

TransSisters ^{\$6.00}

The Journal of Transsexual Feminism

Issue # 7

Winter 1995



TRANSSEXUAL WOMYN AT THE 1994 MICHIGAN WOMYN'S MUSIC FESTIVAL

Plus: Leslie Feinberg on Making Sisterhood Real ✿ The Power of Naming ✿ Gordene MacKenzie's *Transgender Nation* ✿ Beyond Patriarchal Power ✿ Transsexual Theory vs. Reality ✿ Transsexual Dykes to Watch Out For ✿ Elitism ✿ Transsexual Lesbians Expelled from Australian Lesbian Confest ✿ and more



★ *TransSisters* ★

The Journal of Transsexual Feminism

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Statement of Purpose

In recognition of the fact that transsexual persons have been systematically silenced, marginalized, maligned and even brutalized, not only within mainstream society, but also even within feminist philosophy and culture,

TransSisters: the Journal of Transsexual Feminism has been created to further the process of defining ourselves and creating our own reality, rather than allowing others to do so.

As such, *TransSisters* is committed toward accomplishing the following objectives:

- 1.) to providing a forum dealing specifically with issues of transsexuality from a feminist perspective;
- 2.) to giving voice to the ideas, feelings, concerns and perspectives of transsexual feminists;
- 3.) to ending the misperception that transsexuality and feminism are antithetical;
- 4.) to ending the invisibility and marginalization of transsexual persons within the feminist community;
- 5.) to fostering understanding of the phenomenon of transsexuality among nontranssexual feminists;
- 6.) to promoting dialogue, understanding, cooperation and reconciliation between the feminist and transsexual communities;
- 7.) to promoting feminist consciousness within the transsexual community;
- 8.) to promoting honest examination of the complex issues which affect the lives of transsexual persons in a constructive, non-dogmatic manner within a feminist context leading to the empowerment of transsexual persons through feminist principles.

Although the primary focus of *TransSisters* is on issues of concern to male-to-female transsexuals, issues of concern to female-to-male transsexuals are also relevant to its purpose.

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Cover photo: Protesters against the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival's "womyn born womyn" only policy after returning to Camp Trans outside MWMF after entering the festival on 13 August 1994. Photo by Mariette Pathy Allen.

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♡ Letters to the Editor

Davina,

I have just been reading the latest issue of *TransSisters* and I wanted to both thank and commend you for giving all views, including mine, a considerate and fair hearing. Knowing that you had space limitations, I *especially* appreciated your reprinting my open letter. I know this issue must have been very challenging to put together, given your own deep convictions, but I think you have done yourself and our community proud. Hopefully you have also set a standard for how other debates, no matter how fierce, can be heard and aired.

Love,

Riki Anne Wilchins
New York, New York

Dear Davina,

Thank you. Issue number six provided a good and well-balanced treatment of the NWC inclusion question and a number of other things as well. I'm glad that Dallas Denny is now a staff writer; her letter and article provide much food for thought.

Best wishes,

Lynn Elizabeth Walker,
Brooklyn, New York

Dear Davina:

I stand corrected. Because I have never seen any public discussion of the NWC exclusionary policy, I wrongly assumed that this topic had never had any deep discussion amongst NWC participants. It truly broke my heart to read in Rachel Pollack's article that NWC-goers *unanimously* support exclusion. Oh! But there was **PASSIONATE** discussion! Women speaking **STRONGLY!** Sounds like a group of rich white duffers discussing the possibility of letting "darkies" into their country club. (Well, maybe if they get race-change surgery.)

Fortunately, I know from my own experience and from examples such as Kate Bornstein and Riki Anne Wilchins that not *all* post-ops are:

- 1) Elitists who can't resist lording their surgery over those who haven't had it; and
- 2) in denial about #1. Let's examine these two heated allegations.

Many post-ops I have heard from make such a big deal about their surgery that you'd think it was the only thing they'd ever done in life. Notice how many post-ops crow about the number of years post-surgery they are, like it's some kind of contest. Trust me, I *know* how important the surgery is, but we do our community a disservice when we so mystify and exhalt it. It rubs salt in the wounds of those who can never afford it or are

medically or psychologically constrained from SRS (unless they want to play surgical roulette in Tijuana).

As far as denial goes, I recently attended a mediation between a transgender bar owner and several transgendered people of color who accused him of racism. I was confronted with my own racism at this meeting, and though I denied it at the time, I had to examine it later and concede to myself that maybe I *did* have some racism in me. As a guilt-ridden white liberal from the suburbs, I had a lot invested in maintaining this denial. I submit that those post-ops who are (unconsciously) elitist also have a similar investment.

Finally, and anybody can answer this: I have a friend who is frankly amused by most of us vocal, political transsexuals. She's been cross-living since age 14, and she's now 41. She takes hormones, has had plastic surgery to boot, but the only genital surgery she's ever had is an orchiectomy (castration) fifteen years ago. (No SCROTUM, but SMEGMA City!) She wants to know if this makes her a *Woman*. Maybe a *few* brownie points toward a HBIQDA merit badge? I told her I didn't know for sure, that I could think of reasons for and against so labelling her, but that I would consider her a New Woman because castration is an irrevocable procedure that permanently changes one's gonadal and hormonal sex. So what if she's got an extra-big clit?

Anyway, what do you think? Let's vote on whether or not this woman is a New Woman. Surely *some* of you must have an **OPINION** on this matter!

Sincerely,

Christine Beatty

Director, San Francisco Gender Information
Author, *Misery Loves Company*
Singer/Guitarist, Glamazon
aka Glamazette@AOL.com
San Francisco, California

(Editor's response: Christine, I would think that after making the entirely inaccurate and unsupported assumptions on which you based your article vilifying NWC and its supporters in the previous issue -- in which you accused them of being hypocrites -- that you would do well to take your own advice about making assumptions about others that you provided in your article in issue # 4. Just as your article was, your letter is very clearly replete with a number of unfounded assumptions that are entirely lacking in any substantiation whatsoever.)

Having not been present for any of the discussion regarding NWC's policy, I think that you are hardly in any position at all to pass judgement on the nature of those discussions or on the character of the persons who conducted them. What you are now doing is no different than your previous assumption that no such discussion had even taken place, when in fact extensive discussion of the issue had taken place. I think that if you are going to impugn someone else's character and motives that you should at

least have something more substantial than uninformed assumptions to base those accusations on. How many times are you going to have to end up with egg on your face to learn that it is not wise to jump to conclusions entirely on the basis of uninformed assumptions?

Furthermore, your recognition of your own racism in the example that you cite is completely immaterial to this issue. You seem to be arguing that if an allegation of racism is true in one instance that such allegations are necessarily true in every instance (which is obviously not the case) and that therefore, your continued accusation of elitism must also be true just because you perceive it as such. Those are some rather extraordinary leaps of logic, Christine! People are undeniably falsely accused of racism all the time, and usually by someone who genuinely perceives them to be racist. However, the mere perception of racism does not mean that that racism actually exists, and neither does your perception of elitism on the part of the supporters of NWC's policy prove that this policy or the women who support it are elitist in any way.

What you are saying here is essentially that not only is your mere accusation of elitism sufficient proof of its existence, but so is any denial of it, a kind of "heads I win, tails you lose" scenario, so I do not even accept the conditions of your argument as valid. Go back to Logic 101.

Every charge that has been made against this policy has been utterly and thoroughly refuted, and you have done nothing but repeat those same discredited arguments, as if merely repeating them over and over would make them so. But of course, it is always a lot easier to make an allegation than to provide substantiation for it.

To continue to characterize the supporters of NWC's policy as "elitist" on that basis amounts to little more than mere name-calling. Unfortunately, it is apparent that some people seem to realize that if you continue to repeat an accusation long enough and often enough that at least some people will inevitably believe it, as this seems to be the tactic that critics of NWC's policy have now resorted to. However, merely continuing to say "Is too!" and to (mis)characterize the women who support this policy as "elitist" does not make them so, however many times you repeat it, any more than merely saying that you are a woman makes you one [or that merely saying that a penis is really just a big clitoris makes it one either].

Also, would you please explain to me why -- if supporters of the postop women-only policy are necessarily elitist and only in denial of it because they have an investment in such denial to maintain -- is a nontranssexual woman like Janis Walworth such an ardent supporter of that policy?

As for your characterization of "post-ops [who] make such a big deal about their surgery you'd think it was the only thing they'd ever done in life," and who "crow" about it, "like it's some kind of contest," who are these people? I've never met anyone like that. I know postops -- myself included -- who mention how long they have been postop in appropriate circumstances, such as when they are asked, or among their other accomplishments in the biographical information that

accompanies their articles, but I've never met one single person like the one whom you describe. Not once. Not ever. I could with equal legitimacy characterize you in the same manner for the frequency with which you mention the number of talk shows that you have appeared on, but of course, I would never do such a thing.-- Davina)

Dear Davina,

Ronald Reagan actually said one intelligent thing during his political career: he characterized as an 11th. commandment that Republicans speak no ill of one another in order to prevail against their political foes.

I'd like to think trans people are at least as intelligent as the Republican Party under Reagan's leadership. The horrifying exercise in vituperative, vindictive, back-biting, name-calling engaged in by a handful of people in the pages of *TransSisters* # 6, however, was a blight worthy of the letters column of the *San Francisco Bay Times*. How gratifying such a spectacle must be to the Janice Raymonds, Mary Dalys and Lon Mabons of the world! Remember them? They're the people who want to exterminate us -- all of us -- although I don't think there'll be much left for them to gas and incinerate if we persist in such self-destructiveness.

People subjected to as much hatred, discrimination and disparagement as we are don't need more of the same, especially from the hands of those who should be most inclined to love us -- our sisters. The inclination for a down-trodden, oppressed group of human beings to strike out in pain and anger at the nearest target is sadly understandable -- yet must be resisted. Disagree if you wish -- but attack opinions and ideas, not the character of the individual who holds those opinions and ideas.

There is a line at which the free marketplace of ideas ends and self-destruction begins and that line was crossed repeatedly in *TransSisters* # 6. While I appreciate knowing which individuals have internalized such a shocking level of transphobia -- the better to avoid such people and work to repair the damage they do -- I would forego a steady diet of such abuse, and ask Davina to in the future avoid assisting such people in the expression of their contempt for us.

Abhorrence and disgust for male genitals *attached to my body* led to suicide and self-surgery attempts -- I do not need graphic, cruel reminders of my former deformity flung in my face as Riki Anne Wilchins and Denise Norris did. Nor do I need to be subjected to, under the guise of "opinion," the application of a dehumanizing epithet such as "permanently sterilized" courtesy of Joy Shaffer, as though my sum worth is as breeding stock.

When I consider how painful the sting of such words are to one such as myself, who has had the body I chose far longer than many transsexuals, I shudder to think how such words hurt those not yet living in the bodies they would have. It is my on-going concern for those people, and their need to acquire the attributes they so fervently desire, which motivates my activism year after year after year. Establishing our legal rights and consolidating technological gains in surgical techniques are ultimately but means to an end -- and that end is to enable people to inhabit

bodies which do not fill them with revulsion.

How much easier it is to heap additional hatred upon the despised by denouncing the disenfranchised, than risk effecting real change by protesting Columbia University's re-issuance of *The Transsexual Empire!* How much easier to vilify Wendi Kaiser than L.M. Lothstein, who as Director of Psychology at The Institute of Living in Hartford, Connecticut promotes brainwashing young transsexuals into mistakenly believing they are boys! (*Gender Dysphoria: Interdisciplinary Approaches in Clinical Management*. Walter O. Bockting, Eli Coleman, eds.: The Haworth Press, Inc., New York, 1992)

Where are the objections by the critics of the New Woman Conference to the Minnesota Legislature's attempt this year to end public-funding of sex reassignment surgery? Where are their objections to exclusion of transsexual medical needs from the Oregon Health Plan? Where is their presence and testimony at the public hearings on health reform in Washington state?

Verbal abuse of transsexuals, such as that indulged in by Riki, Joy and Denise, stems not from love, but from contempt -- the logical result of setting oneself up as a "leader of the community." Leadership implies subservience on the part of the "followers" and seems inevitably to result in hubris, arrogance and self-aggrandizement. I prefer the notion that subservience should rightfully be placed upon those of us fortunate enough to have already changed sex. We have a sacred duty to those who, emulating us, would likewise change sex -- serving them, not leading them -- to do what we can to ease their progress along the path we have already walked.

In service to Mater Deum Magna Ideae,
Margaret Deirdre O'Hartigan,
Portland, Oregon

Dear *TransSisters*,

As a gender outlaw in a female body and lover of a postop transsexual lesbian in Minneapolis, I read with interest the debate over preoperative inclusion or exclusion from the New Woman Conference.

Philosophically, I am very much inclined to take the side of Christine Beatty and Riki Anne Wilchins, but in the interest of peace I would suggest a compromise.

Perhaps a solution that would take care of one issue is a semantic one. One of the things that hurt the most about the Michigan Festival policy was that the title made it sound like *any* woman ought to be welcome, which was not the case as we all know.

The same problem exists with the title "New Woman Conference." My lover and many other transsexuals, like Christine Beatty, felt like "new women" as soon as they went full time, which is the usual "TS adolescence" and has been described to me that way by transsexual women of varying chronological ages. Surgery is not the beginning, but a culmination of transsexual womanhood, one that not everyone is privileged to reach. Fear, depression, poverty and overly fickle medical professionals can stand in the way.

I haven't had surgery myself, but I've seen my lover through

her transition and it's a long, hard road. All the time that she spent saving money, working her ass off, taking hormones and jumping through psychiatric hoops in preparation for surgery she was a woman: to me, to herself, to all her friends and co-workers and people she met on the street.

"New Woman" sounds like a conference for those who are new to *being* women: TSe's first transitioning and born-females entering their teens! If you would just call it "A Conference of Post-Operative Women," the demarcation would be drawn with no injury or insult.

Meanwhile, I hope in light of the include/exclude controversy that no one makes any permanent enemies and that the organizers consider preop inclusion for this reason: It would give women who have had their surgery a chance to share their wisdom with those who may need it. Hearing the stories of those who have had surgery could give hope to those who haven't yet made it and being witness to discussions and forums on postoperative life will give them ideas of what life is like on the other side of the knife. To know you have a future is a beautiful thing.

Inclusion would also remind postoperative transsexuals of the place they came from, something successful people need to be reminded of occasionally, I think. I wouldn't have thought certain people needed to be reminded so badly until I read some of the arguments for NWC's exclusionary policy in the last issue. Methinks the ladies doth protest too much! Despite the benefits of sorting out "us" from "them" in the process of learning one's own identity, it seems inevitable to me that separatism spawns bigotry, insularity and even hatred in every community where it gets used as a political strategy. Separatists end up alienating not only other communities, but nonseparatist members of their own community, as I think is evident in the flurry of controversy over NWC's policy.

I and others like me don't like to see the sisters of our cause turn around and act like the same bunch of hypocrites who deny transsexuals to "womyn's" events. There's nothing wrong with retreating from the outside world (where we're *forced* to associate with folks of other races, genders, classes, politics or genitalia) to take a breather or "find ourselves," but to call it a political act is pure baloney. If a person takes a retreat then goes *back* into politics refreshed, great, but activism involves reaching outside of our closets, not making the closets more comfortable.

Now that I've got that off my chest, I want to compliment *TransSisters* just for existing {thank you, thank you, thank you} and everyone contributing to this way cool feminist 'zine for speaking out for our liberation. With voices like Kate Bornstein and Leslie Feinberg, transgender feminism has become the cutting edge of feminism itself! My one critique: as Audre Lourde said, "The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house." Advice to remember in the process of constructing an identity as a people.

In some of the articles I've read, it seems like some outdated cultural feminist/essentialist/essentially-fascist-bullshit is being tolerated and even sometimes embraced just because it issues from the mouths of women who call themselves feminists.

In my humble opinion, to be a feminist you have to be *for*

the cause of women's liberation--all women's liberation. Jan Raymond is about as credible a feminist as Josef Mengele is as a doctor; she is a self-righteous bigot who minimalizes women's power, denies transgendered people free will, declares a "moral" cultural war against an oppressed people, suggest coercive brainwashing as "therapy" and trivializes rape. She is NOT a friend, I repeat NOT a friend! Sometimes the enemy wears a vulva, sad to say.

'nuff said.

Your verbose friend,
Riawa Smith,
Minneapolis, Minnesota

(Editor's response: After reading your letter, Riawa, I find myself wondering if you even read my article about NWC at all, since I very clearly suggested the very thing that you have recommended; that is, changing the name of the conference to indicate that it is specifically for postoperative transsexual women only. I have, in fact, advocated that very thing since NWC's very first year. As a result of the controversy generated this year, NWC has decided to do exactly that. (see "Trans-Action News," p. 10)

As for the reasons that you have specified that NWC (now Rite of Passage) should include preoperative male-to-female transsexuals, don't postoperative transsexuals already have the opportunity to do these things the other 362 days out of the year? You sound as though this conference is the only opportunity that preoperative and postoperative transsexual women ever have to interact with each other. Why do some preoperative transsexual women feel that they must begrudge postoperative women three measly days out of the entire year to be by themselves?

Likewise, I very specifically addressed in my article the charge that this policy is "separatist" that you resurrect without substantiation, despite the fact that I very conclusively demonstrated that this policy is not separatist. To continue to falsely label this policy as such when it has been conclusively demonstrated not to be amounts to little more than name-calling. But, as I mentioned in my response to Christine Beatty's letter, if you persist in making false charges or engage in name-calling against someone long enough and often enough, then you are bound to convince at least some people, and this appears to be the tactic that critics of NWC's policy have opted for. This is, of course, no different than what Rush Limbaugh and Newt Gingrich have been doing to Bill and Hillary Clinton for several years now.

As for your comment that the supporters of the postoperative women-only policy "doth protest too much," this is also nothing more than a means to dismiss valid arguments out of hand without having to actually respond to them in a substantive manner. Once again, there really isn't much difference between this tactic and name-calling. But of course, it is also always a lot easier to do this than to actually responding to an argument on its merits.

I also find myself a bit puzzled at your charge that anyone in this publication has ever espoused "the outdated cultural feminist/essentialist/essentially-fascist bullshit" such as that espoused by Janice Raymond. As with your other allegations,

you provide no specifics to substantiate your charge. As a certain fast-food television commercial so poignantly queried about a decade ago: "Where's the beef?" When did anyone ever express in TransSisters that Janice Raymond is a friend or cite her to substantiate an argument? I once expressed agreement with Janice Raymond on one very specific and narrow point, but I also quite clearly specified that I did not agree with her conclusions about that point. I think that that hardly qualifies me as an essentialist. I accept or reject arguments on their merits, not on the basis of who says them, even if it happens to be Janice Raymond.

If any of the articles that have appeared in TransSisters can in any way be accurately characterized as employing the same tactics that Raymond has employed against transsexual women they are the ones that have falsely vilified and maligned the supporters of NWC's postoperative women-only policy by engaging in wholesale distortion of facts and baseless name-calling in much in the same way that Raymond has falsely vilified and maligned transsexual women in general. -- Davina)

Hi!

Before I read issue # 6, I didn't think that it mattered very much whether pre-ops could or could not attend NWC. After reading the issue, I still don't think it matters very much.

Sarah Cardin,
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Dear Davina,

I applaud you on being able to embrace the diversity of opinions that appeared in the First Anniversary Issue. While you agree with some of the authors and definitely disagree with others, it's bold to stand up to your own conviction of personal liberation to allow all the voices to be heard. Keep that spirit of inclusion going!

Truly,
Mimi=Freed,
San Francisco, California

Dear Davina:

First, congratulations on surviving a whole year of publishing!

Second, congratulations on Michigan! I'm looking forward to a deeper examination of the issues surrounding this victory. For a brief time, my attitude on the whole thing was that I didn't want to go where I wasn't wanted. Then I realized that, as my friend Raiwa Smith pointed out, "I'm sure blacks didn't want to sit at every grubby little lunch counter either."

As you are aware by now, Susan Kimberly lost her election bid for Ramsey County Commissioner, 58% to 42%. Still a respectable showing, but in my humble opinion, the local gay press was almost insulting in its neglect of her campaign, especially in light of her efforts on that community's behalf. If memory serves, she was an author of Minnesota's gay rights law. Certainly it would not even be a law without her efforts. It's like Mustang Sally said: gay communities seem to use transsexual energy for all it's worth, then throw them the hell out.

Damn shame, too. Ramsey county denied itself on hell of an administrator.

Margaret O'Hartigan has succeeded where I failed. She's been able to articulate the rage I've felt over *The Transsexual Empire*. One point wasn't addressed though: was anything really changed in this "new, updated edition," or are Ms. Raymond's thought processes so rigid that she's seen no need to change her perspective at all in 15 years? I suspect the later, but the point wasn't directly addressed in the review, save a brief commentary

on the "new" preface. I'm tempted to buy the cursed thing for the same reason Harlan Ellison advocates joining the NRA: you have to know what these maniacs are thinking or you can't fight them. If I can find a used or remaindered copy, I might. That fascist in feminist's clothing gets no book royalties out of THIS "female artifact!" In any event, Ms. O'Hartigan cleanly cuts through the book's "newspeak" and called Ms. Raymond's hateful fanaticism by its proper name: fascism, which seems to be the extreme of ANY political theory.

Now the toughie: the New Woman Conference. In spite of half of issue # 6 being devoted to this controversy, I can't take a side on pre-ops attending. Too much is still unknown. Have any preoperative transsexuals ASKED to attend? Have any been admitted under other auspices, possibly by specific exception or as someone's spousal unit? If so, what was the reaction? Were any problems caused by their presence? Or is this heated, bitter debate entirely theoretical?

Also, there's one clear (in fact, glaring) area in which the NWC definitely discriminates. One clear requirement makes this wondrous event inaccessible to the majority of our community, regardless of surgical status: money. How many of us, including the editrix and myself, wanted to go, but simply couldn't afford it? This is not simply sour grapes. It dovetails on an issue crucial for our community. In issue # 6's letter section, Kristine Holt expresses the fear that our community's policies are being arbitrarily dictated by high-level professionals who seem intent on excluding the majority of us from the decision-making process. I'm not sure Ms. Holt is right about that specific issue -- again, I haven't enough background to give an informed opinion -- but it does echo my point about NWC.

Whenever we're asked by outsiders about our trials by gender fire, one of the key questions is always about money, and rightly so. Financially, almost without exception, transsexualism is suicide. It's damn difficult, if not impossible, to get anywhere in this journey without making some major financial sacrifices (others as well, obviously, but let's restrict the discussion to matters fiscal for the nonce). Possibly this is a "cosmic prerequisite" for personal integrity, and the public nature of our selves dictates that our price be higher in those terms. Show of hands: how many of us have had to file bankruptcy along the way, after going full-time? Let's see, counting my hand, that's 1, 5, 9, 83...a hell of a lot.

Let's face it sisters. We live in a capitalistic society, most of which sees the world divided into "haves" and "have-nots." The have-nots are, more often than not, those who live outside some extremely rigid and arbitrary "norms." That includes a lot of us. By its nature, NWC is of necessity out of the price range of most of us (calm, rustic retreats are seldom cheap). Unless we, as a community, choose to play the "have/have not" game (remember, we're still talking money, not genitalia), we need to establish financially accessible celebrations for our community. I'm not suggesting NWC operate at a loss, only that its organizers remember that many of those for whom the event is intended (including myself) are living on welfare, Social Security or some other marginal income, and, if possible, make some allowance for

Attention, Subscribers! Are You Moving?

If you have recently moved or are planning to move to another address in the near future, it is very important that you notify *TransSisters* about your change of address as soon as possible. Since the United State Postal Service does *not* forward third class mail, *even if you have filed a change of address form* with the Post Office, your subscription copy will be returned to us, postage due, causing us an unnecessary expense if you do not notify us of your change of address. This also will greatly delay your receiving your subscription copy since we have to re-mail it.

So if you have recently moved or are planning on moving in the near future, please take the time to fill out the change of address form below and to return it to *TransSisters* immediately. Thanks in advance for your cooperation!

Old Address:

Name _____

Apartment or Suite Number _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____

Zip/Postal Code _____

New Address:

Name _____

Apartment or Suite Number _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____

Zip/Postal Code _____

Effective date: _____



Mail to: Davina Anne Gabriel;

4004 Troost Avenue; Kansas City, Missouri 64110

that (a stipend/support fund of some sort?) in its planning. Or possibly another celebration, more financially inclusive, could be initiated.

I'm not saying that NWC is being capriciously run by a bunch of corporate greedheads. That's obviously not the case. The earnest attempts in most of the commentaries at achieving an understanding make it clear that these are all highly moral women, deeply concerned with conducting the conference with responsibility and sensitivity. All I'm saying is that there's a financial rift in our community, one which NWC has unintentionally enlarged.

One final point on this topic: since I received *TransSisters* # 6, our local community has suffered a self-mutilation and a suicide. While I've never known anyone who cut their genitals before (though I came close a couple of times), that's the third TS suicide I've known personally, and I'm saddened by the fact that I'm becoming a bit numb to it.

We need to find ways to celebrate survival, surely. But maybe instead of arguing about who gets to attend a celebration which is simply beyond the reach of most of us, we should spend our energies doing what we can to ensure that more of us survive.

The whole thing reminds me of a ride I took on a #17C city bus a few years ago. A young man got on and, after depositing his coins, discovered he was a quarter shy of the fare. As he'd already put in all his money to ride the bus, he refused to get off. As the full fare hadn't been paid, the driver refused to move the bus. While about 40 people waited, they had a heated argument. Finally, a young woman, (not me, I'm ashamed to say) walked to the front of the bus, put a quarter in the fare box, looked at the driver and the passenger, and said, "You're both acting like children."

Come on, sisters. We're bigger than that. Let's stop bickering about who gets to party, and work on helping each other through life. I'm sure we all have a lot of ideas on how to do that. Isn't that what community really is?

Diana Green,
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Dear Davina,

TransSisters # 6 just wonderfully got to me. I've found my tribe. I'm armed with the missing ingredient. I can approach the time of transition with the sure knowledge that I know my place with the "gender community." I'll face any interview, any "coming out" conversation with that essential sense of tribe! I'm way behind most of you, but all is well now. I've found you! Many thanks!

A couple of quick thoughts, reactions:

I'm an officer of my local NOW chapter. I don't know what Kristine Holt's experience has been up in Oil City, but if her thrust is to focus on the women's movement then NOW casts a pretty wide shadow in this area. The exclusion issue is a non-starter, an antique idea from earlier days. There's so little political activity that it's mandatory that we all communicate. Our chapter had six members at the D.C. gay march, all straight women except for me -- a "non-out" lesbian transsexual. We marched

with our chapter flag -- white on purple -- and had gays and lesbians -- ex-Pittsburghers -- came up and greet us all day. I'll never forget it. (I served as a bus captain and attended all plenary sessions.)

What *TransSisters* is doing is so important. Your statement of purpose is like a beacon. Being part of the scene just as our chapter did, but on a much larger scale. I can't thank you enough, Davina.

D.H. Gibson,
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

P.S.

I loved "Let NWC Be NWC" -- very good writing.

Dear Davina,

I am enjoying your latest issue; you have assembled quite a collection of strong opinions on NWC! (Did I hear that they just changed the name?) To me it illustrates the need for more such events for all transsexual women, so that part of the community is not alienated by the need for some post-op women to gather separately. If enough post-op women worked for this along with pre- and non-ops, it might heal the rifts. If the transsexual community can not support more such activities, then maybe NWC should open up, but not to deny post-op women the right to meet separately within the gathering when necessary for ritual or other purposes.

Lisa Canar,
Urbana, Illinois

Letters to the Editor

TransSisters: the Journal of Transsexual Feminism welcomes your comments, suggestions, (constructive) criticism, as well as information affecting the transsexual community, but most of all, your compliments! All letters must be signed, but names will be withheld upon request, except for letters which criticize by name any individual, organization or entity. Anonymous personal attacks will *not* be published. *TransSisters* also reserves the right to refuse publication of any letter. Please include your address and telephone number in case we want to verify your letter. All letters are subject to editing. Please address all letters to: Davina Anne Gabriel; 4004 Troost Avenue; Kansas City, Missouri 64110. *TransSisters* can also be reached by fax at (816) 753-7816, but you must call first, as there must be someone here to receive your fax. *TransSisters* can also be reached via e-mail at davinaanne@aol.com.





TRANSACTION NEWS

Separatists Force Expulsion of Transsexual Women from Lesbian Conference

(Brisbane, Australia)--Lesbian separatists repeatedly disrupted Australia's fifth annual National Lesbian Confest held from 15-17 July 1994 in Brisbane, Australia until they succeeded in forcing organizers to eject three transsexual women and to overturn the organizing committee's policy of allowing transsexual women to attend. This was the first year that the conference had allowed transsexual women to participate in the event. One of the transsexual women who was ejected, who has been identified in the Australian queer press only as Kathy, served on the conference's organizing committee.

Protests against the presence of transsexual women and against a scheduled workshop on transsexuality conducted by Kathy began on the very first day of the conference. *Queensland Pride*, an Australian queer newspaper, reported that: "The disturbance began during the formation of the opening circle. [Separatist leader] Lavender called out, 'Join this second group if you don't want to hold hands with men.' The separatists then formed their own circle. With confusion mounting, a third circle was formed. This was made up of women from other countries who wanted to demonstrate their inclusiveness."

An Australian lesbian magazine *Lesbians on the Loose* reported that in what it described as "some of the most aggressive and violent scenes ever witnessed at a lesbian Confest," Kathy was booed and heckled when she attempted to address the opening plenary session. Approximately 15 lesbians walked out in protest and the constant screaming made it impossible for Kathy to be heard.

Women opposed to the presence of transsexual women held a meeting later in the day, which its organizers claim was attended by 80 women who unanimously agreed to demand expulsion of the transsexual women. However, members of the Confest organizing committee dispute this figure and claim that the meeting was attended only by about only half that number. Approximately 200 women were registered for the conference itself.

These women, consisting primarily of lesbian separatists, subsequently surrounded the organizing committee and demanded that the transsexual women be expelled and that the policy of allowing them to attend be rescinded. According to *Queensland Pride* the demands were accompanied by death threats and threats of damage to personal property against members of the Confest collective if transsexual lesbians were not banned from attending the event.

The following day, according to *Lesbians on the Loose*, after

workshop schedules were again disrupted, the organizing committee "announced that although they stood by their policy of inclusion, they did not want to dictate to Confest participants" and agreed to eject the transsexual women.

In an interview with *Lesbians on the Loose*, three organizing committee members, Jane Downing, Jenny Brown and Fiona Connelly denied that they had caved into the separatists' demands. "The Confest belonged to all lesbians, not just us. It doesn't belong to the Confest committee," Downing stated.

Lesbians on the Loose also reported that the committee continued to support the policy of transsexual inclusion and said that they believed that they had adhered to the aims and objectives finalized last September following last year's Confest in Perth. Among those aims and objectives were "reflecting the diversity of lesbian life."

A petition deploring the violent and aggressive way in which the debate over transsexual inclusion was conducted was subsequently circulated, and two workshops were canceled in protest of the expulsion. Further controversy erupted after two organizing committee members claimed that they were verbally abused because they were parenting a male child.

According to Sonia Hamilton, editor of the Australian transsexual publication *Transys With Attitude*, several women were harassed for bringing male children with them to the Confest, or even for having children at all, and that the Confest later "imploded" in a "mass walkout" by women disgusted with behaviors and attitudes displayed by the separatists. One of the organizing committee members, Sheridan Powers confirmed to *Capital Q Weekly* that many of the lesbians who had attended the Confest "left in disgust."

The 14 October 1994 edition of *Capital Q Weekly* reported that controversy from the incident had not abated as of that date and that some people were still "a little nervous for their safety" as well as that future National Lesbian Confests are in doubt as no city had yet agreed to host the event in 1995. Regarding the future of the Confest, Sheridan Power was quoted as stating: "My sense is that the face of lesbian conferences is going to change. I think it's going to be a lesbian separatists' conference . . . politically specific in the future."

Although it has not been established that she played any role in organizing the move to have the transsexual women ejected, Janice G. Raymond, author of *The Transsexual Empire: the Making of the She-Male*, who was on a book tour of Australia, was present at the conference.

"We respect difference but we didn't think there would be so much oppression within our own ranks. We can accept what happened but not how it turned into a bloodbath. We can't accept the violence." -- National Lesbian Confest organizer Jenny Brown

Although successfully prevented from conducting her workshop at the conference, Kathy went ahead and conducted it on University of Queensland grounds, and it was attended by approximately 20 women.

Despite her experience, Kathy remains unembittered and was quoted in *Lesbians on the Loose* as stating: "But for all the shit that's been poured on me and people like me, there has been some wonderful support from people in the community." Kathy was later quoted in *Capital Q Weekly* as stating: "We didn't break off as such, so I was able to run my workshops as planned . . . a lot of people rallied round me, so the numbers for the workshops remained okay . . . the abuse was intimidating and upsetting, but I've put it behind me now and learned and become stronger from the experience. You must remember that the fights came from a small group who debated that male-to-female transsexuals could not be women in the mental sense. A lot of these women have had bad experiences, such as rape or molestation, and so have pre-formed agendas against men and obviously transsexuals. Some lesbians were worried that people might pretend to be transsexuals, which is ludicrous, as people who have been through it would know. You wouldn't go through the years of hell for the sake of it."

Kathy went on to call the events "a disappointing experience, which ruined the festival and has divided the lesbian community -- a very sad thing. It wasn't a specific ideal that the committee include transsexuals, it basically evolved from me turning up to join the committee. There wasn't any specific thing to say we would include transsexuals or disabled lesbians for that matter, it was presumed because we are an inclusive community and based the Confest on what we believed the tradition to be . . . inclusive regardless of past, sex, color, race, etc. I was on the organizing committee for four months beforehand and ample time was given for people to voice their opinion on the agenda being formed. We didn't anticipate the reaction we got, although we expected some comment, certainly not the outbreak that we got. The committee had decided to handle it on a 'need arises' basis. We did formulate plans for comment should the need arise so to a certain degree we were prepared for some comment."

Leslie Crane, another of the transsexual women ejected, was quoted also in *Lesbians on the Loose* as stating: "I've had no problems from the lesbian community in Brisbane. They can accept me so why can't [the separatists]? I don't want to ruin the Confest but why should I have to hibernate for a week instead?" Ms. Crane was later quoted in *Capital Q Weekly* as stating: "The separatists didn't actually have the numbers against us . . . most people supported us. The only reason they got it through was with support from some past committee members on precedent that trans never attended in the past."

Separatist leaders deny that any violence or threats of violence occurred. Separatist leader Lavender was quoted in *Capital Q Weekly* as stating "the quality of your paper in reporting the

events of Confest are poor . . . you should also be accountable for what you print . . ."

Capital Q Weekly also reported that it had received by fax a copy of the statement drafted by the separatist group to the Confest organizers, but that it did not include the signatures of any of the 80 women whom the separatists claimed to have signed this document.

Another Australian lesbian publication, *Lesbiana*, quoted one of the separatist women, Alice Petherbridge as stating: "Rather than wasting any more precious lesbian energy and time on an issue which was created by men, we must look at the way we deal with conflict. We were divided by men in Brisbane. We must look for ways of ensuring we are not divided like this again."

However, separatists' claims that death threats and threats of violence did not occur is contradicted by numerous accounts by members of the organizing committee: "I was aware of some of the backlash we would get, having worked around women who identified very solidly with separatist beliefs, [but] the ferocity of it was really unexpected," collective member Gai Lemon told another Australian queer newspaper, *Brother Sister*.

In an interview with *Lesbians on the Loose*, Jenny Brown was quoted as stating: "We respect difference but we didn't think there would be so much

oppression within our own ranks. We can accept what happened but not how it turned into a bloodbath. We can't accept the violence."

Capital Q Weekly quoted Sheridan Power as stating ". . . it came down to our personal safety. There were death threats made . . . we had no alternative but to do as they asked . . . most of the women in Brisbane are coalitionist . . . most of the separatists were from Sydney and Melbourne."

In a later edition of *Capital Q Weekly* Ms. Power was quoted as stating: "There were threats of violence, we had threats to our cars, we were told that 'yours wouldn't be the only one' . . . it was pretty scary, I personally have had threats that if I talked to the gay press I would have my head belted in . . . I hope it doesn't become a national lesbian feminist separatist anti-transsexual conference . . . if we're divided in our own community then we're gone. By excluding subgroups of our culture we are no better than the mainstream community which has rejected the gay community in the first place."

Lesbians on the Loose also reported that another organizing committee member who wished to remain anonymous stated that she continued to receive death threats even after the conference: "It was Saturday evening after Confest, about 7:45 p.m., and we had some mates 'round for the afternoon. My partner took the call and I could see she was getting distressed, so I picked up the other line. I said the collective was finished, that it was over and then she started getting abusive. She said she owned a gun, knew where we lived and was coming over to 'blow [our] fucking heads off'."

"...it came down to our personal safety. There were death threats made...we had no alternative but to do as they asked...it was pretty scary, I personally have had threats that if I talked to the gay press I would have my head belted in..." -- National Lesbian Confest organizer Sheridan Power

Kathy stated to *Lesbians on the Loose* that she had received no physical or verbal threats herself at the Confest or afterwards. "I had people coming up to me and asking me why I didn't go away and stop spoiling it for people and a lot of my friends were upset, but I had no threats," she was quoted as saying.

In the wake of the controversy at the Lesbian Confest, lesbian separatists succeeded in persuading the founders of Sydney, Australia's, lesbian community center, the Lesbian Space Project (LSP) to prohibit transsexual lesbians from becoming members of the center, according to *Capital Q Weekly*.

Following a vote at a "community consultation," on 8 October, the center's "caretaker committee" announced that only "lesbian-identified women who are born female" can join. The vote was 27 against transsexual inclusion, 15 for, and six abstentions. A second meeting of members of LSP, which was open to the public, was held on 7 November, at which the caretaker committee reaffirmed its decision to prohibit transsexual women from becoming members.

Capital Q Weekly reported the decision has "prompted several community organizations to reassess their support" for the center, and quoted several gay leaders as opposing the move, including officials of Mardi Gras, Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby, Stonewall, and the Transgender Liberation Coalition (TLC). "Discrimination against trans by anybody under any pretext is not acceptable," said TLC's Aidy Griffin, who pledged to fight the caretaker committee's decision.

Griffin says she personally avoids going anywhere that is segregated on the basis of gender or sexuality. "But for TLC, any move by anybody that will exclude trans from anything will be met with a very firm response," says Griffin.

Griffin has stated that LSP co-convenor, Georgina Abrahams, had previously assured TLC that transsexual women would be able to become members of LSP. "There is no way in the world trans would have made a financial contribution to LSP and offered our cooperation and support if trans were not welcome as members," Griffin was quoted as stating in *Lesbians on the Loose*.

A poll conducted by *Lesbians on the Loose* and published in its November 1994 issue, showed 53% of the 79 persons who responded to it to oppose transsexual inclusion and 47% to support it, with those over 40 most likely to support such a ban, and those under 30 least likely to support it.

New Woman Conference Retains Postop Women-Only Policy, Changes Name

(Guerneville, California)--Several issues pertaining to the future of the New Woman Conference were discussed at the fourth annual New Woman Conference, which was held in Guerneville, California from 15-18 September 1994. Concerns raised by outsider Riki Anne Wilchins and former attendee Denise Norris put the issue of attendance by preoperative transsexual women at the top of the list. Other issues of concern included: whether to continue to allow significant others to attend and whether to

change the name of the event. Informal discussion began as soon as participants gathered on Thursday evening, and a scheduled discussion was held Saturday afternoon. Voting on all issues was put off until Sunday.

Discussion regarding preop inclusion took place at the Saturday afternoon session. The statement by Riki Anne Wilchins (which appeared in *TransSisters* #6) had been posted in a common area since Friday morning, but participants found little of significance within it to discuss. The importance of NWC to postoperative women was affirmed, and their right to define their own space when they gather for a retreat was discussed, with most participants believing that the exercise of this right was not problematic.

Concern was expressed for preoperative and nonoperative transsexual women, and the importance of this segment of the community getting their needs met was acknowledged. Some participants stated an interest in helping to ensure that these needs are met, but it was agreed that NWC was not the place for that to happen. An assessment of the needs of these groups would have to include input from them and therefore could not take place at NWC, so no further action was taken.

Much of the discussion Saturday was on the issue of significant others. NWC has always permitted partners of participants to attend (though very few have), and no restrictions have been placed on the sex or gender of significant others who may attend. As far back as the first NWC, it was made clear that partners would not be allowed to attend many of the workshops held during the conference.

Participants talked about their reasons for wanting their partners at NWC. The primary one was so they could share the experience, especially the ritual that takes place on the last day of the conference. The role of significant others at the conference was discussed, including whether a separate program should be offered for partners and whether an increased effort should be made to attract partners to the conference. Generally, attendees felt that they wanted to focus on their own needs for the few days of NWC and if partners accompanied them, that they should be permitted to attend only certain of the workshops and expect to entertain themselves for the remainder of the time.

There was also discussion about whether participants would feel comfortable with significant others roaming about, especially if they happened to be men. Some expressed discomfort with the men who ran the retreat where the conference was held, even though they were, for the most part, unobtrusive. Some wondered whether they would feel comfortable with all types of partners in the hot tub. The question of "penis-phobia," which was identified by Riki Anne Wilchins and Denise Norris as the underlying reason for the exclusion of preops at NWC, was raised. Although a few participants agreed that the sight of a penis in the hot tub at a retreat would be offensive to them, others pointed out that penises were not a problem for them in other settings, such as the Full Circle of Women conference.

Several people felt that because there seemed to be so little

**"She said she owned a gun, knew where we lived and was coming over to 'blow [our] fucking heads off'."-
-a n o n y m o u s L e s b i a n
Confest organizer**

interest on the part of significant others and because so many difficulties were posed by their presence, it would be simpler to exclude them from the conference.

The meeting on Sunday to vote on these issues opened with a vote on whether to change the name of the conference. A discussion on Saturday had generated three contenders: to keep the name New Woman Conference, to change it to New Woman Retreat (to reflect more clearly the nature of the event), or to rename it Rite of Passage. The last choice won easily with 9 votes; there was only 1 for New Woman Retreat; and 3 voted to keep the name unchanged.

The next issue to be voted on was whether to close the conference to significant others. Despite the arguments against permitting partners the previous day, it was decided by a vote of 8 to 3 to keep NWC (now ROP) open to at least some kinds of significant others. Next, votes were taken on whether to restrict the kinds of partners who could attend, the outcome being that ROP will welcome significant others who are postoperative transsexual women (by definition), preoperative or nonoperative male-to-female transsexuals (by a vote of 10 to 2), nontranssexual women (14 to 0), and those who identify as neither male nor female but perhaps as some other gender (11 to 4). It was voted to exclude male-identified persons (8 to 6). Through discussion, a consensus was reached not to define the relationship a significant other must have with a participant, but it was decided by a vote of 12 to 2 to limit the number of partners to one per participant. As in the past, partners will be restricted from attending some of the workshops.

The vote about whether to include or exclude preoperative transsexual women was preceded by a discussion about how "preoperative" and "postoperative" should be defined. It was suggested that a postoperative woman should have had at least two of the following procedures: castration, penectomy, and vaginoplasty. Some were willing to accept any one of these three procedures as qualifying a person as postoperative. The idea of defining postoperative women by legal status was quickly abandoned because the laws governing legal changes are so variable from place to place, and some women who have had some genital surgery may not have female status. The definition previously used by NWC was put forward: a postoperative woman is a person who has lived socially as a man at some time, is currently living socially as a woman, and has had genital surgery that resulted in making her genitals appear more female than they originally were.

Finally, it was decided to vote on whether any male-to-female transsexual who has had no genital surgery should be included as a participant. Twelve favored exclusion, and 2 voted for inclusion. A consensus was reached that if there was any question about whether an applicant should be allowed to attend, the matter would be decided by a steering committee, to which five members were promptly elected. The definition used previously by NWC would serve as a guideline.

Finally, it was resolved that the entire group was in support of all actions taken, and the problem of where to hold the 1995 ROP was raised. A site is needed that can accommodate about 30

people, and it should be small enough that ROP can have exclusive use of the facility. In addition, it must provide privacy and must have a hot tub. And, oh yes, the management mustn't be transphobic. Any suggestions? Call Wendi (207-676-5870).

In short, women attending the 1994 NWC voted to retain the postoperative women-only policy for participants, to restrict the attendance of partners to those who are not male-identified, and to change the name of the retreat to Rite of Passage.

Despite threats of organized protests by preoperative transsexuals and their supporters against the conference's postoperative women-only policy, no such protest materialized throughout the duration of the conference.

San Francisco Passes Rights Ordinance

(San Francisco, California) -- The San Francisco Board of Supervisors on Monday, 12 December 1994 voted unanimously to adopt the recommendations of a Human Rights Commission Report (see "Trans-Action News" in *TransSisters* # 6) calling for the city to adopt a provision to its human rights ordinance to prohibit discrimination on the basis of gender identity in the areas of employment, housing, social services and public accommodations.

Legislative analyst Shelley Elvira Salieri, who co-wrote the ordinance, was quoted in the 15 December 1994 issue of the *San Francisco Bay Times* as saying, that unlike other municipalities that have similar ordinances, "Our ordinance has teeth in it." Salieri stated that one of the most difficult portions of drafting the ordinance was "the bathroom issue." "If privacy in a bathroom can be provided, then no one can discriminate," Salieri was quoted as stating, but that "the ordinance does make an exception in instances where there's a gang shower or no doors on the stalls. You can only push society so far . . . We can't include every transgender person under this ordinance. You can protect someone who is going to be consistent in their gender presentation, but society at large is not going to buy flip-flopping. An employer has to be able to expect what his employee is going to look like."

The new ordinance names the Human Rights Commission as the agency which will deal with complaints and will specify that anyone who feels he or she has been discriminated against can sue. However, California's Fair Employment and Housing Act, which states that only the state can enact civil rights in employment laws, brings into question the true legal power of San Francisco's civil rights laws in the area of employment.

Larry Brinkin of the San Francisco Human Rights Commission was quoted in the *Bay Times* as stating: "We don't have the power to enforce a remedy, but we are usually pretty successful when we intervene in a dispute between an employer and employee."

Legislation Protecting Transpersons Introduced In New South Wales

(Sydney, Australia) -- Legislation outlawing discrimination against transpersons was introduced into the New South Wales Parliament on Thursday, 24 November 1994. Independent M.P.

Clover Moore, whose Bligh electorate encompasses much of Sydney's queer community, said she was introducing a private member's bill to ensure transpeople received basic human rights and fairness. New South Wales already has laws making it illegal to discriminate against a person on the basis of homosexuality but Ms. Moore says her parallel legislation is needed for transpersons. She said she used the term "transgender" rather than "transsexual" in her bill because transpeople themselves preferred that description. "Trannies believe the term 'transsexual' has strong, political overtones which do not adequately describe or include all the people that risk discrimination because they live identified lives as members of the opposite sex," Ms Moore told parliament. The bill defines a transgender person as someone who assumes any of the characteristics of the opposite sex whether by means of medical intervention or otherwise. She said "trannies" were subjected to an extraordinary level of physical and verbal abuse and other forms of violence and discrimination. A recent survey commissioned by the federal government of 150 transgendered persons in the Sydney area showed almost 40% had attempted suicide. "The transition from one gender to another is not made lightly or pleasurably," she said. "It involves balancing an overwhelming need to be true to themselves against the almost certainty of discrimination and social rejection." She said for the past decade the NSW Anti-Discrimination Board had been calling for transgendered people to be included in its act. Ms Moore said she introduced her bill after the coalition government had taken no action.

Transsexual Woman Files \$12 Million Lawsuit Against Former Employer

(Oil City, Pennsylvania) -- Kristine W. Holt on Wednesday, 14 September 1994, filed a nine-count \$12,200,000 lawsuit seeking damages for financial losses as well as emotional suffering against her former employer Northwest Pennsylvania Training Partnership Consortium (NPTPC), along with Venango County Commissioner Jonathan Hutchinson, four commissioners from other counties, three employees of the state Job Service and Gerald Britton, warden of the Venango County Jail, alleging that she was dismissed from her job as an employability assessment specialist on 15 January 1993 because she underwent sex-change surgery on 5 November 1992. The official reason given for Ms. Holt's dismissal was "violation of community standards."

In her lawsuit, Holt alleges that she was forcibly ejected from her work station under threat of police escort and arrest for trespass on 23 November 1992 because the spouse of an agency employee objected to her presence in the office, and that she was subsequently fired from her position.

Ms. Holt filed a series of administrative complaints beginning with an internal procedures complaint filed with NPTPC, which was denied in June 1993. She then filed a complaint with the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Dept. of Labor and Industry, which after a series of hearing and appeals, resulted in a Governor's Order to reinstate her immediately with all back pay and benefits. NPTPC has steadfastly refused to comply with the order or to negotiate any settlement with Ms.

Holt. As a result, the Pennsylvania Dept. of Labor and Industry has declared its intention to impose sanctions.

Following her dismissal, Ms. Holt lost her home and other possessions was forced to live as a homeless person, subsisting on \$195 per month from the Dept. of Public Welfare. She has subsequently had more than one-hundred in person job interviews, but has received no job offers, despite having an otherwise spotless job record and graduating *magna cum laude* from Clarion University in 1984.

Ms. Holt's lawsuit also contends the following:

- On the day after it was announced to Ms. Holt's co-workers that she would be undergoing sex-change surgery, Venango County Prison Warden, Gerald Britton told Ms. Holt's supervisor that Ms. Holt would no longer be welcome at the jail to take applications for a literacy program.

- Although the consortium notified her that it would recognize her by her new name, because the Venango County Board of Elections denied her request to change her name on the voter registration rolls, the consortium then referred to her on all correspondence as "Kris/Rick" or "Kristine/Richard;"

- After establishing the men's room as a unisex bathroom to accommodate her change, that decision was later rescinded, which is a violation of the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act, as well as other policies and agreements;

- During the period between 2 July and 17 December, 1992, the consortium "encouraged and condoned numerous acts of harassment, intimidation and ridicule of the plaintiff by co-workers."

In addition to monetary damages, Ms. Holt's suit seeks reinstatement to her position or similar employment, payment of back wages and full reinstatement of fringe benefits and seniority rights. She is demanding a jury trial.

Judge Investigated For Lecturing Transsexuals

(Tacoma, Washington) -- The Washington State Commission on Judicial Conduct has accused Pierce County District Judge Alan Hutchinson of violating three canons of judicial ethics by lecturing two male-to-female transsexuals who wanted to change their names in preparation for sex-change surgery. Hutchinson has told the state judicial commission he lectured the two transsexuals in his courtroom because he considered their planned sex-change surgery "an unnatural and immoral act." "It's a mutilation," Eatonville District Judge Alan Hutchinson told the state Commission on Judicial Conduct. "I regard mutilation as an unnatural act. That's the way I've been educated."

Hutchinson appeared Friday, 11 November, 1994 before the 11-member commission to answer allegations he violated the state's canons of judicial conduct.

David Hoff, an attorney for the commission staff, told the panel Hutchinson should be suspended or at least censored for his conduct on 26 October 1993, when two preoperative male-to-female transsexuals sought a name change in Hutchinson's court. "The judge was not acting like a judge. He was acting like a preacher or politician," Hoff told the commission.

Hutchinson had turned down the transsexuals' request to change their names to Gina D'Shirico and Catherine Matthews when they appeared before him in August 1993, stating that he would change their names only after they had surgery. Ms. D'Shirico and Ms. Matthews told him they intended to have the operation, but their psychologist had required them to live as women for at least a year before doing so.

Ms. D'Shirico and Ms. Matthews appeared before Hutchinson again with their lawyer on 26 October 1993 to seek a reconsideration. Hutchinson again refused. "This court is not going to allow any male person with a penis and operating testicles to change their Washington state driver's

license indicating they are a female. This court will refuse to allow these people to live like a woman when that means entering public lavatories of women," the judge said. "I feel strongly that in this community, in restaurants that I know of, people send their daughters into the ladies' restroom, and I am violently opposed to the idea of these two petitioners going into any such area in which this court has jurisdiction."

The two appealed Hutchinson's October 1993 ruling to the Pierce County Superior Court. Defended by a deputy county prosecutor, Hutchinson prevailed. Judge Tom Swayze said Hutchinson had not abused his judicial discretion. The two then complained to the Commission on Judicial Conduct, which after several months of investigation proposed an agreement to Hutchinson. He turned it down because it meant he had to admit wrongdoing.

Hutchinson said he would fight the charges rather than accept the commission's proposed reprimand and 24 hours of sexual sensitivity training, declaring: "The commission staffers want to pretend that the entire world accepts irreversible sex-change operations as perfectly normal and proper, but in fact they are illegal in most states," the judge said. "To say that I may not comment on such a controversial, possibly illegal practice is to impose the worst kind of 'political correctness' on judges."

Ms. D'Shirico and Ms. Matthews eventually had surgery in Belgium and returned to Hutchinson and had their names changed, at which time Hutchinson told them: "I will sign an order for a change of name although I feel this whole procedure is immoral. It evidences a mentally ill and diseased mind."

Gina D'Shirico told the commission she was appalled the judge wasn't more sensitive. "We weren't there asking him for his blessing for what we were doing. We wanted him to change our names, not to lecture us about morality or our mental competence," said Ms. Matthews. Ms. Matthews, 40, said she resented the judge's suggestion that she and her housemate might molest women in a restroom. She said neither she nor D'Shirico has committed a crime.

John Connelly, Hutchinson's attorney, acknowledged the judge might have been out of line in conducting his own out-of-

court research, but was within his rights in expressing his concerns. "I don't see anything here that's vicious and evil," he told the panel. "He was not deliberately insulting these people."

Hutchinson, who is running for re-election after three terms on the bench, said he believes the voters, not a state agency, should decide whether he did wrong. Matthews and D'Shirico believe the community supports them, not Hutchinson. "Everywhere we go,

people are accepting. This community has been very good to us, all except for the judge," Matthews said.

The commission will announce its decision on Hutchinson's case sometime in January 1995, said David Akana, commission director.

"The commission staffers want to pretend that the entire world accepts irreversible sex-change operations as perfectly normal and proper, but in fact, they are illegal in most states . . . I feel this whole procedure is immoral. It evidences a mentally ill and diseased mind." -- Judge Alan Hutchinson

New Activist Organization Formed

(Houston, Texas) -- It's Time, America! (ITA), a new transsexual/transgender activist/lobbying organization was formed during the third annual International Conference on Transgender Law and Employment Policy (ICTLEP) held in Houston, Texas from 17-21 August. The mission of ITA is to educate and to influence Congress, state and local governments, and other transsexual/transgender, as well as nontranssexual/transgender political organizations, using direct action where necessary to safeguard and to advance the rights of transsexual and transgendered persons.

The Executive Director of ITA and editor of its newsletter is Karen Ann Kerin, an engineer and law student from Vermont. Other national directors are Jane Fee, who was instrumental in the inclusion of transsexual and transgendered people in Minnesota's sexual-orientation non-discrimination statute; and Jessica Meredith Xavier of Silver Spring, Maryland, who is a former board member, treasurer and Outreach Director of the TransGender Educational Association of Greater Washington and has been actively involved in a number of political organizations.

ITA has identified the following objectives in its mission statement:

- to monitor state and local legislation that impacts on transsexual/transgender issues and concerns;
- to monitor national, state and local administrative/executive actions that impact on transsexual/transgender issues and concerns;
- to monitor national, state and local regulatory actions that impact on transsexual/transgender issues and concerns;
- to seek to establish liaisons with sexual minority, transsexual/transgender and transsexual/transgender friendly groups. Sexual minority groups are defined as gay, lesbian, bisexual or other groups with the exception of those groups that advocate sexual or physical attachment to children or animals;
- to seek to mobilize support for selected candidates who will best serve its mission and goals;
- to lobby and endorse effective *(continued on page 28)*

Mission to Michigan III: Barbarians at the Gates

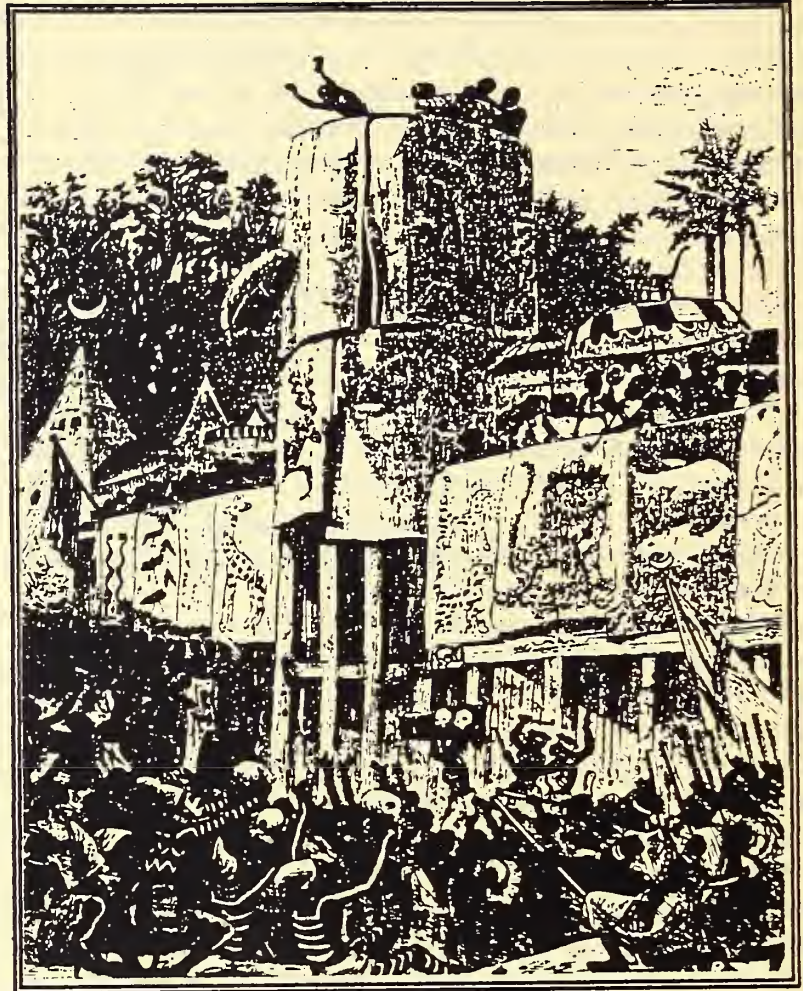
by Davina Anne Gabriel

Nothing could have quite prepared me for the nature or the outcome of this year's protest against the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival's "womyn born womyn" only policy. Of course, having participated in protests against that policy both in 1992 and 1993, I had expected that we would make progress toward achieving our eventual goal of eliminating that exclusionary policy, but I was entirely unprepared for the enormity and complexity of the events that would take place or the eventual breakthrough that transpired. Had someone told me beforehand that I would experience the events that occurred there this year, I would have dismissed it as wildly overoptimistic wishful thinking.

But it was not merely the outcome of this year's protest that was so extraordinary, but likewise the very quality of the entire series of events leading up to it. This year's protest seemed to me more like a dream than waking reality, with its own strangely unique complexity and surreal logic.

We decided upon an entirely different course of strategy than we had adopted in the two previous years. In 1992 and 1993 we had entered the festival with the specific intention of directly challenging the exclusionary policy. In 1994 we decided to make creating greater visibility for our cause to be our top priority, with the expectation that that greater visibility would translate into greater support for our cause and thus enable us to be in a stronger position to challenge the exclusionary policy directly in the future. To that end, we decided that we would create a highly visible presence outside the festival, one that could not possibly be overlooked by anyone entering it, and one that conveyed a powerful statement, as well as would draw significant numbers of women outside to it.

Plans for Camp Trans began to be formulated last February when all but one of us who had taken part in the 1993 protest were reunited at the Full Circle of Women Conference in Essex,



Massachusetts. A fundraising letter was sent out in mid-spring, and in June, during the week after the Stonewall 25

Commemoration, a fundraiser for Camp Trans featuring Kate Bornstein, Leslie Feinberg, Minnie Bruce Pratt and others was held in New York City. By the actual time of the festival, we had a full line up of events planned to take place over the course of the week that we

would be there, as well as a considerable list of endorsers. (see page 36)

I went to the 1994 MWMF with another transsexual woman from Kansas City, Hannah Blackwell. We drove there in a car loaned to us by another transsexual woman, Fran Windler, who could not herself attend, but generously sacrificed the use of her car and rode her bicycle to and from work for a week so that Hannah and I could make the trek to Michigan. Although she didn't directly participate in the protest, she made a considerable sacrifice which enabled Hannah and me to do so, and thus deserves some of the credit for our success.

Hannah and I arrived on the evening of Sunday; 7 August 1994, the day before women begin entering the festival, and two days before the festival officially began. By the time we arrived, Janis Walworth, Wendi Kaiser and Nancy Burkholder were already

"I doubt if anyone there could not have realized that what they were experiencing was nothing less than lesbian herstory in the making, that this was not only a pivotal moment in the history of the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, but in the herstory of the lesbian/feminist movement itself . . ."

there and had begun setting up what would eventually become Camp Trans. As it would soon be dark, Hannah and I immediately began helping them to finish setting everything up. We wanted to be sure that everything was already in place by the next morning when women would begin arriving for the festival.

Knowing that there would be many more of us this year, our encampment spread out over a much larger area than it previously had. We had specific areas mapped out to hold workshops, to prepare food, to set up tents and even set up an enclosed latrine; all of which was quite an improvement over the impromptu nature of the previous year's events.

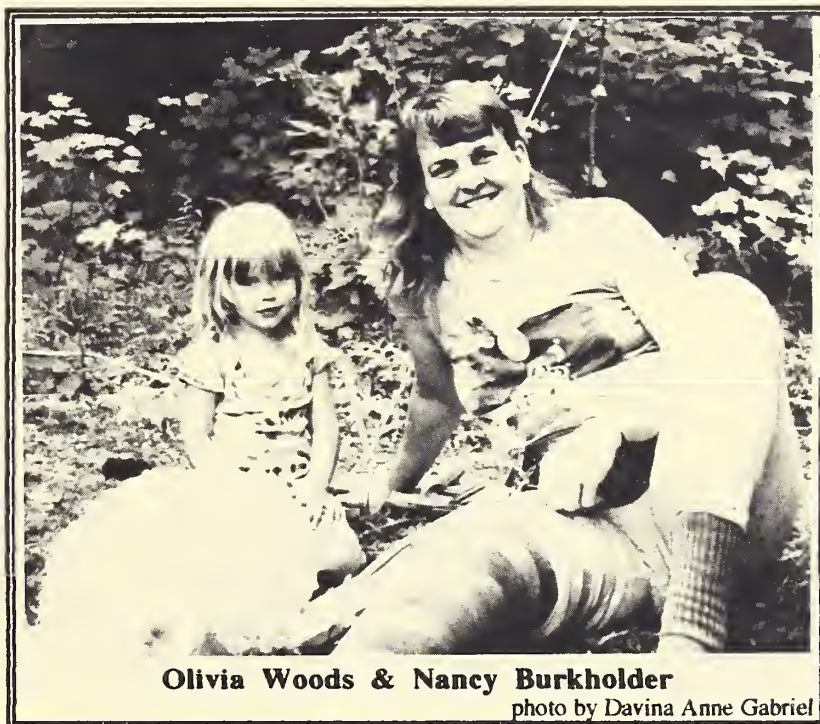
When we had everything else set up and prepared to greet the impending onslaught of eager festigoers, we erected a bright green banner proclaiming "Camp Trans: For Humyn-Born Humyns" on steel poles at the front of our camp, positioned so that no one entering or leaving the festival could possibly fail to see it. We placed a lantern behind it to illuminate it so that it could even be seen at night. Before retiring for the night, we reviewed the guidelines that Janis had written up for us. (see pages 34-35)

Women started lining up outside the festival gates during the night, and by morning the line of cars stretched back as far as the eye could see. We arose early on Monday, 8 August, quickly ate breakfast and set about the task of handing out our literature to the women waiting in line. There were three fliers that we gave to everyone who would accept them. The first was a flier welcoming festigoers to come out to visit us at Camp Trans (see page 36), on the back of which was our schedule of workshops and other events taking place over the course of the week at Camp Trans (see page 37). The second was a joint statement by lesbian musician Alix Dobkin and Riki Anne Wilchins of the Transsexual Menace addressing the need for respectful dialogue on the issue of transsexual inclusion, (see page 38). Alix and Riki had gotten together and written this flier after Alix encountered Riki protesting at one of her concerts in New York City earlier that summer. Also, as a result of the meeting, Alix had agreed to attend a community meeting on the issue of transsexual inclusion at MWMF, and we informed women who accepted our literature that we expected her to be there. The third flier contained two as yet unpublished "Dykes to Watch Out For" cartoons dealing with the issue of transsexual lesbians (see pages 40 & 41) that Alison Bechdel had generously granted us permission to distribute to the women at the festival.

Wendi, Hannah and I started handing out fliers to women in their cars around 9:00 a.m. Janice stayed behind at Camp Trans to keep an eye on things, but intermittently drove Wendi's pickup truck up the road to bring us more fliers in case we ran out. Nancy also stayed behind at camp because her leg was in a cast, as she had broken it in an airplaning accident about a month before. I kidded Nancy that she probably broke it on purpose so that she wouldn't have to do any work at Camp Trans, but actually, Nancy's inability to do any physical labor turned out to be quite fortuitous, as she assumed the responsibility of making sure that there was always someone at Camp Trans who was not busy and, thus, someone whom the women who came by to visit us could talk to. With her very easygoing and unflappable manner, her

knowledge and understanding of the issues, as well as having the greatest name recognition of all of us, Nancy proved to be the perfect person to do this.

Nearly everyone whom we talked to in line was friendly to us and expressed support for our cause. Many kept us involved in conversations for long periods of time and had a great many questions about what we were doing, often wanting to know how they could volunteer to help us. Only a very few women refused to accept our literature, and only one person whom I encountered expressed anything overtly rude to us. Whenever anyone refused to accept our literature, we would respond by saying something like "Hope you have great festival," to which one woman shot back, "Well, I hope that you don't!" This was the only instance that I remember in which a festigoer overtly expressed hostility towards us.



Olivia Woods & Nancy Burkholder

photo by Davina Anne Gabriel

But there were far many more supportive women along the way, many of whom remembered us from the previous year, that more than made up for the ones who were unreceptive to us. Most gratifying, and sometimes embarrassing for me, was that some women actually remembered me by name from the previous two years, but I was usually unable to remember any of theirs. Overall, I estimate that around 90% of the women waiting in line that morning gladly accepted our literature, and the vast majority of those expressed support for our cause as well. Many of them promised that they would come out to Camp Trans to visit us and to attend some of our events. One couple even offered us their leftover bacon and eggs that they had cooked on their Coleman stove on the side of the road beside their car.

The overwhelming degree of support that we received from the women waiting to get inside the festival made distributing our literature such an enjoyable and fulfilling activity that we hardly even noticed the passage of time. Before we realized it, we had reached the end of the line, and it was already early evening. We

had walked almost to the end of the dirt road leading to the festival, a distance of just slightly short of three miles. Only then did we realize that we were exhausted. As Wendi seemed to be the most talkative of the three of us, she remained at the end of the line and continued to distribute literature to women as they arrived, and Hannah and I went off to take showers so as to be ready and refreshed for more of the same the following day.

Of course, we were not able to get our literature into the hands of everyone who entered the festival. Besides the few who refused to accept it, there were some women who were still asleep in their cars, and we did not want to disturb them. Women continued to arrive at the festival throughout the evening and into the night, and we didn't try to hand out literature to women

Hendrix, both from Kokomo, Indiana. ReaRae had been one of the original organizers of the MWMF in its early years, but had become disillusioned with the internal politics of it, and had moved on to become a disability rights activist and to coordinate disability access at the National Women's Music Festival in Bloomington, Indiana. Her lover, Kodi, is intersexual, but has lived as a lesbian for most of her life. We had invited ReaRae and her lover to conduct workshops about disability rights at Camp Trans.

At about 10:00 a.m. on Tuesday, 9 August, several security women walked across the road to Camp Trans and delivered a letter to Janis Walworth. I knew what it was even before she opened it. As I expected, it was a letter from Alix Dobkin stating that she would not be attending the community meeting that we had scheduled to take place the next day to discuss the issue of transsexual inclusion at MWMF. (see page 42) Alix gave as her reason that she felt that her attendance might be interpreted as a sign of support for the inclusion of transsexual women at the festival. I wasn't in the least bit surprised. I had been skeptical that Alix would actually show up for this meeting since the first time that I heard that she was going to do so. Alix reaffirmed her commitment to engaging in respectful dialogue about the issue, but stated that she felt that discussing the issue at the festival is not the appropriate time or place, reasoning which I find to be quite disingenuous to say the least. If discussing the issue at the festival itself is not the appropriate time or place, then what is the appropriate time and place? At what other time and place are there as many women who have an interest in this issue all together in the same place and able to discuss the issue? Doesn't excluding the possibility of discussion of this issue at Michigan itself preclude *ever* really having a meaningful discussion about it? It seems to me that Alix's real reason for not attending the community meeting was that she was simply



clockwise from left: ReaRae Sears, Kodi Hendrix, Mariette Pathy Allen, Karl ? from *Out* magazine

photo by Davina Anne Gabriel

arriving after dark, as it was too dangerous to be walking along the road at that time. Still, we knew that we had successfully gotten our literature into the hands of the vast majority of women who arrived that day, and that we had likewise managed to generate a lot of discussion about the issue already, thus insuring that the exclusionary policy would be an issue even before the festival began. In addition, many women offered to take literature inside and distribute it to women who did not receive it outside, thus ensuring that at least some of the women we missed would also get our literature. And we also knew that no one who entered that festival could have possibly not seen our Camp Trans banner across from the main gate as they entered, and thus could not have not known that *something* was going on across the road, and that it was definitely something *big*.

Later that evening, we were joined at Camp Trans by two nontranssexual supporters: ReaRae Sears and her lover Kodi

afraid of discussing the issue among festigoers themselves, as she knew that the overwhelming majority of them don't agree with it or how it was formulated.

Beginning that same morning, festival security began trying to prevent us from distributing our literature to women as they arrived for the festival. As there was no longer any line of cars waiting to get inside, we were able to stand across the road and approach cars as they slowed down to enter the festival gate, and hand them our literature as they entered. A security woman came across the road and told us that we could not hand out our literature because we were stopping oncoming traffic, and that this was a traffic hazard. We pointed out to her that we were not actually stopping cars because they have to stop anyway before entering the festival, and we were merely giving them our literature as they slowed to a stop. She then said that the sheriff had informed the producers that we couldn't hand out our literature

to women as they arrived because this would create a traffic hazard. We knew that this was not true, as Janis had contacted the sheriff before we arrived and told him what we were intending to do, and he had told her that it was alright with him, but advised her to tell us to be careful and to watch for oncoming traffic. Janis told this to the security woman, who didn't really have a response, but just turned around and went back inside the festival, obviously frustrated that she had failed to prevent us from continuing to distribute our literature. A short time later, realizing that we weren't simply going to quit distributing our literature, security then sent women outside to stand farther down the road and stop cars themselves, just to tell the women inside that their next stop would be the front gate. This was a very obvious ploy to prevent them from slowing down enough to take our literature as they arrived. Realizing what they were doing, we simply moved farther up the road, which meant that we really did have to stop cars along the road, but we figured that if security could do so, then so could we, and they really wouldn't have any rationale to stop us from doing so if they were doing it themselves. We anticipated that security might respond by moving even further up the road than we had done, but they didn't do so, probably realizing that we were prepared to play that leapfrog game as far as necessary, and that we were better prepared to do so than were they. After all, they couldn't get *too* far from the gate.

I later heard from one security woman that the security coordinators had told them that the reason that they were trying to prevent us from distributing literature was concern for our safety, but when I explained to her the reasons why that obviously wasn't true, she was rather upset to realize that they had not been truthful to her. It was very obvious to us from the beginning that their claims that they were only concerned about our safety were untrue, as the effort to prevent us from handing out literature actually began even before we arrived at the festival when Boo Price called Janis at her home and told her that the sheriff had said that he wasn't going to allow us to hand out literature on the road, which Janis knew was untrue as she had already contacted the sheriff herself and obtained his permission.

Later that afternoon, our numbers doubled to fourteen as we were joined by the New York City contingent, consisting of four transsexual women: Riki Anne Wilchins, April Fredricks, Kristy Withers and Lynn Elizabeth Walker, along with two nontranssexual women, Linda Colonna and April Sang, whose lover is a transsexual woman, as well as a male reporter from *Out* magazine. Yet at that point, only half of the people who would eventually spend time at Camp Trans throughout the week had arrived, but already it had turned into something much bigger than I had ever imagined.

Our scheduled events began on Wednesday morning, 10 August, with the community meeting, which was attended by

only a total of about twenty-five women, a much smaller turnout than we had anticipated. But the low attendance was probably due to the fact that it looked as though there were a strong possibility of rain developing that morning, rather than lack of interest in the issue. Nevertheless, those of us who were there did have a productive discussion about the issue, with everyone in attendance agreeing that transsexual women should be allowed to attend the festival. Looking back on it now, I really regret that we scheduled the community meeting to be the first of our scheduled events; I believe that we would have achieved a far greater turnout if we had scheduled it as our final event, but we had scheduled it

for this particular time because Alix Dobkin had said that that was the only time that she could be there, and then she didn't even show up for it.

During the middle of the community meeting, we were greeted with the arrival of our next Camp Trans resident, San Francisco lesbian comedian Mimi=Freed. Though Mimi was only at Camp Trans for slightly over a day, her presence there was a big boost to all of us, as she kept us entertained with stand up comedy and provided so much encouragement and support for our cause.

Later on Wednesday afternoon, a totally unexpected individual showed up to join us at Camp Trans, Charlotte Manheimer, a 68 year old lesbian from Cincinnati, Ohio, and long time friend of Leslie Feinberg's -- who had first met Leslie when she first joined the Workers' World Party and was living as a man back in the 1970s -- who drove up to the festival with the express purpose of supporting those of us at Camp Trans, thus bringing the total number of people at Camp Trans to sixteen. Because she is over 65 years of age, Charlotte could have entered the festival for free, but instead chose to stay at Camp Trans to demonstrate her support for us. I was quite surprised, but very grateful, to see something like this happening. I never would have imagined that someone whom we didn't even know and had not invited to Camp Trans ourselves would just show up on her own specifically to be in solidarity with us.

Later that evening, two more transsexual women, Riki Ashby Fredrickson -- who had participated in the previous year's protest -- and Nancy Ann Forrest, both of Philadelphia arrived at Camp Trans, bringing the total number of people there to eighteen.

The next day, Thursday, 11 August, we decided to take advantage of the fact that Charlotte could enter the festival for free to challenge the exclusionary policy. Charlotte approached the gate, told them that she was over 65 years of age, and that she wanted to go inside to see a friend of hers who was there. As security had seen her coming from Camp Trans, they asked her if she were a transsexual, as we expected they would. As we had planned, she refused to tell them whether she was or not. Security staff then said that they would allow her to enter if she would agree to "respect" the "womyn born womyn" only policy,



Mimi=Freed

which she likewise refused to do. Security staff then offered to escort her inside, but still refused to issue her a wristband, which Charlotte also told them was unsatisfactory. Unsure of how to proceed, security staff told Charlotte to wait at Camp Trans while they deliberated what to do. About two hours later, two security women walked across the road and told Charlotte that they had decided to issue her a wristband and that she was free to enter the festival.

Five more individuals joined us throughout the day. Arriving on Thursday were: Jessica Xavier of Silver Spring, Maryland and Zythyra Anne Austen of Winchester, Virginia, (who arrived literally minutes before her workshop was scheduled to attend); and Arlene Wolves and her partner Beverly Woods, who together form the musical duo of Beyond the Pale) and Beverly's four year-old daughter Olivia, who became the youngest member of Camp Trans. This brought our total number to twenty-two. (Mimi=Freed had to leave earlier in the day after conducting her workshop "The Joys of Marginalization.")

By this time, Camp Trans was starting to seem not just like a camp, but like a little city, or at least a kind of mini-festival counterpart to MWMF. I had expected that maybe we would get ten or twelve women to participate in the protest this year, but I had never expected that our numbers would swell to over twice that. It seemed amazing to me to think back to only two years before when

Janis and I, along with Janis's sister and another nontranssexual woman, had conducted a survey inside the festival. Of course, even then, I realized that we were planting the seeds of something bigger and that what we were doing eventually would swell, but I never imagined that it would do so at quite such an astounding rate, that we would have achieved something like this only two years later.

By this point, we had become virtually an extension of the festival itself, despite being outside the actual festival grounds, by virtue of the fact that women from the festival were constantly coming out to Camp Trans for one reason or another. Besides all of the various workshops that women came out to attend, many women just came out to talk to us and to express their support, and many would even stay for our late night group meetings around the campfire, in which we reviewed the events of the day and planned our strategy for the following day. And as was the case last year, there were several festigoers who seemed to actually spend more time at Camp Trans than inside the festival itself. As with the previous year, the outpouring of support that we received from festigoers was simply overwhelming and deeply touching, only even more so this year because there was so much more of it.

It was as though the boundary between the festival and Camp Trans had practically disappeared, as if we had become a de facto

part of MWMF. It occurred to me that Camp Trans could have just as accurately been called "The Outer Limits," for just as the S/M camping area, which is right beside the road, but inside the gate is called "The Twilight Zone" -- as it is sort of outside the festival while simultaneously being inside it -- so Camp Trans was in a sense inside the festival despite being officially outside of it, and that it also accurately reflects the status of transsexual lesbians within the lesbian community itself in that we are both inside and outside that community simultaneously, that we represent a border of the community that some members of it consider to be outside of it.

The issue of transsexual inclusion was somewhat overshadowed by an even bigger controversy at MWMF this year, and that was the presence of the lesbian punk rock band Tribe 8, who describe themselves as "San Francisco's own all-dyke, all-out, in-your-face, blade-brandishing, gang-castrating, dildo-swingin' bullshit-detecting, aurally pornographic, Neanderthal-pervert band of patriarchy-smashing snatchlickers," and whose stage antics consist of such things as wearing dildos while performing and cutting them off and throwing them into the audience, and some of whose members openly admit to practicing S/M. Tribe 8's lyrics and stage antics were considered by many festigoers, particularly older festigoers, to promote violence and to be pornographic. Anticipating possible controversy, Tribe 8 scheduled a workshop on the morning of their performance entitled, "So

You Have a Problem With Tribe 8?" to try to explain what they were all about. In response, a group of anti-S/M lesbians conducted a workshop entitled "Unmasking the Violence in the Lesbian Community" which was both anti-S/M and anti-Tribe 8 in nature, at which S/M lesbians were barred from attending. S/M lesbians who tried to distribute a report on the incidence of violence against S/M and leatherwomyn within the lesbian community outside the workshop were in turn attacked by anti-S/M lesbians. Some of the women who attended the workshop decided to enact a protest against Tribe 8 at their performance that night and, ironically, carried signs stating such things as "Violence Between Women is Violence Against All Women."

On the day of their performance, several Tribe 8 members came out to visit Camp Trans and to express their support for our cause. Several of them bought Transsexual Menace t-shirts from Riki Anne Wilchins and said that they would wear them onstage that night.

It's difficult to ascertain precisely whether the Tribe 8 controversy was beneficial, detrimental or had no effect on the cause of transsexual inclusion, but it appears to me to have been beneficial, even though it overshadowed the transsexual issue, and thus took away some of the attention that would have otherwise been directed toward us. Since transsexual inclusion was thus relegated to the second biggest controversy at Michigan this year,



Hillary Smith

photo by Davina Anne Gabriel

it was made to seem less threatening, and the fact that Tribe 8 seems to have prevailed at Michigan this year, with the overwhelming majority of festigoers clearly supportive of them, and supported us in the process, seems to be a major plus in our favor.

The presence of another controversial lesbian group at Michigan also proved to be very advantageous to our cause, and that was the Lesbian Avengers. Several Lesbian Avengers came out to visit Camp Trans on Thursday. Among them was Hillary Smith of Portland, Oregon. Hillary recognized Riki Anne Wilchins, who is a member of the N.Y.C. Lesbian Avengers from a Lesbian Avengers meeting that she had attended in N.Y.C. Hillary asked Riki if she was planning on attending the Lesbian Avengers meeting that was scheduled to take place inside the festival on Saturday afternoon, and Riki jokingly told her to, "send out an escort for me." Hillary said, "Okay, how many do you want?" Realizing that Hillary was being completely serious, Riki was suddenly made aware that the possibility of the Lesbian Avengers sending out a contingent to escort her inside would present us with an unanticipated opportunity to challenge the policy in a constructive manner.

Later that evening, as we sat around the campfire discussing the day's events and planning the next day's strategy, we began seriously discussing the possibility of sending Riki into the festival if Hillary were able to come through with a contingent of Lesbian Avengers to escort her inside. We all thought that it sounded like an opportunity that would be worth taking advantage of and agreed that we should do it.

By Friday, I was thoroughly exhilarated, but the best had still yet to come. On Friday afternoon; 12 August, we were joined by Leslie Feinberg and her lover Minnie Bruce Pratt, along with James Green, director of the FTM Support Group in San Francisco, California and the editor/publisher of the *FTM Newsletter*, the largest publication dealing specifically with FTM issues in the world, and two nontranssexual women, Mariette Pathy Allen and Sandra Cole, bringing the total number of persons at Camp Trans to 27. The five of them arrived several minutes after James's workshop on female-to-male experience was scheduled to begin, so he had to rush off to conduct it the moment he arrived.

I was overjoyed to see Leslie again, having met her once before a year earlier during her visit to Kansas City in June of 1993. Leslie's address, entitled "Sisterhood: Make It Real!", (see excerpts on pages 24-26) which could accurately be described as the keynote address of the week's events, took place immediately after James Green's workshop. This was truly the highlight of

the entire week. Approximately 150 women came outside to hear Leslie speak, despite the strong possibility of rain, completely overflowing the canopied area that we erected for workshops. Leslie captivated the crowd from the moment she began speaking and held them enthralled throughout her entire hour and a half address.



James Green

photo by Mariette Pathy Allen

As I listened to Leslie speak, I could not help but know with absolute certainty that MWMF is going to have to eventually give up its exclusionary policy. Listening to Leslie thoroughly obliterate every rationale for the continuation of such policies, and exposing the underlying inconsistencies inherent in them, and witnessing the outpouring of support for what she had to say, I don't think that anyone could doubt that the tide had irrevocably turned within the lesbian community on this issue and that it was just a matter of time before Michigan had to catch up with the rest of it. I felt a sense of exhilaration that was obviously shared by everyone else there, and I looked over at Nancy Burkholder and I thought about how she must have felt on that night when she was summarily expelled from the festival -- coincidentally on that very same date three years earlier, from a spot that one could actually see from where she was now sitting -- and how incredibly different she must now feel. I thought about how utterly alone, dejected and humiliated she must have felt on that night, and how she could never have imagined that what was happening to her that night would ever result in something like what was now

happening, that there would ever be so many people who would come outside to show their support for her, or that her expulsion would be the event that would make the exclusion of transsexual women from women-only space a national issue throughout the entire lesbian/feminist community. And I thought about the producers and the security women who expelled Nancy and how, I'm certain, that they never could have imagined that what they were doing that night would ever result in anything like this, that Nancy would do anything other than just go away, and that they would just be able to sweep the entire issue under the rug. I thought about how they could have never imagined that there would be such an outpouring against what they did, that this many women would care so deeply about what happened to Nancy, and how incredibly remarkable what was happening truly was. I imagined that for Nancy what was happening around her must seem nothing short of miraculous, just as I was feeling it was. In fact, Nancy and I had indeed discussed just how miraculous the entire course of events since the time of her expulsion had been, both of us still amazed at what we had made happen.

Many of the women who came out to hear Leslie speak stuck around for the concert by the Celtic Transsexual Modal Band from Hell -- consisting of Beverly Woods, Arlene Wolves, Zythyra

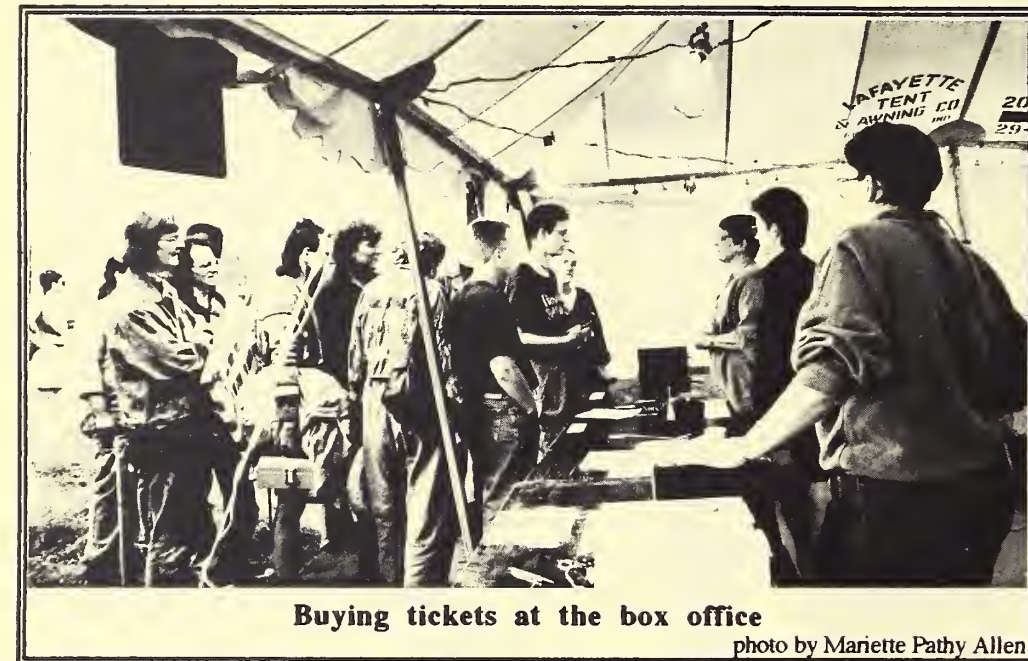
Anne Austen and Jessica Xavier -- the highlight of which was Arlene Wolves' delightful composition "The Ballad of Nancy B." (see page 33) which retold (though slightly inaccurately) the story of Nancy's expulsion from MWMF three years before, and which had everyone joyfully singing along with the chorus.

This was followed by a joint reading by Leslie Feinberg and her lover Minnie Bruce Pratt, consisting of selections from Leslie's novel *Stone Butch Blues* and from Minnie Bruce's

would be a good idea. To allay concerns about appearing to bring men into the festival, we agreed that James would make clear that he did not want to enter the festival, but only wanted to ascertain how the "womyn born womyn" only policy would apply to him.

Saturday, 13 August, was the most momentous day of all, the dramatic and unanticipated climax to the week's events. The day started out with Minnie Bruce Pratt conducting her workshop consisting of readings from her upcoming book, along with free oat meal to whoever showed up.

Around 10:00 a.m., we requested a meeting with the coordinators of security, Sue Doerfer and Lucy Tatman, which they agreed to. Leslie Feinberg introduced herself as the author of *Stone Butch Blues*, and said that although she was born with female anatomy and still identifies as a woman and as a lesbian that she also identifies as transgendered, that she passes as a man, is frequently mistaken for a man, that her driver's license lists her sex as male, and that sometimes she and her lover pass as a heterosexual couple, and asked if she would be allowed to purchase a ticket to the festival. One of the security coordinators (I don't know which one is which) replied, "We would prefer that you do not." Leslie then stated that on her next book tour that she would inform her audiences that she had received confirmation of what she had always suspected; that is, that



Buying tickets at the box office

photo by Mariette Pathy Allen

upcoming book *She*, to be published by Firebrand Books in February 1995.

Following that was by one of the most dreamlike of all the events to take place at Camp Trans during the week, and that was a wedding between two of the festigoers, Kym and Becki. Earlier in the day, they had asked Leslie Feinberg and James Green to give them away to each other during the ceremony and they had agreed to do so. So, the impromptu ceremony -- which had to qualify as the most unique and unusual wedding ceremony of all time -- was conducted by transsexual minister Lynn Walker by lantern light and attended by everyone at Camp Trans, as well as by many festigoers. Though it contributed to the dreamlike atmosphere of Camp Trans, it was also one of those events that gave Camp Trans the feeling of being something more than just a camp, the feeling of being a community, a kind of small town on the frontier of human experience. I remarked to Janis that if things continued to proceed like this that there would probably be a baby born at Camp Trans in 1995.

Before retiring for the night, at our usual day-end group meeting to reappraise the day's events and plan strategy for the following day, we discussed the possibility of challenging the festival's policy by sending James Green, Leslie Feinberg and Kodi Hendrix to the box office the next day to determine how the festival would react if they were to ask for tickets. Despite some reservations about the possibility of appearing as though we were trying to bring men into the festival by sending James Green to the box office along with Leslie and Kodi, we all agreed that it

she is not welcome at the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, whereupon the security coordinator who had answered Leslie initially immediately retracted her statement and said that she never meant to say that Leslie was not welcome, and that she was most certainly welcome to attend if she so desired.

Then James Green introduced himself as a postoperative female-to-male transsexual and stated that he had no intention of entering the festival, and was only there to be in support of his transsexual sisters, but wanted to know if, applying the festival's logic that male-to-female transsexuals are still men, whether he would still be considered to be a woman, and would therefore be able to purchase a ticket. The security coordinators replied that they did not know the answer to this, as this situation had never presented itself before, and that festival policy did not address such a possibility.

Then Kodi Hendrix, who has until recently identified as a lesbian, but recently began identifying as a male, introduced himself as someone who was born with both male and female genitals and asked if "only half of me could go inside." The security coordinators were also unable to provide an answer to this question.

At this point, one of the security coordinators was virtually in tears at having been placed in the unenviable position of defending a festival policy which she had no role in formulating and probably didn't even agree with. The other one was also very noticeably uncomfortable at being placed in this position. I felt sorry for them, remembering the times in my life when I worked

for a bureaucracy whose rules I felt were arbitrary and unjust, but still had to enforce. It would surprise me very much to find either one of them in those positions again next year.

We asked them to obtain clarification of the festival policy regarding Leslie, James and Kodi from Boo and Lisa, which they agreed to do. About an hour later, they returned with their reply, which was that Boo and Lisa had stated that the term "womyn born woman" is perfectly clear and needs no further clarification, and that it was up to each individual to decide for herself whether that policy applied to them. We were also informed that anyone who tried to purchase tickets would be allowed to do so "since it [was] no longer a security issue."

We then hurriedly decided that when the Lesbian Avengers sent their contingent out to escort Riki inside to attend their meeting that several of us would likewise go inside. The other transsexual women chosen to go inside were: Rica Fredrickson, Jessica Xavier, April Fredricks, Zythyra Austen and myself. Unfortunately, Nancy Burkholder was unable to be among those who entered the festival because her cast had broken and she had to be taken to the nearest hospital by Wendi Kaiser to have it repaired. Leslie Feinberg, who had previously said that she would not enter the festival "until [her] transsexual sisters are able to attend" decided to postpone her flight home for one day in order to enter the festival later that afternoon. In addition, Minnie Bruce Pratt, Kodi Hendrix and Mariette Pathy Allen and Sandra Cole decided to enter the festival as well.

Although I do not consider myself to be a "womyn born woman" I decided that I could still enter the festival in good faith because I don't believe that anyone is a "womyn born woman." Like Simone de Beauvoir, I believe that "one is not born a woman, one becomes one," and decided that since none of the other women who were at the festival were "womyn born women" either and that none of them had been quizzed as to whether they were "womyn born women," that I could enter the festival in good faith despite not considering myself a "womyn born woman."

Shortly before 2:00 p.m., as promised, the Lesbian Avengers sent out a contingent of women to escort Riki to their scheduled meeting. They surrounded those of us who were going inside and we proceeded to the box office to purchase tickets. At the box office, Riki presented a statement that she had written stating that our contingent consisted of transsexual women, nontranssexual women, a transgendered woman and an intersexed person, but that we were not going to identify who was who, that we all felt that we were respecting the "womyn born womyn" only policy, and that we all wanted to purchase tickets. We encountered no resistance. All of us were given the plastic wristbands that serve as tickets to the festival. With Leslie, Minnie Bruce, Riki, Kodi, Hillary Smith and I in the lead, we entered the festival.

I felt elated to be back inside; it was like a homecoming. Although the week's events outside the festival had been



Entering the festival

photo by Mariette Pathy Allen

enjoyable and exciting for me, there were also times during the week when, because of having the experience of being inside before, I nevertheless did feel disappointed about not being able to go inside this year. Entering the festival was not something that I had expected to happen this year, so it was very much like receiving an unanticipated gift.

The weather had been lousy all week long, the temperature abnormally cold, the sky overcast and cloudy almost constantly, with the sun peeping out from behind the clouds only occasionally and then never for more than about fifteen minutes at a time. Every day we had hoped that we would finally get some sunny weather the next day, but it never did happen until Saturday afternoon. Just as we were entering the festival, the sky cleared and the temperature rose as if somehow it were waiting for this very moment to happen. I remarked to Leslie that it took us entering the festival for the sky to finally clear.

We were joined by supporters all along the way to the meeting. Many other women just cheered us as we passed by. We told women along the way to come to join us at the meeting. By the time that we reached the meeting, there must have been at least fifty people in our group, and there were at least a hundred women at the meeting to greet us. As we entered, we were met with a resounding cheer from all the women there.

After discussion of Lesbian Avengers issues was completed, Leslie addressed the group essentially recapping the speech she had given at Camp Trans the night before, again electrifying the crowd as she had previously done. I doubt if anyone there could not have realized that what they were experiencing was nothing less than lesbian herstory in the making, that this was not only a pivotal moment in the history of the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, but also in the herstory of the lesbian/feminist movement itself, and that the course of both MWMF and the lesbian/feminist community as a whole had been launched on an entirely new trajectory.

After the meeting, many women wanted to stick around and

to continue discussing what had been said at the meeting, but we had to move to another area so that the area we were in could be utilized for another workshop. About thirty of us moved to an adjacent area where no workshop was being conducted. Suddenly a woman walked into the area and declared that she was angry that we were there and that she felt very "ripped off" because transsexual women had been allowed to enter the festival. She said that she had been walking along a path and had been able to sense "boy energy" even before she had seen any of us.

Leslie asked her why she felt that way. I don't recall



**Wendi Kaiser opening champagne in celebration,
Janis Walworth to right**

photo by Davina Anne Gabriel

everything she said, but I do recall that one of the things she said was that transsexual women are men and that men "take up more space" than women. I wondered how the very heavyset woman, who was much larger than I, and who was sitting next to me, felt when she heard that. Leslie then asked her if she could tell which of us were transsexual and which of us were not. The woman declined to do so, saying she didn't want to make the issue "personal." Leslie then invited her to join with us in discussion about the issue, but she just turned around and walked away.

As it was getting close to dinner time, and we had paid for tickets which include the price of meals, some women suggested that we should stay for dinner. We discussed whether or not we should do so, but decided against it since we knew that dinner was being prepared for us back at Camp Trans, but we decided that before we left that we would parade through the dining area before returning to Camp Trans. Some women went to the kitchen and got food to give to us take back with us.

Once again, women spontaneously joined us along the way when they saw us parading through the festival. When we reached the dining area -- where there was the greatest number of women -- we were again met with a resounding chorus of cheers. It was another of many truly exhilarating moments, reminding me of marching in the 1993 March on Washington and having the feeling that after experiencing this that I would never be able to go back to the lesbian community and willingly accept marginalization within it again. Along the way I saw signs

announcing a meeting to discuss Camp Trans and the issue of transsexual inclusion posted at various places throughout the festival. This was another of many things about the entire experience that was tremendously gratifying to me because I knew that this was not a meeting that any of us at Camp Trans had anything to do with organizing, but had been spontaneously organized by women inside the festival who cared deeply about the issue.

We deliberately took a long route through the festival on our way out, so as to pass as many people as possible, so of course we were all exhausted, but nonetheless exhilarated when we got back to Camp Trans at approximately 5:30 p.m. After eating dinner, we discussed what should be our next move. The bright sunny weather that had greeted our entrance into the festival had suddenly vanished just at about the same time that we returned to Camp Trans. It was positively uncanny how the only good weather to last more than a few minutes seemed to coincide almost exactly with the time that we were inside the festival.

Severe thunderstorms were forecast to begin that evening and to last throughout the night and all day Sunday. Realizing that Camp Trans would probably just be washed away by the impending storm, and feeling that we had succeeded beyond all expectations in accomplishing our goals, and that the meeting scheduled to take place inside the festival on Sunday probably wouldn't happen anyway because of the storm, we decided to declare victory, strike camp and to go home.

However, we did think that at least some of us should stay behind and say goodbye to festigoers as they left the next day if at all possible, so Janis, Wendi and Nancy stayed behind. The rain soon began and we hurriedly dismantled Camp Trans and packed our belongings in our cars. But the storm came on so quickly that none of us was entirely able to escape getting wet before leaving. We drove to Lansing and had one last meal together at a Perkins restaurant before going our separate ways. We discussed what we should do next year, and we all felt that the next logical step in our process of challenging the exclusionary policy would be to enter the festival next year and to refuse to leave if told to do so.

All the way back to Kansas City, all that I could do was to marvel at the extraordinary and momentous series of mind-blowing events that I had just experienced. It was just like awakening from an utterly fantastic dream.

Ironically, though the storm on Saturday night was indeed very severe and Camp Trans probably would have indeed been washed away had we stayed, the weather was warm and sunny the entire next day, so Janis, Wendi and Nancy were able to make a visible presence throughout the day, saying goodbye to festigoers as they departed. The meeting inside the festival was also able to take place. According to one of the women who attended, there were approximately 35 women in attendance of which approximately 70% were either strongly in favor of or leaning toward favoring changing the policy to allow transsexual women to attend. Some of the women attending that meeting also expressed an interest in conducting workshops about the issue of transsexual inclusion inside the festival next year.

Later Janis informed me that on Sunday afternoon a pickup truck pulled up into the field across the road from the festival and a local resident from a nearby town got out and told her and Wendi and Nancy that he thinks that he might be a transsexual, but had never talked to anyone about it before. He had heard about our activities and wanted to talk to us about what we were doing, and to just get some general information about transsexuality. He pulled his truck off the road because he was afraid of someone he knew seeing it parked beside our camp.

Whether MWMF's willingness to allow us to enter the festival this year signals a change in festival policy is still uncertain, but all indications so far are that it does not. One factor that might make a difference is that one of the current festival producers, Barbara ("Boo") Price, has announced that this would be the last year that she would serve as a producer. Whether anyone will take her place or whether Lisa Vogel will produce the festival by herself still remains uncertain.

Lisa Vogel has subsequently indicated that their willingness to allow us to enter the festival does not signal a change in the festival policy, and that the "womyn born womyn" only policy will remain in effect. An article in the 25 August 1994 edition of the *San Francisco Bay Times*, Ms. Vogel stated that the decision to allow transsexual women to enter the festival was an effort to diffuse what she called "a gender-baiting situation," and added that the festival would be treading on dangerous legal ground if it refused to sell tickets to anyone. On this later point, Ms. Vogel has no need to worry, at least not from any of us who were involved in the protest this year. We have from the beginning stated that we have no desire or intention of challenging this policy on legal grounds, that we don't want to resort to the patriarchal system to resolve this issue, and that we do recognize the producers' legal right to determine festival policy, but that we would like for this policy to be formulated in accordance with feminist principles and practices, rather than in the autocratic manner in which it was determined.

The *San Francisco Bay Times* also reported that a large group of separatist women left the festival en masse after learning that we had been allowed to enter, but we have as of yet been unable to confirm this.

Despite our concerted attempt to insure that our press release did not convey the false impression that our entrance into the festival signaled an end to the exclusionary policy, apparently some media have reported it that way, or at least some readers have interpreted it to mean that. However, all indications that we have received since the festival signal the contrary, that MWMF does not intend to eliminate its exclusionary policy. What our entrance into the festival probably does indicate is that in practice MWMF will continue to enforce the policy on a "don't ask, don't tell" basis; that is, persons entering the festival who are not obviously male will be admitted without any questions and will not risk expulsion as long as they remain closeted. However, we still consider this solution to be unsatisfactory, as we believe that we should all be allowed to be out as transsexual women inside

the festival. In light of this, we have resolved that protests against MWMF's continued "womyn born womyn" only policy will continue again in 1995 and in subsequent years until the policy is rescinded.



Davina Anne Gabriel at the last stop before the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, near Hart, Michigan
photo by Hannah Blackwell

Davina Anne Gabriel is a forty-one year-old, fifteen years postoperative transsexual lesbian feminist Witch, the founder, editor and publisher of TransSisters: the Journal of Transsexual Feminism, a former editor of two queer newspapers in Kansas City, Missouri, and a long time activist for queer, feminist, transsexual and other causes. She has been involved, for all three years of its existence, in the protest against the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival's "womyn born womyn" only policy and was one of four transsexual lesbians expelled from that festival for defying that policy in 1993. She lives in Kansas City, Missouri.

Plans are already underway for next year's protest against the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival's "woman-born womyn" only policy. Great progress was made toward eliminating that policy this year, but much work remains to be done. Many expenses are involved in conducting this event, and it relies heavily on donations from individuals to make it happen. To contribute to the ongoing protest against the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival's "woman-born womyn" only policy, please send donations to:

**Davina Anne Gabriel
4004 Troost Avenue
Kansas City, Missouri 64110**

Excerpts from "Sisterhood: Make It Real!"

by Leslie Feinberg

(Editor's note: The following remarks are excerpted from Leslie Feinberg's keynote address at Camp Trans on Friday; 12 August 1994, outside the 1994 Michigan Womyn's Music Festival)

"When Nancy Burkholder was expelled from the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival three years ago, it would have been very easy to let that settle into shame, personal individual shame and just go home, and to just think 'to hell with the movement, if that's how women feel, then to hell with the movement,' but she had the courage, and so did other transsexual women and their supporters to go back in there and to ask the women 'Is that really the policy that you agree with?' and three to one the women said, 'no; that's wrong to kick her out.' Well, no wonder, there were no men at the Michigan Women's Music Festival."

"Any place where 'woman' is being defined and screened by a security team is not safe space for me."

"I believe that there are two rights that we have to defend. The first is the right of each individual to define and determine and to change their sex, whether that be female or male or any point on the continuum between, and that includes the right to sexual contradiction and sexual ambiguity. And I believe that every individual has the right to express their gender in any way they choose whether that be feminine or masculine or androgynous or any point on the spectrum between, and that includes the right to gender contradiction and gender ambiguity."

"We're outlaws in this society. Now that's something all women understand: our bodies being disrespected, our rights, our capabilities, our very lives being so devalued."

"We're in danger of losing what the entire second wave of feminism, what the entire second wave of women's liberation was built on, and that was 'Biology is not destiny'. 'One is not born a woman,' Simone de Beauvoir said, 'one becomes one'. Now there's some place where transsexual women and other women intersect. Biological determinism has been used for centuries as a weapon against women, in order to justify a second-class and oppressed status. How on Earth, then, are you going to pick up the weapon of biological determinism and use it to liberate yourself? It's a reactionary tool."



"And I think that the fight against transphobia, which I am loosely defining here as an irrational fear of the mutability of sex, and genderphobia, which I am defining as an irrational fear of the mutability of gender in relation to sex, that these twin enemies, transphobia and genderphobia, that if they're allowed to creep into the women's movement and poison the atmosphere under this guise of 'women's safety,' issues, it's going to set back the entire women's movement."

"The Michigan Womyn's Music Festival is not 'The Movement.' It's a business; it's run by business people. And there's always a cultural lag anyway between culture and activism. Things change faster on the street than they do in music and art and literature and everything else, but now you superimpose over that this sort of feudal bureaucracy, and things aren't going to change so fast. I was told that there's no room for individual attacks here. Well, I don't have to. Some people *own* the land and some people *work* the land. And this policy from these owners is not really any different than the policy of owners of gay mens' bars in Greenwich Village -- which doesn't mean they were gay -- who put up signs in the seventies and eighties that read 'no drunks, no dogs, no drags'. It's a reactionary policy; it's not coming from the movement."

"Last year a group of women went back in -- transsexual and otherwise -- and were expelled when the security team told them that violence had been threatened against them, and that security couldn't or wouldn't protect them. Well, violence is supposed to be against the law of the land at Michigan, so why weren't the women who threatened the violence expelled? And if security won't protect these women, who else won't security protect? This is an issue for every one of those seven thousand women in that festival."

“There have always been transsexual women helping to build the women’s movement, and whenever you have been in a large gathering of women, I assure you, you have been with transsexual women. Did you feel unsafe? . . . They’re women in a women-hating society, so of course transsexual women want to be welcomed into women’s space for the same reason that every woman does, to feel safe.”

“Why are transsexual women a danger to any other women as a group? Why on Earth? You know you can only not think about it for it to have any impact. Well, wait a minute. I don’t get this. What do you mean I’m in danger? Haven’t we learned from the AIDS movement for example the danger of creating high-risk groups? We fought the category of high-risk groups, and we fought for and won the category of high-risk behavior. So if you want to talk about what is unsafe in women’s groups you have to talk about what is unsafe behavior. For example, overt racist behavior by white women towards women of color. Insensitivity to women’s disabilities. You know there’s a whole lot of drinking and drugging that goes on at these festivals and a whole lot of unsafe behavior results from it. So if you want to make that safe space for women, you go after high-risk behavior, behavior that’s threatening to women, not creating the risk that transsexual women are a danger to all women.”

“I was told this summer, and I’ve been told by defenders of this policy at Michigan -- which I must say have been in the handful compared to the audiences that have cheered bringing down this reactionary policy -- that there has to be a definition of woman based on experience. Well, now we’ve shifted from the biological argument, haven’t we? Just like that, whoa, what happened to the biological argument? Now it’s based on experience. I was told that the reason that the spirituality workshops [at the National Women’s Music Festival] were closed was because they were going to deal with menstrual cycles, which I took to mean that none of my friends who have had hysterectomies could come, and none of the women I knew who were in menopause could come, because we all had to bond in the circle of bleeding. And I told the organizers I thought they should think twice about a definition of women that’s centered on the uterus. Is childbirth then the common experience for all of us? Raise your hands if that leaves you out. . . Rape? Is that the common experience for women? Well, then I know a lot of my brothers who have experienced that same horror. You know, really, 90% of the women on this planet share in common the physical experience of hauling water and firewood, but that’s not the common experience they’re talking about because, you see, that roots it back in class, and that’s the last thing on Earth these business people are talking about.”

“‘Male energy’ -- now that’s a frighteningly subjective border for a security team to patrol.”

“And what about our female-to-male brothers? There is a misconception that all female-to-male transsexuals were butch

lesbians who couldn’t accept being women and changed their sex. But if that were true, then why is a large percentage -- maybe a third to forty percent in some areas -- of female-to-male, why do they identify as gay or bisexual men? That would have placed them in a heterosexual or a bisexual status before their transition. I don’t think there’s anyone here who doesn’t know of someone who lived in the lesbian community and helped build it and helped forge it who transitioned as female-to-male who wasn’t labelled as a traitor and expelled from the movement at the very moment that they needed their friends the most. Don’t you want your friends around you when you’re going through enormous change and anxiety? Now this is interesting. From the point of view of security -- or who defines their mission -- if someone wasn’t born female, if they were born male, but they’ve transitioned and lived as a woman for twenty years, they’ll always be a man. Not welcome. But now you take someone who was born female, and the minute they transition ‘They’re a man. Get ‘em the hell outa here’. See, there’s something going on here that we have to take apart and look at because it literally poisons the atmosphere.”

“What is at the heart of the right of reproductive freedom? It’s the right of each woman to control her own body. Well, isn’t that the same right we should be defending for our transsexual sisters? You know, nobody wants to have to live in a body they’re not happy in for any reason. It’s hard enough to live in an apartment you’re not comfortable in. Each person has the right to control their own body, to shape their own identity. This is fundamental. If we don’t defend that right for each individual, who are we giving it to? The state? The church? Should we open it up to a poll?”

“The discussion of what constitutes a woman when all the women are not in the room produces just as skewed a result as the discussion that took place in the women’s movement about gender in which not all of the poles of the spectrum were allowed to be present for the discussion. No wonder people who were androgynous could say, ‘We don’t do that butch/femme stuff anymore’. We weren’t in the room. You can’t discuss a spectrum of sexuality if only these many people can come.”

“Most people don’t realize that sex-change also has very ancient roots, and was considered a sacred path to walk . . . Male-to-female priestesses, who are quite arguably the earliest ancestors of our transsexual sisters today are the ones who fought and upheld the matrilineal traditions against the rise of patriarchal, class society. So it’s cruelly ironic that that’s who’s being expelled at women’s festivals from spirituality workshops. You want to reclaim Goddess worship, but you don’t want the original shamans to be there.”

“Women’s oppression and the oppression of transpeople is interwoven. Not only historically, but today. The first historical periods that I can find the edicts against transgender and intersexuality are the rise of class societies, under chattel slavery, the same time when women’s status was being so degraded. And

the second major campaign against transgenderism and transsexualism and intersexuality was under feudalism, where the state regrouped and launched its holy war against the Pagans. Well "Pagan" meant rural-dweller; it was a war against the peasantry. So if you have transsexual and transgender people who have an esteemed status in the communal order, of course you have to demonize them."

"Transphobia and genderphobia are these kinds of historical weapons that have been passed on to keep us divided."

"The modern transgender movement is not eroding the boundaries of women's oppression . . . What is the gift of the women's liberation movement? It's that it showed there's an institutionalized machinery of oppression in this society that's keeping us down . . . There's a machinery that oppresses us in this society that tries to keep us fighting with each other and not looking at the source of all this bigotry. The modern transgender

movement is not eroding the boundaries of women's oppression. Throughout history whenever new lands and new oceans have been discovered, maps have been re-drawn to show their relationship to each other. The modern transgender movement is redrawing the boundaries of sex and gender oppression in this society, and fighting the very same foundations of sexism and bigotry and gender oppression in this society. So no wonder you get this *Silence of the Lambs* propaganda saying, 'Aw, they're all out to skin you and make bodies for themselves'. But who is more likely to be the victims of serial murders than women and transgendered people? How many transgendered serial murderers can you remember in recent history? This is *serious* propaganda."

"The only way that I believe we can build real solidarity in our movements is that each of us has to be the best fighters of each other's oppressions. It's the kind of solidarity that's forged in the heat of struggle that makes lasting bonds. Until the lesbian, gay & bisexual movement fights gender oppression, until it fights gender baiting, that's always going to be the weak spot of the movement. That's where the enemy will always go to. . . And the

transsexual and transgender movement has to be on the front lines of fighting homophobia because I know for many of my transgendered and transsexual brothers and sisters who are heterosexual, they've been told all their lives 'Aw, you're just gay and you're ashamed. You'd rather change your sex than admit that you're gay.' . . . Well, nobody wants their whole identity that they fight for and live for to be invalidated by someone else's judgement. But you know, not every lesbian, gay or bi person faces gender oppression, but every transgendered and transsexual person faces a barrage of anti-gay bigotry because to our bashers we're all queer. So you can't just say 'I'm *not* gay' in an anti-gay society and try to move yourself over to be safe. The safest place for the transgender movement is on the front lines fighting homophobia along with a lot of other heterosexual and bisexual people as well who see how dangerous homophobia is."

"You can't be gender bent in a society that's not gender rigid."

"The analysis that all women are allies and all men are enemies was in error. It puts Sojourner Truth and Margaret Thatcher on one side and John Brown and John Rockefeller on the other. It's not a sophisticated tool to analyze who our allies and our enemies are."

"I don't want to move upward mobility. I want to fight for the rights of all of us to be able to live and work in dignity and respect, to control our own bodies and to shape our own identities, to live lives that are the ones that we set out to live, you know, the kind of world where all the Billy Tiptons can play their sweetest music, and you can't build a world like that with a policy that says 'womyn-born-womyn' only."

Leslie Feinberg is an activist and author of the novel Stone Butch Blues and the pamphlet Transgender Liberation: A Movement Whose Time Has Come. Her work has also appeared in numerous publications including TransSisters: the Journal of Transsexual Feminism and Transsexual News-Telegraph. She is currently working on writing a nonfiction book tentatively entitled Transgender: A History of Resistance.



Leslie Feinberg delivering her address, "Sisterhood: Make It Real!" at Camp Trans

photo by Davina Anne Gabriel

A Transgender Pride Project From Leslie Feinberg

I need your help on a project I've begun since I finished **Stone Butch Blues** and the historical pamphlet **Transgender Liberation**. I'm working on the book I needed to read so badly when I was a scared, ashamed transgendered teenager.

I have assembled my historical and cross-cultural research on transgender. In addition, I have located 150 photos, graphics, etchings and paintings of transgendered individuals from many nationalities and time periods. Together, they will make up a book tentatively titled **Transgender: A History of Resistance**.

I am fashioning this body of work as a weapon to defend the rights of each person today to shape their bodies, identities and self-expression. I want to show that although gender has been expressed differently in diverse historical periods, regions, cultures, classes and nationalities, there has always been gender diversity in the human population. And people have always determined, defined and changed their sex.

This is a work of pride. It is a work of dignity. It is in draft form and ready to go to a publisher. It is only the costs that are an insurmountable barrier blocking my way. I've reached the maximum limit on a credit card to cover research costs. And I've discovered that it is the author who must shoulder the financial weight of the steep costs of purchasing photo/graphic reproduction rights.

The good news

I have submitted a \$12,500 budget to the Column Foundation in New York City, which has an IRS 501, (c) 3, non-profit, tax-exempt status.

The Column Foundation will award me a grant in the amount of all donations it receives that are earmarked for the "Transgender Pride Project."

The budget includes \$15-\$25 for 50 photo prints from museums and collectors, \$50 for 50 prints and \$100 for 50 prints for valuable images. It would pay the costs of travel to archives and private collections in Los Angeles, Atlanta and Boston, and cover xeroxing, print-making, long distance calls, faxing and postage to international collections and museums.

I need your help in this giant unearthing of history

1. Please make a tax-deductible donation to this educational project. Checks should be made payable to the Column Foundation, c/o William Sachs, Esq., Suite 830, 7 Penn Plaza, New York, New York 10001. Please note this contribution is for the Transgender Pride Project.

2. Please xerox and circulate this request or include it in mailings to people who you think are sensitive to this issue and would be willing to help.

I hope to make this book the one so many of us needed when we were growing up -- and still need now. It will be a powerful defense of the rights of all transgendered people to live and work in dignity and respect.

Thank you for your help.

Trans-Action News
(continued from page 13)

legislative actions at national, state and local levels that impact favorably on transsexual/transgender issues and concerns;

- to lobby and endorse effective administrative or regulatory actions at the state or local level that impact favorably on transsexual/transgender issues and concerns;

- to foster and support a commitment to diversity and inclusion in sexual or gender minority rights movements consistent with its missions and goals.

For more information about It's Time, America!, please write to: ITA; P.O. Box 65; Kensington, Maryland 20895

Harassment, Assault & Discrimination Against Transsexual Inmate Ruled Appropriate

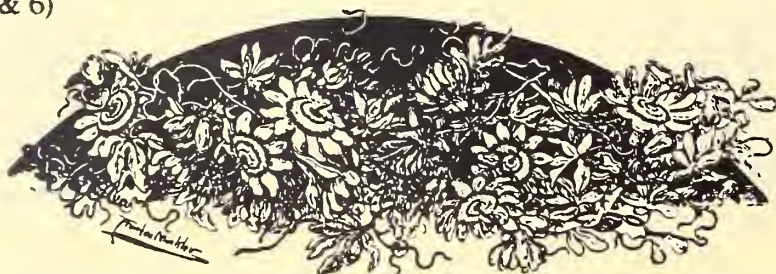
(Ashland, Kentucky) -- The *San Francisco Bay Times* has reported that a federal judge has dismissed all but one of the 23 defendants from a transsexual prison inmate's \$50 million discrimination suit.

Michelle Murray of Hackensack, N.J., alleged that she had been subjected to routine harassment, assault and discrimination from employees of the Federal Correctional Institution in Ashland, but that Judge-Magistrate James Todd ruled that Murray failed to prove that her constitutional rights had been violated.

Judge Todd was quoted as stating: "Given that the plaintiff, by his own choice, has breasts, as well as other feminine characteristics, the court finds no evidence suggesting that the challenged actions constitute an exaggerated response to the situation."

Susan Kimberly Defeated in General Election

(St. Paul, Minnesota) -- Susan Kimberly, a postoperative transsexual woman who ran for a seat on the Ramsey County Board of Supervisors was defeated in the general election on 8 November 1994 by her opponent Sue Haigh by a margin of 58-42%. Ms. Kimberly, who ran as an openly transsexual woman, received 8,449 votes to Ms. Haigh's 11,877. If Ms. Kimberly would have won, she would have been the first openly transsexual woman to have been elected to public office in the United States. (see "Trans-Action News in *TransSisters* #s 5 & 6)



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TransSisters Newswatch

TransSisters: the Journal of Transsexual Feminism appreciates receiving news clippings or copies of articles about transsexual persons and the issues affecting their lives. You can help *TransSisters* keep the transsexual community informed of events and issues affecting it by sending copies of any such news clippings or articles to: Davina Anne Gabriel; 4004 Troost Avenue; Kansas City, Missouri 64110. Articles and clippings can also be sent by e-mail to davinaanne@aol.com or by fax to (816)753-7816, but you must call first, as there must be someone here to receive your fax.

Chrysalis Quarterly

The intelligent, theme-oriented gender magazine for consumers and caregivers

From AEGIS – Who Else?

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CQ – The Gender Magazine That Dares to Compare!

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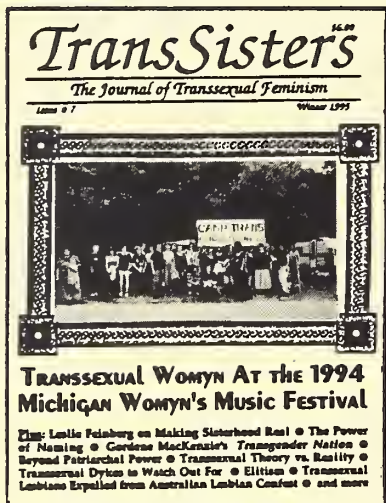
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The Journal of Transsexual Feminism



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-- Sandy Stone, author of "The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto"

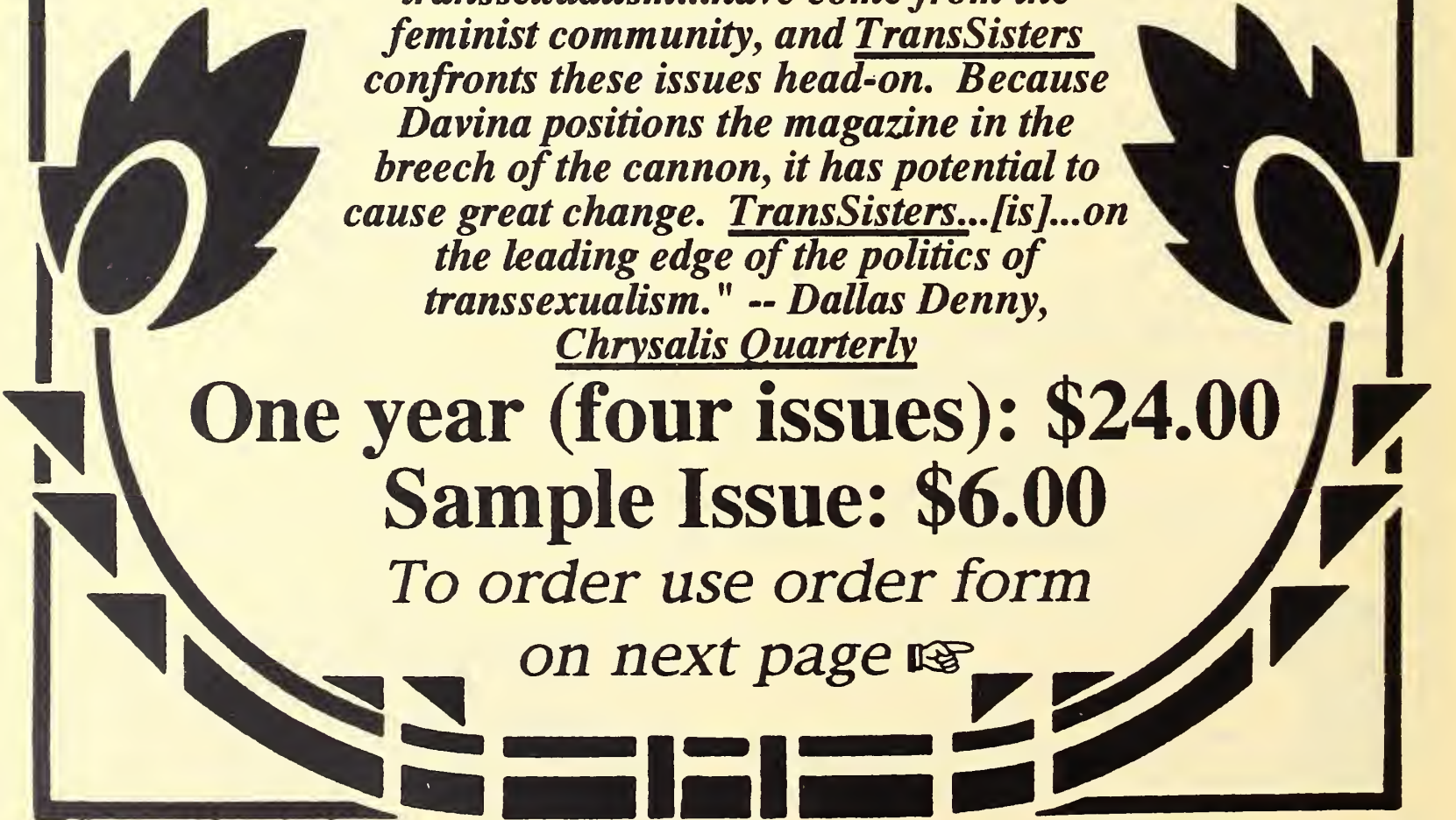
"Some of the most hostile and damaging criticisms of transsexualism...have come from the feminist community, and *TransSisters* confronts these issues head-on. Because Davina positions the magazine in the breach of the cannon, it has potential to cause great change. *TransSisters*...[is]...on the leading edge of the politics of transsexualism." -- Dallas Denny, *Chrysalis Quarterly*

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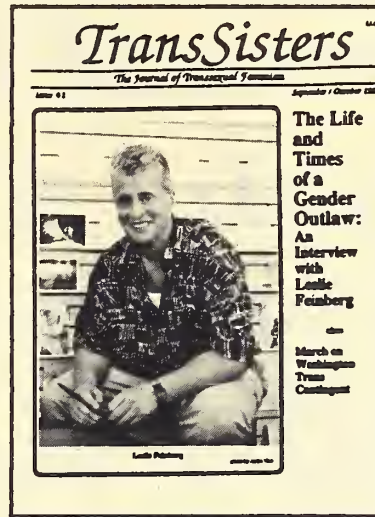


TransSisters

The Journal of Transsexual Feminism

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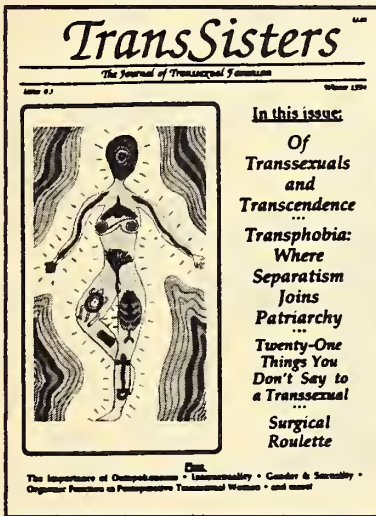
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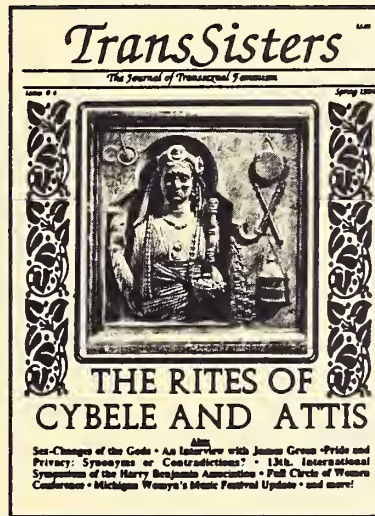
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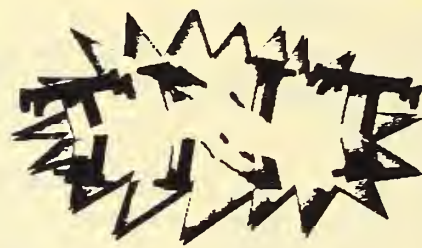
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Transsexual News Telegraph



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The Ballad of Nancy B.

by *Arlene Wolves*

(Editor's note: This song was performed by the Celtic Transsexual Modal Band from Hell -- consisting of Zythyra Austen, Arlene Wolves, Beverly Woods and Jessica Xavier -- at the Friday night concert at Camp Trans on 12 August 1994)

This is the story of Nancy,
the woman-born infant I'm sure.
She wanted to be with her sisters,
so she drove to the Michigan shore.

She drove to the Michigan shore.
She drove to the Michigan shore.
She wanted to be with her sisters,
so she drove to the Michigan shore.

Nancy was sleeping quite peaceful
when she suffered a terrible fate.
It came to a head when they roused her
from bed
and showed her the festival gate.

They showed her the festival gate.
They showed her the festival gate.
It came to a head when they roused her
from bed
and showed her the festival gate.

The security guards did surround her.
They threw out her tent and her gear.
A troublesome thought did confound her.
Poor Nancy was simply too queer.

Poor Nancy was simply too queer.
Poor Nancy was simply too queer.
A troublesome thought did confound her.
Poor Nancy was simply too queer.

A midsummer midnight eviction
poor Nancy could not understand.
She thought she had heard the conviction
that this would be woman safe land.

That this would be woman safe land.

That this would be woman safe land.
She thought she had heard the conviction
that this would be woman safe land.

"My sisters, my friends, what have I done
to deserve this harsh treatment from you?"
Out of the darkness came the reply,
"Go tell it to Lisa and Boo."

"Go tell it to Lisa and Boo."
"Go tell it to Lisa and Boo."
Out of the darkness came the reply,
"Go tell it to Lisa and Boo."

Now patriarchs rule by dictation.
Clearly they haven't a clue.
But matriarchs rule by consensus.
It seems a consensus of two.

It seems a consensus of two.
It seems a consensus of two.
But matriarchs rule by consensus.
It seems a consensus of two.

These wise women made their
pronouncement.
They let their opinions run free.
They finally reached the conclusion
that Nancy had male energy.

That Nancy had male energy.
That Nancy had male energy.
They finally reached the conclusion
that Nancy had male energy.

As for our friend and our gender
I think that it's her right to choose.
I see that she's done that quite clearly.
So I ask you who's gender confused.

I ask you who's gender confused.
I ask you who's gender confused.
I see that she's done that quite clearly.
So I ask you who's gender confused.

Now Nancy, she left there unbroken.
I'll tell you all what were her plans.



She's making a space that's both loving
and safe
for people-born-people, Camp Trans.

For people-born-people, Camp Trans.
For people-born-people, Camp Trans.
She making a space that's both loving and
safe
for people-born-people, Camp Trans.

Well this is the start of a movement.
I'll tell you what we're gonna do.
We'll make a home in a gender free zone,
and there's room at our table for you.

There's room at our table for you.
There's room at our table for you.
We'll make a home in a gender free zone,
and there's room at our table for you.

Arlene Wolves is a full time musician and transsexual parent living in Burlington, Vermont. She is one half of the musical duo Beyond the Pale, consisting also of her partner Beverly Woods.



Arlene Wolves
photo by Davina Anne Gabriel

(The following are the guidelines for persons participating in the protest against the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival's "womyn born womyn" only policy in 1994:)

Guidelines

During the past several months it has become clear that our actions here have much larger implications than protesting the festival policy against admitting transsexuals—it is about the right of *all* individuals to self-define their sex and gender. To this end, we are camping outside the festival this year to demonstrate our continued opposition to the festival policy and to provide education on gender issues to festigoers. Our emphasis will be on having fun and attracting festigoers to our workshops rather than confronting them or arguing our point of view in anger. We are here to engage in respectful dialog, as emphasized in the joint statement released by Alix Dobkin and Riki Anne.

Because we are a group gathered for a joint purpose, and yet hold individual beliefs, we set forth the following *group* philosophical positions:

1. We claim the right to identify ourselves as women (and whatever else we feel ourselves to be). Others can describe our characteristics; only we can speak our identity.
2. We feel that the statement of festival policy in the brochure is duplicitous. It attempts to cloak transphobia in coded language (womyn-born womyn) so that transsexual women will know they are not welcome, while most women won't be aware such a policy exists (or so it won't be challenged on legal grounds). We seek to have festival policy (whatever it is) expressed in plain language.
3. Boo and Lisa are not our enemies. Transphobic women are not our enemies. We are all on this planet trying to figure out a lot of complex stuff together.
4. We are not interested in pursuing legal action against the festival; getting into the festival by using the patriarchal system to impose an unwanted policy on the festival would not be a win for us. Instead, through consciousness-raising about the issue and providing the opportunity for nontranssexual women to get to know us, we will eventually gain tremendous support in the women's and lesbian communities. Not only MWMF but all other community events will thus be affected.
5. We do not seek pity. We should be welcome at the festival not because we have nowhere else to go or because we've had a hard life. We should be inside because the festival is for all women and we are women. (If the festival is not for all women, the brochure should not say "all womyn" and should state exactly who it is for, ie, the Michigan Nontranssexual Womyn's Music Festival).
6. We are not asking nontranssexual women to take a vote on whether we are women or to give us permission to partake of women-only space. Only we can know if we are women; if we so identify, we have a right to be in space that is open to all women.

7. We do not claim that transsexual women are the same as nontranssexual women. We bring our own unique contributions to the community; nonetheless, we are all women.

If you express an opinion not included in the above, be sure to make it clear that it is your personal opinion and not the official position of Camp Trans. Examples are whether preops should be allowed in the festival, whether the rules should be set by a majority of festigoers, whether SRS is mutilating the body, whether SM is PC, etc.

Familiarize yourself with our history at MWMF so you do not unwittingly promote falsehoods. See *Nancy's Story* and *Press Release*.

Do not equate separatism with transphobia. There are some separatist who are on our side and many detractors who are not separatists. Using these terms interchangeably adds to the confusion and offends some people.

Tell your story. Sharing what you've been through and how it felt is an incredibly effective way to communicate with women.

Our discussions will be less confusing if we use the terms sex and gender consistently. Sex is biological (anatomy, chromosomes, hormones, etc.); gender is psychological (how we think of ourselves).

Most festigoers are thoughtful and open-minded. When talking with them, remember to listen carefully and remain calm and patient. Avoid shouting and interrupting. If you feel yourself losing your cool, *walk away*. If someone shouts an abusive remark from a passing vehicle, just smile and thank them for sharing.

Do not call the person you're addressing or anyone else names, discount or belittle their point of view, impugn their motives, imply that they are irrational, or voice theories about their hidden psychopathology. These strategies do not further the dialogue and are abusive.

If you have contact with festival workers, cooperate pleasantly with them, within reason (this will be mainly around safety considerations). If you feel that cooperation is inappropriate, tell them that you have to consult with others at Camp Trans before deciding whether we will do as they ask. Talk to Janis or Riki Anne.

If you need to vent your frustrations or if you engage in a disagreement with another member of Camp Trans, please take a walk away from Camp Trans to do this. Remember that an atmosphere of love and joy will attract people to us; anger and hostility will turn them away.

We do not anticipate any violence. Our experience indicates that if any such acts are perpetrated against us, they are more likely to be against property than persons, and to occur when no one is around. As a precaution, please keep your valuables locked in a car and keep your eyes open. If anything happens, protect yourself but *do not attack*. Keep in mind how this incident will appear in print.

HAVE FUN!

(The following is a flier distributed by womyn taking part in the protest of the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival's "womyn born womyn" only policy welcoming women at the festival to visit Camp Trans :)

Camp Trans welcomes you...

The four transsexual women who were expelled last year from the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival are back. This year, we're camping across the road from the festival with our friends and supporters to express our continued opposition to the festival's anti-transsexual policy, the covert statement of it in the festival brochure, the festival's insistence that it is for all women, and the producers' presumption that they can define our gender.

To promote an understanding of gender from a variety of perspectives and to address issues of disenfranchisement in the women's and lesbian communities, we are offering workshops, performances, fun and games, and even food! We hope you'll make time in your festival schedule to come out and visit us, participate in our events, help us out, or just hang out.

Don't miss:

- Leslie Feinberg updating the Sisterhood
 - Minnie Bruce Pratt reading from her latest book
 - Transsexual versus nontranssexual volleyball
 - Fabulous Celtic music by Beyond the Pale
 - So you want to grow a beard: female-to-male urges
 - The separatist viewpoint on changing sex
 - West Coast comedian Mimi = Freed
 - The inside scoop on transsexuals in the military
 - The first-ever transgender weenie roast
 - The only woman expelled from the festival twice
 - What they don't show you on Geraldo
- ... and much more

Schedule (see reverse) subject to change (who isn't?). Check for updated schedules at Camp Trans or on the literature tables at One World.

We have made our space as accessible as possible for people with disabilities. We will try to accommodate you in whatever way you need. Deaf participants: We have one woman who can do some signing but if you can bring an interpreter out with you, please do.

We have received endorsements from: ACT-UP member Ann Northrup, Amber Hollibaugh of the Lesbian AIDS Project, Bea Hanson of the Gay and Lesbian Antiviolence Project, author and actor Kate Bornstein, (*Gender Outlaw* and *The Opposite Sex Is Neither*), Donald Suggs of the Gay and Lesbian Antidefamation League, performance artist Holly Hughes, poet Cheryl Clarke, Betty Dodson Videos, Susie (Sexpert) Bright, teacher and author Gayle Rubin, author and activist Leslie Feinberg, Tom Duane of the New York City Council, Executive Director of the Lesbian and Gay Community Center of NYC Richard Burns, activist and author Minnie Bruce Pratt, the Imperial Court of New York, the Lesbian Avengers, the Garden State Gender Coalition, Visibility in Pride, the New Jersey Lesbian and Gay Coalition, and the Greater New York Gender Alliance.

(The following is the schedule of events which took place at Camp Trans listed on the reverse side of the flier distributed by persons participating in the 1994 protest of the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival's "womyn born womyn" only policy to women at the festival:)

* WEDNESDAY *

10:00 am Community Meeting All are invited to share their views on issues of concern to our communities in this free-wheeling discussion facilitated by a bisexual, a separatist, and a transsexual woman. Our goal is to promote respectful dialogue among those with divergent views.

12:30 pm Self-Defense Seminar April Fredericks, second-degree black belt in karate and 13-year student of Kaicho Nakamura of the World Seido Karate Organization, will teach street awareness and simple techniques for defending yourself.

2:00 pm The Primal Androgyny: Shamanism and Gender Davina Anne Gabriel, 15-years postoperative transsexual lesbian/feminist witch, leads a discussion on rediscovering old sacred paths following gender-blending and androgyny, and how to incorporate these ideas into contemporary life.

3:30 pm Transsexual Sexuality: Our Cunts Are Not the Same. Riki Anne Wilchins, author of *Read My Lips*, will conduct a (hands-on?) workshop that will begin as a talk-and-listen, may evolve into a show-and-tell (and perhaps a scratch-and-sniff, or even a touch-and-feel).

5:30 pm Disability and Disenfranchisement: How we do it and how we can undo it. ReaRae Sears, MWMF worker in the early days and currently a woman with disabilities, retells struggles of disabled women in the women's/lesbian community.

7:00 pm How MWMF Raised Me Stand-up comic and freelance journalist Mimi = Freed will regale her audience with tales of 14 years of coming out, including her entrance into politics, which was aided by several MWMF core organizers.

9:00 pm The Open Door Lynn E. Walker, peer counselor for the Gender Identity Project and ordained clergyperson, leads an informal prayer and meditation meeting centered in the spirituality of the transsexual experience. All are welcome.

* THURSDAY *

10:00 am The Joys of Marginalization Mimi = Freed (see above) will explore the opportunities available to those who are marginalized—all the doodling and creativity goes on in the margins anyway.

12:30 pm Big Brother Is Watching Wendi Kaiser, Lt Commander, USN, retired, speaks about the law and the Department of Defense actions regarding transsexuality and their repercussions in the various branches of the military.

2:00 pm How Many Genders Are There? Zythyra (formerly Seth Austen), a guitarist and singer/songwriter, presents a view of gender as a continuum, deals with the dilemma of pronouns, and wonders whether transgender is a third (or fourth?) gender.

3:30 pm Volleyball! Play volleyball with transsexuals at the Mary Daly Memorial Volleyball Game, cleverly and sarcastically subtitled "Surgically Altered She-Males Against the World."

5:00 pm Weenie Roast and Concert "Eat Our Weiners, Bite Our Buns"—an open invitation to share food, listen to Celtic music, and laugh at ourselves. Real meat (well, hot dogs) and a vegetarian alternative will be provided, as well as beans and buns. And for dessert? S'mores! (that's right, CHOCOLATE!)

7:00 pm Read My Lips Riki Anne Wilchins reads from her forthcoming book such enchanting selections as "21 Things You Don't Say to a Transsexual," "Videotape (My Life as a Dog)," and "34 Questions We'd Most Like to Ask Nontranssexuals."

9:00 pm The Open Door See Wednesday.

* FRIDAY *

10:00 am SM 101: Everything you always wanted to know about SM but were afraid to ask, led by Mary V. Cochran, PhD in Clinical Psychology and Headmistress of Female Trouble, Philadelphia.

12:30 pm Nonpatriarchal Guitar Playing Zythyra (see Wednesday) explores alternative tuning, using fewer fingers to make fuller sound, and finding ways to let the guitar play itself. Bring a guitar if you have one handy.

2:00 pm The Female-to-Male Experience James Green, writer, gender diversity consultant, director of FTM International, and editor of *FTM Newsletter*, talks about his journey.

3:30 pm Sisterhood: Make it Real! Leslie Feinberg, activist and author of *Stone Butch Blues* and *Transgender Liberation*, explains why the women's movement needs an "All-Women Welcome" policy.

6:00 pm Concert Beyond the Pale and Zythyra, aka The Celtic Transsexual Modal Band from Hell, perform traditional and original acoustic music on hammered dulcimer, keyboard, guitar, and voice.

7:00 pm Talking Gender Leslie Feinberg (see above) and poet and activist Minnie Bruce Pratt give a repeat performance of the ob-so-hot dialogue between them from the 1992 Out/Write conference.

9:00 pm The Open Door See Wednesday.

* SATURDAY *

9:00 am Gender Bending and Me Get musby with Minnie Bruce Pratt (see above) as we serve oatmeal and she presents a lesbian feminist journey through gender, reading from her new book *She*.

11:00 am Open Discussion: Female-to-Male Identity James Green (see Friday) talks about facets of transgendered identity in people born with female bodies.

1:30 pm Lesbian Herstory Archives: Its Story and Yours Ed Varga of the Lesbian Herstory Archives tells the herstory of the archives and how you can preserve your personal herstory there.

3:00 pm Creating Identity Amber Hollibaugh of the Lesbian AIDS Project explores ways in which we all alter our bodies and create our identities.

4:30 pm Passing Women in the 90s Ed Varga (see above) shares insights into the lives of Brandon Teena, drag kings, stone butches, transgendered people, and others.

6:00 pm Concert Same as Friday, but different.

7:00 pm Auction Bring your cash and get ready to bid on autographed items donated by Alison Bechdel, Leslie Feinberg, Gayle Rubin, Betty Dodson, Susie Bright, and others; bits of lesbian memorabilia; books, videos, magazine subscriptions, and much more. All proceeds help to offset the expenses of running Camp Trans.

9:00 pm The Open Door See Wednesday.

(The following is a reproduction of a flier distributed to womyn at the 1994 Michigan Womyn's Music Festival:)

Pink and Blue ... Not!

We, Alix and Riki, come from overlapping communities, difficult to define, especially among ourselves. We believe Lesbians and Transsexuals understand that changing old assumptions and making new definitions is far from simple. We also know it's easier to lash out at each other than to do the hard work of creating autonomous, satisfying lives and building communities for ourselves. But we want to do it anyway.

Being ourselves and creating our own lives, Lesbians and Transgendered people challenge a rigid, destructive, and archaic gender system. In defying this system, we learn to convert fear into anger: this makes us dangerous, not only to the system, but to ourselves as well. Instead of attacking the powerful institutions of sexual control, we sometimes attack and try to control each other. This helps neither Riki nor Alix, who sometimes agree and sometimes disagree, but who nevertheless recognize that we both benefit by treating each other with respect and by creating mutually acceptable common ground.

To this end, we jointly affirm the importance of dialog for all those who have an interest in the Women's Community: Lesbian, Separatist, Feminist, Transgender, S/M, Transsexual, Bisexual, and all others. Given our exceptional and outrageous diversity, it is paramount that all parties be encouraged to express their views, in an atmosphere of respect for divergent beliefs and concern for each other's well-being.

Alix Dobkin,

Lesbian entertainer, writer, and educator.

Riki Anne Wilchins

Transsexual Menace, Committee to Free Nancy Now!

(The following is a flier created by the Transsexual Menace and distributed to women at the 1994 Michigan Womyn's Music Festival:)

BARBARA PRICE & LISA VOGEL:

Can you spell T-R-A-N-S-P-H-O-B-I-A?

Did you know:

In 1991 the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival security guards threw Nancy Burkholder out of the Festival simply because she was a transsexual woman ?

Did you know:

After Nancy's expulsion, producers Barbara ("Boo") Price and Lisa Vogel declared a transphobic policy of "Womyn-Born Womyn Only", now printed on Festival literature?

Did you know:

After she was expelled from MWMF, Boo and Lisa referred to Nancy Burkholder as "a known transsexual man"?
(Gay Community News, 11/91)

Did you know:

Boo Price on why transsexual women can't attend MWMF:
"People would say 'there's a gay man doing a workshop', 'that's a gay man in drag'. "
(Philadelphia Gay News, 9/93)

Did you know:

In 1993, after separatists threatened violence against 4 transsexual women attending the Festival, the transsexual women were forced to leave and the women who threatened them went unpunished?

Did you know:

In 1993, the transsexual literature table was completely trashed and much of their property thrown down the toilets, and again the perpetrators went unpunished by Boo and Lisa?

Well, we're not invisible.
We're not quiet.
We're not well-behaved.
And we're not going away.

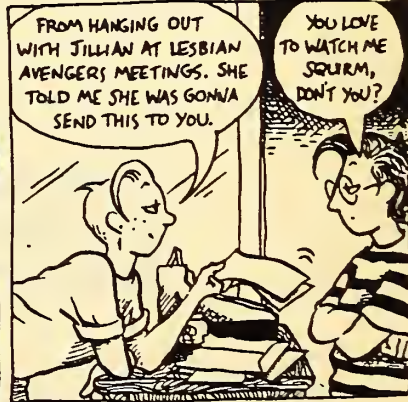
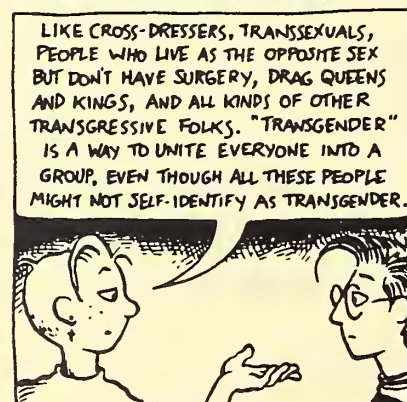
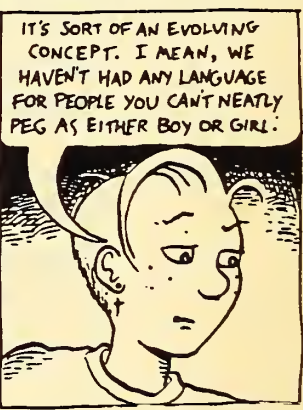
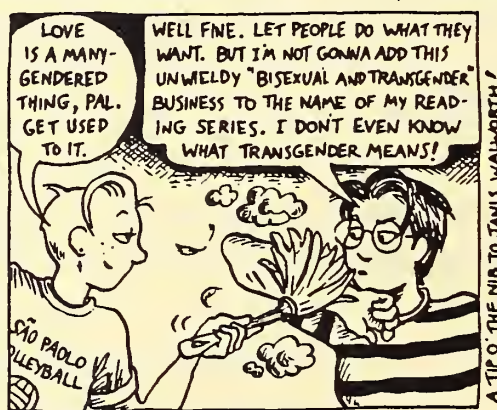
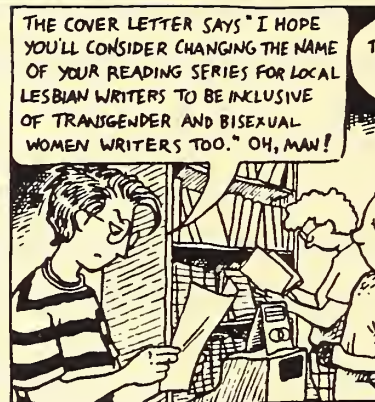
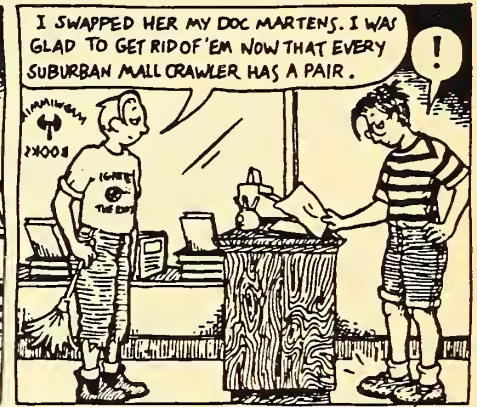
"Camp Trans", the educational outreach event across the road from the Michigan Women's Music Festival, will be back this summer: bigger, better and now more politically incorrect than ever!

The Transsexual Menace: We're here. We're queerer. Get used to it!

Dykes To Watch Out For

by Alison Bechdel

(Editor's note: The following two Dykes to Watch Out For strips were among the literature distributed at this year's protest against the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival and are reprinted with permission of the cartoonist.)



LIME LIGHT

©1994 BY ALISON BECHDEL

THANK YOU, JILLIAN, FOR THAT FASCINATING, UH, TRANSEXUAL VERSION OF THE OEDIPUS LEGEND, "OEDIPAL COMPLEX." THANKS ALSO TO MIKO TAKAGI AND DEIRDRE TRIVELPIECE FOR SHARING THEIR WORK WITH US TONIGHT, AND TO OUR ASL INTERPRETER, JO PALMER.

AND THANKS TO ALL OF YOU FOR COMING OUT TO SUPPORT OUR LOCAL AUTHORS, AND MAKING THIS FIRST EVENT IN OUR "MADWIMMIN READ" SERIES A SUCCESS. PLEASE STICK AROUND FOR REFRESHMENTS, AND COME BACK AGAIN NEXT MONTH.



HUH! YOU PULLED IT OFF! NICE WORK, MO. AND LOOK AT ALL THESE PEOPLE! I BETTER GET UP TO THE REGISTER. YOU GO SCHMOOZE.

VERY IMPRESSIVE. NO ONE WOULD EVER SUSPECT YOU WERE A SHY PERSON, THE WAY YOU RAN THE SHOW.

EXCUSE ME. I JUST NEED TO SAY I WAS REALLY SHOCKED THAT YOU LET A MAN READ HERE TONIGHT. MEN HAVE ACCESS TO THE WHOLE WORLD. WHY SHOULD WE SHARE OUR MEAGER RESOURCES WITH THEM?

UH... WELL, FIRST OF ALL, HE'S NOT A MAN, HE'S A LESBIAN. I MEAN, SHE'S A LESBIAN. AND SECOND, I WANT THIS SERIES TO BE INCLUSIVE, AND NOT SOME PRIVATE CLUB. I MEAN, WHO AM I TO QUESTION SOMEONE ELSE'S IDENTITY?

HMPH. I SUPPOSE YOU THINK "LESBIANS" WHO SLEEP WITH MEN ARE DYKES TOO.

UH... WELL...

EXCUSE ME, MO. I'M MJ, THE ARTS EDITOR AT THE TEN PERCENT TRIBUNE. GREAT EVENT YOU PUT TOGETHER TONIGHT. LISTEN, WE'RE LOOKING FOR A NEW BOOK REVIEWER, AND I WONDER IF YOU'D BE AT ALL INTERESTED?

UH... ME? WRITE BOOK REVIEWS? FOR THE NEWS-PAPER?!

MO, SORRY TO INTERRUPT. I'M FLORA, FROM THE QUEER VEGAN SOCIETY. WHEN YOU GET A CHANCE, LET'S TALK ABOUT SOME NON-ANIMAL PRODUCT ALTERNATIVES TO THE CHEESE YOU'RE SERVING HERE.

UH... OKAY.

HEY, THANKS FOR INCLUDING JILLIAN'S WORK TONIGHT. I'M GONNA TELL MY FRIEND BIFF TO SEND YOU SOME OF HIS POEMS. HE'S BEEN WRITING GREAT STUFF ABOUT HIS FEMALE-TO-MALE TRANSITIONING.

UH... BIFF?

MO, THIS WAS WONDERFUL. THANKS A LOT FOR MAKING IT HAPPEN. I NEVER READ IN PUBLIC BEFORE. COULD YOU TELL HOW NERVOUS I WAS?!

UH... NOT AT ALL, DEIRDRE. YOU WERE GREAT. I DON'T THINK ANYONE NOTICED YOU READ THAT ONE PAGETWICE.

SO, I KNOW YOU'RE PROBABLY REALLY BUSY AND ALL, BUT WOULD YOU MAYBE LIKE TO DO SOMETHING SOMETIME? LIKE, I DUNNO. A MOVIE?

HERE YOU GO. CHECK OUT THESE RECIPES FOR MEAT, EGG, AND DAIRY-FREE HORS D'OEUVRES. THE PICKLED TOFU CHEESE IS MY PARTICULAR FAVORITE.



Alison Bechdel
photo by Amey Radcliffe

Alison Bechdel is appalled to realize that she's been churning out *Dykes To Watch Out For* for over ten years now. Her comic strip appears regularly in feminist, gay, lesbian and progressive papers in the U.S. and Canada, and she has five collections of her work in print -- all published by Firebrand Books. She makes her home in rural Vermont.

(The following is the letter sent to Camp Trans by Alix Dobkin at the 1994 Michigan Womyn's Music Festival:)

Alix Dobkin
P.O. Box 727 Woodstock, NY 12498
(914)679-6168

9 AUG 94

To Camp Trans & Ricki Anne:

I have felt increasingly uncomfortable with agreeing to spend time at Camp Trans.

Because your event is a protest against a festival I cherish and a policy I support, I've decided not to see you this week.

However, I have not changed my mind about the value of open, respectful discussion with anyone who has a genuine interest in a strong women's community, and am still interested in participating in such a discussion, but not in Michigan in August:

Sincerely,
XX Alix Dobkin

(The following is the letter sent to Alix Dobkin by Camp Trans in response to her letter stating that she would not be attending the community meeting at Camp Trans:)

Dear Alix,

We're truly sorry we won't be seeing you at Camp Trans this year. We and many festigoers were looking forward to opening a ground-breaking dialogue among people with diverse viewpoints.

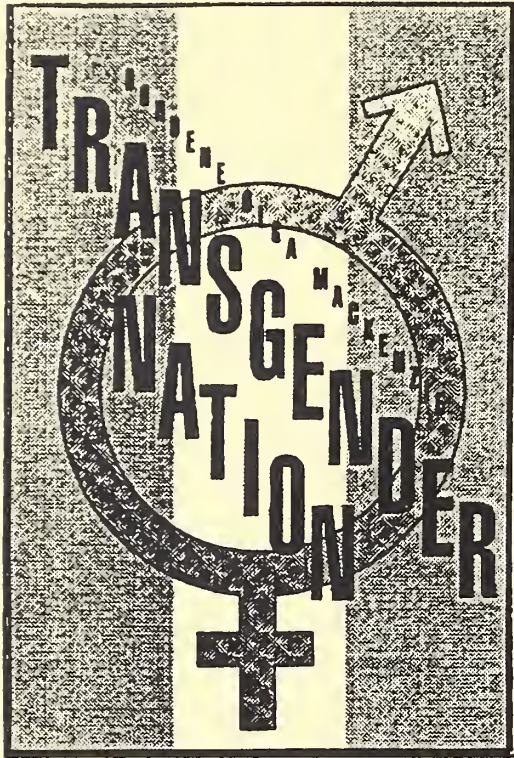
We feel that holding such a dialogue in August in Michigan would provide the greatest opportunity for many womyn to participate. Therefore, we regret your decision but thank you for letting us know of it in advance.

Also, we would like to emphasize that we are not against the Festival. We fully support the ideals of this gathering and are protesting only the antitranssexual policy and the ^{wording} ~~statement~~ of it in the ^{festival} brochure.

Respectfully,

Janis Walworth

Camp Trans



Gordene MacKenzie's *Transgender Nation:* A Commentary

Transgender Nation by Gordene Olga MacKenzie. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1994.

the world at large through books' like Kate Bornstein's *Gender Outlaw* and magazine articles like R.M. Jones' "Crossing the Line," which appeared in *Mother Jones* in June, 1994.

For a time, it seemed as if at long last transgendered persons, rather than being channeled into preprogrammed (hormones, real-life test, SRS, disappear into mainstream society) scripts, would be allowed to be themselves, that at long last we as a community had defied the stereotypes which we, in our ignorance, had subscribed to. We would be able to simply be ourselves. If we desired surgery, we would have it, but if we did not, there would be no need to submit to it.

But clearly, the battle is not over. *Transgender Nation*, a new release from Bowling Green University Press, attacks transsexual people and the men and women who have helped them. It does so by attributing an almost magical importance to surgery.

By idealizing the newly emerged transgender sensibility (which after all, differs from full-fledged transsexualism only by a three-hour medical procedure), the author, Gordene Olga

MacKenzie, vilifies transsexual surgery and by association, transsexual men and women themselves. Somehow, in her mind, this little operation, a relatively minor procedure, really, reinforces existing gender roles, whereas living as a member of the other sex without the surgery does not. Transsexual people, by having

surgery, perpetuate the tyranny of the existing system, whereas transgenderists, by not having the surgery, are enlightened pioneers.

Excuse me. Unless one is an exhibitionist, only a very few people see the surgery site. Genitals, those of transgendered and nontransgendered persons alike, are not visible to others in a society in which genitals are almost always clothed.

Susan Kessler and Wendy McKenna, in their book *Gender: An Ethnomethodological Approach*, speak of cultural genitals. By that, they mean that we assume particular genitals for everyone we know; we have no personal experience with them. If we see a woman in the supermarket, we assume she has a vagina. This is not always the case, for she well be Holly Boswell or Phyllis Frye or Linda Phillips, who retain and plan to always retain the original factory equipment. The fact is that transgenderists, like every else in our society, no matter how androgynous, are assumed by those who meet them to be either male or female or transgendered, and their genitals are a product of

reviewed by Dallas Denny

I've been very encouraged by the increasing realization by many in the transgender community that it is entirely reasonable and appropriate to live full-time as a member of the other sex without having genital sex reassignment surgery. For many years, this was not even considered as a possibility. Those who crosslived full-time without surgery professed to want it, whether they meant it or not, and those who had had it deluded themselves that they had reached the end of a journey that could have but one legitimate outcome -- the lancet.

To their everlasting credit, a few courageous souls, notably Virginia Prince, Linda Phillips, Phyllis Randolph Frye, and Holly Boswell, realized the absurdity of this type of thinking, and began asking, quietly at first, and then with increasing force and volume, "Why is it necessary to have a surgery I don't want in order to live the life I desire?" Once posed, this question had but one logical answer, and that was that the rigidly dichotomous gender roles of our society had made us blind to the possibility, and that of course, they and other transgendered persons *could* function in society as women without offering their genitals up to the surgeons.

With time, this new view merged with the similarly awakening realization of postoperative transsexual men and women like Jason Cromwell, Denise Norris, Riki Anne Wilchins, and Kate Bornstein, who had independently realized that surgery was not the panacea that they had thought it to be, and that they were, in fact, still transgendered, and would always remain so. This merged philosophy is now making its way into

"Raymond ... like MacKenzie ... does not realize that it is transsexual people and those who work with them, much more than transgenderists, who have for more than 40 years brought into question our society's bipolar model of gender ... There are two words which explain this: poor scholarship."

the imagination of the other party as well as what they are concealing beneath their clothes. In this way, transgenderists are exactly the same as post-op transsexuals. If they are assumed to be male or female, their genitals are assumed accordingly. It is when they (transgenderist and transsexual alike) are read, and when they claim their transgender status and are out, that they transgress dichotomous gender roles. Genitalia have nothing whatsoever to do with it.

This is a realization that Gordene Olga MacKenzie has obviously not made, and it is for that reason that *Transgender Nation* is an unfortunate book which will do a great deal of damage to the transgender community and to the understanding of the community by the general public.

John Money once wrote that those who attack transsexual people the most viciously have never to any extent known them. It's clear, from MacKenzie's description that her exposure to the transgender community has been limited and her exposure to transsexual people even more limited-- and yet it is an attack on transsexualism, and not the uplifting of transgenderism, that is the real goal of *Transgender Nation*.

MacKenzie seems unaware of Sandy Stone's article, "The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto," and other writings of transsexual people. In fact, from her description, it seems highly unlikely that MacKenzie met any nonassimilation-minded transsexual people. Her involvement with the community was brief, certainly not extensive enough to justify writing a book like *Transgender Nation*.

MacKenzie's involvement with the transgender literature is even briefer-- or perhaps she is merely being selective in her use of that literature. She relies heavily on papers such as Meyer and Reters's infamous 1979 study, which has been thoroughly discredited as bad science and unmasked as having political motives, and the writings of Leslie Lothstein, whose findings about the effectiveness of transsexual surgery are at variance from more than a dozen other researchers. But most of all, she centers on Janice Raymond's *The Transsexual Empire: The Making of the She-Male*, using Raymond's arguments as her own. Raymond's thesis, which seems laughable, but which has been taken with utmost seriousness by feminist scholars, is that transsexual surgery is a plot by males to render females obsolete by creating "constructed" females from men. Raymond also vilifies transsexual people, for, like MacKenzie, she does not realize that it is transsexual people and those who work with them, much more than transgenderists, who have for more than 40 years brought into question our society's bipolar model of gender.

MacKenzie fails to mention that those she cites have been challenged and in many instances refuted. She seems ignorant of much of the literature, and in fact does not mention the activist organization

Transgender Nation, which had its name and which had been working to deconstruct traditional gender roles long before her book appeared. There are two words which explain this: poor scholarship.

MacKenzie's book has already elicited one enthusiastic review in the transgender press, and will no doubt be praised by writers in the mainstream press who also have no knowledge of transsexual persons. Once again I call it an unfortunate book, for MacKenzie has driven a wedge firmly between transsexual people and transgenderists, just as they were figuring out just how very much they have in common.

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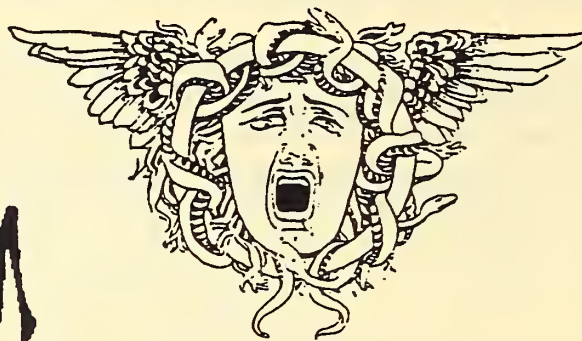
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Dallas Denny

Dallas Denny is Licensed Psychological Examiner and a member of the Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association, Inc. and of the Society for the Scientific Study of Sex. She is founder and executive director of the American Educational Gender Information Service, Inc., a national clearinghouse for information about gender dysphoria, publisher of *Chrysalis Quarterly*, and founder of Atlanta Gender Explorations. She has been previously published in many magazines and a number of peer-reviewed professional journals. Her books *Gender Dysphoria: A Guide to Research and Identity Management in Transsexualism* were published in early 1994.

TOXIC THINKING, PART ONE: ELITISM



by Christine Beatty

I used to hate transvestites. I never said anything to them, choosing instead to pity them from afar. Oh, but I did say disparaging things about them to my friends. Never mind that I once identified as a transvestite, before I even considered issues of gender identity. Never mind that I didn't really know any TVs. I just didn't like them. It didn't matter if they were heterosexual,

homosexual or whatever. I was a transsexual, not a weekend warrior like those crossdressers. As far as I was concerned, those guys gave us transsexuals a bad name because transvestites just don't look as good as us. Right? Why couldn't they be happy prancing around at home in their wives' panties? Why did they have to go out IN PUBLIC and undermine the image that we serious transsexuals were so carefully trying to cultivate?

As will probably be obvious to most open minded, tolerant, patient, non-egocentric people, my prior attitude hinged upon so many fallacies and destructive thinking patterns that they each deserve a separate article. Of course, I was younger back then (5 years ago) and only recently cross-living after a two year hiatus, so I was pretty insecure at the time *and* I was entrenched in the binary gender system and... *Oh fer chrissake, Christine, quit making excuses for yourself. You were an asshole, at least in that respect, and you're on the verge of being a double asshole by trying to minimize your intolerance.*

All right, I guess I'm a sinner, and I suppose this article may be considered atonement. What were my sins? Aside from my obvious plunge into looksism, stereotyping, and judgmental labelling of people into whose thoughts and feelings I hadn't the slightest clue, I was being very elitist. You know, elitism: engaging in us-and-them thinking with "us" being superior and "them" being inferior, and all of it based on presumptuous stereotype-rooted value judgements. And now that I recognize that thinking for what it is, I must ask myself if I really want to wallow in the same mindset found in the ranks of separatists and the terminally-rednecked. Do I? Do we?

Sadly, many people in the transgender community buy into elitism at one point or another; we embrace the us-versus-them mentality. I am a little ashamed to have participated in that farce, but I sometimes wonder if it was a stage of growing I needed to go through. Perhaps, like separatism functions for some people, my us-and-them mind gave me an opportunity to fully establish

"Those who insist on beating their breast about nomenclature and differences, who regress into us-and-them thinking, they are sabotaging our campaign for rights."

my identity in a society that is mostly hostile to transgendered people. Until now, I have never really considered why I was an elitist, and maybe that is because it would have seemed defensive on my part (i.e., making excuses for myself). Maybe now is a good time to consider it, with all of our readership observing my well-meaning liberal squirmings at the prospect of confronting a not-so-nice aspect of myself. For clarity of writing I will be confining my remarks to male-to-female examples, but I'm mentioning my FTM buddies right here so they'll know I'm not forgetting them. Negative personality traits know no gender boundaries.

Though it's not any kind of justification, I know I'm not alone in this. Many transgendered people have a problem with elitism. Kate Bornstein and I were again having dinner at

Chevy's last week (Uh-oh! What's she going to say *now?*), and she and I both observed how elitist some members of our community can be. After discussing the issue, we both agreed that we have noticed a certain "pecking order" among genderfolk. The hierarchy, in terms of their perceived value, seems to be based on surgery and/or intentions of surgery.

The post-operative transsexual a.k.a. "new woman" a.k.a. "woman" is on the top of the heap. She is the heavy in our community. Being in a group of less than 10% of all transsexuals and being the recipient of an operation that costs thousands of dollars, she is truly in an elite category. This is, however, no justification for acting snooty.

The pre-op transsexual who is near surgery is second banana (no pun intended whatsoever). She is the one who has accumulated enough money and HBIKDA merit badges to make the provider community take her seriously. Of course she may back out at the last minute, which means she then slips several rungs down to a lower level, but as long as she intends surgery and has assembled the means to get it then, by Goddess, she is practically a *sister*.

A pre-op transsexual who lacks the money and/or the HBIKDA seal-of-approval is to be pitied, mostly, by her fortunate sisters over her. Whether she's economically disadvantaged, medically or psychologically constrained from getting SRS, or just not able to convince the shrink to write "the letter" this poor individual can only hope that one day she may turn her life around. Still, her heart is in the right place, which is more than can be said about the next three groups.

A non-operative transsexual is not even thought to be a transsexual by some people. She is known by many labels

including transgenderist, GIDAANT person, "drag queen" and so on, labels which she may or may not embrace. I once wrote an article for *Chrysalis Quarterly* which asked the question "What is a drag queen?" It detailed some of the disdain which many of the aforementioned groups have for these girls. I was too polite to say it so blatantly in that essay, but the truth of the matter is that the ones labelling others "drag queen" are so butt-ugly and the ones they are judging are so pretty that it seems a clear-cut case of envy.

Transvestites and Cross-Dressers of whatever frequency, be they gay or straight -- and it should be kept in mind that sometimes the line blurs between this group and the "transgenderists" with only frequency of dressing and/or the pronoun one uses for oneself giving a clue as to what label might be applied -- are definitely on a lower rung. These weekend warriors are held in contempt for not having the guts to come out and just do it: take a stand, live as a woman, screw the world. Of course it is the height of presumption to say that these people want to or should do any such thing. But then, we don't care about that, do we?

Genderfuckers occupy the lowest rung. These include the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence or any gay man with facial hair and makeup. It also includes punk rockers and other anarchists who choose to wear the clothing of the "other" sex for purposes of making a political statement. Let's face it, these people are clowns. And all they do is make us all look bad. They should be morally mandated out of existence. (Hey, where have I heard *that* before?)

Now that we have all of these people nice and neatly labelled and ready for a big USDA stamp on their rump, we still need to consider further ways to make judgements on people. It seems that aesthetics/passability (looksism) and prestige (read press coverage) serves to further value (or, in my mind, to de-value) transsexuals. Thus, Tula is a "better" transsexual than me because she "passed" for a long time until she was exposed by the tabloid press *and* she's been on Donahue and all the better talk shows, whereas I get clocked several times a week (or more frequently) and, nationally speaking, I've only been on a very unflattering Jane Whitney show and on a Montel Williams episode where I was brought in for freak-appeal during sweeps week. (However I *did* look good for Montel!)

Sadly, elitist thinking *does* exist in our community, and it is a problem for many of us. I believe this mentality is partly a byproduct of the entire psychological/medical model of "gender issues" and the bipolar nature of gender in our culture. The provider community and society at large have defined sex, gender, and the transitional path for us. And most of us have swallowed these definitions whole. We had to -- if we wanted our hormones and surgery. Thus, if the transsexual journey is already mapped out for us, then we are defined by our "progress" in this transition.

Unfortunately, this path is based on the assumptions of: the number of genders in the world, what defines those genders, what is acceptable gender behavior, and what people should be doing with/about their genders. For instance, by the definition of the

American Psychiatric Ass. (intentional creative abbreviation), you aren't a transsexual if you don't want SRS. This theory is, of course, rooted in the genitalia-defines-gender schema. Some providers don't even consider you a "true" transsexual unless you are heterosexually oriented and/or look like a caricature of your identified gender. At this point, I'm not ready to digress further into a discussion about labels, I just wanted to point out how these rules for transsexuals are predicated on the ideas of a patriarchal society.

It is precisely these ideas and expectations that provide the class structure for an elitist transsexual caste system. All of these hoops we "must" jump through, from therapy to hormones to surgery, make for levels of transition. And, of course, genital surgery is considered the apex of success for a transsexual. (Although I would observe that "success" is a very loaded and relative term. I've met post-ops who were miserable and I've known many "drag queens" who were the happiest people in the world.) It all comes down to social/peer expectations. Just like a *real* woman is supposed to want a husband and 2.3 children, a *real* transsexual is supposed to want SRS. Her stature in the community is partly based on having surgery. I've seen this pecking order demonstrated too many times in social discourse. And it's a goddamn shame.

A *perfect* example of this kind of elitism reared its ugly head recently in the Letters section of the *San Francisco Bay Times*. A progressive gay newspaper, they recently added the word "Trans" to their masthead. A letter from a post-op TS thanked the paper for inclusion of the word, then she expressed gratitude for using "Trans" instead of "Transgender." She went on to state how different transsexuals were from transgenders and that she *didn't* appreciate being lumped in with all of the transvestites and other trans people who didn't have or intend surgery. The tone of her letter suggested that transsexuals suffer more or are somehow superior to other trans-people. I wanted to puke.

How *dare* anybody make such value judgements! Surgery might make transsexuals different (and that's assuming that intending SRS makes one a transsexual), but we are no more heroic than the non-surgical transgendered person who goes out and faces the world every day. Riki Anne Wilchins stated it beautifully in "21 Things You Don't Say to a Transsexual" when she said the hard part was watching family, former lovers and "friends" turn their backs on her. I was disowned by most of my family and acquaintances long before I ever announced any intentions of surgery. People yell cruel things at me -- they *throw* things at me -- without knowing what surgeries I have had. And you know what, Sports Fans? They wouldn't have cared.

I suppose that's what galls me the most about elitism in our community. We are *all* freaks and faggots in the mind of the bat-wielding redneck and the theocratic fundamentalist demagogue. Whether they are trying to take our rights away with laws or our lives away with blunt instruments, they don't give a tin snip about what our label-of-the-month is. Believe it!

We need some solidarity and we need it now. Those who insist on beating their breast about nomenclature and differences, who regress into (*continued on page 55*)

What's In a Name?

by Margaret Deirdre O'Hartigan

I first came across the term "transgender" while passing through Seattle back in 1976 with Dyna, touring the West and making courtesy calls at every transsexual and gender organization we knew existed. Our contact person for Seattle's counseling center for sexual minorities was Gwen, a female-to-male individual who felt more at ease with the label "transgender" because he didn't want to undergo genital surgery with all its concomitant risk of failure which female-to-male people face. Gwen even had a two-page position paper extolling this new term. Significantly, the paper urged the utter abandonment of the term "transsexual" and its uniform replacement by "transgender".

Gwen's arguments didn't really address our own personal experience but we dutifully took the term -- and copies of Gwen's position paper -- back to Minnesota with us, where the new term languished, finding little acceptance save for the occasional female-to-male. Even so, "transgender" was clearly a term and concept useful and empowering to some -- but all of the male-to-female people I knew were more comfortable identifying as transsexual.

Fast-forward to 1992. *Transgender* seemed to be cropping up everywhere, from the title of the newly formed Transgender Nation in San Francisco to inclusion of *transgender* in the Seattle pride day celebration. And I felt excluded.

"*Transgender* doesn't really describe me, in fact it excludes me," I explained to the few people who would listen. "Gender is psychological and sociological -- sex is anatomical. I did something a lot more difficult and dangerous than change gender -- I changed sex."

"Oh, but transgender's an umbrella term," was the typical response, "it covers transsexuals, transvestites and transgendered people."

"Oh, like *gay* really includes lesbians and bisexuals and transsexuals, so we don't need to mention them by name, right?"

Sometimes people got the point and sometimes people got mad. I could soon predict the reactions rather well. Almost all post-operative transsexuals resented being referred to as *transgendered* while non-ops and gay/lesbian/bisexual people preferred the new term.

Shortly after I began writing for *Sound Out* the editorial collective amended their masthead to the abbreviated *trans* after hearing my rationale for an all-inclusive term. Now the *San Francisco Bay Times* has recently changed its masthead to include *trans* as well.

Unfortunately, some people seem intent on imposing *transgender* on transsexuals -- oftentimes the very people one would think to be our staunchest allies.

Of the two right-wing-sponsored initiatives which recently threatened to impose legally-mandated discrimination against queers in the State of Washington, one specifically referred to *transsexuals* while the other specifically ordered the state to treat post-operative people as the sex of birth.

A *transgender* organization ostensibly working to defeat these initiatives, Transgender Caucus, neglected to include either transsexuals or the concept of changing sex in its mission statement.

"The TG Caucus' mission supports [Washington Citizens for Fairness/Hands Off Washington] in the effort to defeat statewide

"Every application of the term 'transgender' to me denigrates my accomplishment, masks what I've done, co-opts my life and denies my experience. It violates my very soul."

political initiatives to limit or deny the civil rights of any resident of the state of Washington based on perceived or actual sexual/gender orientation."

Since the right-wing initiatives specifically attacks *transsexuals* why didn't the Caucus do likewise? Transgender Caucus didn't have any problem advertising in the *Seattle Gay News* for transsexual volunteers to lick envelopes, answer phones and do other grunt work in the campaign against the initiatives. Such a failure to include transsexuals might be understandable in a queer or straight organization ignorant of the issues involved but no one can seriously suggest that to be the case with Transgender Caucus.

I can imagine some people at this point complaining that I'm splitting hairs -- but it's exactly this sort of hair-splitting that goes on in courts of law and is why -- unless specifically included in legislation protecting other queers -- transsexuals find themselves left to fend for themselves. I've worked on too many civil rights complaints and had too many lawsuits not to recognize when we're being excluded from equal protection under law; likewise, I know when someone's pussyfooting around our inclusion.

The simple fact of the matter is that Transgender Caucus was working hand-in-glove with Hands Off Washington, the gay and lesbian organization combatting the right-wing initiatives in Washington State. Like many mainstream political gay and lesbian organizations, H.O.W. wished to keep transsexuals at arms' length.

It isn't that transsexuals are considered too *outré* for public consumption -- it's that many of our needs differ drastically from those of homosexuals. Unlike us, homosexuals don't need medical intervention to be able to lead fulfilling sex lives -- so most homosexual organizations couldn't care less about our surgical or

medical issues. Homosexuals couldn't marry one another in the State of Washington even prior to the threat posed by Initiative 610 -- so they were hardly sympathetic to the plight married post-operative transsexuals would face should passage of that initiative invalidate their existing, legally binding marriages.

Yet the majority of the voting public -- straight, marriage-minded and prone to mental and physical ailments as they are -- were far more amenable to being reached with the political message that their *own* marriage and medical rights were threatened by Initiative 610. I believe Transgender Caucus' tendency to marginalize transsexuals stemmed from the fact they were so intimately involved with an assimilationist gay and lesbian organization such as Hands Off Washington.

Mainstream political gay and lesbian organizations are all too often discomfited by the thought of us actually changing our sex, for their arguments for obtaining public acceptance rest in large part on the premise that sexual orientation is inherent at birth, innate and for all practical purposes immutable. Homosexuals, goes the argument, are born, not made, and should therefore not be penalized for being what they are. It's why the gay movement has such trouble including bisexuals -- who theoretically can choose the sex of their partners -- fearing bisexuals susceptible to being portrayed by the right-wing as purposely perverse.

People like us are even more threatening to homosexuals than are the bisexuals. Here we are, persons who once were physically male and are now female -- our flesh-and-blood reality is proof that anatomy is not destiny. If we can change sex, go the fears of some in the homosexual community, mightn't they be asked why *they* can't change something as apparently simple as sexual orientation?

The possibility of changing sex, therefore, is no more to be tolerated than entertaining the notion of changing sexual orientation. This is why, when homosexual organizations finally manage to include us, they so often utilize "transgender" to describe as.

Changing gender is safe. Gender, after all, is a social construct, and as such changes from society to society and over periods of time. Gender is so safe that increasing numbers of homosexuals are claiming to be transgendered themselves. A gay man writes in the Pagan magazine *Green Egg* that he is a berdache because he shaves his legs and wears drag. Walter Williams writes about the *hijra* as gay males, while Randy Conner likewise claims the sex-changing *Gallae* as "gender-variant males". Will Roscoe claims to be able to be a berdache simply thinking about it. And lesbian writers such as Joanne Nestle refer to "butch" and "femme" as genders.

Of far greater danger to transsexuals than that posed by gay men and lesbians co-opting our historical antecedents and political energy, however, is the threat we face from transgender activists who threaten us from within our own community. The Health Law Project's 2nd International Conference on Transgender Law and Employment Policy is a perfect example.

"If the patient is married, the physician may not require divorce but may also require the spouse to sign a waiver of liability form", the "professionals in the fields of law, health care

policy, and gender science, most of whom are transgendered themselves," have decided. With those few words the Health Law Project turns its back on the currently accepted practice of recognizing that sex-changing surgery is exactly that -- a change of sex -- and lays the groundwork to reduce those of us who have literally changed sex to merely people who have changed "their sexual appearance".

Before anyone accuses me of exaggerating, let me point out that performing sex-changing surgery upon a married individual can have only one of two possible effects: either setting precedent for legal recognition of homosexual marriages -- or setting precedent to redefine sex reassignment surgery as less than a legal change of sex.

Thorny questions immediately arise: Is the Health Law Project taking such a stance because it places heterosexual privilege above the needs of post-operative transsexuals to obtain a legal status consistent with their anatomy? Is that why it is working, at our expense, to preserve existing marriages contracted in the sex of birth? Or is the Health Law Project willing to sacrifice us to accomplish the homosexual agenda of obtaining legal marriage rights for gay and lesbian relationships? Surely an organization comprised of, as the Health Law Project claims to be, "professionals in the fields of law, health care policy, and gender science, most of whom are transgendered themselves", has thought through the legal consequences of their recommendations?

In 1979 lesbian-feminist author Janice Raymond wrote in *The Transsexual Empire* that "the problem of transsexualism would best be served by morally mandating it out of existence." Well it's 1995 now, and I have the distinct impression I'm being morally mandated out of existence, not only by right-wing ideologues with initiatives designed to outlaw my legal status as female but by the homosexual movement mislabeling me as transgender, having even that remnant so watered down as to be meaningless -- and then having the transgenders use us for their own purposes.

Every application of the term *transgender* to me denigrates my accomplishments, masks what I've done, co-opts my life and denies my experience. It denies the existence of my very soul.

Like the *hijra* of India cold steel severed my body to prove anatomy is not destiny. Like the *Gallae* of old I followed the example of the Great Mother and changed sex -- and lived. Like the Siberian Chuckchee shaman I died and was taken apart, reassembled and returned with new powers -- not only on the spiritual plane but physically as well. Like the *winkte* of the Mdewakanton Sioux who originally inhabited the land upon which I grew up I have had my visions -- but they led to changing my body as well as my soul.

I am not transgender -- I changed my sex.

Changing sex is life-threatening. Whether as practiced by the *hijra* in India or the *Gallae* in Phrygia or in modern-day antiseptic hospital operating rooms, the risk inherent in changing sex is death. However much the odds may have improved for those of us undertaking this journey, there is always the danger we will not survive its completion. The friend of mine who goes for her surgery mere days from my writing (*continued on page 51*)

Power: Seeing Beyond the House of Mirrors

by Renee Chinquapin

Power is an illusion . . . as is this ephemeral, shifting "reality" most of us inhabit. To survive grade school, the military, the freeway, we need power: the ability to impact others.

As a feminist, I think a lot about power. I admire women who command respect with their mere presence, their evident self-esteem, their brilliance or integrity. I resent it when men use their deep voices, built-in hormonal belligerence and bulk to bulldoze women. I regret having done it myself in my male past.

I am tall, I am strong. I move with the untrammled directness of someone trained as a boy: Climb that tree! Punch that sissy! Jump that little girl! I splayed my legs, climbed fences, learned to use my hands as tool-holders, and leapt before I looked. This training helped me endure electrolysis and made undergoing a sex-change easier.

It also means that I carry an unconscious, hardwired physical and attitudinal arsenal of interpersonal assertiveness. No one messes with me on the street. It's a useful armor that my nontranssexual women friends envy. I am seldom afraid, I don't think about rape or being physically abused, and men don't intimidate me.

In a subtler way, this power dynamic plays itself out as well on the telephone and in discussions with friends. My Marlene Dietrich voice commands respect: I can easily interrupt my women friends, who were taught, as I was not, to cede to the louder, deeper, more authoritative male-sounding voice. I see this same dynamic in butch-femme identified lesbian couples.

This palpable if invisible power that men, my butch sisters and I wield is both seductive and handy. Whether elbowing my way through life, tackling what might overwhelm someone else,



or providing for and protecting those I love, this blustering yang energy serves me well.

My courage and assertiveness serve the feminist cause as well. I insist on being seen, being counted, I'm sure that I matter and insist others take me into account. Women have often modelled their assertiveness on me. My ego is strong and well-supported by my physical and oral power.

But . . . as much as personal power helps me to get what I want or deserve, as much as collective power helps transsexuals win what we deserve, it can also keep me/us from focusing on what is ultimately more important: serenity. The jostling tog-of-war of power dynamics polarizes my life into "us and them," the good and the bad, right and wrong, topdog-bottomdog, etc. There are winners and losers in the game my physical and learned power allows me to play so well.

Either way, there is *not* harmony, cooperation and inner peace. Instinct and ego reign supreme in the necessary but somehow self-defeating sphere of power.

When I step back and examine my behavior, I remind myself of a moody child caught up in a Sunday morning tussle with my siblings: "I want it *my* way"; "I want you to like me"; "I want things to be fair". . . Little in our culture encourages this step backwards, or inward: we hardly know how to reach this wider, wiser perspective. In fact, we're ridiculed for even trying, when near universal ignorance and intolerance surround us and there are such important political struggles to be fought and won.

But when I am old, and look back on my life, what I'll find important will not be the battles won, as worthy as they indeed may be. No, what will soften my last breaths, and ease my passing over, will be less my vindicated righteousness than something much subtler, and something much more, yes, powerful. Namely, does the Goddess's light shine through my eyes? Do I bring wisdom, or harmony, or insight where before there was none? Do others see their own potential for

"Transsexual feminism is not about 'We deserve our share too,' but rather, 'Hey, we're all in this together, look what we have to offer . . ."

transformation and transcendence modelled in me? Does my courage, humility and humor in the face of discrimination inspire them to fight their own disparate battles?

Sure, you have to fight fire with fire, you have to sit outside the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival for years before *they* get it that exclusion is ridiculous, yes, and you have to remind our lesbian sisters that women come in all shapes and sizes and that we all have something important to offer. This teaching is our lot, surely.

But I do not confuse the vehicle with the destination; the political arena is a limited one, so tainted with the archaisms of patriarchic thinking, that we daren't take it or ourselves too seriously . . . Politics is only a first, rudimentary, unfortunately necessary step in the process of integration. Transsexual feminism is not about "We deserve our share too," but rather, "Hey, we're all in this together, look what we have to offer, let's get on with the really important work: saving the planet, feeding the poor, nurturing the helpless, *together.*" A feminist perspective without a spiritual foundation leaves us dazed and cross-eyed in the patriarchal, materialistic house of mirrors.

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Renee Chinquapin
photo by Davina Anne Gabriel

What's In a Name? (continued from page 49)

this knows that, however slight, there remains some chance she may die -- and the risk is acceptable. Like the rest of us, she would rather die than remain male -- and that willingness accounts, in part, for the awe in which we are held even today.

There are names for people who have done what you and I have done -- transsexual, *Galla*, changeling, *hijra*, male-to-female, sex-change -- names that we have coined and recovered and have yet to discover. Names I expect people to have the courtesy to use, thank you very much. These names describe us, what we've done, what we do. What we've done is change sex and slipped past the limits beyond which most humans cannot go and dare not venture. We shape-shift, we transform ourselves from one form of humanity to another.

This power to transcend the human form we were born in is too much for some people to bear contemplating: they would deny us our power; they would deny us our names. Like the faded corpses of butterflies safely contained behind the glass of some collector's case, these people would pin their own labels onto our bodies. These people would have us be eunuchs, or freaks or simply men -- or *transgender*.

Naming is power. When I tell you who I am, I give you the power to know me. When someone else names me they define who I am and usurp the power that is rightfully mine. Transgendered people in particular need to respect the fact that terms and labels which empower them do not necessarily empower transsexuals.

The beginning or end of our freedom lies in the power to name ourselves - or others.



Margaret Deirdre O'Hartigan

Margaret Deirdre O'Hartigan is the author of numerous articles on transsexuality and changing sex which have been published in a variety of publications. She successfully sued the state of Minnesota in the 1970s to pay for her reconstructive surgery and was instrumental in defeating a bill subsequently introduced in the Minnesota legislature that would have prohibited such funding. She presently lives in Portland, Oregon.

Guide on the Inner Voyage

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Smells Like Teen Pussy

(An Open Response To Rachel Koteles)

by Mustang Sally

Ever notice how the devotedly politically correct assume they can know all about your life from small details because they have a theory to explain those details? Rachel Koteles' open letter to me (re my considering being out as transsexual or not a privacy issue) is a perfect example. She concludes from my use of a pen name as a transsexual writer that I hide my history in shame, doing nothing for sisters



coming behind me. In reality, my identity is not that much of a secret in the community (Davina had little enough trouble finding me to solicit my participation in *TransSisters*), nor do I bother making it one. Meanwhile, I am working with a new non-profit to establish an employment project for transsexuals in San Francisco's Tenderloin, and am mentoring a young woman two years into her transition. So much for my being a kind of transsexual feminist Kurt Cobain.

"...loose cannons keep rolling around the deck, sometimes misrepresenting personal points of view as the experience of most transsexuals, sometimes putting the drive to be as radical as possible before common sense and the good of the community."

In the wake of the transsexual feminist activism of the past two years, I have been out to more friends than had been my custom. This has had much to do with the support and community offered by the groundswell of transsexual feminism but more, perhaps, with my continuing my mainstreaming back into the lesbian community (which began ten years ago when an editor bucked the blacklist because she liked my writing) through my growing involvement with a segment of the lesbian community--leatherdykes--more transfriendly than average and inclined to think of gender as a sex toy. I have had occasion to ask various friends for feedback on my caution around disclosure and my process of re-emerging as a transsexual in the lesbian community. To a woman, they have said why bother coming out--you're an asset to the community, you owe nobody an explanation, *your history is nobody's business*. So, widening my circle of women to whom I am out can, at this point, serve one of two purposes: make my life easier (when done selectively), or make an ideological point.

Despite the pressure to come out for political reasons, I am, at this point, reserving judgment on the character of transgender liberation and transsexual feminism, waiting to see if they become movements with which I want to be identified. You see,

when I got bounced out of the lesbian feminist movement 20 years ago, it wasn't just for being transsexual. My friends and I were highly critical of some trends that were to become enshrined as radical feminist process. These included setting policy by the perceptions of the angriest, being so fixated on theory that brilliant observations were wasted by being extended to the point of absurdity, and jockeying for movement position by calling rivals "male identified." And damned if I don't see these very things going on among activist transsexuals, compounded by a queer nationalist-type belief that pride means getting in people's faces and the practice of putting politics before transition.

I find the diversity of opinions in the new transsexual activist discourse exciting, especially when it results in a capability to play with elements of sex and gender without fear of that play making us less than "real" women. Nonetheless, I am very concerned about transsexuality being deconstructed to the point of the very real experience of gender dysphoria (as in the identification with another physical sex and the desire to experience life in that sex's body type and social identity) being rendered meaningless. It is very fashionable these days to say

surgery and even passing are unimportant, despite the empirical experience of many a transsexual to the contrary. If the personal is political, as they say, my personal experience demands a transsexual feminism that recognizes the importance of affiliation with and belonging to the larger body of womankind -- something I would think is implied in the very word *feminism*.

Unfortunately, part of the MTF community is taking the same wrong turn as radical feminism: instead of recognizing that we have majority and minority opinions, we are allowing the lowest common denominator of transsexual thinking to be mistaken for "transsexual feminism" just so no one feels her opinion is being negatively judged through not being given the same weight as everyone else's. Furthermore, we are compounding this mistake in the very same way, namely by allowing minority or alternative opinion-holders to attack as politically incorrect (or "male-identified") theorists/activists who don't assimilate into their own personal opinion all minority or alternative views regardless of merit. As a result, loose cannons keep rolling around the deck, sometimes misrepresenting personal points of view as the experience of most transsexuals, sometimes putting the drive to be as radical as possible before common sense and the good of the community.

I recognize no one person or group of people as the one, true, official "transsexual feminism" to which I must pledge allegiance, and reserve my right to pick and choose from among the ideas being spread through transsexual feminist discourse. If those

ideas make sense to me and I find my own in alignment with enough of them, I will allow myself to be seen as part of that movement, one exponent of that school of thought. If I perceive too large a portion of ideas and actions as being ill-conceived and doom-ridden, I will bail rather than have it assumed I agree with or approve of ideas and/or actions that give me pause.

For one thing, I will not take part in a movement in which accusations of "male identification" are used as weapons against unpopular thought. You read just such a slur used against me in issue # 5: Rachel's claim that my reluctance to play trannie martyr again, and my admission that having done so hurt, was "a guy thing." I have also heard of transsexual women who have defended the right of others to remain non-op receiving critical letters addressed to them as "Mr." So-And-So. People, I don't take this crap from dyke separatists, and I'm sure as hell not going to stand for it in a transsexual feminist movement.

I realize this is slippery ground. I have myself, in private, been critical of those rare transsexual individuals who expect to be able to waltz into any women's group and proceed directly to a leadership position without paying their dues. I have, in private, considered this a form of male entitlement-type thinking, and have worried about its affect on how transsexuals are perceived in feminist groups. I intend to continue trying my damndest to express whatever reservations I may have about this behavior in ways that do not publicly challenge any sister's womanhood.

I will say, though, that I believe we would do well to temper any concept of an equal right to participate in women's groups with a realization that we have to develop our individual credibility as women to do so. If this means accepting post-op only policies, or pre-conditions of a certain amount of full-time living as women, so be it. Taking a women's group to court or before a civil rights commission may result in access, but it would sign the death warrant for any real inclusion. And yet, there are groups that cry transphobia over any women's group's reluctance to embrace individuals who are, well, not quite ready for prime time.

A friend of mine recently spent an entire evening -- a late evening -- attempting to explain this to someone who had just tentatively come out as transsexual, had been on hormones two weeks and was committed only to exploring the possibility of transition. My friend said this individual was wearing a dress and lipstick but walked and talked "like a man" (i.e., with no attempt to modify voice, body language or carriage) and, most significantly, went by a male name and showed no interest in catching up on female socialization, that is, learning how to interact with other women the way women interact. Now, you can call me "assimilationist" if you like, or even "elitist" (apparently the new term for those who prefer surgery to living intersexed), but if I were in a women's group, and all we had to go on when approached by this person was their word that they were a woman, I wouldn't buy it, just like I didn't buy the idea in another group that a male crossdresser should have been able to join our women's rap group on the days he "felt like a woman." Yet this individual very nearly got a local group to make fools out of all of us through a "direct action" against a very small

support group that didn't yet see this person as a woman.

Three months later, my friend tells me this same individual has now been seen at the Whiptail Lizard Lounge, "dyke social space" on weekends in San Francisco's Castro district, with no progression in presentation. Now, the Whiptail is a very cool place: the collective takes pride in making the lounge a friendly place for all lesbians, including transsexuals. But the transsexual women who are made to feel welcome there are the ones who at least attempt to pass and don't make a big deal about being T. The only folks presenting themselves as women whose presence makes other women uncomfortable are those who appear to be deliberately doing an incomplete job of passing. Is this proof that passing is privilege? No. There is a common-sense reason for this of which anyone claiming to be a woman and a lesbian should be aware.

The big deal about having "women's space," "lesbian space" or "dyke space" is that it's about the only opportunity women have to socialize in an environment in which women are the majority, our world view is the "normal" one, and we can meet other women to date without being hassled by straight boys trying to fulfill their ultimate fantasy of picking up a lesbian. Lesbians have a legitimate interest in ascertaining whether someone with a penis in such space is a woman or a crossdresser looking to get his dick wet. Someone making their best attempt to pass and fit in with all the other women is most likely to be not only a woman, but a woman who shares the expectations of the other women in that space. But someone making a point of not passing is saying, in effect, "Hi, I want you to accept me as a woman, and I've got a dick," which means they could very well be hoping to stick that dick where it's not wanted.

While we can know that we are women through dealing with our dysphoria and coming out transsexual, we can only *be* women (in the way female-assigned and reared women are, which does happen to be the standard) by the experiential knowledge which comes from living as women full-time and being accepted as part of the *collective experience* that is womanhood. That means learning to survive in the patriarchy without crying "transphobia" every time you face the banal evil of everyday sexism. I can and will fault women for excluding us on theoretical grounds; I won't fault women for declining to accept into women's community anyone disinterested in showing, by how she lives and interacts with other women, some interest in exploring meaning through being female and building community with other women to whom this is important.

This, of course, leads us to questions of absolutism about issues of surgery and "passing." The Correct Political Line (which has been put before the non-transsexual public as facts about transsexuality) is that passing isn't as important as feeling good about yourself, and that not all transsexuals desire surgery (this latter being true but misleading).

I applaud the new sensibility which says you don't have to woodwork to be a success as a transsexual. As far as passing goes, however, there are differences between being perceived as a woman, as a woman who is (or may be) transsexual, and as a transsexual (in the gender-illiterate sense of a man trying to

become a woman). The difference isn't the hand each of us was dealt in terms of body types; it isn't how good a job one does of achieving conventional femininity. One transsexual could be a 6'4" amazon and have credibility as a woman among women by the way she interacts with them and her unaffected "presentation." Another could be 5'4" with features to die for but still come off as a drag queen. In *theory* they may have an equal "right" to inclusion in women's groups, but only one of them will really belong.

There is room in today's lesbian community for all sorts of gender play and exploration.

However, beyond challenging the idea that one need be "womon-born" to be a woman and therefore a part of that community, I can't see demanding that women's and lesbian groups include anyone we say they should instead of

those sufficiently woman-identified who have "walked the walk" to the point of obviously belonging. Moreover, I consider it essential that we approach inclusion not so much as the enforcing of a "right" as a process of networking and melding which results in, at least some sort of consensus, even if that means a process of proving ourselves that those recognized as female at birth don't have to go through. This is especially true for pre- and non-ops; it's easier for post-ops to demonstrate how little our daily experience differs from that of the female-raised. We need to keep in sight the long-range goal of getting women's groups and communities enough experience with having transsexual women among them that this is no longer a big deal. As individual women fit into individual women's communities, they may even develop the credibility to be both community members *and* radically gendered (if they choose to experience themselves as such), while those who do not do such groundwork may never fit.

For those who claim to have been "pressured" into going through with surgery, I have one question: what planet are you and your doctors on? Last time I checked, reputable professionals required certainty of choice, in addition to proven ability to live full-time happily and successfully, for approval for surgery. Doubt is still a disqualifier; given the existence of malpractice law in a litigious, damage award-hungry society, it's likely to be just that for a long, long time. There are individuals living indefinitely as non-ops and accepted generally as women, partly due to consciousness raising by transsexuals but greatly due to their own individual credibility. Since this option is increasingly viable, where are we getting these claims of pressure to get surgery? If it's coming from the transsexual community, I can only see that as further proof of the wisdom of aligning one's self and life with women in general rather than with transsexuals or the transgender community at large.

The tricky thing about post-op remorse is that it's very much a luxury of the post-op. I myself wish I could have allowed myself to explore enthusiastically a hermaphroditic female sexuality during the five years I was going through transition. It

would have saved me a lot of pain and shame and -- judging from the windows of opportunity when lovers made me comfortable with my transitioning body -- been a lot more fun. I can say this, though, because I've been a more than reasonably anatomically correct female for years and years, with a corresponding comfort level. During transition, my genitals usually got in the way of intimacy; at the very least, they betrayed me by being an inauthentic communication of my sexuality--and that was mortifying. Today, I can fantasize about a hermaphroditic female sexuality, even to the point of strapping on a dildo and

penetrating a lover, because I'm not stuck there: it doesn't get in the way of my being a woman with a pussy, especially in bed, like it used to.

I am, actually, angry that people are representing surgery as unnecessary for

anyone else, much less for transsexuals in general. I think that compromises our rights and betrays our goal of safe, high-quality, accessible and affordable medical services for those who desire them. You might as well say there's no such thing as a transsexual if you say there is no group of people for whom SRS is a necessity for survival and well-being. I've got news for you: there are such people, and we resent having our lives, identities and experiences trivialized.

I resent the hell out of transsexuals publicly agreeing with the lesbian separatists that we are surgically constructed women (or castrated men), that we are pressured into undergoing surgery instead of living radically gendered lives, that we are not women but a third gender (as per the Dworkin-Mackinnon Model Anti-Pornography Ordinance), that our male histories will always be a part of us and make us significantly different from the "womon-born," that SRS is elective rather than medically necessary surgery, etc., etc., etc. If you believe these things, believe them for yourself: by telling the public these things are true of transsexuals in general, you are misrepresenting my life, putting my safety and well-being in jeopardy and interfering in my relationship with the lesbian community of which I am a part. I expect better of "radical transsexuals" or the "radically gendered" than rolling over for the transphobic like a bunch of spineless suck-ups. I expect more of transsexual feminism than some totally weak cop-out that everything the seps say about us is true *but that these are good things*.

I have been hearing we should stop comparing ourselves to female-raised women and, instead, see our bodies, selves and experiences as "normal for transsexual women." This is kind of cool in a way; we can certainly afford to get over any feelings of inferiority to which we're tempted by our physical histories. On the other hand, no amount of interest in who we are as transsexual women can negate what is usually our original interest, namely who we are as women, period. To be transsexual women we must recognize ourselves as women; how to do that without comparing and contrasting ourselves to those recognized and raised

"I expect better of 'radical transsexuals' or the 'radically gendered' than rolling over for the transphobic like a bunch of spineless suck-ups. I expect more of transsexual feminism than some totally weak cop-out that everything the seps say about us is true but that these are good things."

as female, having XX chromosomes and born with a female reproductive tract? Even those of us who want to see themselves as a separate and distinct kind of woman must ask what makes them different from the transgendered with no desire to modify their physical bodies and endocrine cycles as thoroughly as we do. There are limits, then, to how independent we can be of non-transsexual womankind, no matter how driven some of us are to develop an ideology that would make us so.

My own variation on the "normal for transsexual women" theme has been its inverse proposition: that our experiences are one normal subset of women's growing up--which places the emphasis on the *woman* part, not the transsexual part. In the long run, I'm more interested in who I am as a woman than who I am as a transsexual woman, more interested in my place in the women's community than in the transsexual community. If that means distancing myself from dippy transsexuals over what I think is good for women as a whole, I'll do it. I don't "owe" any group blind loyalty, especially in the face of thought and behavior contrary to my best interest and judgment.

Along the lines of "normal for transsexual women" is the declaration by some post-op sisters that they still have a penis, albeit a reconfigured one. I do know women with penises, the hanging-from-the-pubes kind. The only penis I have is one I can tuck away in a drawer after I take it out of the harness. My body told me what I had eight weeks after surgery, when a woman chatted me up in a women's bookstore. She gave me a ride home, I invited her in for tea, and you can guess the rest. I was so afraid of not getting wet because of my lack of Bartholin glands; this would make me look like a freak and insult her by suggesting she wasn't turning me on.

Just when I was most worried, she ran a finger along the opening to my vagina, smiled, and held the finger up to my lips. "Mmmmm," she purred, "look how wet you are for me!" I smelled a familiar (and favorite) scent as she slipped her finger into my mouth for me to suck. I looked down. What I saw between my legs looked liked pussy, felt like pussy, smelled like pussy and tasted like pussy. Going by the "duck" rule (if it looks like a duck, walks like a duck and quacks), I knew it must be pussy.

My body knew the score: it had been waiting for me to get my genitals fixed so it could react in a way typical to female physiology, even with a skin graft for vaginal lining. It would be denying the truth of my body to make a big deal about being an alternative form of female, especially since I've had 19 years of my body and other circumstances hitting me over the head with the fact that I'm never as different from non-T women as I'm ever tempted to think I am.

Mustang Sally is a nineteen years postoperative transsexual lesbian and has been actively involved in the feminist and lesbian movements since the late 1960s. Her work has been widely published, and she is also a regular staff writer for Transsexual News-Telegraph.

Toxic Thinking, Part One: Elitism

(continued from page 47)

us-and-them thinking, they are sabotaging our campaign for rights. They are the kinds of people who would have snippily rearranged deck chairs on the Titanic instead of keeping a lookout for icebergs. Full of self-important zeal about their precious labels, ready to throw stones at anyone who publicly disagrees with them, the elitists sap vital energy from our community.

We cannot afford this. Our community is small and many of our members are so closeted that they cannot come forward to stand with those who can be vocal and public. Infighting and elitism only serves to repel those who might stand with us but who can't abide the acrimony. Unless we as a community can learn to focus on important issues like building bridges between our different groups and the outside world, we will eventually throw away any hope of making progress for our rightful place in the world.

What can *you* do, my astute and thoughtful reader? You can start by challenging these attitudes in yourself. Realize that we don't all have to agree on labels. More importantly, realize that our community is full of people who are on different paths *and* who all deserve respect as peers. Once you have your own house in order, challenge these attitudes in others. You don't have to be confrontational -- just ask a question or two that may get someone to think.

Slowly, one person at a time, we can help our community evolve to a movement based on love, tolerance and inclusion. As a group faced daily with hate, bigotry and exclusion, we must rise above and not succumb to the temptation to fight fire with fire. Don't give in to the dark side of the Force, as Alec Guinness would have counselled. I believe that the gender community has the power to help transform society as a whole, but we won't accomplish this by bickering and being intolerant. It will take a lot of us developing and growing emotionally and spiritually, but

I believe we are strong enough to do it.

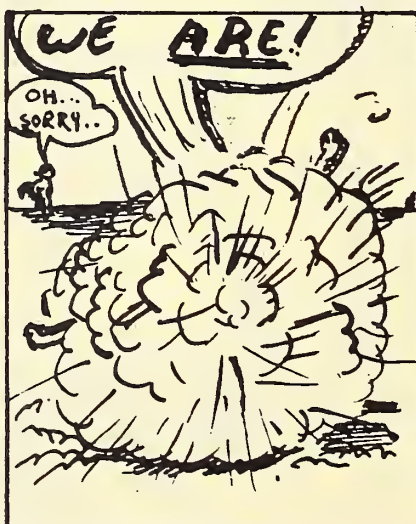
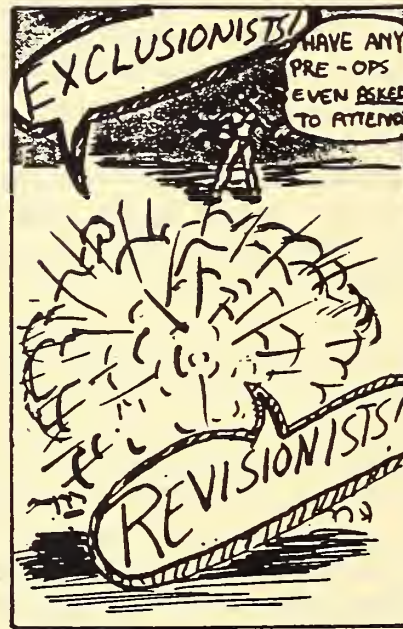
Look how far we've come already.



Christine Beatty

*Christine Beatty is an author, musician and corporate computer drone who lives in San Francisco. Christine's latest book, **Misery Loves Company**, is a collection of short stories and poetry based on her experience as a transsexual and former prostitute and drug addict. She has also just been published in a gay/lesbian anthology called **Beyond Definition** from Manic D Press and is currently assembling with her lover Rynata a "modern metal" rock band called **Glamazon**.*

Not Quite What I Had In Mind by Diana Green



Diana Green
photo by Pauline Johnson

Diana Green is a forty year old, five years postoperative bisexual woman and a resident of Minneapolis, Minnesota. During her commercial art education, she was an apprentice to Reed Waller, creator of Omaha, the Cat Dancer. Her writings, illustrations and cartoons have appeared in *Animania*, *The Madison Edge*, *Feminist Voices* and *Gay Comics*.

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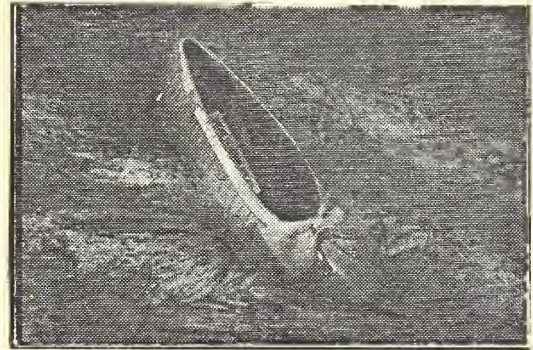
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All submissions are subject to editing by the Domineditrix. Please enclose a brief biographical summary (two or three sentences) with your submission. Submissions written under pseudonyms are acceptable.

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Contributors receive a free copy of the issue in which their work appears. Please address all submissions to: *TransSisters*; Davina Anne Gabriel, editor; 4004 Troost Avenue; Kansas City, Missouri 64110. Submissions can also be sent by fax to (816)753-7816, but you must call first, as there must be someone here to receive your fax.

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