gays, lesbians, and bisexual women and men to come together and put into practice what feminists had taught us — that the personal is indeed the political.

We laughed and we cried together. We shared our ideas and our most intimate secrets. We dreamed our dreams and laid our plans for a world free from all the deadly forms of oppression, and as we went along, invented new ways of relating.

For the men, we came to consciousness of how we had been stifled as males growing up in a culture that taught us to hate the woman within, that taught us that if we were to be considered worthy, we must be athletic, independent, assertive, domineering, competitive, that we must bury our emotions deep within the recesses of our souls.

Looking back over the years, as our visibility has increased, as our place within the culture has become somewhat more assured, much certainly has been gained, but also, something very precious

has been lost. That early excitement, that desire (though by no means the ability) to fully restructure the culture, as distinguished from mere reform, seems now to lay dormant in many sectors of, at least, the gay male community.

I do remain hopeful, however, for I believe that bisexual women and men and transgenderists today are on the cutting edge of the discourse on gender, having the greatest potential to bring us back into the future — a future in which the Estelles (and the Butches) everywhere will live freely, unencumbered by others' notions of behavior, one in which the feminine and masculine, as well as all the qualities on the continuum in between can live and prosper in us all.

So therefore I say, let us not work only toward lifting the ban against gay, lesbian, and bisexual people in the military, but let us also work toward lifting the ban against our transcending and obliterating the gender status quo.

Let us not limit our efforts to defeating homophobia, heterosexism, biphobia, and the many other categories of oppression, but let us also work toward conquering personal, institutional, and societal forms of transphobia and its offshoot, what some of us have labeled *effemiphobia*, that insidious and dehumanizing fear and hatred of anything even hinting at the feminine in males, which is, as we all know, basically the fear and hatred of females.

Let us continue to work on issues around same-sex marriage and domestic partnership, but let us not fail to put efforts into strengthening a partnership between our masculine and feminine qualities making us all whole, integrated human beings.

If indeed it is true, as the old saying goes, that the fish is the last to see the water because it is so pervasive, then from our vantage point at the margins, we have a special opportunity, indeed a responsibility, to serve as social commentators, as critics, exposing and highlighting the rigid gender roles that dampen and saturate our environment, and to challenge the culture to move forever forward and to grow.

This is my view of true and lasting liberation. I hope it is part of yours too.

# Costs of Transgender Conferences

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There are many transgender conferences; in fact, if one were to go from event to event, trips home would be a rarity. If one factors in trans-friendly and trans-inclusive gay and lesbian, women's, scholarly conferences, and professional conferences, it's unlikely one would ever get home, except perhaps for the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays.

With so many excellent conventions, one must choose which to attend. Most of us can afford to go to only one or at most two in any year. Factors impacting our decision are (a) the nature of the conference (does it meet our needs?); (b) the time of the conference (can we get the days off?); (c) its location (how hard is it to get to?); and perhaps most importantly, (d) its cost (is it out of our financial reach?).

This article concerns the cost of the various conferences. I've looked at the price for registration, meals, and lodging of eleven major annual transgender conferences. Prices are in each case for the 1997 conference; 1998 prices should be no more than five percent higher. Tri-Ess' "Holiday En Femme" has been cancelled, and so is not included.

The conferences I've included are the Annual Transgender & Transsexual Health Empowerment Conference, the Be-All, the Colorado Gold Rush (in its first year), Fantasia Fair, Full Circle of Women, IFGE's Coming Together, New Woman Conference (formerly known as the Rites of Passage, for post-op MTF transsexuals only), Southern Comfort, the Texas "T" Party, S.P.I.C.E., and ICTLEP. My apologies to Fall Harvest; I couldn't locate a copy of your brochure.

The conferences have a number of basic formats. The Be-All, the Gold Rush, ICTLEP, IFGE, Southern Comfort, and S.P.I.C.E. and are held in hotels with convention facilities, and attendees must pay for their own lodging and any meals which are not scheduled. Full Circle of Women and New Woman Conference are held in retreat centers, with lodging and meals provided. Fantasia Fair is not limited to one facility, but takes place in venues all over the little resort town of Provincetown, Massachusetts. Lodging is included, as are most meals and workshops. The

Health Empowerment conference is held at the Gay and Lesbian Community Service Center in New York City; attendees are expected to arrange their own meals and accommodations; thus, it is very inexpensive if one happens to live in New York City, but is much less so for those who have to travel.

Ignoring for a moment the Health Empowerment Conference, total costs ranged from \$239 (ICTLEP) to \$895 (Fantasia Fair). Per day rates (registration plus lodging) ranged from \$80 (ICTLEP and New Woman Conference) to \$120 (Be All). I think you'll see that when prices are broken down on a per-day basis, events like Fantasia Fair, which many people believe to be expensive, actually fare quite well. Also consider that some conferences have a low registration fee and then stick you for extras, while others, by charging a higher fee with includes meals and/or lodging, are actually less expensive than they might seem on first impression. Adding the three \$25 luncheons to the IFGE conference brings the total cost to \$600 and the per day cost up to \$100 from \$88. Adding the optional meals (\$117) to the Texas "T" Party raises the total cost from \$555 to \$672 and the per day cost from \$93 to \$112 — the same as the "expensive" Fantasia Fair! The "T" Party also has a sightseeing tour at \$45 and four workshops at prices ranging from \$40 to \$60 (\$220 total), making it, with extras figured in, by far the most expensive of the eleven conferences.

My figures do not of course tell the whole story. For example, there will be travel expenses for those not fortunate enough to live in the same town as one of the events. For the hotel-based conventions, it's possible to save money by staying with friends or at a less expensive hotel (something generally frowned on by conference organizers, who negotiate rates for meals and use of facilities based on rooms booked), or by sharing a room with another conference attendee. And of course, some of the conferences have vendor rooms where it's possible to part with hundreds of dollars.

So which conference should you attend? I would say the one that best meets your needs. Need to learn more about legal and political issues? Go to

ICTLEP. Want to have an intimate time with other transpeople, or need to explore the realities of living as a woman? Try Full Circle of Women, or, if you're post-op and wondering about the rest of your life, New Woman Conference. If you're the female partner of a male crossdresser, S.P.I.C.E. will have particular appeal. Want to network with community leaders? Try the IFGE convention. Interested in supporting a national transgender organization? Try IFGE or Fantasia Fair or Holiday en Femme or ICTLEP. Want to have a fabulous week-long cross-living experience? Try Fantasia Fair. Want to blend fun and education? Try Fantasia Fair, the Gold Rush, the Be-All, or Southern Comfort. Want an experience which is primarily educational? Try the Health Empowerment Conference. Surgery shopping? Try Southern Comfort or the Be-All. Looking to shop 'till you drop? Check out Southern Comfort, the Be-All, Fantasia Fair, Holiday en Femme, or the Gold Rush. First-timer? Try the "T" Party. FTM, or the partner of an FTM? See the sidebar on page 6.

There are of course conferences which I have not mentioned. Academic and queer conferences are often trans-inclusive. And there are professional meetings, most notably those of the Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association, The American Association of Sex Educators, Counselors, and Therapists and the Society for the Scientific Study of Sexuality (which have a joint meeting this year), and the International Congress on Sex and Gender Issues. Holly Boswell runs spiritual retreats in the mountain of North Carolina, and Creative Design Services has "Weekends in the Poconos" for cross-dressers. Any number of support groups have banquets, cotillions, or mini-conferences, and of course, there are political events such as Transgender Lobby Days.

While it's always possible to find something to gripe about, I've found the conventions of the transgender community to be carefully planned and professionally run. Whichever events you choose, I'm sure you'll have a wonderful time. I've certainly enjoyed myself at the more than 35 such events I've attended!

## Conferences for FTMs

Most transgender conferences were designed primarily by and for male-to-female people. FTMs may find themselves excluded (Full Circle of Women, New Woman Conference, S.P.I.C.E.), ignored, or surrounded by MTFs with no FTMs in sight and a schedule that seems to consist primarily of makeup seminars. Some conferences make a sincere attempt to address the issues of FTMs. Certainly Southern Comfort always has (there has always, for instance, been equal emphasis on MTF and FTM hormones and surgery), and this year ICTLEP had an emphasis on FTM concerns. Fantasia Fair and the "T" Party have almost no FTM participation or programming (but welcome FTMs nonetheless). There is a sizeable FTM contingent at the IFGE conventions. In 1997 IFGE provided a special (lower) registration fee for FTMs, at the same time beefing up its track for transmen.

Fortunately, there are now two national conferences that are entirely by and for FTMs: the FTM Conference of the Americas, and the True Spirit Conference. Both, fortunately, are inexpensive. The three-day FTM Conference met in 1997 in Boston; the 1998 site has not yet been announced. Registration was \$75 at the door, with a discount for early registration. Snacks and beverages were provided, but meals were not included. Attendees were expected to find their own lodging, but assistance was offered to those who were unable to afford a hotel. The date and location of the '98 conference have not yet been announced.

The three-day True Spirit Conference cost only \$25; at this price, meals and lodging were obviously not provided. Registration in 1998 will be \$65 (\$45 for early registrants), but conference organizers say programming will be expanded. Hotel rooms for the '98 conference are \$75 single or double. The True Spirit conference is held in the Washington D.C. area.

The 1997 Gold Rush brochure lists one FTM program (as compared to at least four programs of interest only to MTFs and four of equal interest to FTMs and MTFs). The 1997 Be-All brochure does not indicate any FTM-specific programming.

## Contact Information

**Be-All**  
P.O. Box 15237  
Pittsburgh, PA 15230

**Colorado Gold Rush**  
G.I.C. of Colorado, Inc.  
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**Fantasia Fair**  
P.O. Box 2734  
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617-522-6033  
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**Fall Harvest**  
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P.O. Box 75  
Cedar Rapids, IA 52406-0075

**FTM Conference of the Americas**  
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**Full Circle of Women**  
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**Rainbow Spirit Convergence**  
Kindred Spirits  
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**Rites of Passage**  
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**Southern Comfort**  
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**Texas "T" Party**  
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**Transgender Lobby Days**  
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**True Spirit Conference**  
The American Boyz  
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transman@netgsi.com

**TS/TG Health Conference**  
Gender Identity Project  
Gay & Lesbian Comm. Svc. Ctr.  
208 West 13th Street  
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**AASECT/Quad-Ess**  
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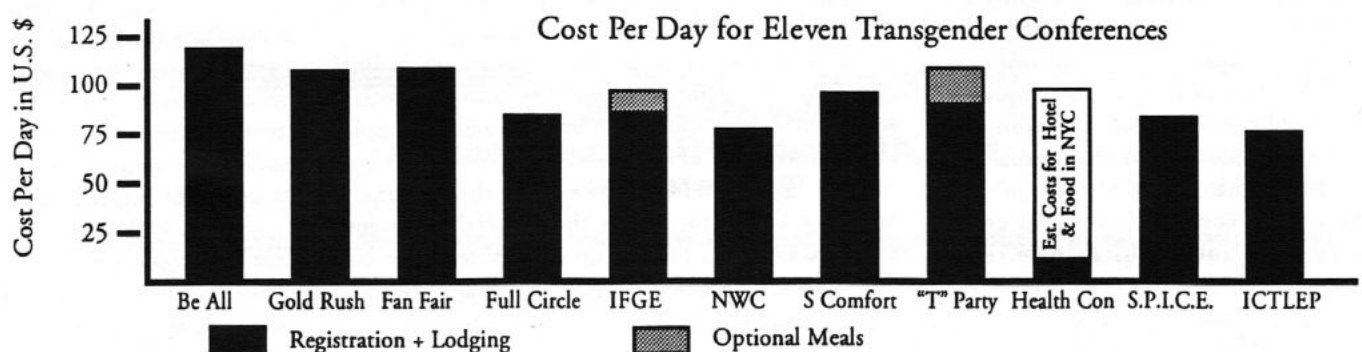
**Weekends in the Poconos**  
Intl. Congress on Sex & Gender Issues  
Creative Design Service  
P.O. Box 61263  
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<i>Conference</i>	<i>Registration</i>	<i>Meals</i>	<i>Lodging</i> <i>(does not include tax)</i>	<i>Total Cost</i> <i>Cost Per Day</i>
<i>Be All</i> 4-8 June, 1997	\$305 <sup>1</sup>	10 meals included	\$74/night \$296 (4 nights)	\$601 \$120/day
<i>Colorado Gold Rush</i> 24-28 Sept., 1997	\$275 <sup>1</sup> \$425/couple	9 meals included	\$71/night \$284 (4 nights)	\$559 \$112/day
<i>Fantasia Fair</i> 19-26 October, 1997	\$895 <sup>1,2,3</sup> \$1675/couple	11 meals included	Included (7 nights)	\$895 \$112/day
<i>Full Circle of Women</i> 4-6 April, 1997	\$265 <sup>2</sup>	All meals (6) included	Included (2 nights)	\$265 \$88/day
<i>IFGE</i> 15-20 April, 1997	\$200 <sup>1,4</sup>	2 meals included	\$65/night \$325 (5 nights)	\$525 \$ 88/day
<i>NWC</i> 4-7 September, 1997	\$320 <sup>2</sup>	All meals (6) included	Included (3 nights)	\$320 \$80/day
<i>Southern Comfort</i> 2-5 October, 1997	\$205 <sup>5</sup> \$400/couple	5 meals included	\$62/night \$186 (3 nights)	\$391 \$98/day
<i>"T" Party</i> 11-16 March, 1997	\$210 <sup>1,2,6</sup>	7 meals included	\$69/night \$345 (5 nights)	\$555 \$93/day
<i>TG/TS Health Conference</i>	\$10 Professionals \$5 Students	No formal meals	Not held in hotel	\$100/day (est.) for non-NYC residents
<i>S.P.I.C.E.</i> 16-20 July, 1997	\$150	6 meals included	\$68/night \$272 (4 nights)	\$422 \$84/day
<i>ICTLEP</i> 11-12 July, 1997	\$115.50 <sup>1,7</sup>	3 meals included	\$62/night \$124 (2 nights)	\$239.50 \$80/day

Number of days was taken from advertised beginning and ending data; thus, the Be-All is 5 days and Southern Comfort is 4 days. The sole exception is ICTLEP, which actually ended on Sunday morning 7/13; per day price was calculated for three days, although it was advertised as a 2-day conference

- 1 Discount for early registration
- 2 Extra for single room
- 3 In addition to programs covered by registration, there are for-fee workshops
- 4 Th/F/Sat lunches not covered by registration fees; \$25 each
- 5 Southern Comfort has a separate program for counseling professionals; there is a fee for those wishing continuing education hours
- 6 \$117 extra for scheduled meals not covered by registration fee; \$40-\$60 each for four optional workshops
- 7 One really shouldn't attend ICTLEP without purchasing the proceedings, which cost \$65



# ENDA: Less Than Promised

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Will ENDA achieve its stated purpose of protecting gays and lesbians from employment discrimination? A recent appeals court ruling suggests it may not. The ruling held that preventing employment discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is different than protecting gays and lesbians from employment discrimination. ENDA's narrow language leaves much legal room for continued employment discrimination against gays and lesbians.

Deb Price's newspaper column from the June 14, 1997 New Orleans' Times *Picayune* entitled "Court ruling is a head-on collision of cultural forces" centers on a May 30th (1997) ruling of the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals. Price says the legal case of Robin Shahar, an attorney who was offered a job in the Georgia State attorney general's office which was later revoked when they discovered she was lesbian, "should have been greeted as an open-and-shut case of illegal job discrimination." However, the eight-member majority of the twelve-member court found no evidence that Shahar lost her job because she was gay.

The case, the majority said, was about conduct — Shahar's refusal to be secretive. The majority said that Shahar "seemingly did not appreciate the importance of appearances." You read that correctly: the court said that the case was about conduct and appearances — not sexual orientation.

For three years the transgender community has actively told the leaders of The Human Rights Campaign (HRC), the nation's largest gay and lesbian civil rights organization, exactly what the judges on the 11th Circuit Court of Appeal have said in this ruling. The transgender leaders have repeatedly warned the leaders of HRC that employment discrimination against gays and lesbians would be legal as long as the employer established that the discrimination was based upon reasons other than sexual orientation and that "sexual orientation" had narrow legal connotations. This court ruling does not establish new legal

ground. (If there is any new ground, it is that the four-judge minority held that the action was a case of illegal job discrimination, pointing to last year's Supreme Court ruling that a government action cannot legitimately be based on animosity and prejudice towards gay people.)

*Gays and lesbians... need to recognize that ENDA will not fully protect them. They should not be misled by HRC's rhetoric, which leads them to think that it will.*

Rulings in previous employment cases involving gay employees have already established that gays can be discriminated against for other reasons. Indeed, after the court had established that employment discrimination based on sexual orientation was not protected by Title VII, gays filed cases stating that they were discriminated against because of public appearances of femininity, such as wearing an earring at work. The courts established that display of femininity was different from sexual orientation and, like transsexualism, it was also not protected by Title VII.

The Employment Non Discrimination Act (ENDA), which was recently reintroduced in Congress, will protect Americans from employment discrimination based upon their actual or perceived sexual orientation. ENDA purposely excludes transgendered persons, since gender identity is a different legal concept than sexual orientation. HRC has repeatedly said that ENDA will not pass if it includes protections for gender identity.

The transgender community once again asks our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters to take note of the Court of Appeals ruling. Whereas Deb Price asks the Supreme Court to correct the judicial error, we ask HRC to wake up and realize that gays and lesbians will be legally dis-

criminated against for reasons other than their sexual orientation. Conduct is one basis for discrimination. Conduct can mean engaging in transgender behaviors — presenting in ways that do not conform to traditional gender norms. Conduct, as in Shahar's case, can be failing to keep a relationship secret. Conduct can mean many things, and we will find the limits of what is considered conduct only after many gays and lesbians are fired and unsuccessfully seek remedies under ENDA.

It should be fairly clear that if a female-to-male transsexual could be legally terminated for appearing in masculine clothes at work, a lesbian could be similarly fired for wearing masculine clothes to work. After all, both are participating in transgendered conduct. (Conservative religious groups have begun to include statements about transgender behaviors in their anti-gay fund raising letters. They recognize that gays and lesbians, while they do not self-identify as transgendered, participate in transgendered behaviors. They are not just targeting transgenders with this language).

It will be very interesting to watch how employers maneuver around the limitations of ENDA and find ground for legal employment discrimination. It is my guess that many gays and lesbians will find themselves on common ground with transgendered persons. They will discover that appearance does matter and that they, like transgenders, appear too masculine or too feminine. Price concludes, "No one should have to choose between integrity and employment." Well, at least there is one point where the transgender community agrees with Price. We do, however, think that Congress should offer protections to all Americans who face unfair employment discrimination.

We do not think the Supreme Court is likely to reverse many years of court decisions which provide legal paths for employers to discriminate against gays, lesbians, bisexual, and transgendered persons. The issue is not limited to sexual orientation — as the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals has once again established. As long as the gay leaders fail to acknowl-



edge this, employers will be able to legally discriminate against gays.

Transgenders join with the majority of Americans in saying that employment discrimination is wrong. We differ with gay leaders not in this belief, but in how we believe that protection can best be achieved. Eventually, it will become clear that gays, like transgenders, are discriminated against based upon appearance, and they will submit appropriate legislation to protect all of us.

Sadly, appropriate language is not contained in the ENDA bill introduced in this Congress. Sad for transgendered persons. Sad for gender nonconforming gays and lesbians who may wear clothing items generally considered appropriate for another gender. Sad for gays and lesbians whose mannerisms are a bit too feminine or masculine.

Gay leaders argue that after spending millions of dollars to get ENDA to this point in Congress, it is not worth jeopardizing efforts by altering the language to offer more protections. Transgenders point out, however, that if the purpose of ENDA is to protect gays and lesbians from employment discrimination, the language in ENDA will not achieve its stated purpose. When gays and lesbians acknowledge that it is not only transgenders who are not protected by ENDA, but gay men and lesbians, then possibly HRC members will ask their organization some difficult questions. It is better to answer the questions now than to have the courts explain why ENDA

does not protect gays and lesbians from many forms of employment discrimination that are not strictly due to their sexual orientation.

Transgendered persons are not the only group which should be upset with the limited protections being offered in ENDA. Gays and lesbians have much reason to be concerned. Will they confront HRC? Yes, they will eventually confront HRC. The only question is *when?* Will they do so now, or many years from now, after ENDA becomes law and the courts rule that ENDA protects gays and lesbians only in narrow circumstances — circumstances around which employers can legally maneuver.

It seems somewhat misguided for HRC to continue to spend millions of dollars on an ENDA bill which provides room for employers to continue to discriminate against large numbers of gays and lesbians. More importantly though, many gays and lesbians who are contributing to HRC because HRC is fighting the battle to protect them from employment discrimination. They need to recognize that ENDA will not fully protect them. They should not be misled by HRC's rhetoric, which leads them to think that it will.

Yes, ENDA will prevent an employer from discriminating against gay or lesbian people based on their sexual orientation. As HRC is quick to point out, ENDA offers protection for all Americans, and it will even protect transgendered persons from discrimination

based upon their sexual orientation. However, what HRC fails to disclose is that most employers do not discriminate against transgendered persons due to their sexual orientation, and after ENDA passes they will not discriminate against gays and lesbians based upon their sexual orientation either, but because of their gender-nonconforming behavior and dress. In its current form, ENDA will protect gays and lesbians who agree to pass for straight and remain fairly closeted — a group which is among the least likely to experience employment discrimination. As Robin Shahar recently learned, eliminating discrimination against gays and lesbians based upon sexual orientation will not end legal employment discrimination against gays and lesbians. The current ENDA bill does not provide an appropriate mechanism.

In many situations, the issue before the court will revolve around an employer's argument that the case is really about a gay person engaging in transgendered behaviors. After all, the women attending HRC dinners in tuxedos are bending gender, aren't they? Well, maybe they disagree, but one day they will be explaining it in court. Many of those oppressive to transgendered people will find themselves victims of their own oppression. It will be interesting!

When the goal is to move the boundaries of discrimination rather than to erase discrimination, some will be surprised to find themselves on the wrong side of the newly-drawn boundaries.

## Counseling in Genderland by Niela Miller

"Over one-half of transgendered individuals who said they had sought some kind of counseling believe that the professionals they saw seemed poorly informed about gender issues."

*Counseling in Genderland* is a practical "how-to" guide. Written by a humanistic psychologist, the book not only gives counselors a track on which to build their own work patterns with the transgendered, but it also clearly illustrates, perhaps for the first time, how the transgendered can help themselves to deal with their particular aspect of diversity. *Counseling in Genderland* is available for \$19.95 (plus \$3.00 s/h) from Different Path Press, P.O. Box

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# The Masculinity Trap

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Gary Bowen is the Coordinator-in-chief of the American Boyz

I have a view of transsexualism and transition that differs radically from some of the prevailing notions; my transition has not been strictly according to Benjamin. After spending the first thirty years of my life failing to live up to the feminine standard, and experiencing the depression and discrimination and exhaustion that come from alternately rebelling against and being overwhelmed by social pressures, I finally lost all my material possessions and wound up homeless and living in a shelter. At that point, I realized I had been granted a great freedom: with no baggage to carry from a previous existence, I decided that I would not do anything I didn't want to do.

Accordingly, I cut my hair, chopping off my hip-length ponytail without a second thought. I dressed the way I wanted to dress, mixing male and female garb, and began to experience other people's transition. I did not go through transition. The people around me went through transition.

When I realized it was happening, I decided to get professional help — not because I was gender-distressed, but because I wanted to be in control of what was happening instead of blithely sailing along. During the mixed period I was read variously as a beautiful woman, an ugly woman, a lesbian, a gay man, and a straight man. I was subjected to verbal and sexual harassment. My car was vandalized.

My therapist and family doctor were very good, but while my therapist is one of the most humane, flexible, and reasonable gender therapists in the business, she still put pressure on me for gender conformity, asking me things like, "When are you going to start dressing more masculine?" I looked at her and asked, "I'm wearing men's jeans, men's boxer shorts, men's socks, men's shoes, a man's shirt, and a man's jacket, what else did you want me to do?" She backed off, but occasionally revisited the question of masculinity. Each time I told her, "If I am really a man, then this is what a real man looks like. After thirty years of being oppressed

as a woman, I have no intention of allowing myself to be oppressed as a man." Gradually, my therapist came to see my point of view.

## Woman = Femininity

Masculine females are constantly pressured to make themselves erotically attractive to men, and are constantly judged by their beauty, or lack of it. Certain elements, such as athletic ability and mechanical ability, enable a masculine woman to be accepted as one of the guys. Nonetheless, other women will worry about her level of femininity long after the men have gotten used to having a tomboy around. Recently, I was reading a career book about fire fighting; the woman author, who was at great pains to discuss career options for women, included photographs of women firefighters and reassured readers that these female firefighters were still feminine. Excuse me, but how does a person decked in eighty pounds of turnout coat, helmet, hip waders, boots, gauntlets, and an air mask qualify as feminine? And more to the point, what possible relevance does femininity or masculinity have to the job of putting out fires? Firefighters are hired to perform the world's most dangerous job — not to look good on magazine covers.

## Man = Masculinity

The masculinity trap is almost as pervasive as the femininity trap. Male-to-female transsexuals are well aware of the penalties meted out to those individuals who are not man enough in the eye of the beholder. Female-to-male transgendered people, caught in the belief that their manhood is dependent upon appearing as "real men," find themselves up against stiff barriers to self-acceptance. There are many passing questions. How can a 4'11" person ever hope to pass as a man? How can a woman "of goddess-like proportions" pass as a man? How can somebody with a slight frame ever pass as a man?

The usual answer to these questions is: testosterone.

Testosterone is in many ways a wonder drug. It gives bulk to the musculature, magically making muscles bigger, denser, and stronger. It reshapes body fat into a male pattern, it alters the hair line to creeping male pattern baldness. It gives energy and increases libido. It also gives the risk of high blood pressure and liver damage, not to mention the possibility of diabetes. Female-to-male transsexuals have taken to testosterone like a fish to water—and so testosterone has become the *de facto* tool for passing.

But is it really necessary? I have met transgendered men that did not need testosterone; they had a passably male appearance on their own. I have likewise met male impersonators and drag kings that were very credible through use of makeup and clothing and theatrical supplies. Case in point: the 5'7", 130 lb. male impersonator who makes a formidable Arnold Schwarzenegger. Her secret? A "muscle shirt" bought from a theatrical supply company. These shirts are padded and colored to resemble a muscular male torso. Under clothes, they're quite convincing. The best ones are convincing without a shirt. The use of false beards and other facial hair, binding the breasts, and a pantstuffer can round out a totally believable presentation without medical intervention. Unfortunately, this knowledge is being developed mostly by lesbian drag kings, and a few heterosexual theater people, and due to the fractions within the F2M community, there are plenty of transmen or wannabe transmen who turn up their noses at "those people" on the grounds that they have nothing in common with them. They seem to feel that if you aren't willing to undergo the health risks of medical intervention, your transgenderism doesn't count because it's merely "part-time" or "not serious."

As for myself, while intrigued by the possibilities of male impersonation, I decided it's not for me. It used to take me two hours to put myself together to give a



credible impersonation of a woman. I don't see any point in repeating that effort to pass as a man. For me, the whole point of transition is to be who I want to be, not who society thinks I should be.

I chose testosterone, and I'm happy with it — but testosterone is not the be-all and end-all. I started off as a statuesque person: big tits, big hips, curvaceous, porcelain skin, minimal body hair. While testosterone has made a lot of changes in my appearance, it will never overcome the fact that I am of Native American descent and don't have the genes for a body rug like some guys I've seen. After eighteen months I can't even grow an Indian moustache, twelve hairs at the corner of my mouth. Having seen a lot of transmen with facial hair, I have to agree — facial hair is a big help at passing as male. I don't have that advantage.

I also don't bind my breasts. I started off with a 44 D chest — not a small thing to hide. I tried a variety of chest binders and was unhappy. They were uncomfortable. My solution is to wear tight athletic t-shirts; that works pretty well. Wearing a plaid or striped crisp cotton shirt over the t-shirt will pass casual inspection. I don't wear knit or silk shirts — they're too soft and clingy. I take my cotton shirts to the cleaners and tell 'em to starch 'em stiff.

The addition of a tie and sport coat seals the presentation. Even without the facial hair, a well-constructed sport coat (with padding and stiffening) and a tie will signal "male" to all comers. However, the summer heat is a bitch.

Recently, I've developed new summer wear: a jean jacket with the sleeves ripped out, worn over a short sleeved cotton shirt. The jean vest is sufficiently sturdy to conceal my breasts, while sufficiently light not to suffocate me in the summer heat — at least, not as badly as last summer, all through which I wore a linen sport coat (Linen is the fabric of choice for hot weather clothing).

I don't bother with a pants stuffer. In my experience heterosexual men and women don't look at guys' crotches too much. I do recommend a hat and boots: a ball cap or a cowboy hat, and work boots or cowboy boots send the appropriate masculine image.

You can be pretty swishy, but as long as you're wearing cowboy boots and hat, people will accept you as a straight man. Early on, I had a demonstration of this

during country line dancing lessons. The DJ was so gay he would have set off even the least developed gaydar. But he had on the regulation Western uniform (snap button shirt, blue jeans, high heeled boots), and he was self-confident, so the big hunky macho cowboys gaped a while, then got over it. In private conversations they said things like, "I didn't know how to take him at first, but he's an okay guy."

This DJ was one of my role models. The lesson I learned from him was that if you are who you are, and that if you act as if you expect to be taken seriously, you will be. The key here is for F2Ms to get over their own internalized homophobia and transphobia, the internal paranoia that we have to be macho enough, man enough, convincing enough — or whatever — for other people to believe in us. No, first we have to believe in ourselves, then it follows that other people will believe in us.

Making that switch requires some wrestling. F2Ms are used to being considered too masculine. To make the switch over to being a man and discovering that they are now considered "kinda effeminate" is hard for a lot of us to take. We grow up being berated for being aggressive, butch, having masculine energy, and all that crap. Once we pass the border into men's territory, these evaluations no longer hold true as we turn out to be very ordinary, and maybe even kinda wimpy, specimens of manhood. While at first this might seem like a blessing — to be accepted as a normal member of your gender instead of constantly being vilified for deviating from the socially approved norm — normality itself is a challenge for those who have never been normal. If you've grown up being treated as a freak, you learn the survival skills necessary for a freak to survive. These same skills are not necessary effective, useful, or desirable in an environment in which you are accepted as normal. Adapting to the new environment is something some female-to-male transsexuals refuse.

"I don't want to be a male chauvinist pig," some of them proclaim. "I want to be a new kind of man, a sensitive, caring kind of man." Caring and sensitive men are not new; while they are not in as great a supply as we might like, nonetheless, they do exist. Caring and sensitive non-transgendered men face challenges as well; the typical male socialization is very rough and tumble. Isn't "sensitive" a

code word for "gay"? In my neighborhood, young men pick fights with each other by calling each other fag. Anybody who exhibits any sort of artistic ability is instantly derided with, "That's so gay."

The concept of gentleman has lost credibility; movie machismo has replaced it. Gentlemen are considered old-fashioned, out of touch, patriarchal, and have been consigned to the realm of etiquette books and knowing which fork to use at dinner. Yet isn't a gentle man composed of exactly the sensitive, courteous, reliable and supportive character traits we claim we want in men? Yet gentlemen are perceived as stuffed shirts, wimps, and assimilationists; they are the image against which young queers of various genders and orientations rebel.

Transmen are caught in the masculinity trap: to be masculine enough so that they pass as "real" men, living up to but not buying into conventional standards of masculinity; or to be who they really are, with some feminine attributes still displayed, which unfortunately makes them vulnerable to homophobic hazing. For a straight transman, the usual defense is, "I'm not gay, I'm attracted to women." But effeminate straight men have been using that defense for years, and the average American idiot doesn't believe them either. For a transman who is gay, being labeled as such carries with it the need to either deny or affirm. Again, denial is not a very effective defense mechanism. But they fear that affirming it will expose them to even worse harassment. A transsexual man is therefore caught in the crux between denying and embracing whatever it is he thinks society expects of a man.

Yet in my personal experience, it needn't be that way. Americans respect courage, and if a transgendered person is at ease with who they are, usually other people will accept them at face value. Of all the apparel and mannerism that an F2M might adopt, self-confidence is the most important one. On occasion when I enter the men's room, I get stared at. At first I stared back, giving tit-for-tat, then I realized it was utterly irrelevant whether I was clocked or not. Now I walk around as if I have a perfect right to be where I am, doing what I'm doing, and no one has ever challenged me. In fact, I'm "man enough" that my six year old son demands that I use the urinal next to his. Sorry, I haven't mastered the trick of peeing standing up, son, I'll use the stall.



# NATIONAL NEWS

## *GLB Orgs Become Transinclusive HRC Still Showing Its Transphobic Butt*

In early October, The National Gay & Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF) changed its mission statement to include transgendered persons. This was not unexpected by transgender activists, as attendees of NGLTF's 1996 Creating Change conference were overwhelmingly in favor of transinclusion. Many other gay and lesbian organizations have become transinclusive. Over 125 chapters of Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) now have T-Son (transgender) coordinators, and PFLAG is preparing a booklet for parents of transgendered and transsexual persons. Many formerly gay and lesbian youth groups are now transinclusive; so are most Pride organizations. Many formerly GLB newspapers — for instance, the Bay Times of San Francisco — have changed their mastheads. Even the National Organization for Women has taken a strong pro-transgender stand.

In the midst of all this inclusion, the Human Rights Campaign is still acting as if the "T" word doesn't exist. There's the ENDA issue of course — but it goes much deeper. After years of complaints from transgender leaders, HRC's literature still rarely mentions trans-folk. Recently, HRC told Virginians for Justice that it was not interested in including a transgender case in its employment discrimination statistics.

The HRC folks just love to get mail from transpeople. Give a call or send a letter to Human Rights Campaign, 1012 14th St., NE, Washington, DC 20005 [202-628-4160 voice, 202-347-5323 FAX; hrc@hrcusa.org]. Be pretty!

## *APA Slams Reparative Therapy*

On 14 August, the American Psychological Association (APA), the U.S.' largest professional association for psy-

chologists, overwhelmingly passed a resolution condemning reparative therapy, which aims to "cure" gay men and lesbians. The resolution requires therapists to: obtain informed consent from clients; inform them that many gay men and lesbians are happy and feel no need to be "cured;" provide a statement that there is no sound scientific evidence that reparative therapy works; warn clients that reparative therapy may worsen their problems; and analyze the client's true motivation for wanting to change.

## *HBIGDA Discusses HIV & Surgery*

In a plenary session at its recent (October) meeting in Vancouver, member of the Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association, Inc. (HBIGDA) examined the ethical issues in providing sex reassignment surgery (SRS) to persons who are positive for the HIV virus. Surgeon A. Neal Wilson, M.D. presented follow-up data from several MTF patients who were HIV+ at the time of surgery. J. Joris Hage, M.D., a surgeon from the gender program in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, reported that his team did not screen for HIV, as the team believed such screening to be unethical.

Attendees reached a consensus that HIV+ status should not prevent a healthy applicant from having SRS or cosmetic surgery. This is good news for transsexual people who carry the HIV virus, as until now it has been very difficult for those who are HIV+ to obtain any type of surgery.

## *IFGE Gets New Executive Director*

At the Southern Comfort Conference (2-5 October, in Atlanta), IFGE Board Chair Linda Buten announced the appointment of Nancy Nangeroni as Executive Director. Nangeroni, who is best known for her Boston-based radio

show and her participation in various transgender political activities, will take the place of Alison Laing, who replaced Founding Director Marissa Sherrill Lynn as director in March, 1995. Laing took the Executive Director position to see IFGE through a time of change (some said crisis); she will work with Nangeroni through a transitional period and then assume the role of Director of Outreach.

Laing, who recently oversaw a move from IFGE's former quarters to smaller, less expensive offices, leaves IFGE with a new journal (*Transgender Tapestry*) a greatly improved bookstore, and a better financial situation.

## *Historic Town Hall Meeting*

The transgender community's first town hall meeting took place on Saturday, 4 October in Atlanta during the Southern Comfort Conference. About 125 people were in attendance.

Issues addressed included working with other minority communities; inclusion of youth, the disabled and disadvantaged, and persons of color; the privacy needs of those who choose not to be out; and inclusion/removal of the Gender Identity Disorder of Adulthood and Adolescence from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders of the American Psychiatric Association.

During the three-hour meeting, nearly half of the audience members spoke. Questions were started off by a panel that included Jennifer Marquette (CrossPort), Linda Buten (IFGE), Tony Barreto-Neto (TOPS), Dallas Denny (AEGIS), Nancy Nangeroni (IFGE), Max Anderson (Southern Comfort), Dr. JoAnn Roberts (Creative Design Services), Holly Boswell (Phoenix), Dr. Erin Swenson, Mirha-Soleil Ross, Marc Eden, and Dr. Anne Bolin (Elon College). Dr. Marisa Richmond (Tennessee Vals, AEGIS) served as moderator.

# NATIONAL NEWS