TRANSGENDER PIONEER AWARD DINNER

Friday, August 19, 1994

Third Annual International Conference on Transgender Law and Employment Policy

Speakers:

- ***Martine Aliana Rothblatt, Attorney, Past Director and Moderator of Health Law Project, ICTLEP, Inc.***
- ***Michael Hernandez, Attorney***
- ***Cissy G. Conley, Transgender Pioneer Award Recipient***

A SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION IN THE AEROSPACE ENGINEERING INDUSTRY

by Martine Aliana Rothblatt
Past Director and Moderator of Health Law Project ICTLEP, Inc.

Welcome everybody here to the Transgender Pioneer Award Dinner at the International Conference of Transgender Law and Employment Policy. My name is Martine Rothblatt and I've been the moderator of the health law session for the conference, and it's my pleasure to host the podium for this evening and kind of walk us through the events for the night. Please keep on eating and enjoy your food as I make a few announcements as I introduce our first speaker and then the recipient of the Transgender Pioneer Award. We have Michael Hernandez and Cissy Conley as people that we will be honoring this evening.

Before I go further, I'd like if everyone can just take a moment if you haven't already noticed the beautiful plaque hanging in the front of the podium. This plaque was sculpted by a member of our community, and Phyllis has taken excellent care of it from the second conference until now. Sydney is the sculptor of this

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beautiful plaque, and it's been in the video, it's seen around the world. Everyone is always amazed at it. Please joint me in a round of thanks for your beautiful work. Thank you very much, Sydney. It's really one of a kind.

Second, I'd like to remind everybody that promptly at 9:30 this evening or right after the conclusion of the dinner, whichever comes first, but if it comes after 9:30, then immediately afterwards there is a very important meeting of activists upstairs in the second floor, Acapulco room. And I really encourage everybody who has any activist leanings to please go up there and give your full support. We've seen during this conference that there are a number of things occurring out there that have a bad effect on us, that have a bad effect on the next generation of us, such as children identified as transgender and a psychological community. We all need to really lend our support to this effort.

Phyllis has often asked us to share stories of coming out of the closet with everyone because this is very helpful, I think, in building up all of our courage. And I'd like to really acknowledge my great debt to Phyllis for her examples of coming out in Houston in the 1970s, really gave me a lot of encouragement for coming out in Washington in the 1990s. So it really is very helpful to follow role models and Phyllis was for me.

I experienced myself that coming out, if you do it really with a positive attitude, can be a very positive experience. Having worked in a very technical male orientated field throughout the 1980s, that of the engineering and technology community and particularly aerospace engineering which is very male dominated, and then coming out to the field and saying, "I know you know me as a man, but I'm now a woman, and I'm going to present myself to you as a woman, and please treat me as a woman. My name is Martine and not Martin." That's a big shock for a lot of people. And it really makes you nervous to even get up and say that.

It's violating this terrible unwritten law and sometimes written law of the United States and of the rest of the world that if somebody calls you a male at the moment you're born, you better never say that you're not, or if someone calls you a female at the moment you're born, you better never say that you're not.

It takes a lot of guts to really come up and break that mold, sort of like the person saying, "Hey" to the King, of "The Emperor is wearing no clothes." Somebody's got to say the truth. Once you say that truth, it's remarkable how everything falls into place. It's like, once a lie is exposed as a lie, the truth looks so obvious. If you're honest about yourself, certainly it's been my experience, that the vast majority of people will accept you and respect you as an honest person. There may be that one out of ten or one of a hundred who doesn't, but we don't live our lives for those people. It would be amazing if you wanted to be friends with more than nine out of every ten people, so don't let that really bother you.

One thing we do know is that we all only live once and during that life you should express your soul. Your soul is a magical, wonderful thing that's only been created once in the universe. Let it be expressed. Don't keep any of this in jail. Don't keep any of in prison.

Another thing that's been very rewarding, too, on the importance of coming out, is that once you come out you will find other people coming up to you and saying, "Hey, you know, I feel a little bit that way, too." It's a funny thing. I came out in this aerospace world where there is not even a gay or lesbian organization, much less a transgender organization. There's no visible transgender people

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at all. One person called me up after a couple of months sheepishly. "Can I meet you for lunch?" I was really astonished because of the way he made the phone conversation setting up the lunch—it had something to do with my transitioning. I thought about this person, and I thought of the Suburban Virginia Country Club that he was a member of. I thought of how a friend of mine had told me he had made some disparaging remarks about my transition when he first heard about it. Like, "How does he think he can be a woman with a beard?" This person hadn't seen me for a year or two and didn't know that good electrology can remove your beard and make you look ten years younger at the same time.

I thought "Wow!" This person had in the past made various homophobic sorts of comments or jokes. We sat down at lunch, and within thirty seconds this person looked at me and I looked at him, and the person said, "When did you first know?" And I said, "Oh, my God!", because this was one of those leading executives in the industry and a very conservative individual. It turns out that that person was doing some of his transitioning in another country. He was so afraid of being discovered that the therapist was in another country and whatnot. Now that person has begun the transition process, and has begun telling some close friends.

Then last week I was phoned and the voice said, "Martine, remember you meeting me and my husband at so and so's party." A friend of ours did have a party about a week and a half earlier, and I remembered meeting her and her husband. She said, "Well, one of my husband's business colleagues in San Diego works for a defense contracting company and has begun the transition by just telling a couple of his closest friends, including my husband. My husband showed them an article that had been written about you [see Appendix B]." And the friend said, "Oh, my God, this is my life, this is my exact pattern, my milestones, my industry. I'm not the only person. Please can you have this person call me up." I later talked to this person and he said that he thought he was the only aerospace engineer in the world who was in the predicament, only to read I was able to come out in Washington D. C. He felt so much more encouragement that he was just going to go ahead and come out totally.

Then the third and funniest story—because I think it's a story that tells us something about statistics—was my daughter's friend's grandmother. The grandmother of my daughter's friend came over to drop her granddaughter over at our house to play the other day. She is a woman in her sixties. She has been a schoolteacher for thirty or forty years, and looks very grandmotherly. She said out of the blue—because we had never discussed my transitioning even though I did it right on Main Street, so to speak—"Martine, you know." She looked up at me and looked down and looked back up again. She said, "I've always wanted to be a man." I couldn't have been more shocked. I really was so surprised. She said, "since I was a child, I wanted to be a boy but I knew it was just not possible. And even now it's just completely not possible, right?" She said, "I've seen on TV men becoming women, but it's not possible." But she said, "I knew I was supposed to be a boy. I even had a little strip of hair, some sort of darker amounts of hair growing from the top of my pubic area to my belly button," which is short of a male hair growth pattern sometimes.

I said, "Well, you know, many, many people are intersexed to some way or another. Some of us are intersexed clearly, some of us not so clearly." I said, "Doctors say five or ten percent of all people have some parts of male and some parts of female internal organs usually undiscovered." And of course the only reason she admitted, which I'm sure she never admitted to anyone, is because I was out and open about being a transgendered person.

Sandy Stone—who's really one of the true heroes of our movement, and I hope she really receives

a transgender pioneer at some point in the future— she's a professor at the University of Texas in Austin. As open as the day is long, teaching at a major university, she just graduated recently from UC Santa Cruz with a great thesis. She wrote in her famous essay, "The Empire Strikes Back" that we spent the first part of our lives putting our future in the closet hopefully keeping it there forever. Why, after we transition, should we spend the rest of our lives keeping our past in the closet. And I think no truer words for this movement have been said.

Come out and stay out. [much encouragement from audience] I know I'm preaching to some choir members on the left, but there may be some first comers out there. [more encouragement] So I'm going to say it again, and I want to hear a big amen. COME OUT. STAY OUT. AMEN.

COMMENTS ON 501(c)(3), LOBBYING AND THE ENDA BILL

by Phyllis Randolph Frye:

I just need to do a little quick business and then Martine just pop back up here and introduce Michael.

I received yesterday a letter from JoAnn Roberts, not our JoAnne Roberts with an "E," but JoAnn Roberts from Renaissance in Pennsylvania. Many of you know her. She's been a staunch and a financial supporter of ICTLEP, and she sent a letter of encouragement. She also sent a letter of advice because she's been working on the 501(c)(3) tax question herself. Anyone wishing a copy of her letter merely needs to ask me for it [see Appendix C].

Second quick announcement, I've received letters from Debra Danberg, who is a member of the Texas Legislature. She is a chair on the committee of elections and on state affairs. She has sent me copies of four letters. One is to the Honorable Craig A. Washington, United States Congress, Member of Congress. Another one is to the Honorable Kay Bailey Hutchinson Senator from Texas. Another is to the Honorable Phil Gramm, Senator from Texas; and the last one is to Mr. Ralph Neas, Executive Director of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights. And they all read as follows on her official stationery.

"It is my understanding that the senate labor and human resource committee is currently hearing testimony on the Employment Non-discrimination Act of 1994. As you may already know, I am a strong supporter of individual rights including gays, lesbians and transgenders. It is come to my attention that language protecting the rights of the transgender has been omitted from the Employment Non-discrimination Act of 1994. Federal job protection for transgenders should be included in the legislation. Please include the transgendered in the Employment Non-discrimination Act of 1994. Thank you for your attention."

Each every one of you has a representative in Congress and two senators, and it's just something to think about.

PERSPECTIVE FROM A TRANSGENDERED MAN

Introduction by Martine Aliana Rothblatt:

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Well, it's my pleasure now to invite up to the podium, I think one of the most courageous people in our community, Michael Hernandez. He is one of the recipients of our great respect because it's only the true leaders or professionals of the community that get the honor of speaking from this podium. I know in past years, we've had only judges and legislators, senior legislators. Please I'd like everybody to take a moment and join me in telling Mr. Hernandez just how much we appreciate him taking the time out to address us and that he really has our respect.

by Michael Hernandez:

I'd like to thank Phyllis Frye for the honor of addressing you this evening. And now for the standard lawyer type disclosures. I don't like being spoken *at*, so I'm going to try to avoid doing that this evening. My goal is to discuss a variety of topics about openness and diversity. I can only speak from my own perspective. Although I am representing the FTM community on this occasion, the opinions that I express are my own and reflect on no one but myself. In a typical conversation, it's easy to explain either broad generalities or narrow statements. A speech, being one-sided, is void of that opportunity. For the most part, I will be making broad generalizations.

I've been asked to discuss the FTM perspective. As we run the gambit of human existence coming from all walks of life, races, sexual orientations and spiritualities, you can see what a difficult and broad topic this is. Some of us prefer to be called FTM while others prefer the term "transgendered." Some of us are homosexual, some bisexual, some heterosexual, and some cases we are asexual. Some of us require a strict adherence to the proper gender pronouns. Others could care less. Some believe that we are strictly male and there's no room for anything else in us. Some believe that we are all of both and neither of either, a walking contradiction, a third gender so to speak.

Pioneers in our own fashion navigating the waters of a turbulent bipolar society where you're forced to choose the gender box that you will reside in. In a sense, women have an advantage over men. There's broader latitude when it comes to the expression of emotion. Women are able to express emotion without stigma. They touch each other from time to time. They're able to hug when they meet and preserve their semblance of sexual identity. There are no hushed whispers of "lesbos." No one will look twice at elderly matrons dancing at a wedding together. The feeling of "Oh, how cute" implodes immediately when the same situation involves two men.

There's also a greater latitude in the choice of clothing. For the most part, no one will think twice about a woman buying a man's shirt, man's pants or sports jacket. But a man in the lingerie department is outrageous, whether or not he is there to shop for his girlfriend, his wife or his mistress. Ask any MTF about her first experience purchasing clothing or accessories during her initial transition. Muted comments, stares, and murmurs of disapproval, rudely loud enough to hear but not brazen enough to be clearly assertive. Whereas for the majority of us FTM's, the experience was, "What can I do for you young man? Will you be using your credit card or your mother's?"

What we tend to forget is that for every freedom, there is a cost. To a greater disadvantage, there are disadvantages for women. Such as lower wages, discrimination, clothing and accessories are more expensive and less durable, and there's also the added fear of your own personal safety while walking down the street.

I practiced law as woman for four years. During those four years, I was required to wear pantyhose, heels, a business suit or skirt and a blouse to work everyday just in case I had to go to court

in an emergency. That emergency never arose. I noticed that I was replacing three to four pairs of pumps every six months. It was more expensive to launder my blouses. And digressing from the point, has anybody ever been able to figure out why it costs more to launder women's blouses than men's shirts. They use the same soap, the same washing machine, the same press. For the most part, women don't ask for starch. It's the same material, often smaller dimensions. Seems to me that women's blouses should cost less to launder than men's shirts.

Generally, my lady suits lasted only a couple of years before they started falling apart. Pantyhose purchases had a life into themselves. Inevitably, I ruined a pair every three days, that is, if I was lucky. As a man, my suits are more expensive, but have lasted far longer. My shirts cost less to launder. My soles have not yet needed to be resoled, and I've been wearing them to about four and a half years. In short, I'm spending less money for more durable goods. I don't buy the argument that women are more fashion conscious and that their clothes are made with that in mind. I've known men who are far greater clothes horses and can care less that fashion changes. They just go out and buy the current threads.

However, the price paid by men for the relative freedoms is a rigid code of behavior. Real men don't cry, don't eat quiche and certainly don't discuss anything which could be perceived as a sign of weakness by their so called brothers. Male bonding consists of slapping each other on the back and making off colored jokes to hide the fact that they even touched. God help you if that hello hug is not accompanied by a couple of hearty slaps. By this little ritual, they're able to avoid any specter of homosexuality. What is absolutely bizarre about all of this is that a sexually aroused male can, within reason, be convinced to try just about anything that smacks of homoeroticism. Women are more circumspect when it comes to crossing this line, yet they are freer with their affections.

I believe that little by little, the stereotypical role model of what is appropriate behavior is changing. With the advent of the men's movement, there is some progress being made in this regard. More opportunities are becoming available for men to discuss what ails them without being pounded into the sand for being a sissy or weak. The struggle for women is still being fought slowly and painstakingly. There is no forward motion to terminate the wage or other disparities which exist.

As transgendered individuals we have the opportunity of having experienced both sides of the fence. Whether FTMs choose to acknowledge it or not, we did walk on this earth being perceived as women in some way, shape, or form. And as such, we have experienced discrimination, whether obvious or overt. We can and should help change this world in this society by not falling into the macho-man, back-slapping, tobacco-spitting, beer-guzzling syndrome. We can and should speak out when women are being demeaned or marginalized. We can and should refuse to outspit, outpiss or outscrew our biological male counterparts. We have the ability to disagree with the opinions of other men without being less manly or of being discovered.

We must keep in mind that our way is not always right for someone else, and that for every opinion that we have there is someone with a contrary one, each one based on a different set of experiences with its own validity. Instead of getting angry invalidating the opinions or beliefs of others and inflaming passions on both sides, we need to take a deep breath and hear each other out. And in a worse case scenario agree to disagree. We must each walk the path of our own choice, whether it be straight or narrow, curvy, or uphill at a ninety degree angle. We can laugh, cry, talk about our fears with at least one person, whether it be a friend, lover, member of our community, and for those of us who are less fortunate, with a therapist, or in the modern age, by plugging into cyberspace.

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In a sense, we are gender outlaws forging a new frontier. The absence of clearly defined transgender role models permits us to define who we are, whom we sleep with and whom we love. We get to decide what behaviors are acceptable for us so long as we spew the appropriate catch phrases to the medical providers who have the power to stop us in our tracks. By the same token, the lack of role models results in a lack of a frame of reference within which to work. We have more options than we did in the forties and fifties. We should avail ourselves of these freedoms and benefits.

How you ask? By coming out. I can see the sweat beating on many faces when I use that phrase.

What does coming out mean? The first closet that I subsisted in was as a lesbian. I had doubts about my sexuality, and called a high school friend who came out during our senior year. I asked her if she thought I was a dyke. She laughed, and basically told me that only by sleeping with women would I be able to answer that question for myself. Well, at that time that advice was the most aggravating and frustrating thing I had ever heard. I let her realize that she was teaching me one of the most important lessons that I could ever learn. It was what I thought and felt that was important. To live my life by anyone else's standard would doom any happiness that I could ever hope to achieve.

In short order, I followed her advice. I proceeded to jump out of the closet, boldly asserted to the world who I was in my best Ethyl Merman voice and slammed the door shut so hard and fast that it shattered in splinters behind me. What can I say? "Youth is wasted on the young."

I was working at a prestigious law firm in Beverly Hills at the time. And wouldn't you know it, not only did they fail to offer me a job after I passed the bar exam, they tried to fire me thirty days before it. The fact that I was working sixty hours a week on a salary with no overtime pay and no comp time and going to school at night conveniently slipped their minds. Fortunately, I convinced them to let me stay until my results came in. It was at this time that I realized that the splinters from the shattered closet door were lodged in the back of my head. Needless to say, I had them painstakingly removed. I knew in my heart that I was being discriminated against, but I could never prove it. That experience taught me caution if nothing else.

So why am I here encouraging you to come out? It's because you can make the difference for all of us. No one is suggesting that you wear a sign declaring that you are transgendered. You don't even have to leap out of the closet or come out for very long. You don't have to turn on the light if you don't want to, just start by opening the door. If and when you feel comfortable, stick your head out and look around. If you need to go back, go on in, close the door. Fine. Do that. You have the right to do whatever makes you feel comfortable. At least you got a little fresh air.

For the most part, people tend to view coming out as an extreme process. The image of a deer frozen and thereby trapped in the lights of an oncoming car comes to mind. If you want it to be this way, it can, but it doesn't have to. By starting on the road to transition you can, of an essence, come out to yourself. This is the first step. If you've started taking hormones, you've come out to your medical providers. If you've been to the Department of Motor Vehicles, you come out to them, too. The point I'm trying to make is that everyday we live and breathe, we come out to some degree.

A gay writer said, "When you finally come out, there's a pain that stops. And you know that it will never hurt again no matter how bad you loose or how bad you die." But coming out is not the end all and be all to happiness. No one is suggesting that you will be teleported to a Disney-esk setting

where birds chirp all the live-long day and the bad guys never win. Quite the contrary. There is vulnerability and associated risks. But what are the options if you stay in the closet. Closets are musty. They reek with fear—the fear of discovery and of humiliation—a fear for our own personal safety in the world.

Whether or not we choose to see it, closets communicate to others that we are ashamed of who we are or who we once were.

So you see, closets portray an illusion of safety. But in actuality they're not safe at all. There's no lock on the door. People who want to hurt us either physically or emotionally can smell that fear and sense that shame. By being out the impression that we have no fear is conveyed whether it be true or not. I can illustrate this perfectly. I would surmise that at least the majority of you think, or at some point in time since I started the speech concluded, that I have no fear of public speaking. This impression is totally false. See, you too can fool the world to a certain degree.

In this day and age with the Religious Right closing around us, we cannot wait for the world to change so that we are accepted. We must take some form of affirmative action to change it. I have permission from the author of the following passage to read this to you. It's written by S. Gardner. "I was waiting patiently for thirty-nine years, then I got tired of waiting. Ten years ago, I would never have dreamed of sharing my thoughts on this subject with even my closest family members, let alone strangers. I would never have dreamed of being so bold as to openly buy my own skirts and blouses in stores. Now I know we can't wait for society. I have to take some small action myself. We all do. We all have to do what we can to help ourselves and to help others to have the courage to change society's perception of men and women."

When I began to question my own situation with respect to my gender and my role, the thing that really haunted me was not my own pain, which was nevertheless real, but instead my complicity with the infliction of pain on others. If I didn't start to make some minor moves to help move the rock off our chest, how could I look in the mirror? Then I read Queer in America and realized how far ahead the non-transgendered gay movement is and how much happier life is for gays now than it was in the fifties when I was born. I realized how much life has changed for gays, and I saw how it could change for us if we only began the small steps now that will lead to major change in a few years.

I vowed never to answer any questions about my transgendered status with a lie. Ever. I wouldn't rub anyone's nose in it, but my gender I won't lie about that now either. It was a very liberating experience, and the joy continues. Everyday I get a little bolder about letting others know who I am and why, and this makes me feel so relieved. Closets kill and closets make other closets. I realize now that I'm not the only one in the closet. My closet also helps imprison others in their closets. And every crack that I hack from my own closet doors lets light into a million other closets. I could not have said this better.

We cannot sit back and rely on talk shows to portray us in a favorable or appropriate light. While it's well and good that we're garnering greater visibility through the media, the media cannot be trusted. Their goal is different than ours. We're not concerned about how many papers get sold or what the ratings are. What does concern us that we don't have the same basic and alienable rights and freedoms that others enjoy. We are not free from discrimination in housing, in employment, or any other facets of our lives. This is slowly changing. We want to be treated with the same level of decency and respect as anyone else, not like a bunch of sideshow freaks.

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If we sit back and wait for it to happen, our persecution will continue and more than likely increase. There's a famous quote by Martin A. Meuller. "In Germany, they came first for the Communists, and I did not speak up because I was not a Communist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak up because I was not a Jew. Then they came from the trade unionists, and I did not speak up because I was not a trade unionists. Then, they came for the Catholics, and I did not speak up because I was a Protestant. When they came for me, there was no one left to speak up." What that sentiment illustrates to me is that not only do we have a duty to get involved, but that we cannot rely on others to speak up for us, to speak out for us or to protect us.

We cannot rely solely on the gay, lesbian and/or bisexual communities to do our work for us. Some of them are busy ostracizing their very own because of a purported negative image. This includes drag queens, cross dressers, transgendered individuals, and anyone not in line with the Izod shirt, Banana Republic Chino pants and penny loafer, white bread image. While a faction of the gay community is willing to embrace us with open arms, a very vocal faction of that community would like us to bury our heads in the sand. We are told to wait by the sidelines while they garnish support and gain acceptance. Then, and only then, should we step in. I don't trust this anymore than someone who starts their sentence with the word "honestly" and then expects me to believe the remainder of whatever it is that they're trying to tell me.

It has taken the gay and lesbian community twenty-five years to even get close to legal protection. If we agree to wait by the sidelines, it's going to take much longer than twenty-five years for us to get anywhere even close to where they are today.

By your coming out, whether globally or on an individual basis, we touch people's lives. By being honest and open about ourselves, we educate others that we are no different from them, irrespective of our unique qualities. It is easier to disparage and destroy that which is not close to you. In other words, distance and dehumanization make us much easier to obliterate and therefore constitute a greater threat to our existence.

I used to believe that political activism meant going out on a limb. That politics involved long meetings, lots of arguments and nothing being accomplished of promises made and broken only to be resolved with a lot of last minute scrambling by the same few people to get the conference or newsletter for event together in time for the deadline. That politics involved a lot of pain and sacrifice. I deluded myself into believing that since I no longer did any of these things, I was not political. Fortunately, someone with a very large needle burst that bubble. Talking to people is political in nature. Telling someone your story and aspects of your journey in transition is political. Every time that we stand up in front of somebody and say, "Hey, this is what life is about for me," we are being political. This work, in addition, to all the other work, must be done. We must find our own niches and ways to help and be supportive of our fight for civil rights.

You can get involved without coming out. You don't have to be transgendered to write your congress person or senator. You can write an article anonymously and present it for publication to "Tapestry," "Chrysalis," "FTM" or a number of other publications that are out there. You can even write anonymous "Letters to the Editor." If these things prove to be too disconcerting for you, you can stuff mailing envelopes, donate money or donate your time to one of our organizations. Or if this minimal level of interaction makes you uncomfortable, you can post your thoughts, opinions or advice to others on the Internet, and in that fashion make it easier for someone else to transition, crossdress, come out, or to start thinking about us in a different light.

There presently exists the rift between the MTF and FTM communities. This is not due to transgressions or bad blood. The riff is gradually becoming smaller but exists nonetheless. I believe that this stems from the bipolar nature of the society in which we live. The world forces you to choose what box you'll live in, male or female. Only these two spaces are available on motor vehicle forms, credit applications, insurance forms, medical history and the like. There is no box marked other, both, or either. Even in our own community, even in our own community, gender ambiguity is a no-no. It's no wonder we're persecuted. We make people uncomfortable. This is another reason why talking to other people is imperative. In essence transition involves a rejection of prior self. Both overtly and subliminally. Those boxes help make this so.

This rift is further compounded by the ever familiar pre-op body image discomfort. I've known FTMs who have said, "Why would anybody want to be female, the pantyhose, the makeup the dreaded heels, the pressure to be feminine." This isn't fun. There are also MTFs who have expressed that testosterone is poison and all men are worms.

While I have no desire whatsoever to be feminine, I cannot deny that the look of a feminine woman is, well, more than just appealing. Without invoking my Fifth Amendment rights, I freely and voluntarily admit that a shapely pair of legs, particularly in black stockings can render me speechless on the spot. Fortunately, there are a lot of table cloths in this place, and that has enabled me to speak tonight. My desire to be masculine does not preclude my appreciation of femininity.

Also, I've noticed that trend among FTMs to leave the community after they've completed transition. I myself, although still in transition, haven't been around it at all this past year. This is not a swipe. If it weren't for the few FTMs who've stuck around and heard the same questions and dilemma, a million and one times, I would not be here before you tonight. MTFs, on the other hand, tend to stick around longer, continuing to get and give support. I have haven't quite figured out why this is.

Part of it may be that MTFs have more information to absorb than we do. Let's face it, learning how to knot a tie is much less difficult than how to apply makeup properly or trying to walk in heels. I tried to walk in heels before, I can tell you it's an art form that I haven't mastered. The fact that there are fewer FTMs around to interact with each other also means that there are less of us around to interact with MTFs.

I have no clear solution as to how to narrow this rift. But conferences such as this one, and with IFGE, provide a place and opportunity for us to interact and work toward a common goal. I'm not sure whether I covered FTM perspective.

I understand that it is usual to tell the audience about yourself at the beginning so they will know who you are and what you're about. I didn't do this. I wanted you to listen to my words without an impression of my background except for the basics, of course. I wanted you to listen with open ears and open minds. I'm an attorney. I practice law in San Francisco. I was born in Cuba. And you can imagine the dismay that my parents had when I boldly announced to them that in addition to being their daughter, some day I hoped to be their son. This was after a year on hormones and many excuses as to that [indicating] cold I had.

When I finally met my parents with a full beard and a crew cut and a partner with earrings and tattoos and hair longer than mine, who was very clearly male, you can imagine their shock. My

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mother's jaw dropped to the ground, and I don't think she recovered the ability to speak for twenty minutes. But during that period of time, the mention of my female name continued throughout the evening. While my mother is trying to be better about my name, she still flubs up every once in a while and calls me she and uses the wrong gender pronoun. I haven't bothered correcting her. I'm merely informed her that if this ever happened in public, I would do the, "Sorry, my mother's a little crazy. We need to take her back to the home so she can get her meds" routine. She's gotten much better about it since then.

In closing, I'd like to say life's too bloody short. If it feels good, and it's right in your heart, DO IT. Don't live for work: work that you may live.

I'd like to thank my partner, Sky Renfro, who convinced me that my abject fear of speaking to a group of total strangers, in the first public speech that I've ever delivered, would make me a better person. Thanks a lot Buddy, I owe you. I'd like to thank Pat Colifia who edited this speech, convinced me that it would be fine and that people would laugh in all the appropriate situations. Last, but not least, I'd like to thank my parents who continue to hold those closet doors open for me and have supported me while facing their own fears. Thank you.

by Martine Aliana Rothblatt:

Michael, thank you so much. That speech was everything that we were hoping for and were promised. And none of us believed that's your first public speaking. If it is we want to be at second, third and fourth. It was really, really inspirational and thanks a lot. Next, I'm going to turn the podium over to the chairperson of our conference, Phyllis Frye.

WE MUST ACTIVELY RECRUIT OUR TRANSGENDERED MEN TO JOIN WITH US

by Phyllis Randolph Frye:

You know the best laid plans, there's inevitably snafu. And Martine and I worked hard to coordinate and I thought she was going to give a full introduction of Michael, and she thought I was going to give a full introduction of Michael. So Michael, you're fixing to get part of your introduction. I know that you are done, but you're going to listen anyway because it deals with the fact that we are proud or you tonight and we are fixing to applaud the men in our community who are here joining us tonight. Let's have a rousing applause for our men.

I've been truly honored this year. I've been flown around a lot of places in this country to speak about the law conference. And everywhere I go, I tell these groups that are almost exclusively male to female that they are missing out on a HUGE and powerful resource. They're missing out on doubling their numbers. They are missing out on learning more about themselves while learning about the men in the community. And not only that, it's just the right thing to do.

So ICTLEP is very proud of the fact that on our letterhead, you look at our letterhead sometime, on our letterhead we have specifically, deliberately, intentionally listed an FTM Inclusion Coordinator who happens to be Mr. Aaron Davis. He should have been here, but on Wednesday he faxed me a quick letter expressing the fact that he was ill. He said that he was going to still—if he gets to feeling

better—going to come. The purpose for Aaron's job is, if we screw up and say something stupid or not inclusive, then he's supposed to rattle our cages. ICTLEP has a real devotion to bringing our men in and getting them to working just right alongside of us because we've got the same jobs.

In that spirit, I was advised that we had an out-of-the-closet practicing attorney in San Francisco, and I gave him a call. He just give us one hell of a speech, and we're proud of you Michael. Thank you very much. When you edit your speech, because you're going to go back over it many times in your mind, you will look at it and you will see, where you were making little comical remark about all the things you were going to put into the box that says sex, that you should add to your next speech to put in a "Y" in the sex square. "Y" means yes, or "F" meaning frequently, or "O" meaning occasionally, or "S" meaning sometimes.

THE FIRST TRANSGENDER PIONEER AWARD

A SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION WITH THE US AIR FORCE CIVIL SERVICE

Introduction by Phyllis Randolph Frye:

We have an honorable person who is amongst us at this dinner tonight. She slipped in—I wasn't aware that she had slipped in until I was eating my desert and I saw her. Whoops! So we do have an introduction tonight. We are very honored tonight by the presence of one of our state legislators. I just happened to go to law school with the woman. She has been very, very, very supportive of us in our state legislature. Her name is Yolanda Navarro Flores. And would you please stand for an applause.

Now we're going to get to the business of this evening. I want you to take a quick look at this [plaque]. We spared no expense to honor the recipient. This is the first ever transgender pioneer award. When I went to get the plaque engraved, the woman says, "Are you sure you want to put that many words on there? That's a lot of words." I said, "Yes. As a matter of fact, because we want to make sure that the recipient knows just how proud we are of her. And we want to make sure that everybody knows why. And we want to make sure that she knows in her times of being down,"—which as an advocate she will probably get from time to time to go along with those that she's already gone through—"that she is are spiritually lifted." I'm going to read it to you in a second.

Cissy called me a couple of years ago. I'm not going to tell you much of her story because that's her job. But she called me several years ago. I don't know if the law conference had it's first conference yet. I think we were in the planning stages. She called and she told me what was going on, and essentially she was being given the run around in her job because of the fact that it was discovered that she crossdressed, in private or certainly away from work. They were processing her out.

And I said, "Why?" And she says, "Well, because it's a military-type thing" which she'll explain "and because I have a top security clearance," which she will also explain "and they felt that me being transgendered and all this other stuff was a security risk because I'd be subject to blackmail." And I said, "Well, you can't be subject to blackmail if everybody knows, can you?" And she says, "No." And I said, "Well, why don't you do this?" And I just suggested she run off about 500 copies of her story and pass them around where she worked and pass around where she lived and send them to the radio

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stations and television stations. I mean, she's fixing to lose her job: she's fixing to lose her livelihood. What else does she have to lose? Then she can't be blackmailed.

Surprise! She actually followed some of my advice.

I get so many calls. Trish watches me. Sometimes I come out of the office, and I'm just fuming. Somebody has called who is of desperate needs, but they have never done a damn thing for the community before. They've done everything they can to stay inside closeted, then they call me up and they want to know what I can do to help them. I tell them what limited things we can do to help them, and they fuss at me because they're just a few limited things that we can do because, number one, they haven't helped us yet. Then they fuss at me because I don't have enough attorneys on the list.

Then they ask me what I think they should do, and then they start arguing with me about it.

The other day I just really lost my cool. I said, "I do this for free. Quit bitching at me. You haven't done anything about it yet, so either listen and do it or don't do it, but I've got other things to do. I would like to earn a living."

Cissy, please come up. Don't clap yet. Please come up. I want to present this to you and read it to you. Come on up Cissy. When we were deciding who to give this to, we developed some criteria. The first criteria was that this award, the Transgender Pioneer Award had to go to a transgendered person. The award you're going to hear about tomorrow night does have to go to a transgendered person. The second thing is she or he has to be a lay person, not an attorney. That's what tomorrow night's award is for. We also wanted to make sure that our group was to accused of being incestuous and patting our own selves on the back. So anybody on our board or on our advisory panel is ineligible to win, is ineligible to win.

The fourth criteria is what I'm going to read here on the plaque. By the way tonight's her birthday. "The International Conference on Transgender Law" She's shaking like a leaf: it's okay, darling. We've got the scales of justice hanging here. "The International Conference on Transgender Law and Employment Policy, Incorporated. Third Annual Conference, TRANSGEN '94, presents the First Transgender Pioneer Award. Cissy G Conley" and this is the last criteria "who has openly struggled to affect a positive change in the law as the law effects transgendered people. Dated 19 August, 1994, Houston Texas USA". I love you sweetheart, you deserve it. Okay. Knock them dead.

by Cissy G. Conley:

Thank you Phyllis. I am deeply honored. I really don't know what to say except thank you. I couldn't have done it without the help of Phyllis and a lot of other people. Many of them are in this room. And I will mention others specifically later.

This is more or less of a chronological accounting of what happened, at least as far as I'm able to determine. I guess that Phyllis has essentially already told you as to where I am on the gender line. I am a crossdresser, a part-time woman as I prefer to say. This is something that I'm comfortable with and have done for a number of years.

In January of 1991, which as you may remember was the January of Desert Storm when feelings

were running high and especially high among our hypermasculine military leaders, and many in this room know because there's many ex-military personnel in this room and perhaps others that we don't know of, but at any rate, I was in an air force base on a temporary duty assignment with my job. I'm an electronics engineer in an air force base in Biloxi, Mississippi. It's in the record. On one of occasions—I was there for two or three weeks—and one time someone saw me in an elevator dressed in my preferred attire, I don't know when, but sometime during that time, and supposedly recognized me and made an official report back to the office in Keesler Air Force Base that I worked for.

I could never determine who this was. I got a lot of information with the Privacy Act, but I never found out exactly who outed me if, you will. The comment that was made to me is that this particular person couldn't see how I could do what I was doing and still have a security clearance. Because this is or was in direct conflict with some of the sexual misconduct language in the Air Force military and even in the industrial security regulations, essentially all the same documents. But at any rate, a report was made between January and March of that year, and I didn't know anything of this occurring. I went to the [Texas] T-Party that February in 1991.

Sometime during March of that year, I was called into the Office of Special Investigations on Keesler Air Force Base and asked if I want to have an attorney present. I was asked if—and they reported some of the essence of the report and wanted to know whether—I would admit or deny the facts of the matter. I thought about this a little bit. Just to digress for a moment, in 1975, my first spouse told everyone, my children, my parents, the people I worked with. After getting over that shock, some fifteen years before, I felt I was pretty much out anyway and it didn't matter. Everybody really knew. So I said no. So I sat in there and sweated, and we talked for about oh, two or through hours. Then they later asked if I would like to make an official statement, if I would like to write a document, so I did. But before I turned that back into them, I did consult a local attorney and had it read and there were a couple of suggestions made as to things that should not have been included which I considered was well the worth the $20 or $30 at that particular time.

The next thing that happened very soon after this at work is that there was a temporary withdrawal of my security clearance and there was an appropriate letter. It was done under particular guidelines, and the government started preparing what they called a special security file. This turns out to be a several hundred page document of from the first time you went to work for the government up until the current time and everything that they can put together. It's the Office of Special Investigations interviews with your co-workers and have them to come over and they give them an interview and asked what did they know about this and what do they think about it and all this type of thing.

I don't know how many, but there was about fifteen or twenty attachments to this file. There was an opinion from the legal office as to whether or not I had done anything that violated civil service employment regulations. And this was a very key piece of proof that came back. This opinion was that while I might have done something in violation of the security regulations, I actually did nothing contrary to civil service employment operations or regulations. While all this was going on, I was able to get a copy of almost everything that was in this particular file through the Privacy Act.

I started getting concerned about what was going to happen because there's a large rock over there that's kind of crumbling, and I started networking around the country. This was a time that I wrote Phyllis. I wrote the ACLU. The results of this was one of the key persons that helped was Renee of the Houston GCTC group here. And I had known Renee here in Houston a couple of years before that, but I didn't know that she had gone through a similar situation when she worked at her particular

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job with the government.

The other JoAnn Roberts [in Pennsylvania] wrote our group to tell me—that's one that sells books—anyway she wrote to let us know that Renee had been through a similar situation. Renee was very comforting. I don't know if Renee suggested that I write Phyllis. I had picked up Phyllis' business card at the T-Party. That's when I met Phyllis that February. The ACLU referred me eventually to an attorney on the West Coast in San Francisco. Some of you on the West Coast may know Richard Gayer who had helped people win security clearance battles. And in some of the cases had actually gone to court.

He suggested that I get in touch with Dr. Frank Caminey of Washington D.C., who is a well known activist, not an attorney, a paralegal, but in the Washington D.C. area. He also suggested the same thing Phyllis did—going public. I wasn't really sure at that time what—whether this—I mean, this was good advice, but what I am going to be charged with. There had been a temporary withdrawal that was a special security file forwarded to Washington. But until something came back, I was standing around watching this rock crumble out with more or less, more violence above.

Finally in January of 1992, the results came down from the Security Office, ironically at Bolling Air Force Base. Their findings were essentially the fact that I had violated security clearance regulations, and that I was guilty of gross sexual misconduct. There was a whole shopping list or laundry list of similar—all in the same sentences with child molesting, exhibitionism, homosexuality, transvestitism—all in the same sentence that I had been guilty of these charges. It was their intention to terminate my security clearance which would eventually result in termination of my employment.

That's when Dr. Caminey started preparing my defense and essentially prepared the appeal. What this appeal consisted of was he said, "I want you to go to a psychologist, a local sex therapist in your area. Have an opinion of as to whether or not you're guilty of sexual misconduct or whether this person's opinion that and this as to the case. And if you can get an academic opinion, that would be nice too." And he said, "In the meantime I will do some networking in the Washington area. I will contact the office in the Pentagon that writes the security regulations." And he also wrote to Dr. Spitzer, the chairman of DSM-IIIR, and got an opinion from him as to whether or not a crossdresser was a person that could be trusted or that could be expected to successfully hold a top secret security clearance.

All of these things started coming together. There was a little—there was some difficulties in my daughter's family. I had a granddaughter that was killed the same day that I was to have visited the psychotherapist in New Orleans. So that had to be postponed. There was a very limited time to do all this, something like forty-five days to prepare the appeal. But at any rate, I did meet with Dr. Diane Bailey of New Orleans. And after I had been in her office about twenty minutes, she said, "What can I do to help YOU?" And it was key. I had met Dr. Bailey at one of our group meetings a year or so before that. I knew she was at least a friendly face. But at any rate, I visited with her several times. She prepared a written report for the formal part of this appeal. I was able to obtain an academic opinion from one of the local university psychology departments. The particular person said, "I will give you this opinion, but I wish that it not be released other than in your defense." So I'm unable to mention that particular person's name or even the university's name, but I'm forever indebted to them. Some of the people know who these people are.

By at any rate. This came together. The contact with the office in the Pentagon that wrote the

regulations—Dr. Caminey had a personal friend that worked in this office—he wrote up a memo and confirmed it and had it notarized that these regulations were under change. And that it was expected to be dropped in the next revision. These things takes time, but at any rate I still expect this to happen. I believe it was the 30th of April—this is from about six weeks from the time the appeal was sent in to the security clearance office—that it came back. Essentially I'd been favorably adjudicated, all charges are dropped, my clearance has been reinstated. It was essentially over. It took me several days to realize that this albatross wasn't hanging around my neck anymore.

I would like to thank—I'd like to mention several people's name that have been very helpful to me. The Louisiana table here, the local Gulf Gender Alliance group have been very helpful: Ann West, staunch supporter; my good friend Jennie McGuinness from Phoenix; and especially want to thank Linda and Cynthia Phillips and the people from the Texas T-Party who made a very generous donation to my defense. I just couldn't have done it without you.

What I have offered to do is to help anyone who's been in a similar situation. I have helped a couple of people already. I can be of help in networking with you or giving you non-legal advice—we refer that to the attorneys. But at any rate, I will be glad to do so. I will put my address in the record, which is Post Office Box 5085 Biloxi, Mississippi 39534. Thank you very much.

by Martine Aliana Rothblatt:

Cissy, thank you for that very inspiring story. I remember my first Texas T event. The biggest auditorium I ever saw. Our ballroom was a filled table as Cynthia and Linda Phillips really know how to do it, and your story was told. And everybody at that Texas T, I think, contributed or felt like contributing and it was I think the singular moment that I can think of when the entire transgender community has come together. And I hope it really is a precedent for many more occasions like that. Thank you for willing to share your story with us.

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