

Bet Power
146 Riverbank Road
Northampton, MA 01060

November 10 & 17, 1987

Lou Sullivan
1827 Haight St. #164
San Francisco, CA 94117

Dear Lou,

I was pleased to get your letter. I could sense that you'd write again and I knew your letter was coming, so even though your letter took awhile, I've had a sense of continuity in our correspondence. Do you think your tiredness is an AZT side effect? What will give you more energy?

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I've enclosed some photos from the March, as well as a photo taken of me in leather at the March which was published in Sojourner (Boston) and a photo of the painting of me. I attended the S/M Leather Conference in D.C. the day before the March and was also interviewed there and quoted extensively on S/M activism/liberation in Gay Community News (Boston).

I noticed there was a banner for the "Transgender People Contingent" not too far from the "S/M Leather Contingent" which I marched in (every facet of Lesbian/Gay/Bi life had its own contingent!) as we assembled on the Ellipse before the March, and I saw a small group of gender community, less than 50, gathered there. At the dances and parties, as usual, many M to F TVs were present. One amazingly wonderful aspect was that, at the Rally, I could hear speakers tell 650,000 people that this was a day for all of us ... Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, Transvestites and Transsexuals, Leatherpeople. They'd always include TVs and TSs and Leatherfolks and it was great to hear, out loud, and know so many others were being persuaded to open up to us, to the diversity in our communities.

It sounds like your visit with Dr. Pauly was a very productive one. Do you think there is any way I could be sent a VHS copy of this video interview? Instead of going to "B Group" in NYC, which hasn't worked out for me, I've decided to start my own support group closer to home for Lesbian butches and F to M TVs. I am hoping I could show the interview to F to Ms here. What do you think?

I had a "passing" experience a few weeks ago which has impressed me. I beat a speeding ticket mainly, I'm convinced, because the cop thought I was a man through the whole interaction. It was getting dark and I had to pull over and when I rolled down the window, the cop said, "What's your hurry, Sir?" He checked my license and registration and continued to call me Sir throughout. He asked me about my job, my position and let me go with a warning even though I was going about 12 miles over the limit. His whole tone was respectful and concerned, rather than intimidating and harassing. He would've talked to me very differently if he knew I was a woman. He even advised me, "man to man," that if I were getting sleepy, to pull over, take a break and walk around. I've told this story to my Lesbian friends: the difference in how he perceived me and treated me was distinctly different (better) than how I'm treated if perceived to be female. No wonder I like to crossdress and pass! I know, of course, I'm not telling you anything new.

Thanks for reminding me not to depend on a partner for my sexual identity. It's just that it's been hard healing from being told by my last lover as she left, "You're too masculine" and being held briefly, at her request, in jail for "trespassing" when I tried to talk things over with her at her apartment. It's been hard reaffirming my masculinity and my dominance after that and growing into my TVism, but of course, I am doing it because I've

had to. It's just who I am and I must choose myself first, no matter what anyone else may think or say or do. I need to let go of a hurtful episode which is only a memory in my past now and take full responsibility for my own TV/sexual growth and happiness. I know this is true. A good sign lately is that I'm feeling readier than ever for a lover relationship and more selective in choosing a partner than ever. I'm very impatient, however. I do need to feel and be loved clearly for who I am for once.

I wore my first mustache "out" to a Lesbian Halloween dance and I felt tough and handsome and super in it. Several women commented on how attractive it looked. It simply added to my self-perception as a man inside and somehow I felt safer in the world (on the street among straights as my female body went further into "masquerade") yet somewhat more vulnerable in my community (of Lesbians who know me as a woman who crossdresses and may either judge that wonderful & sexy or unacceptable). I want to investigate getting custom-fitted for a mustache now and see if I can work up the nerve to go to a salon I recently learned of, in Boston.

Thanks for the photo of yourself. It helps me see you as I write.

And thanks for writing openly about death and your process of living now in the face of death. At this time for you, it must be so special to appreciate life and living fully for today.

Please keep sending me your FTM newsletter. Is there a subscription cost? I love "She Even Chewed Tobacco." I don't know if I've mentioned it before, but I live with and direct a national archives of Lesbian herstory (the New Alexandria Lesbian Library) and a few years ago I showed "She Even Chewed Tobacco" in the Library for women here. It meant so much to me to connect with the lives of crossdressers from the past, I put several of their stories in a poem I later wrote. "Queen Christina" (Garbo) and "Sylvia Scarlett" (Hepburn) are also great old movies with F to M themes. I'm glad you have the F to M group now. Support is so important. Have you seen the video short, "Fun With A Sausage"? If not, I'll tell you about it. It's a great F to M comic video.

I have a question for you, Lou. What do you think?: I have this long-standing feeling (most of my life) of being a man's spirit/mind/soul inside a female body. Can this be a F to M TV feeling as well as a F to M TS feeling? Have you heard other F to M TVs say this? In other words, do you think this feeling is exclusively a TS one? And does it make sense that I, who identify as a TV only, have this distinct feeling I carry inside? Also, what do you think of the idea that there are TSs who won't ever choose to transform via surgery/hormones but are really TSs anyway? (I know. I know. I and only I can say who I am myself, but your thoughts on this will interest me.)

Right now it's being hard to find the right lover. There are women who want to be with me, but they're either not pretty enough for me, or not into S/M, or are too controlling, or are otherwise not "her." I'm sad it's been so long ... 2-1/2 years ... without. I keep looking and mustering up faith. I'm just beginning to correspond with a stripper who lives in SF! She answered an ad I ran in On Our Backs (a Lesbian S/M mag). She seems gorgeous and possibly right sexually. Is this the way to get married, or what? We'll see. I hope this isn't just a letter-writing-fantasy-tease.

What else is new? I have a headhunter going after a better position for me ... as a corporate advertising creative director in a Hartford insurance corporation. It's the position I've been working 11 years to achieve. I'll know more about my chances early next week. Send me some lucky energy.

And ... it snowed here on Nov. 10-12 for the first time this "winter." 8 inches fell! Too early for so much heavy snow!

In March, for my 38th birthday, I'm planning to visit SF for the first time! (I've never been west of the Mississippi.) Can I come visit you if you're up to it? My vacation will be between March 10 and March 21. Somewhere in the back of my mind I'm considering moving to SF because I tell myself I'd have more women in the scene to choose from and find a lover among. (Though, if a fem out in SF has to write to me in New England to connect, how sexually perfect can SF be?) This would be a huge and major move for me that would take much planning, money and time. But for right now, I'll simply enjoy vacationing and checking it out.

This letter's getting huge. To be expected from a writer ... especially writing on my favorite topics. I'm glad I know you. Glad we're in each others' lives through these words back and forth, coast to coast.

Write to me soon.

To life,

Bet

Bet Power

enclosures

Bet Power
146 Riverbank Road
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November 10¹⁷~~11~~, 1987

Lou Sullivan
1827 Haight St. #164
San Francisco, CA 94117

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Your letter

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National Lesbian and Gay March on Washington, October 9
Marilyn Humphries (left) and Tracey L. Litt (right).



Whoopi Goldberg w/PWAs



→ Bet Power at the March

Continued from previous page
cent of the total number of people who have thus far died from AIDS in the U.S. More than 1,000 additional panels weren't completed in time for the October 11 ceremony, but will be added to the quilt when it's brought back to San Francisco. Jones and hundreds of volunteers connected to the Names Project hope to take the quilt on a 35-city tour in 1988. Plans are also under way to hold another AIDS quilt ceremony in Washington several weeks before the 1988 presidential election. (*Washington Post, The Names Project.*)

And Finally, The Wedding

Two thousand couples, in a crowd of 7000, spent Saturday afternoon in Washington getting married. Despite the controversy among gay activists before the wedding, and attempts to keep that controversy out of the non-gay press,

everything proceeded smoothly near the steps of the IRS, where the couples said their vows. Those in attendance, even the skeptical, were moved by the love and affection that was shown.

There had been concern that media attention on the wedding would diminish coverage of the march and other weekend events, but the media apparently cooperated: even the *Washington Post* called it a "ceremony of rights" and focused most of the coverage on discrimination faced by gay couples. Rev. Troy Perry, who spoke at the ceremony, urged participants to be more "out" as a result of their participation in the event. Karen Thompson, involved in a two-year legal battle to regain custody of her disabled lover, Sharon Kowalski, spoke about the contrast between her experience and what would have happened to a man and a woman in a similar circumstance. She and other participants said there should be legal protection for gay couples.

We're Not Going Back!

More than 800 gay men and lesbians were arrested in front of the Supreme Court on Tuesday, October 13. The lack of federal response to the AIDS crisis as well as the recent Supreme Court decision upholding sodomy laws (*Hardwick v. Bowers*) were the major focal points of the demonstration. The crowd of demonstrators and supporters, numbering 5,000, chanted, sang, and cheered as wave after wave of protestors occupied the steps of the Supreme Court. Police began systematic arrests of small groups in an orderly process that continued for almost four hours.

In an effort to challenge police control of the action, a group of several primarily Boston-based affinity groups instigated a march around to the back of the court. About 300 people joined from the sidelines as the groups marched around the building chanting "for love and for life

we're not going back" and "We're from Massachusetts so we know Mike Dukakis has got to go" (referring to Governor Dukakis's legislation against gay foster parents). The police were completely unprepared at the side entrance as the affinity groups broke away from the march and moved across the lawn. Several people came close to actually entering the building, resulting in the first closure of the Supreme Court in its history.

The protestors were organized in waves which included a gay liberation wave; a women's wave; a wave of PWAs, AIDS activists, and their supporters; a wave for anti-intervention groups, and an open wave. The PWA affinity groups identified themselves with brightly colored headbands and were among the most militant of the demonstrators.

After arrests, protestors were loaded on buses, where many remained throughout the day. According to those who participated, the buses became

moving political and educational communities for the day. Far from feeling confined, most participants said the experience on the buses was one of the most powerful of the weekend, as very diverse groups shared their experiences of the march, being gay, becoming politicized, and dealing with the diversity of the gay movement. Women and men interviewed one another, told stories, and compared the different experiences that brought them there.

Some of those arrested chose to post a collateral and leave, but many insisted on arraignment and the right to plead. Many pleaded guilty and discussed before the judges and magistrates the reason they were compelled to break the law. A common underpinning of the court statements was the conviction that the *Hardwick v. Bowers* sodomy decision had criminalized gay people so that civil disobedience was only an extension of daily life for lesbians and gay men in this country.

Bill Powers

146 Riverbank Rd.

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Low Sullivan

1827 Haight St. #164

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