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TRANSSEXUAL• NEWS •TELEGRAPH

Arts Politics



HIJRA WOMEN IN NEW DELHI

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We welcome your letters, articles, poems, stories and photographs. Please send them to:
TNT, 584 Castro Street, Suite 288, San Francisco, CA 94114-2588
Telephone no.: 415/703-7161.

Letters

Dear Gail:

Hello Hello — I picked up the Winter '94 issue at the FTM meeting on April 10. Great writing, great info, great resources. Thank you!

Here is my check for $20. $15 for a year subscription, $3.50 to pay for the issue i picked up at FTM and was so spaced out i forgot to find out where to pay for it. And the rest to make it an even number.

This whole gender thing is fascinating to me, i guess i've been dealing with it all my life and didn't know it, seeing as how i spent most of it hiding in the woods of Oregon and never knew ts/tv/gender stuff had anything to do with *me*, while there i was working on male tree-planting crews with a female body and cruising the woods alone for a living. So now that i am back partaking of civilization, and finding that maybe i do fit in somewhere after all, i have been having a million (well, maybe only a couple thousand) ideas about all of this. Someday maybe i will even get something coherent on paper, i mean on disk, (which is where i cruise now).

Jamie Walker
[redacted]@bit.com
Palo Alto, California

TNT Greetings,

I just had to thank you for TNT. I had quite a fight with the "powers that be" but yesterday, I was finally allowed to get the issue of TNT that you sent. I won my case 2 to 1. TNT was more than worth the effort. The information and articles truly spoke to places in my mind and heart.

I felt uncomfortable with the term "trannie hawk" in Mustang Sally's piece. Can we, or any group, afford to use negative epithets to describe people who cave for us?

I loved Kevin Horwitz's "Ten Warnings Signals" on the inside back cover as well as his article on passing. Do you plan another article on the subject, from the MTF viewpoint?

Thanks again. In solidarity,

Vernon Maulsby
#AY-4429
Graterford PA

Dear Gail:

Mustang Sally's article is a watershed in transexual (my preferred spelling, not a typo) sex literature. I can't remember anyone speaking in print so clearly, honestly and personally about transexual sexuality. MS is willing to work without a net on the cutting edge of her sexual experience, not just in the physical mechanics, but in her willingness to integrate her experimentation into her own sexuality. And she does so in such a constructive and liberating manner.

Yes, I've tried a dildo too, from both ends, but not with the enthusiasm and openness she displays. Her article deserves the widest possible audience. Incidentally, we're planning a national conference on Transexual Health here in NYC for the fall. It will include a session on transexual sexuality and I would be interested in inviting MS if she's free and willin' to travel.

On the down side, I do have an issue with the following two lines from her article:

"I could only conclude that this was something wired into the human brain...which meant it was there for me to claim as a human capability, not a remnant of male physiology."

"...but [I would be] doing something consistent with normal female sexual physiology and response."

We don't need to reference our sexual experience to that of non-transexual women. There is nothing special, specially definitive, or specially enviable about non-transexual female sexuality or sexual response. I don't believe it is possible for me to have any responses which are "remnants of male physiology": all my responses are remnants of transsexual female physiology. I know this is true because I am a transexual woman and this is my body.

Similarly, anything I do sexually will be consistent with "normal" transexual female responses and physiology. Again, I know this because I am a female transexual and I claim my own sexuality. (Note the word "normal" here actually means "non-transexual". I would caution against using "normal", since this makes me, what? an "abnormal" woman?)

Just as MS is willing to joyfully own her use of a dildo, I believe it is important for me to joyfully own my own body before, as well as after, surgery. While I may have had a penis and testicles before surgery, they were the normal genitals of a normal transexual woman. My pre-op genitals are nothing for me to hide from or disown. My body was perfect just as it was at that time. My sexual responses were those of a transexual woman.

more LETTERS

Now that I am post-op, guess what? I still have penis and testicles of a sort. All my doctor did was cut them down and sew them up differently. And who cares? My post-op genitals are still those of a normal transexual woman, and so are my sexual responses. I didn't have surgery to become a non-transexual woman; I had surgery to become me. I am my own reference point in my own sexuality, and god help me if I need to check my non-transexual female sisters to make sure what I'm feeling is okay. In fact, it must be okay, 'cause I'm feeling it.

All that said, the article is still a gem. Send that woman a glow-in-this dark dildo complete with studded harness for me.

Finally, I must take you (affectionately) to task for your coverage on Michigan: "it's hard not to feel doomed after hearing about the experiences like the ones the transsexual womyn experienced at Michigan Womyn's Music Festival".

Well Gail, feel doomed all you like, but my advice is not to put it in print. Better yet, forget the doom and just get angry. Love,

Riki Ann Wilchins
New York City

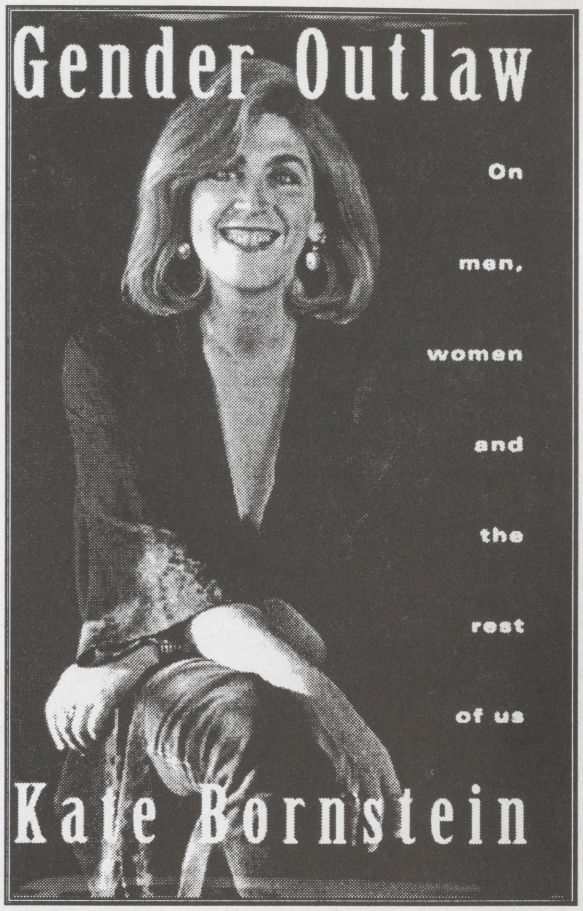
Dear Gail:

Thank you so much for sendin' me the first two issues of Transsexual News Telegraph. I really like everything about TNT, Gail, especially its strong bond of true sisterhood with all of us women and girls within the transgender community. Especially when it comes to the seemingly difficult and controversial issues in our divinely bittersweet lives.

You don't know how wonderful it feels to me to know that I've got such cool, understanding, strong - willed, committed, hard working, brave, intelligent sisters like you and the others at TNT that are making a difference for all of us. I liked Susan Stryker's article about the Health Law Project: "The focus of activism should be to insure that we have access to health care based on our unique needs as transsexual people and not because of some illness requiring treatment." Say it, sister!

I really do love ya all and I thank you so very much for sending me TNT and I promise to share them with others. Love,

Joni Sayers
#185067
Mansfield, OH



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NEWS ON THE MARCH

BRANDON TEENA CASE UPDATE

A progression hearing to determine how far along both the prosecution and defense are in the Brandon Teena case was held in district court in Lincoln, Nebraska on June 28, 1994. It was decided that two of the cases against John Lotter (3 counts of murder and 3 counts of use of a dangerous weapon in committing a crime) will be combined into one. This means there will be six separate trials. (Lotter and Nissen each have three separate cases charged against them). A motion to change venue was filed and is under consideration. Possible trial dates are currently October or November. Both Lotter and Nissen have public defenders.

As many people already know, the Village Voice published an amazingly transphobic article about Brandon by Donna Minkowitz in its 4/19/94 issue. Minkowitz's article prompted a public picketing and leafletting of the Voice by The Transexual Menace. The picketing was covered by Dyke TV and we are told it was their lead story that night. Minkowitz is still sticking to her guns that Brandon was a confused lesbian. She may be covering Camp Trans at this year's Michigan Womyn's Music Festival (see below).

MEMORIAL FUND BEGUN

A Brandon Teena Memorial Fund has been established. Donations can be made out to either Lana Tisdale or Joanne Brandon and should be sent in care of them at P.O. Box 38, 561 Hudson, New York New York, 10014, where they will be forwarded to the appropriate person.

CAMP TRANS

Transsexual womyn are again going back to the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival. Only this year they've decided that, since they can't get invited to one party to start one of their own. Great idea! So this year, right outside the gates of MWMF, CAMP TRANS will be happening. Everyone is invited, including, it is hoped, many of the womyn attending MWMF. A number of workshops over four days are scheduled, including ones by Rachel Pollack on the tarot, a spirituality workshop, an S/M workshop and a self-defense workshop conducted by April Frederick, a 2nd degree black belt in karate. Speakers currently include Leslie Feinberg, who will read from Stone Butch Blues and sign copies of her book, James Green of FTM, Minnie Bruce Pratt and possibly Holly Hughes and Debi Sundahl.

Camp Trans will be setting up August 7 and taking down August 14. A town meeting is scheduled for August 10. Regular participants of MWMF have promised to attend the town meeting in an attempt to lower the hostility level through dialogue. At this meeting the common ground between lesbians and transsexuals fighting the gender system is one of the topics that will be explored.

CAMP TRANS FUNDRAISER

A fundraiser for Camp Trans occurred at the Lesbian & Gay Community Center in Greenwich Village on June 29. Organized by Transsexual Menace and The Committee to Free Nancy Now!, over 6500 flyers were passed out and over $1000 in donations was raised. Speakers for the event included Anne Northrop of Gay Games; performers included Holly Hughes and Kate Bornstein. Riki Ann Wilchins, one of the organizers,, was "astonished" at the amount of support Camp Trans received. At first she thought it was because people were only being nice to us and wanted to support an embattled minority. But "almost all the speakers supported us because they too felt put upon by a rigid gender system." The speakers saw transsexuals as fighting this system and lesbian separatists as trying to police the boundaries of same.

NWC CONTROVERSY

A major controversy has erupted over the New Woman Conference for post-operative transsexual women caused by NWC's policy of admitting only post-ops. The protestors, led by Riki Ann Wilchins and Denise Norris, are calling for the inclusion of pre-operative and non-operative transsexual women into the New Women's Conference. A vote on this policy was conducted among last year's attendees, who voted 20-4 to keep NWC limited to post-op women only. Nonetheless, a protest is planned for the conference. Two views of this issue can be found on pp. 32 and beyond. This year's New Woman's Conference will be held at the Wildwood Retreat in Guerneville, California from Septebmer 15-18, 1994.

VICTORY FOR DEE FARMER

Dee Farmer won a surprising victory at the Supreme Court this last month. Voting 8-0, the Court not only said that prison officials had a duty to ensure the safety of prisoners, they couldn't avoid that responsibility by claiming they didn't realize there was any danger. Jennie Gainsborough of the ACLU's National Prison Project was "pretty pleased with" the ruling because it "went quite a long ways to saying what we wanted it to say." The question before the Court was what constituted "deliberate indifference" to a prisoner's safety by correctional staff. Under the old "state of

NEWS ON THE MARCH continued

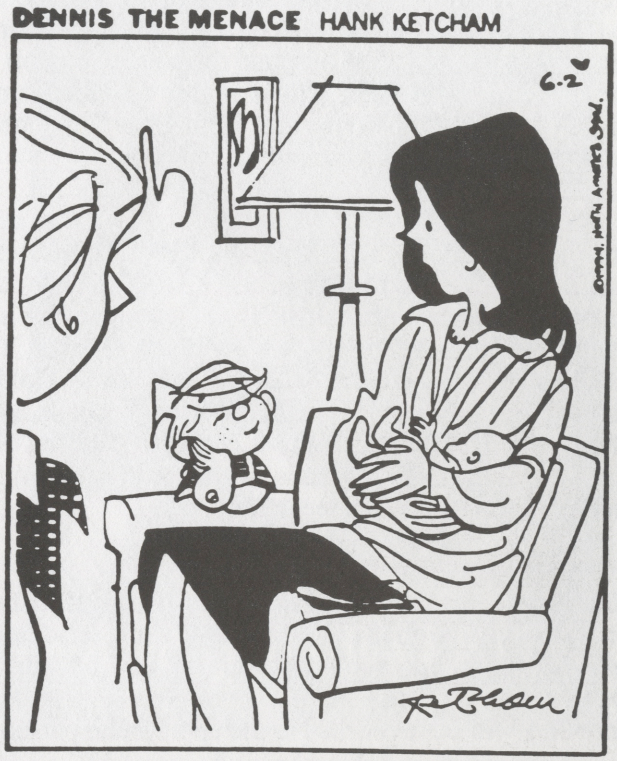
mind" rule, if prison officials didn't believe any danger or harm would result from putting a transsexual woman into a prison population of violent male offenders, then they weren't responsible for whatever happened. The new ruling means that if a risk or danger is so obvious that a reasonable person should have known it existed, then it can be said that prison officials knew it existed and therefore are liable. Farmer's case has been kicked back to a lower court for retrial. She now has to prove prison officials had a "knowing disregard" of the danger she was in and has retained another attorney to represent her. NOTM was told that normally the ACLU doesn't represent individual prisoners and were asked to take this case by the Supreme Court. Up to that point the indominatble Ms. Farmer had argued the case herself. NOTM also learned she received a 20 year sentence for credit card fraud, which strikes us as very harsh, especially as she may have been under 20 at the time with no prior arrest record.

NEWS FLASH -- MICHIGAN WOMYN'S MUSIC FESTIVAL OPENS ITS GATES TO TRANSGENDERED PEOPLE!

In a surprise reversal of policy, the MWMF changed their "womyn-born womyn" policy to one of anyone who "self-identified" as a womyn born womyn on Saturday, the last day of the festival. A contingent of people from Camp Trans, led by Leslie Feinberg, marched chanting through the main part of the festival, with lots of cheers from supporters along the way as they did so. This news just came to us as we went to press, and this is all we know for sure at this time.

AND A FIRST FOR TNT

One thing we have always tried to avoid in TNT is reprints of anything from anywhere. However, a recent *Dennis the Menace* cartoon by Hank Ketchum showed such a rare and advanced understanding of the human gender condition that it prompted us to make an exception to this rule.



"WHAT'S IT GOING TO BE ... A BOY OR A GIRL?"

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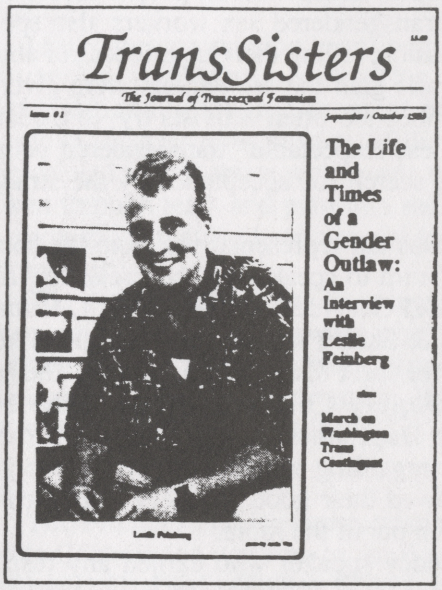
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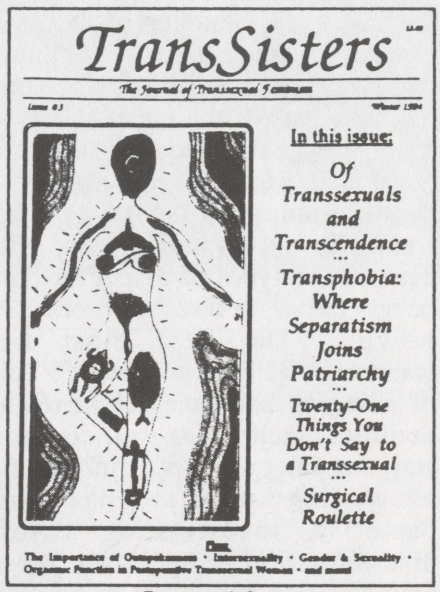
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SAN FRANCISCO HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION HOLDS PUBLIC HEARING ON TRANSGENDER DISCRIMINATION

An important step in the goal of including transgender people in San Francisco's civil rights laws was taken when the San Francisco Human Rights Commission held a public hearing on May 12, 1994, to hear testimony on the discrimination against transgender people. After being so long relegated to the shadows, the sight of the many faces of the transgender community sitting in the benches of the Board of Supervisors chambers, with its high ornate ceiling and floor-to-ceiling windows, was an inspiring, and pride-filled moment.

The tone of the meeting was set with an emotion-charged opening speech by Edwin Lee, the Director of the Human Rights Commission, who spoke movingly of the discriminiation faced by transgendered people. He was followed by commissioner Larry Brinkin, who detailed the types of discrimination, the most common being "failure to hire," also one of the most difficult to prove. The next most frequent complaint concerned"facilities treatment". This included instances of being refused service at restaurants, health care facilities, shelters, as well contemptuous treatment by staff and other workers. Brinkin told commissioners, "We are working without the empowerment of law" when it came to investigating cases of transgender discrimination. Supervisor Terence Hallinan had a message read before the commission stating that he is committed to introducing legislation to prohibit discrimination against the transgendered people.

After this came personal testimonies of discrimination from the transgender community. Many stories were told of being thrown out of shelters, refused service at social service agencies and the constant verbal abuse and harassment transgendered people face daily. Transsexual and transgendered sex workers also spoke before the Commission, telling their experiences of abuse by the police. I was glad the sexworkers were given a chance to speak, since too often activists try to distance themselves from"less respectable" transgendered people in their benighted search for acceptance by the straight majority.

After this it was the representatives from the social services agencies' turn to speak. All the speakers (from the Dept. of Social Services, Public Health, Human Resources, Police & Sheriff's Dept., among others) kept saying 'Gosh no, we don't discriminate, not us.' The best one was when Deputy Chief Fred Lau of the San Francisco Police Dept stated the SFPD had a "zero tolerance" policy regarding transgender discrimination. The audience showed their good manners and breeding by not laughing him out of the room.

The only agency speaker who earned any respect was Lester Olmstead Rose of CUAV (Community United Against Violence). He frankly admitted that up to eighteen months ago CUAV had done nothing about violence against transgendered people, had no awareness of the extent of the violence against transgendered people and had no training programs about it. Since then, he said, CUAV has recognized the magnitude of the problem and was doing their best to address it. I admired his candor in admitting CUAV's shortcomings and desire to correct them. You can't ask for more than that. At the very

Transsexuals and transgendered people attending the HRC hearing



least the various city social service agencies are now on record as saying they don't discriminate against transgendered people making it that much easier to hold them accountable for their actions in the future.

The unexpected star of the proceedings was Police Sgt. Stephan Thorn, who had called a press conference the previous week to announce his sex change from female to male. A spontaneous standing ovation arose from the audience when he arrived at the podium to speak.

Lastly, the commission heard public testimony from ordinary transgendered people. This was possibly the most emotionally moving moment of the hearings as people told their own stories of discrimination and physical and verbal abuse with words that were heartfelt, spoken through tears and pain in a multitutde of voices. So many spoke that the hearing went an half-hour past its appointed length.

The entire meeting was best summed up by James Green, editor of FTM Newsletter when I asked him what he thought of it. "Real," he said. "Usually it's all fantasy when people talk about community, but tonight, here in this room with this energy, it's real." .

THE NEXT STEP

The Findings and Recommendations of the Human Rights Commission was sent to the Board of Supervisors on August 11, 1994. Shelley Salieri is finishing a draft of the legislation and the Board will probably vote on the legislation in September or October. The hearing on this legislation will probably be smaller than the HRC hearing and may not go as smoothly; there may be more opposition from conservatives than at the HRC hearing. However, most supervisors are very supportive of passing this legislation (and so, we're told, is Mayor Jordan). Check with ETVC and local sources and keep informed.

A lot of the credit for the success of theHuman Rights Commission hearings goes to Kiki Whitlock, who worked with the commissioners to bring the hearings about. TNT talked with her on the telephone about her activism, the HRC and the future.

TNT: *You worked in the financial district as a computer consultant for several years. What changed you into an activist?*

Kiki Whitlock: I became more interested in doing HIV-AIDS advocacy work. My activism is a combination of many things. I wanted to give something back to my community. In particular I wanted to help the transgender



Kiki Whitlock addressing the HRC

community. I like to advocate for disenfranchised transgender people who are systemically discriminated against.

TNT: *How did you get involved with HRC?*

KW: I gave a presentation to the LGBAC (Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual Advisory Committee) of the HRC on transgender issues. They were impressed with the presentation and decided they wanted a transgendered person on the committee. They interviewed many people and I was the one they chose.

TNT: *Why and how did HRC suddenly become interested in transgender rights?*

KW: It was a lot of things. The HRC changed because of visible community activism, education, the presentations I and others made before its members —

TNT: — *A lot of streams coming together int one big river.*

KW: Exactly. Ex-commissioner Lawrence Wong was a big help in getting the LGBAC to accept transgender concerns as a legitimate issue. He was very strong on this. But he [Wong] and Mayor Jordan didn't see eye-to-eye on many issues and when his appointment was up, the mayor appointed someone else. So Lawrence Wong is no longer on the commission.

TNT: *Anne Bolin is an anthropologist in North Carolina who has stated that transgendered people are medically colonized. Do you agree?*

KW: I agree; that's a joke. Transgendered people don't even need to be in the DSM III or even the DSM IV. It's

Continued on page 25

AND? AND? AND?
A Stonewall Story for the Rest of Us

by Beth Elliott

TNT asked local leatherdyke Beth Elliott to cover the Stonewall 25 parade and the events leading up to it for us. Following is her report.

While one of the issues surrounding the Stonewall 25 Human Rights March was the exclusion of the word "Transgendered" from the title, it was also symptomatic of a larger problem: the pressure applied by affluent white gay men to draw boundaries around the community and movement in terms of a misguided respectability based on public presentation and purchasing power. Stonewall 25 and Gay Games IV, which overlapped in New York this June, were very slickly packaged, with glossy programs full of corporate advertising, a cocktail created for the occasion by an aperitif firm, and dances and other entertainment costing upwards of $15 a throw. Meanwhile, the more marginalized queer folk who dared to fight back at Stonewall (people of color and those conspicuous by sexual or gender transgression)were severely under-represented in terms of visibility.

Transsexual and transgender issues arguably overlap but are not identical to issues of oppression for sexual orientation. Nonetheless, lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transsexuals and the transgendered face a common oppression based on our non-conformity to patriarchal standards of gender-appropriate behavior and identification. If there was any one event where this should have been recognized and acted upon it was Stonewall 25. The commonality of gender transgression as a human rights issue is much more obvious when considered on an international and multicultural basis, (and SW 25 was designed as an international action). Also, to limit transgender participation in SW 25 would be to deny transgender participation in the original Stonewall riots—to bowdlerize and sanitize history. Yet that is precisely what a portion of the Stonewall 25 organization attempted to do.

Stonewall 25 and Gay Games IV were slickly packaged programs full of corporate advertising while the more marginalized queer folk who fought back at Stonewall were severely underrepresented.

I covered a number of events at the request of *TNT* while in New York: the International Leather/SM Celebration, the Dyke March, the "Stonewall Was a Riot" illegal demonstration in Greenwich village, SW 25 and the U.N.I.T.Y! and Inclusion benefit for Camp Trans. I also gathered information about other events. Along with my SW 25 press pass and Leather Celebration dog tags, I spent the weekend wearing a rainbow SW 25 press pass about my neck identifying me as a reporter for *TNT*. This was an interesting experience. When queried, I stated that a friend had asked me to cover Stonewall for her magazine, and let them draw their own conclusions about whatever my gender history might be. Most just said, "Cool!"; that is, how wonderful to have the gig. It appeared that people who made the assumption I was TS (or cared whether I were) were those who appeared to be considering flirting with me—until they read the badge and got perplexed looks on their faces.

By the Stonewall weekend, both ICTLEP (International Conference on Transgender Law and Employment Policy) and New York's Transexual Menace had been skirmishing with the SW 25 organization over adding "Transgender" to the march title, with ICTLEP having prepared a sit-in to block the march and issued a call for volunteers. Those willing to block 1st Avenue (and risk arrest) would be given T-shirts to wear saying "AND . . . AND . . . AND . . ." to symbolize waiting to hear "transgender" after lesbian and gay (and maybe bi). Transexual Menace issued a press release over a week before the march saying that, having won concessions from the organization and augmented positive relationships with local agencies, they would not protest the name of the march but focus on improved local inclusion afterwards. ICTLEP called off its threatened action the day before the march, also claiming to have achieved some of its goals. Still, a rumor hung over the event that wealthy donors had threatened not to fund the march if the transgender community was included, either in name or substantial visibility.

That set the stage for the first of a number of unauthorized marches, Friday night's Drag March. The Drag March, which gathered 8,000 people, met at Sheridan Square in Greenwich Village (site of the Stonewall Inn) and involved the Radical Faeries, various drag queens, ACT-UP and the Lesbian Avengers(!).

Tension arose between demonstrators and the police at one point as the march closed Seventh Avenue; ACT-UP warned people to move to the sidewalk if they did not want to be arrested. But the Radical Faeries chanted "Go away, go away" to the police, who did just that. Content with a small victory (and knowing enough to quit when they were ahead), the Faeries led the marchers down a small side street.

Saturday was an eventful day. The Leather Celebration had a workshop on "Genderflex". I feared it would be merely about gender play, such as lesbian daddy/girl or daddy/boy scenes, or the currently popular "fag dyke" play, in which lesbians act out interactions between leathermen. As it turned out, the panelists were either differently gendered (or questioning) or partners of the differently gendered. They spoke of the complexities of identity and the challenges of being in a lesbian/gay community unaccustomed to their non-binary genders. The workshop evolved into a group discussion as audience members shared their thoughts and experiences.



Marchers for Transgender Liberation, Stonewall 25, 1994

Bet Power, a "non-operative female to straight guy" FTM, spoke of being 44 years old and seeing "time running out" for (physical) transition. He noted that Stonewall was a transgender rebellion, and expressed his anger that after putting years of energy into the lesbian/gay movement, he had no working surgery available to show for all that activism. He said there are "a lot of butch dykes walking around who are really guys" but don't have a community support system for exploring the transsexual option. He also said we should continue to take the "alphabet soup" approach to event and organization names "until we get this word thing sorted out." Power also noted that while there are numerous books for young lesbians and gays, there is nothing for young transgendered people, and that it was time transgendered people began writing them.

Julia, an MTF who had accompanied SW 25 speaker Aidy Griffin from Australia, spoke of her pain at being excluded from woman-only space for being non-operative, though she was willing to acknowledge having been socialized to be a boy. By contrast, the presence of Tala Brandeis on the panel underscored the range of reactions to MTFs in "women's space." A non-operative MTF herself, she is a highly respected leatherdyke who has been welcomed to SM play parties in San Francisco despite the customary rule of post-ops only (i.e., dildos yes, penises no). This would suggest that one-to-one networking and trust-building plays an important role in transsexual inclusion, yet it remains obvious that prejudice still runs deep.

One of the more interesting subjects brought up in this workshop was the phenomenon of femme lesbians who have dated or are dating people who have crossed the line from butch dyke to FTM. Two women shared this sense of confusion over what this meant to their lesbian identities and whether they could be fair to these men by being lesbians in love with them. The issue was murky (especially given the state of FTM surgery and the ambivalent feelings some former-dyke FTMs have expressed about losing their connection to lesbian communities), but the sincerity and caring of the non-trans women sharing their conflicted feelings was quite touching.

Later on Saturday, *On Our Backs* and *Steam* magazines co-sponsored a forum/performance event on queer sexuality. One of the emcees was *Village Voice* writer Donna Minkowitz, much criticized of late for reporting on the Brandon Teena murder without giving any credence to (or even discussing) Teena's self-professed transsexuality. Minkowitz has stated in response to this criticism that she does not believe transsexuality exists. Transexual Menace has been giving Minkowitz every opportunity to stick her foot in

her mouth, and she did so here, flubbing both a chance to add "and transgender" to her description of the subject community and to recover from being flustered when being teased about this by the audience.

On Saturday night, a group of 3,000 radicals led an unauthorized march through Greenwich Village to remind people that "Stonewall Was A Riot" and that some queer folk are still marginalized and oppressed even within the "target market" mainstream lesbian/gay community. The police were more adamant on controlling the streets after the Drag March and the afternoon's Dyke March (when 8,000 women took 5th Avenue), and this march was nearly prevented. There was a standoff at 8th Avenue and West 15th Street over an attempt to block the intersection, but for the most part the police ceded the small side streets of the Village (and West Street by the river) while keeping everyone on the sidewalk on larger streets.

The demonstration began at Sheridan Square by the Stonewall Inn. After a stop to wave coathangers in front of an Operation Rescue clinic, the marchers proceeded to the piers. In addition to the piers' significance as a gay male cruising ground (especially during the days of bar raids), the stop was meant to commemorate and protest the murder of transgendered sex workers, whose bodies are often dumped into the river. Denise Norris of Transexual Menace climbed up on a pair of traffic pylons and, physically supported by two monitors (and one reporter), read a statement from a now-post-op MTF transsexual who took part in the original riot.

After the past two nights' showdowns over who would control the streets of the Village (one chant at the Stonewall demo: "Whose streets? Our streets!") the Mayor's office let ACT-UP have 5th Avenue, the traditional route for New York parades, for a march to the March on Sunday morning. Otherwise, it could have been the most public (and therefore volatile and embarassing) confrontation. As it was, 11,000 people marched to the staging area for the official March without incident.

The transgender contingent at Stonewall 25 was made up of a number of groups with banners, including ones from New York, New Jersey and San Francisco, and took up an entire block. In addition, a few other contingents had banners with inclusive language. The Workers' World party also marched with the trans contingent, carrying a banner with the likeness of Leslie Feinberg.

At the Stonewall rally at Central Park, there was another attempt made to limit transgender participation: Leslie Feinberg was almost dropped from the program.

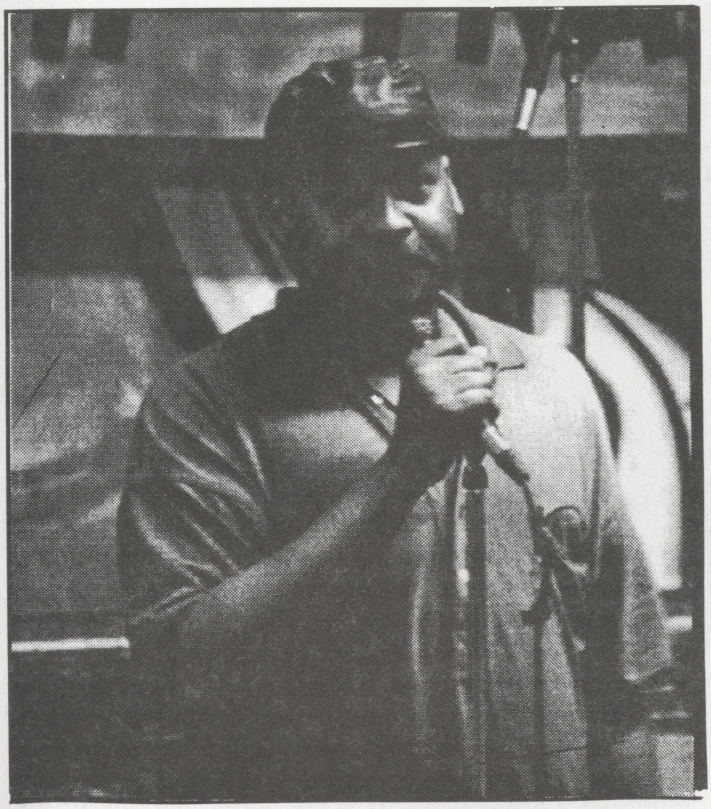
At the Stonewall rally at Central Park, there was once again an attempt to limit transgender participation: Leslie Feinberg was almost dropped from the program, supposedly in the interest of time. Feinberg would have none of this, and a decision was made to start the celebration six minutes early with her leading off.

Aidy Griffin of Sydney, Australia's Transgender Liberation Coalition was also moved up in the speaking order. After telling the crowd that Stonewall was started by transgendered people, including transsexuals, she hit out at drawing boundaries around a queer community to present an image that was safely gay but not queer. She said it takes recognizing diversity to build community. When we do so, we will not have to explain ourselves (especially the more marginalized of us) to straight people; they will have to explain themselves to us.

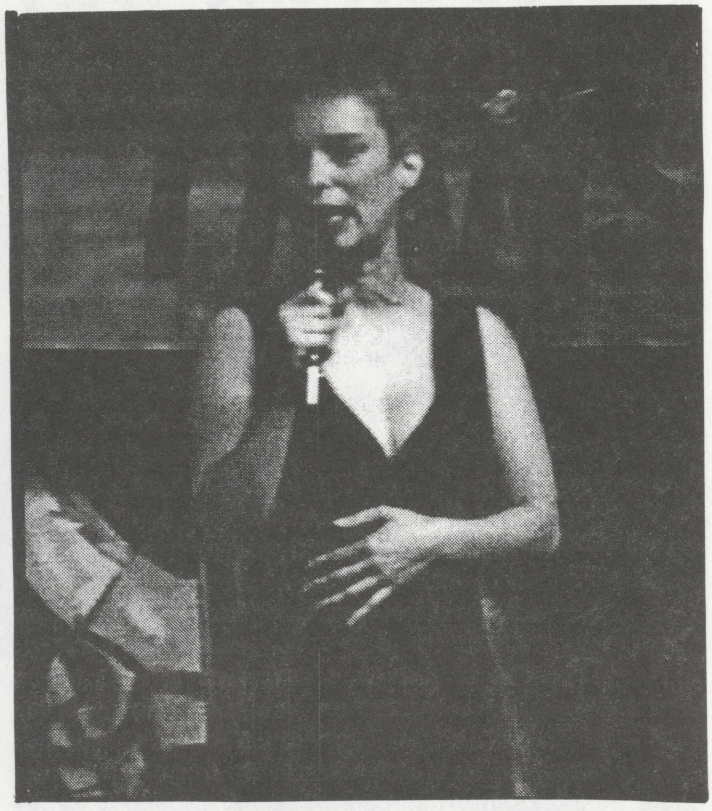
Speaking to me backstage, Urvashi Vaid of the National Lesbian and Gay Task Force said she felt it was wonderful that Camp Trans would be educating the women coming to the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival. She stressed the importance of keeping on educating the lesbian community and that it would take people getting out there and putting their bodies on the line to do that. She cited the fact that there is a subcamp at Michigan for leather/SM dykes as an indication that some day there will be peace in the lesbian community on the transsexual inclusion issue.

Hearing these words from Vaid, who makes a point of drawing connections between the queer and other movements to better our world, was exciting for me, since I have seen more than my share of the nasty side of lesbian politics. But even this optimistic outlook could not prepare me for the historic event which took place three nights later, the U.N.I.T.Y. and Inclusion benefit for Camp Trans. I do not think it an exaggeration to say that this event may turn out to be the kind of watershed that the Stonewall Riots were: the lesbian feminists who took part came not merely to support Camp Trans, but to claim its cause as their own.

Amber Hollibaugh, a femme-identified lesbian originally from Bakersfield, California, staked out the scope of the event by saying, "Tonight is historic. I know something's historic when there's a list of people I don't know or don't know what they're going to say.



Donald Suggs speaking at Camp Trans benefit



Holly Hughes speaking at Camp Trans benefit

When it's not an insider's club." Minnie Bruce Pratt set the tone by saying, "This is no longer about transsexuals; this is about the larger issue of gender oppression," and things took off from there.

The early speakers, such as Ann Northrup of Gay Games IV and Donald Suggs, thanked Transexual Menace for helping, nudging or pestering them to expand community outreach, services and nomenclature to include the transgendered. Suggs took pokes at the squeaky-clean "corporate" mentality of SW 25 and its message that there is only one acceptable way to be lesbian or gay, since that isolates the most vulnerable members of the community from support and services. He spoke of coming out in St. Louis, where his role models—the people who had the guts to be out even if it meant facing violence—were the people who couldn't hide because they were too queer. He linked the invisibility wished for the transgendered with the relative invisibility people of color had in SW 25 marketing. (This was a theme I heard often and observed myself: that transpeople and the other-than-white were shunted off to the side.)

City Councilmember Tom Duane urged transgender activists to keep pushing for inclusion in service agencies and their target populations. He asked people to get involved with the 46th Street Safe Space and act as role models for transgendered teenagers who, discarded by their families, end up on the streets in cities like New York. Duane's continuing support for and respon-siveness to the transgender community earned him the presentation of his very own embroidered black satin Transexual Menace jacket by Denise Norris.

The presence of two representatives of the Lesbian Avengers was itself enough to signal a significant shift in lesbian political attitudes toward transsexuals in the lesbian community. They went even further, calling the "woman-born women" policy "a bunch of shit" and saying Lesbian Avengers would be at Camp Trans. Amber Hollibaugh went even further, giving an intense prepared speech she was determined to deliver despite the standing ovation which threatened to end it prematurely.

Hollibaugh called a movement of "gender police" dangerous. "Each of us lives, experiences and constructs our sexuality and gender in different ways," she said, speaking of having taken different pieces of her own identity from feminine people and masculine

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Renaissance and Apocalypse: Notes on the Bay Area's Transsexual Arts Scene

by Susan Stryker

Dishing Up San Francisco's Transsexual Arts Scene

For those of you who don't get out much, I want to make the following public service announcement: transsexual art, literature, and attitude are the hottest things to pop out of the San Francisco's underground since Modern Primitivism entered the mainstream.

Pick up any funky-cool queerzine (like the most recent Brat Attack, for instance) and you're likely to find some friendly neighborhood transsexual pontificating about the complexity of fin-de-siecle identity. On a glossier note, the next issue of Deneuve—San Francisco's slick, high-profile lesbo mag—will include a story on dyke-identitifed MTFs that features a couple of Bay Area homegirls. Local gender talent has been providing a lot of grist for the straight national media mill, too. The New Yorker (yep, swankier-than-thou New Yorker) is doing a piece scheduled for mid-July on female-to-male transsexuality that relies heavily on a few of the guys you're likely to bump into at the local FTM group. Mother Jones ran an article on transsexuality back in May based on Bay Area writer Richard Levine's forays into our community (and a book by him is in the works). Closer to home, the June 15 issue of the Bay Guardian featured a story on the transgender liberation movement that quoted several Bay Area gender activists. It's not just schlock TV for us transies anymore.

> ***We are beginning to grasp the fact that we have experiences without parallels among people.***

This burst of media attention represents something more than the fact that transgenderism has become a chi-chi topic in fields as disparate as high fashion and academe. Increasingly, transsexuals are speaking for themselves about their own experiences, interpreting the world from their own perspective—and nontranssexuals are listening.

A burgeoning number of local transsexual writers, artists, activists and intellectuals are beginning to make their mark in the broader Bay Area culture—and beyond. Hard-working MTF playwright Kate Bornstein has finally hit the big-time with her latest one-woman show, Virtually Yours. The multi-media performance piece played to packed houses on two coasts in the spring of '94, and her new genre-busting book, Gender Outlaw, has men, women and the rest of us eagerly turning pages all across the country.

The ambiguously gendered (but obviously altered) body of California Academy of the Arts's Jill St. Jacques took the stage several months ago during the San Francisco run of the transgender technodrama Umbilical Thorn. Meanwhile, at 848 Community Art Space on Divisadero, local FTM playwright David Harrison staged a trial run of his promising work-in-progress, the appropriately titled FTM. Also at 848, FTM photographer Loren Cameron presented his tour-de-force exhibit, "Our Vision, Our Voices: Transsexual Portraits and Nudes." All the critics raved about it; the opening night crowd was so huge some people waited hours outside the door for their chance to get in—and inquiring minds have learned that Cameron is pursuing a book project based on his work.

Last summer another exhibit featuring transgender photographs and prose by transsexual subjects, "Crossing the Line," opened at the now-defunct ARU Gallery on the Duboce Triangle before moving to Red Dora's/Bearded Lady Coffeehouse, the hippest boy-tolerant dyke hang-out in the known universe. Red Dora's also hosted a night of readings last August, "Over and Out: Dispatches from the Gender Front by Openly Transsexual People." T-type performers appear regularly in the cafe/art space's cutting-edge cabaret shows, thanks largely to the trans-positive attitude of impressario extraordinaire Kris Kovic.

There's more. Sultry TS torch singer Veronica Klaus pulls in big crowds at Bay Area nightclubs with her blues and soul revue. Pop the right video by stylish German film-maker Monika Treut into your VCR and you just might find youself staring at FTM poster boy Max Wolf. Marin County native Hank Rubin was the subject of "Trans," a short film by Sophie Constantinou that premiered at the 1994 San Francisco International Lesbian and Gay Film Festival. I even made a few waves myself at the Illustrated Woman conference at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts this past February, when I read a short piece of experimental prose about how a sex-change surgeon insinuates himself into all of a pre-operative transsexual lesbian's erotic relationships with other women.

The list could go on. Just about any literary-minded transsexual you meet these days has notes for a novel stuffed in his/her back pocket. FTM community

leader Jamison Green is currently looking for a publisher for his autobiography, while MTF Christine Beatty recently self-published her collection of sex-worker short stories and poems, Misery Loves Company. On July 20th at Kimo's, globe-trotting transsexual activist Anne Ogborn screened roughly edited video footage of her recent stay in a Hijra community in India, which we can only hope will reappear in a more polished form in the near future. Finally, newcomer Philippa Garner is definitely a womanoid to watch out for. In a previous incarnation she landed on The Tonight Show with her whimsical spoofs of American consumer culture; now that she's settling into this trans thing we shouldn't be suprised to see something delightful from her soon.



Opening night crowd at "Our Visions, Our Voices" art show

A Renaissance?

Modern transsexual surgical techniques have been around at least since 1931. Most people have known about transsexuality since Christine Jorgensen grabbed headlines with her sex-change back in 1953. Gender clinics at major universities have been riding herd on the transsexual population since the late '60s. Oprah, Geraldo, Phil, Joan, Sally, Montel and the rest of the talkie-tabloid pack have been functioning like a well-oiled transsexual PR machine since the mid-80s. The numbers of transsexuals have been steadily increasing for decades. So why all this hullaballoo now?

Having spent way too many years in grad school studying American history, I start to salivate at the slightest suggestion of a long-term, multicausal explanation for anything, and have learned to draw pointed analogies between any two seemingly unrelated cultural phenomena. But such Pavlovian behaviors actually seem appropriate at this moment. Part of the answer to the question I posed above lies in everything described in the preceding paragraph—the current explosion of artistic expression is directly related to the growth, maturity, and historical development of transsexual identities and communities.

Some people in most cultures around the world and in all periods of history have "changed sex," sometimes physically altering their genitals. But transsexual surgery and hormones are unique to the twentieth century: transsexuality is a novel, historically specific way to assert an identity contrary to the one we were handed at birth. Since the practice is so distinctive, it's taken awhile for a critical mass of transsexual people to build, for transsexuals to get to know one another and start building social networks, as well as start recovering our history. It's taken a while for us to begin to understand the relationship of this new identity—the transsexual—to the rest of human culture and to lay the groundwork for political mobilization. It's taken awhile to find our voices in the public arena. We are just beginning to grasp the implications of the fact that we have experiences without parallels among other kinds of people—and to insist that these differences are not best understood by labelling them a sickness. We are just now discovering transsexual pride and starting to make self-conscious art based on our situation in the world.

This all reminds me of the Harlem Renaissance in the 1920s and 30s. After the Civil War, most of the former slaves stayed put for a few years, too poor to go elsewhere and cautiously optimistic about the prospect of achieving racial equality in a "reconstructed" South. By the late 1870s, that prospect had failed to materialize, and African-Americans began leaving for the North in numbers so vast that the movement is still know as the Great Migration. It demographically transformed the old industrial cities of the Northeast, where Southern blacks went in search of jobs. By the early twentieth century the New York City

neighborhood of Harlem had become the cultural capital of African America.

Harlem in the 20s and 30s was full of young black people whose parents had never been slaves—they had a new kind of American identity. Harlem was smack in the middle of one of the most cosmopolitan places on earth, and the people who lived there were constantly exposed to an endless variety of stimulating cultural cross-fertilizations. More importantly, black artists, musicians, and writers began to express their understanding of their own particular experiences in a manner that succeeded both in terms of the dominant white American culture and according to their own cultural aesthetics. They had hand-me-down stories of oppression and resistance, fragments of African memory, a rich legacy of song, the multi-faceted lived experiences of racial discrimination. From them they fashioned a literature, a new kind of music, new ways interpreting the world through dance or painting that altered the very meaning of literature, music, and art up until that point in time. This outpouring of tale

We disappear and reappear at will among the ankylotic ones, repeating with fond attention any form that gives us pleasure, taking delight in shapeliness and vanishing into identity.

I have to wonder: will there be a transsexual equivalent of jazz? Can we see its dim outlines today in the streets of San Francisco? Are we feeling the birth pangs of a Transsexual Renaissance?

Slave Narratives and Transsexual Autobiography

African-American literature is built upon the bedrock of the classic slave narrative, which recounts the paradigm of a uniquely African-American historical experience. It begins with African freedom, includes a "middle passage" of enslavement, and culminates in a new kind of freedom after slavery. The middle passage is crucial. It is transformative; it is what separates African-Americans from Africans as well as from other Americans, even while it links them inextricably with both. The middle passage is occupied by no one other than the African-Americans themselves. The legacy of that occupation is part of the meaning of African-American identity, but it is not the entire definition. And African-American literature is more than an artistic reaction against the history of slavery; it is a powerful demonstration that the fullness of one's human experience cannot be mastered by an outside force.

Like the slave narrative, the classic transsexual autobiographical narrative has three parts: an account of pre-transitional feelings about identity, the "middle passage" of transition, and post-transitional life experiences in a new gender. And as in the slave narrative, the transsexual middle passage is the part of the story that makes it uniquely our own. Whatever myth of origins we graft that experience on to, whatever plot line we follow into the unknown future, the transition from one sex to another is the single experience that no one other than transsexuals will ever have. Having that experience makes you one of us.

The transsexual autobio-graphical narrative is the bedrock of our future literature, the map of our past. Almost every one of us has had to sit down with a psychological evaluation ques-tionnaire and seriously address some version of the question, "How did you develop your sense of gender identity? Please give a brief personal statement." The very fact of our medical colonization incidentally produces a composite record of our lives. How many tens of thousands of these sketches have now been written? How many more stories are buried in case studies and other medical or psychological treatises? A handful of our autobiographies have been published, but where is the vast bulk of the raw documentary material of our culture? How are we ever to grasp the rich diversity of transsexual human experience that is our legacy if we cannot learn about the lives of our brothers and sisters?

We need to think hard, individually and collectively, about the meaning of our transitions, and ask if the stories we use to explain that life-passage are sufficient to voice the complexities of what we have experienced. Why is it that we are content to answer the questions others put to us rather than devise a story of our own? Perhaps, like Africans americanized through slavery, we must define ourselves partly by claiming the full content of our historical experience, and partly by opposing the narrative that has been imposed upon our flesh. The tale of gender dysphoria and its cure is the medical/psychiatric narrative of transsexuality. Must it also be our own? If we stop asking nontranssexuals to explain our lives and emotions to us, can we fashion the phenomenology of our experience into a radically different account of who we are, where we've been, where we're going?

We need to get beyond thinking of our desires and self-perceptions as the symptoms of a mental disorder,

and start thinking of them as the raw material for a new story about transsexual identity. We need to stop sanding away the rough edges of attitudes, moods, styles, opinions, and responses that don't fit somebody else's interpretation of what our lives are about. We need to become a confederate band of starry-eyed yarn-spinners. We're ripe for a transsexual Renaissance.

Apocalypse: Fragment of a Work in Progress to be Completed by the Reader

I have a dream that is older than heaven, keener than wisdom, more pointed than a sword of vengeance.

Seven trumpets sound; seven seals are broken, and we the shapechangers unbind our masks. We step from our prisonstriped bodysuits to launch our bioplasm against the locked drawers of psychotherapists' file cabinets. We seep through the cracks and ingest every transsexual client's file, taking upon our communal selves their every written word as the skin of our own new flesh. We leach every syllable of whispered confession from the office wallpaper and reabsorb it into our mass. We flee on a thousand legs into the desert and dance, rubbing our dung into each letter on the surface of our corporate form until we transmute into shimmering gold. We expand, our ruptured exoskeleton spilling jewels and diadems across the hot sand. We glisten in the searing sunlight, blinding all who dare approach us.

On the second day of the Anarcorporeal Dispensation we reconvene as myriad individual mammals. In this mode we maximize our spatio-political efficacy and gain control of certain areas between, as well as within, our bodies. We surround and beseige all gender clinics, psychiatric hospitals, and surgical centers. During our encampment we feast on auto-castrated testicles, and warm ourselves at night with the burning fat of amputated breasts. In passing through the gate of carnal transit we have shed the primal fear of meatification, and now comprehend the full range of embodiment's usefulness. We are more resourceful than the monomorphs who would bury us in their static image. They abandon their citadels in confusion, and we gaily bedeck ourselves in the costumes of their cast-off uniforms. We take up their sober workthings as the ecstatic tools of our play.

The paired principles of homosemblance and xenogenesis shall henceforth govern the consolidation of our fluidflesh until the Chronoterminal Decree. We now disappear and reappear at will among the ankylotic ones. We shall repeat with fond attention any form that gives us pleasure, taking delight in shapeliness itself and vanishing into identity with that which we adore. Likewise shall we unharness content from its material contraints. We shall become a menagerie bursting suddenly into sight to stop traffic on a whim with any nightmare-mocking guise. Having thus fully accomplished the twin ideals of incorporation, we announce the evening of the last day in a machine language to the bloody-throated multitudes. We shall plunge our animal tongues like justice against the barestripped bosombones of the people. The blessed plastiphiles shall receive our lips like honeywine, while all others shall be cast out—broken mirrors, swept without reflection into darknesss.

THE FEMININE CHILD

TRANSSEXUAL CHILDREN BANNED FROM FOSTER CARE: GO DIRECTLY TO PSYCH WARDS 1994

she thought of irons and waxed paper
that seal the colors of cold music
as she walked through leaf blood calling
the children out of their buried caves
and climbing from their glowing cells
as the sky was full of souls flying
to escape over the naked trees.

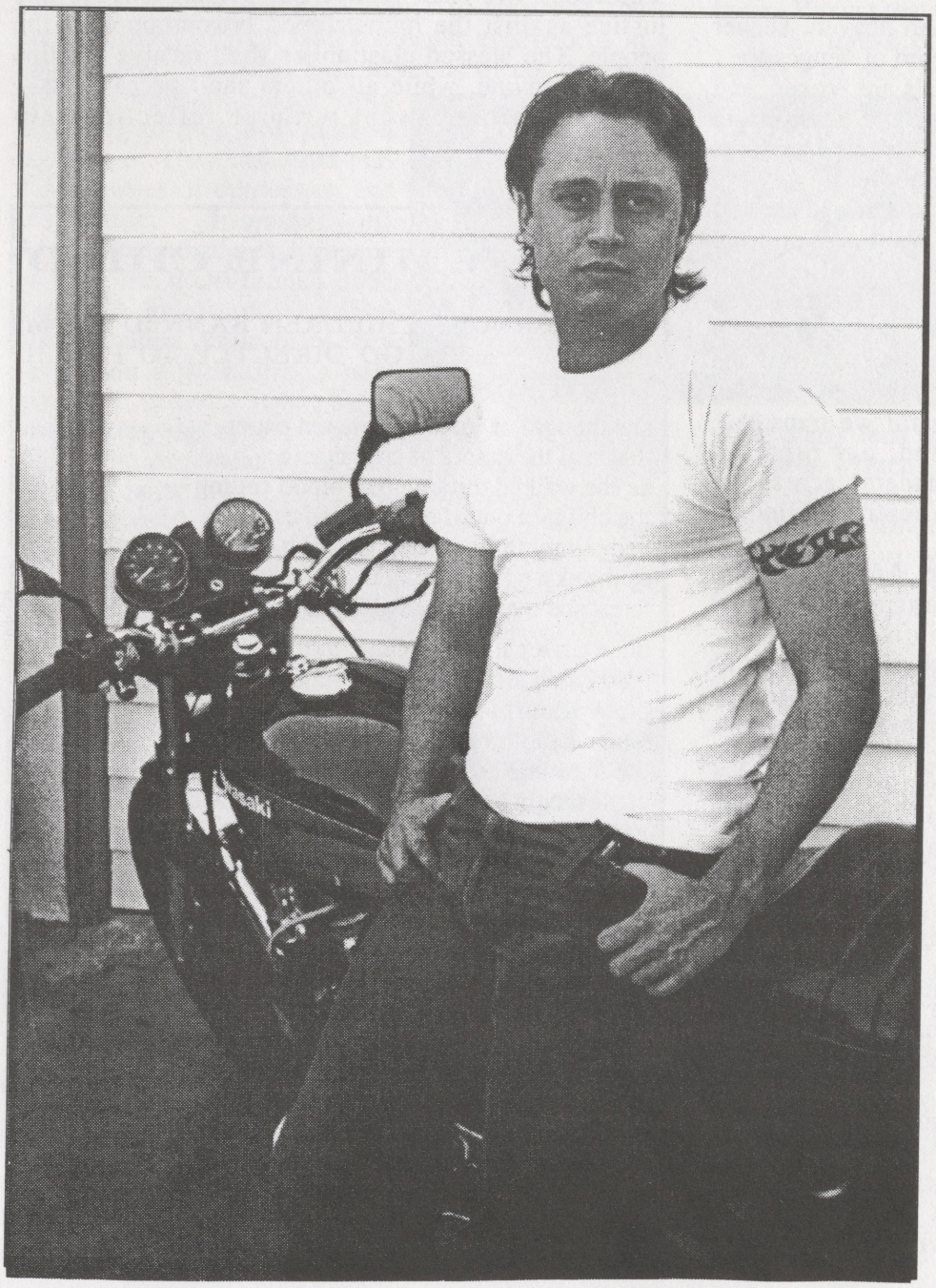
once tender shamans came morning dancing
on dawn's feet, and the magic child
blew palms of changing light across all
waters, and time wept into its own raining.
the feminine child born not constructed
came singing fire to worlds on earth, and
variously named, accused by others' tongues,
men raped them before they killed them
and afterwards occasionally asked for
blessings from the dead in secret.

girlchild is a good name to gather fury,
her survival as a ghost depends on it.
the faces of children floating through
mirrored images reveal the turnings back
of an old girlchild at the end of the world,
or until they are out and safely sleeping,
for the sky is full of wings without bodies.

-- *Camille Genderella Liberty*

Loren Cameron: Photographs from Our Visions, Our Voices

Loren Cameron has been taking photographs of transsexuals and combining them with the words of the subjects themselves to create an impressive body of work. His recent show, *Our Visions, Our Voices,* at 848 Gallery in San Francisco was a smashing success, and possibly the first exhibit of transsexual portraits taken by a transsexual. Hopefully, this work will one day be published in book form. Until then, following are selected photographs from that show. A self-portrait of Loren appears on our back cover.



ERIK

"Sometimes I feel like a science project."



TALA CANDRA BRANDEIS

"I knew people who lost interest in sex after having their genital surgery. Many of my friends have said: 'I had to go and get my dick cut off to find out I didn't have to go and get my dick cut off.' I have had to learn to like and become comfortable with my genitals again...because the alternative is crazy. The women having the surgery are not the lunatics; the lunatics are the ones who are performing the surgery without any conscious understanding of what they're taking away from them. I think orgasm is necessary for health."

Saheli!

by Anne Ogborn

For as long as I have been out as a transsexual woman, I have been in a cycle. First be healed by the community, then heal the community.

I applied this to my voyage to India. I didn't go to study Hijras, but to be with them, and as it turns out, to become one. I am not an anthropologist or a student of comparative religion. I'm a transsexual woman. I wanted to have a new experience of that.

A Hijra's working day is divided between walking around talking to people and locating newborns and marriage ceremonies, and actual performances.

I've tried to capture the daily life I was immersed in. Each day is slightly different, but this was a typical workday for me in New Delhi. I've made up some of the trivial parts to make it flow togather, but all the incidents basically happened to me as I tell them.

I live in a room in a brick and lime building in the basti (old style neighborhood - the Spanish word barrio is an exact translation) in Nizam-Ud-Din. I have the entire second floor - one room, a courtyard, and a toilet. It's painted the color of swimming pools.

The little battery powered alarm wakes me at 7am. I lift away the mosquito net and get up off my charpoi (low Indian bed). My first chore is to undo the net so I can sit down.

I work the kinks out of my back, my mood foul. I don't sleep well in India, where noise and people are constant companions. I have electricity, so I put on my chappels (rubber bathroom slippers, worn by basti dwellers instead of shoes) and pad across to the light switch. The bare flourescent tube blinks on.

I swap the clothes I've slept in for a salwar-kameez, a loose pair of trousers and matching long shirt, the traditional clothing of Punjabi women and a nice, "respectable" garment. With it goes a dupatta, a long narrow scarf worn with one end over each shoulder and the middle bunched up over the breasts. Mine constantly falls off. Most Hijras wear a sari (a dress made of a single unsewn piece of cloth 1 meter by 6 meters) to dance in, but I'm too clumsy yet to dance in a sari.

I go outside to use the bathroom, a separate room off the courtyard. Slit toilet. Left hand method. There is no toilet paper in India. My only water tap is here, so I take the pitcher with me to fill.

Back inside I decide to heat some chai (Indian tea). I put milk, tea, and water in a pot and heat it on my little kerosene camp stove. I'm afraid of the stove, one just like it blew up and killed my aunt Julie in Jumnapat. I have to squat in front of it the whole time or it goes out.

Now I start the long process of putting on my performing makeup. It takes skill and patience, but I'm becoming fairly proficient at it. I brush out my hair and put cocoanut oil in it, but I'll need help to tie it back in the tight Indian style. I never take off my bangles, solid glass bracelets, as they take a half hour to put on. The symbol of women, they are a necessity for a Hijra. I put on my earrings (a gift from my guru) and leave for Ratnaa's.

Some of the children are about. They shout "Gandu, Gandu" ("Butt fucker") at my back. Later they realize I speak only broken Hindi and instead yell, "Faggot, faggot." They ring my doorbell and throw rocks at my door when I am home.

One night, tired of the harassment and frightened that it might become something serious, I asked my downstairs neighbor what I should do. He went out and talked to the children, then told me to pass out some toffee and I'd be all right. I went to a small shop with a large crowd of children shouting "Toffee, toffee" behind me.

The shop was just an open-fronted stall in a gully. (If it's big enough for a cow to go down, it's a rasti, a road. If it's narrower, it's a gully.) I bought 20 Rupees worth of toffee, and instantly was surrounded by a sea of grabbing hands. At first I tried to give some to the younger children first, but was kicked and punched by the older ones. I held the bag over my head, they leapt at me, and I lost my balance and went down on all fours. The bag was ripped from my hands, there were a few more kicks and punches, and suddenly I was alone, dazedly holding half a toffee.

This morning I try to ignore them. Absorbed in a game of marbles, they don't pursue me, and my first challenge of the day is over.

Ratnaa and the other Hijras live nearby, in a bamboo shack in a Bangladesh refugee camp, known locally as the hutments. I walk past the emaciated cow that invariably is standing there, and down the good dirt road that runs between a park and a Hindu temple.

The hutment is in a park next to the temple, squashed between the major road on this side of Nizam-Ud-Din and the dargah (Moslem pilgrimage center). The hutment is a maze of narrow gullies and hundreds of bamboo huts. Some of the gullies are incredibly small. My friend Hasina lives at the end of a gully so tiny we have to turn sideways to get through it.

The huts are made of bamboo mats over bamboo and wood pole frames with thatched roofs. They actually are very functional - the bamboo mats have holes that let air in, while the thick thatch roof keeps out the heat.

My guru, Ratnaa, lives in a hut near the end of the hutments. It's one of the nicest ones, relatively clean and

airy. Once a woman who lived nearby said to me, "We are poor, but at least we have the Hijras living with us." Gulbaharie, my guru-sister, and Durga, my aunt, live with Ratnaa. All three are getting ready to dance, so I sit on the bed and watch.

Ratnaa is my guru. She's a good looking 36 year old Bangladeshi Hijra. Gulbaharie said Ratnaa was her guru, even though she and Gulbaharie were about the same age, because Ratnaa had more *agal*. I asked my translator what agal was, and he said, "Intelligence — Well, more like common sense. If you are going to start a business, you have to have *agal*."

The guru-chela relationship is a central organizing principle of Hijra life. This ideally life-long teacher-student/mother-child relationship occurs over and over in Indian society. But how guru and chela relate depends on the two people involved. Towards me, Ratnaa acts more like mom. In fact, I usually call her "amma" - mommy.

With Gulbaharie she is more like the boss. There is some friction between the two, since they used to be guru-sisters under another guru back in the village in Bangladesh. When they came to Delhi Ratnaa became the guru. Sometimes Gulbaharie grumbles about this, and shortly after I met them they had a big fight and Ratnaa threw her out. Two days later, they were back togather.

Unlike Ratnaa, Gulbaharie wants to go out and party. It's Gulbaharie who takes me to Hindi movies and who tries to talk me into going to go suck dick in the bushes across the highway. Although we are all in our mid thirties, I think of her as the youngest.

Durga is the other member of my family who lives in the hutments. She's a jolly sort of person, always laughing and singing. She also treats me like a little child. We develop this little routine, where I purse my lips and say, "Milk, mommy! milk!", and she holds her breast up to my mouth. Jokes about infertility are common, both by us and by the nons.

I spend a lot of my time in India simply sitting and watching. I'm incompetent to do much else, since even the simplest activities are done so differently. I get Gulbaharie to pull my hair back tight and tie it with a rubber band. I attach my hair ornament, and I'm ready to go. Everybody else is chattering away in Bangla and passing makeup back and forth.

Ratnaa has a horrible tape recorder that doesn't play at the right speed. She turns the volume up all the way, far beyond what the speakers can take, and we all get ready to the strains of badly distorted Hindi film music.

Hijra performance makeup and dress is very much like drag - a showier, flashier version of women's dress. When we're not performing we dress like ordinary women, but to dance we dress up. Today Ratnaa wears a bright yellow sari, one of the ones I gave her when I joined the Hijras.

After everybody's ready we walk through the hutments to where the autorickshas stop. Everybody stops and watches as we go by, even though we do this three or four days a week. We're one of the bright moments in a dreary existence, and rather nobles in this little corner of the world.

We flag down an "auto", one of the little 2-cycle powered, 3 wheel taxis that are the main transport in Delhi. The driver sits up front and steers like steering a motorcycle. There is a seat designed for two in the back. All four of us pile in. Nine people in an 'auto' is the record for my stay.

Off we go to Lodhi Colony, a middle class suburb. Our dance troupe has permission to perform there and in a basti near Nehru stadium. We are appreciated more in the Basti, but we make more money in Lodhi Colony.

Some of the children are about. They shout "Gandu, Gandu" at my back. Later they yell "Faggot, faggot." They ring the doorbell and throw rocks at my door when I am home.

The Hijras who live in Jumnapat have already come. I "Salaam" grandmother Tarah, our leader. She's a late middle aged person who looks more like a man than a woman, with a receding hairline and a huge potbelly. She's the secret to our success, though, and one of the finest leaders I've ever known. I admire Tarah a lot.

Sunna, our religious specialist, claims she's fifty. She looks like she was on hand for the coming of the Prophet. Always dressed in a battered salwar-kameez, she dispenses with the elaborate Hijra makeup. Sunna is one of the most childlike people I know. She and I are the first to expose our genitals when we don't get paid enough. Once some people slammed the door on us. Sunna took her salwar (pants) off and then ululated while leaning against their door until finally they came out. We did a quick dance, took the badhai (traditional offering) and split.

She sometimes played jacks with bits of broken concrete or brick. More than anybody else, Sunna enjoyed the Hijra freedom from being "grihasta" - a householder.

Marriage and family are considered religious obligations for Hindus. Everyone else in India is expected to be "respectable". We are expected to be mischevious and disreputable.

Samla, our main dancer, also is mischevious. Very young (perhaps 19) but technically my aunt, she's stunningly beautiful and our best dancer. She's got the hots for me and paws me whenever she gets the chance.

Reshma doesn't dance, but sings and carries the loot. She's in her mid thirties, and seems frustrated with the lack of social mobility in being a Hijra. One day we were all waiting to go to a dance, lying on our backs in a pinwheel with our heads together. I said, "This life is O.K." Reshma said, "No, Hijra life is very hard." I asked her how long she had been a Hijra, and she said five years. I asked her why she became a Hijra and she said, "I was born this way." Before I leave she'll come down with tuberculosis.

Aashiq is our dholak, the man who plays the sacred drum (dholak) for us. When Aashiq isn't there, Gulbaharie plays, but Aashiq is better. People believe that playing (or even touching) a Hijra dholak will make a person sterile, so Aashiq shares our stigma. In sharp contrast to the usual asshole macho Indian men, Aashiq is kind and gentle.

Our meeting place is a little dhaba - a roadside stall where bread and chai are served. This one has a bunch of charpois to sit on, with low tables in front of some. Next door is a stable for horses, including the horse that draws the brightly decorated and lit (with christmas lights) carriage that takes newlyweds away.

As we approach, the other Hijras call "Ram! Ram!

Girl from the hutments



Salaam Alikum". This is the holy name of Ram, a Hindu greeting, followed by "the peace of God", a Moslem greeting. This ecumenism is a central tenant of the Hijras.

We all pile onto one of the charpois, and somebody orders roti (barely leavened bread, like an English muffin, smeared with rancid butter). I'm always given a seat near the edge, since people know I can't squat. I long for a place where there are chairs.

I force the roti down, and start looking for the water pitcher. Water that undoubtedly came straight from a Delhi city tap (or from the Yamuna - horrid thought). I've constantly got diarrhea.

Water, food, a place to sit, a place to sleep — these are the things that dominate my life right now.

The hardest part of dancing isn't dancing, it's finding someplace to dance. Tarah helps a lot. She knows "everybody" in Lodhi colony. As we go around she chats with grannies, ironing women, men, housewives watching children, and so on. She efficiently manages our network of paid informants. She has good relationships with the men who rent wedding horses, put up wedding tents, etc.

As well as Tarah's contacts, we go out and search. Today we've got "appointments" for the afternoon, but for now we search. Tarah splits us up - Sunna, Samla, and I go off down one street, others go other directions. Tarah points out two apartments to check. We're off, Samla and I walking together, Sunna trailing behind as usual.

We walk down the wide lawns that run between pairs of apartment buildings. Lodhi colony is mostly big apartment blocks, three or four stories high, with a dozen or more apartments per floor, surrounded by pretty lawns. As we walk, we make our traditional call, "Kiska hua munaa!" -- "Who has children?"

We also make our traditional clap, a hollow handed, sharp cracking sound that carries for blocks. It's our communication device to call the group to a "find". Our clap is the most distinctive symbol we have. No non-Hijra in India would ever clap that way.

Soon we hear clapping from the next block and go there. Aashiq waves to us from a second floor landing. As we come up the stairs Ratnaa is talking to a housewife. The housewife claims the family from Madras, where there is no custom of the Hijras. She doesn't look Madrasi, and we don't believe it. It's part of the social contract between Hijras and nons. The nons will try to act put out that we've come, and will put us down. But they always let us dance in the end, even though they could easily just chase us off. What could we do if they did? We're powerless. We're just eunuchs.

In a sense we're "religious", like nuns or brothers. Hindus say when you give up personal power over

something, you gain universal power over it. In Breaking Silence, a collection of writings by lesbian nuns, one of the authors says her vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience free her from being controlled by material things, by sex, and by lust for power,respectively.

As a Hijra, I am poor and live communally. As a Hijra I don't crave material things to pass on to family and children. I haven't taken a vow of poverty, but I don't desire more than what I need to be comfortable.

As a eunuch, I am not controlled by lust. That is my experience as a transsexual woman, that I have far more control of my sexuality than most nons.



Ratnaa dancing with a baby boy

As a member of a hierarchical organization, I am free of the lust for power. I will never be anything but Ratnaa's student until she dies. Ratnaa is exactly my age, 36.

At the house, the woman accedes. We start performing. Aashiq playing, Samla dancing. Pretty soon somebody inside the house hands out a badhai, The badhai is a thali (metal plate) with some wheat flour, some rice, a little bowl of oil, and a little pile of turmeric. Stuck in the flour is some money. The thali rests on a silk sari. Reshma sets the Badhai in front of her, but doesn't put it in the swag bag. We'll give it back if they don't give us enough money. She does count the money and quietly tells Ratnaa how much there is.

Meanwhile, our dancing and singing has gathered a crowd, mostly women and children. Of course the crowd is enjoying the spectacle and we do several more songs.

Gulbaharie puts on some ankle bells and we do a fast number. Ratnaa sits down and plays the little cymbals we use. I'm constantly at a loss. Our repertoire changes constantly and it's incredibly difficult to learn the words to a song in a foreign language.

Next we do a very folksy little song, a traditional song that starts, "How old is this child? It cries like it's grandma, and talks like it's grandpa, as it plays in my lap." All the verses pick on various family members, comparing them unfavorably to parts of the baby. Ratnaa dances for this one.

By this point the man of the house has come and is sticking his head through the door. He recognizes me from an article in the Times of India and asks in English, "Are these your disciples?"

I say in Hindi, "No, I'm their disciple. This is my guru. This is my grandmother."

He switches to Hindi and I can't understand him. I say so in English, so he switches back to English.

"Why do you want to be a Hijra?", he asks.

"I," I reply, "was born this way."

He smiles and pulls a ten rupee note out of his wallet, waves it over my head, then hands it to me. I touch the dholak, then pass the note to Ratnaa as my guru. She passes it to Reshma.

After a while they bring out the little boy. Samla dances one dance with the child in her arms, and then passes the child to Sunna. Sunna gets the mother to cover her head with her pallav, the scarflike end of her sari, then chants and throws rice onto the woman's head. As it rolls off, Sunna tells her to hold out her pallav to catch it, then to tie some up in a knot in the end of her sari. Money is nice, but we'd all rather see the baby and be appreciated than get paid a lot.

Eventually the inevitable arguing about the fee starts between the man and Ratnaa. Eventually she becomes exasperated and says, "You think you're poor? You think you have nothing? Well look at what I haven't got!" With that, she starts to pull up her skirt.

Works every time. They give us 200 more Rupees, for a

Continued on page 29

Why Is There So Much Emphasis On Passing?

by Kate Bornstein

The following section on passing is reprinted from Kate Bornstein's new book ***Gender Outlaw*** *and is part of our ongoing series on this subject*

Passing is a form of pretending, which can be fun. In gender, passing is currently defined as the act of appearing in the world as a gender to which one does not belong, or as a gender to which one did not formerly belong. Most passing is undertaken in response to the cultural imperative to be one gender or the other. In this case, passing becomes the outward manifestation of shame and capitulation. Passing becomes silence. Passing becomes invisibility. Passing becomes lies. Passing becomes self-denial. A more universal and less depressing definition of passing wouldbe the act of appearing in the gender of one's choice. Everyone is passing; some have an easier job of it than others.

There's a reward and punishment mechanism to passing. As much as I go on about this stuff, and as out of the closet as I am on a very broad public level, I still make an effort to walk down the street and pass on a very private level. I do this because I don't want to get beaten up. I do this because all my life it's been something I've wanted — to live as a woman — and by walking through the world looking like one, I have that last handhold on the illusion, the fantasy, the dream of it all. Passing is seductive — people don't look at you like you're some kind of freak.

On the punishment side of the coin, there's a deep shame involved in any failure to pass. As I was preparing the final draft of this book, someone I know only peripherally came over to my house on an errand — she was with an ex-lover of mine. In casual conversation, he slipped on a pronoun and referred to me as "he."

There is most certainly a privilege to having a gender. Just ask someone who can't pass or who doesn't pass.

Let me tell you what happened, the way it looked from inside my head. The world slowed down, like it does in the movies when someone is getting shot and the filmmaker wants you to feel every bullet enter your body. The words echoed in my ears over and over and over. Attached to that simple pronoun was the word *failure*, quickly followed by the word *freak*. All the joy sucked out of my life in that instant, and every moment I'd ever fucked up crashed down on my head. Here was someone who'd never known me as a man, referring to me as a man. Instead of saying or doing anything, I shut down and was polite to him for the rest of the time he was in my house.

Now here's a telling point: all three of us (as I later found out) were aware of that slip, and none of us said anything. [He's] a trained sex worker, with a great deal of experience working with sexual and gender minorities. [She] had two transsexual lovers, me having been one them. I'm a transsexual. We all knew he'd slipped on a pronoun, and none of us said anything — not a giggle, not an "oops," not one comment. Each of us was far too embarrassed to say anything 'til the next day. What does that say about the gender imperative? I think it says everything.

Who reads us? People whose identity hinges on the need to determine gender: gays and lesbians for sexual reasons, sex workers and street people for economic reasons, children for the reason of trying to establish their own place in the system.

Passing emphatically equals membership, and passing includes all the privileges of gender membership. There is most certainly a privilege to having a gender. Just ask someone who doesn't have a gender, or who can't pass, or who doesn't pass. When you have a gender, or when you are perceived as having a gender, you don't get laughed at in the street. You don't get beat up. You know which public bathroom to use, and when you use it, people don't stare at you or worse. You know which from to fill out. You know what clothes to wear. You have heroes and role models. You have a past.

Passing by choice can be fantastic fun. Enforced passing is a joyless activity. Any joy that might be generated by the passing cannot be shared. Similarly, the joy of history lies in its telling and in its relevance to current times and relationships. Transgendered people, particularly post-operative

transsexuals, are not allowed any history beyond their current gender — we're not supposed to reveal our transgender status or our other-gendered past. Denied the opportunity to speak our stories, transsexuals are denied the joy of our histories. Sometimes it's painful for me to recall having been male. I did some stupid stuff — but that's part of me, and I need my male past as a reference point life. Discouraged from examining our past, transgendered people are discourage from growth.

The biggest gift for me after having gone through my gender change was getting back in touch with people I'd known when I was a guy. I really thought I'd never hear from them again. I thought they'd all think I was too weird to be in touch with. One by one, as I get back in touch with folks from my past, I can measure the continuity of my life. And I'm so grateful for their open minds and their open hearts.

The concept of passing is built into the culture's definition of transsexuality; and the result is that transsexuals don't question the gender system which their very existence could topple. Instead, through the mandate of passing, the culture uses transsexuals to reinforce the bi-polar gender system, as transsexuals strive for recognition within their new gender, and thus the privilege and chains of their new gender.

Ironically, the concept of passing invites and even demands the concept of reading (seeing through someone else's attempt at passing) and being read. The culture desires and will insist upon an unmasking, the culture will have its "truth." The fear of being read as a transsexual weighs so heavily on an individual that it focuses even more attention on "passing". It's a conundrum, because more and better passing brings about an increased far of being read. I know too many transsexuals who deny their lives as transsexual for the sake of appearing "normal".

Kate Bornstein's new book, Gender Outlaw: On Men, Women and The Rest of Us *has just been published by Routledge Press and will be published in paperback under Random House.*

Kiki Whitlock interview - *Cont. from page 9*

not some psychiatric disorder. It's just a fact of life.

TNT: *Do you think psychiatry and psychology have had a role in preventing the formation of an independent transgender community?*

KW: I know so for a fact. I feel it's all a racket for society to make money off this community. We don't have to go through any of that psychological and psychiatric bullshit. I think it's a shame that psychiatrists are making a living off this community by keeping the price of services so high. The Tom Waddell Clinic is a step in the right direction. After they do intake, providing you don't have any prior medical problems, will give you hormones. Unlike the CSP [Center for Special Problems] where they put you through the wringer.

TNT: *Can you elaborate on the significance of being both a transsexual and a racial minority?*

KW: From my point of view, it's an additional burden. It adds another form of discrimination so it's a double or triple burden. All you can do is take what you got, put your best foot forward and go for it.

TNT: *When Sgt. Thorn spoke at the hearing many people felt he stole the show. Do you agree? Do you think his appearance detracted from charges of police misconduct against transgendered people?*

KW: I don't think he stole the show. I don't think anyone was so consumed by Sgt. Thorn that we forgot the real facts and issues. What Fred Lau said about the police having zero tolerance for prejudice was a joke and I think most people saw it as such. I don't think anyone was fooled by that for a minute. Just from jump you know that is not an accurate statement. I'm sure Fred Lau's a very nice man but I doubt he's ever been at intake at 850 Bryant.

TNT: *What about racism in transgender community?*

KW: There's a lot of ethnic discrimination in our own community. We need to expand forums and have more dialogue between people. There's also a lot of elitism and classism between the haves and the have-nots. Our community needs role models. It needs people to give back to it. Don't just take from this community and bleed it dry. I have seen so many people who just get their surgery and then leave, never to be seen or heard from again. Ultimately what I'm looking for is that this community become so visible that everyone has some understanding of what being transgendered is. Growing up I felt so alone. I don't want anyone to suffer the feelings of loneliness and alienation that I did growing up. We may all be transgendered but it's very destructive if we think that we're all the same or have the same issues. But ultimately I believe in community and family.

GENDER OUTLAW:

On Men, Women and the Rest of Us by Kate Bornstein. Routledge Press

Reviewed by Gail Sondegaard

This book is entertaining, thoughtful and thought-provoking. It is also aggravating, frustrating and exasperating. It is the kind of book that people will have wildly divergent reactions to, often with passages on the same page. The book is a pastiche filled with anecdotes of transsexual and transgender experience, quotes, asides, comments and observations. It is also curiously light, resembling in many ways a scrapbook. The opening chapters have a maudlin quality due to Kate's thanking everyone she's ever known for almost anything they've ever done in her life. Once past that, however, it is a fairly provocative and entertaining read.

The book is written in two different typefaces. Normally when I see something like this my first response is "Uh-oh — airhead alert." Not so here. The call/response format works quite well, the bold-faced text forming a running commentary that adds rather than subtracts from what she is saying.

The book asks the perennial Bornstein questions of what is a man, what is a woman, and why do we limit ourselves to only two genders? Her aim is to knock loose our bi-polar perception of gender and ultimately "be the conversation about gender she never had." She wants her book to question of the very existence of gender itself and put that question "firmly into the fabric of culture." It's a noble goal. Much of what she has to say about gender and transsexuals is provocative. She gives definitions of community and dysphoria that promote thinking and do indeed shake loose old perceptions. For example, she writes that one of the reasons transsexuals have so much trouble building communities is that we threaten each other's world view, and that scares us.

A better question to ask is why so many people attribute so much power to such a marginalized group of people.

The book contains one of her more infamous comments: that transsexuality is the only condition where the therapy is to lie. I heard her say that once to a lecture audience and found it quite offensive. Here, with the opportunity to explain more fully what she meant, her answer makes perfect sense. However, without that explanation it is still a very inflammatory statement that plays to too many prejudices against transsexuals by giving the impression that we lie about our sense of interior identity. I only hope Bornstein realizes this and doesn't use it in her public speaking just because it's a clever sound bite that wows an audience.

Bornstein spends much of the book talking about the limitless possibilities of gender, believing that gender is fluid and can change every hour if need be. This started getting old after awhile. Just when she should be suggesting other alternatives to male/female she only repeats that we should have more than two. Her inability to suggest anything other than male/female is a serious flaw in her book. It raises the possibility that maybe there aren't more than two.

One of the most interesting sections is the one entitled 'Creating A Third Space'. This is a statement of her own queer aesthetics as well as a fleshing out of her concept of the Third, which she touches on in earlier chapters. I like what she's trying to say here. The Third, as I understand it, is more of a spiritual and philosophic concept rather than an attempt at creating a third gender. The Third is that which constantly nudges us out of our dichotomous thinking patterns, forcing us to change and grow in our perceptions whether in politics, art and spirituality or gender. This concept has great possibilities.

When Kate is good she is very very good, but when she is bad she leaves a lot to be desired. The book has many letdowns. One of the big ones is her willingness to accept every negative criticism against transsexuals as justified (even though I agree with some of them). She briefly relates the story of a transsexual woman thrown out of a lesbian organization after trying a "power play". No details of this power play are given nor the circumstances, yet Bornstein writes about it as if it served the transsexual woman right. It never occurs to her that maybe these lesbians were transphobic bigots. Or when Kate is told that she is nothing more than a castrated man, she replies "Yep, I'm a castrated man all right, if that's what you see." Kate writes that this response enabled her to no longer be humiliated by other peoples' definitions of her. I'm sure that's true, but when I read this passage it didn't come across as powerful so much as pathetic. "Doesn't Bornstein ever stand up for herself?" I found myself thinking. There is an awful lot of passivity in this book, with Kate constantly being told what to do or believe by intangible forces (the patriarchy, psychology) that are

quite real but not in anyone's control. And it would have been nice if just once in *Gender Outlaw* she said that we transsexuals have the right to define ourselves in our own way in our own words.

At one point she states that transsexuals have the power to destroy the binary gender system. This is very similar to the old Janice Raymond assertion that transsexuals uphold the binary gender system and is just as idiotic. While I agree that what we do is powerful and certainly destroys the notion that one is born a man or a woman, transsexuals are not capable of or responsible for either maintaining or uprooting the gender status quo of this society. (I also always wonder *how* we are supposed to do this.) A better question might be to ask why so many people attribute so much power to such a marginalized group of people.

Bornstein also refers to what happened to her when she inserted herself into a war of words between lesbian feminists and transsexuals over MTF inclusion at the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival. This is the one part of the book that, more than any other, I wish she hadn't put in.

This conflict occurred in San Francisco about two years ago over the expulsion of Nancy Burkholder from Michigan Womyn's Music Festival. Letters back and forth between lesbian separatists and transsexuals were printed in the Bay Times, a local lesbian and gay newspaper. At times the words got pretty heated. At the height of the controversy, Bornstein wrote an article called "A Plan For Peace" that was widely viewed by many transsexuals here and elsewhere as a sell-out. Kate's account of those events and her role in them is extremely selective and self-serving. She still believes it was only a small group of people that were angry at her and egging everyone else on. That is not true. Bornstein didn't and still doesn't understand how much her position that transsexuals should back off about MTF inclusion at MWMF riled people in the community. People reading this book only learn her side of it, which is "I'm the poor helpless peacemaker who was trashed." Interestingly, Bornstein was trashed by transsexuals and not, as far as I know, by lesbian separatists or anyone in the gay and lesbian community.

I don't enjoy bringing up and re-hashing everything that happened at that time. Kate can never undo that article and no one can undo their responses to it. She can continue to seek vindication for what she did, but it's unlikely to come from the people she wants it from the most. It would be better if she would just let the matter drop.

Overall, *Gender Outlaw* is a fairly good book that has many thoughtful and provocative ideas about being transgendered. It also contains a strong critique of the rigidity of current gender roles and may even contribute to a loosening of that rigidity.

But I am not so sure about what this book will do for transsexuals. Certain passages could be taken to mean that with loose enough gender roles, people wouldn't need to change their sex, as though being transsexual was a response to sex-role rigidity. It isn't. It's about having a transposed gender identity, but Bornstein never discusses this at all. In fact, when she does discuss identity, it's as something so fluid and changeable that it almost doesn't exist. I think transgendered people will take a much more careful and realistic appraisal of her ideas because we live them every day.

DONATIONS NEEDED FOR TRANSGENDER PRIDE PROJECT

Leslie Feinberg needs your help. She is working on a book tentatively called "Transgender: A History of Resistance." She is currently collecting and assembling many historical and cross-cultural photos, graphics, etchings and paintings of transgendered individuals from many nationalities and time periods. It is in draft form and ready to go to a publisher, but she must shoulder the financial burden of research and the high costs of purchasing photo and graphic reproduction rights herself.

A $12,500 budget has been submitted to the Column Foundation in New York City, which will award her a grant in the amount of all donations it receives for the "Transgender Pride Project." This budget includes over $8,000 for photo rights and is intended to cover xeroxing, print-making, long distance phone calls, faxing, and postage to international collections and museums.

If you can help her in this giant unearthing of our history, please make a tax-deductible donation to:

Column Foundation
c/o William Sachs, Esq.
7 Penn Plaza
Suite 830
New York, NY 10001

Please note on your check that this contribution is for the Transgender Pride Project. Her goal is to make this book the one so many of usneeded when we were growing up — and still need now.

Thank you for your help.

And ... And... And....Continued from page 13

people. "It must be said that the lesbian feminist gender police do not get to say what we look like, who we want, why we want them, and how we do it with them." It had frightened her, she said, to see Kate Bornstein's play *Hidden: A Gender* because, she supposed, she was afraid of loving or being attracted to someone who hadn't come up the way she had—and yet loving the wrong people was how she had discovered she was a lesbian. Claiming the movement was never meant to define individual women's desire or label that desire as inappropriate, she said she wanted "a liberation movement that values desire that's different."

Minnie Bruce Pratt, too, spoke of the importance of transsexual inclusion and transgender activism to lesbian feminism. Her own introduction to the women's movement, she said, was as "a place where you could bend gender and set up an economic system in which you could do that." "The complexities of gender," she continued, "are layered through everybody's life," and she predicted a strong and positive reception in the lesbian feminist community to discussions of gender. "I'm happy to be going to Camp Trans," she said, "to see the meeting of these two currents as a continuing development of the movement."

After such forceful and reasoned presentations, the remarks of the transgendered speakers were nearly anticlimactic, though Leslie Feinberg did a very thoughtful and intelligent job of reminding the gathering to build on the foundation laid by the '60s liberation movements. Some comic but still-thoughtful relief from the stunning procession of pro-transsexual lesbian-feminists included a surprise visit from playwright/performance artist Holly Hughes, who acted out a ribald segment from her play *Clit Notes*, and Kate Bornstein' hilarious sketch on taking nerve-wracking sessions from a speech therapist to learn how to talk like a woman until a roommate told her to chuck it and listen to Laurie Anderson records.

This evening was nothing less than a sea change in lesbian community attitudes toward male-to-female transsexuals. It put the lesbian movement on notice that some of its best and brightest (not just its youngest and feistiest) consider the automatic exclusion of MTFs (and other gender rebels) not only oppressive but counter to feminist principles. This has implications that go far beyond the question of transsexual inclusion.

Heretofore, the de/construction and investiture with meaning of gender roles, identities and play dynamics has been the province of sex radicals. Their approach has been to claim the entirety of both virtual and actual sex and gender components as fair game for exploration and recombination. Traditional lesbian feminism that came out of "second wave" feminism has emphasized drawing boundaries around sexuality and gender, ostensibly to prevent women from being victimized in the sexual arena. Sex radicals—or anyone engaged in radical sexuality of any kind—have had to distinguish ourselves from mainstream feminism no matter what our commitment was to working for women's freedom.

The lesbian feminists who spoke at the Camp Trans benefit, by reclaiming the fight against gender oppression as central to feminist activism, have claimed taking responsibility for construction of one's own identity and desire—which may mean by choosing to take sexual risks—as a feminist act. This runs counter to both the "pure, safe haven" concept of women's community *and* to the concept of conformity to a collective standard instead of one's own conscience. It also reflects a new maturity on the part of lesbian feminists, a security in the strength of our woman-centered lives amidst a patriarchal society.

At the beginning of lesbian feminist communities post-Stonewall, the inclusion of transsexual lesbians was seen in terms of disproving society's assumptions that womanhood meant an attraction to men (and putting them first in our lives) and that lesbianism was somehow inferior to female heterosexuality (since here was living proof of how highly it could be valued). This inclusive approach, which affirmed lesbian women's beautiful individuality, was crushed early and brutally. Given the nastiness toward transsexuals that still emanates from the lesbian separatist subcommunity, the strong and positive change in attitudes evidenced at the Camp Trans benefit is nothing short of amazing.

Transexual Menace's Riki Ann Wilchins, looking both astonished and elated after the event, summed it up: "We thought they were there to support us, but they were there to start a movement." As I walked back to the East Village from the Gay and Lesbian Community Center, I turned the corner onto West 4th Street and found myself for one last time at Christopher Street, Sheridan Square and a few buildings from the Stonewall Inn. Standing there, I knew she was right, and that this night in Greenwich Village could end up being remembered like another night 25 years ago.

Saheli!- continued from page 23

total of 400. With a sari worth, say, 200 Rs, it's a nice haul for a kid. Somehow we end up with a nice dupatta (scarf) as well, and we leave happy.

Back to looking for work. Twenty minutes later we're called to do a blessing for a marriage. It's a big affair, the men are frisky, so we do lots of songs. The men paw at us some. The women stand in the back, torn between being embarrassed and having fun.

When it comes time for the inevitable argument about money, the father of the groom says to me, "They're asking for more than I can afford! I don't have that much money! I'm not an officer, I'm just a clerk! What should I do?"

I just smile at him and say, "If you want your son to have children, I'd take up a collection."

We walk away with a cool 600 Rupees.

I have this theory that one of the things we do at weddings and births is to give people a place to put unexpressible emotions. We loosen up the overly-stiff aspect of these things, and we give the people who need to blow off steam an acceptable place to do it.

Late afternoon, we knock off and divide the loot. We take the auto back to Nizzam-Ud-Din, exhausted but happy with rupees in our purses.

Gulbaharie starts cooking right away. She does most of the housework. She's very domestic, and I think given her druthers she'd just stay home and keep the house. Certainly it was Gulbaharie who got enthused about helping me set up my household. But it's part of the Hijra way of "from each according to her ability, to each according to her need" that she does the cooking, and somehow life goes on.

I go home, change into an old salwar-kameez. On the way back. I run into Asha, a woman friend.

"Baitho, baitho! Chai piogie?" she calls out. There's a joke in India that Hindus greet you by saying "Namaste," Moslems greet you by saying "Salaam Alaikum," and women greet you by saying "Sit, sit! Have some tea?" It doesn't matter what you're doing, or if you're busy -- if you pass a woman's door, you have to stop and have chai.

I'm always glad to see Asha. So I squat down beside her. Somebody's been cutting up fish in a bowl in front of her hut. Her husband's a ragpicker (garbage recycler), so there's a garbage dump next door. The city is fixing the sewer and they've diverted the raw sewage into the gutter. You learn to ignore flies in India.

Asha and I sit there in silence awhile. Without turning she says to me, "Is America clean?"

I look at her, but she's looking out at the road, with a million miles in her eyes.

"Yes," I say, "America is clean."

Still without looking at me, but with an expression I shan't forget soon, she replies, "Then I should like America."

I don't know what to say. She once showed me her family picture album - pictures of Moslem weddings, her in a wedding sari, celebrations, smiling people. Mostly taken in an achingly neat little western looking bungalow. She's been living in this garbage dump for five years.

We were squatting together one day when a man came up and asked about my family. "Parents? Brothers?"

"In America," I reply.

"Sisters?," he asked.

"None," I said. Then he walked away.

After he left, I quietly said, "In all the world, all Hijras are my sisters." When I looked at Asha, she had a huge smile on her face, and her eyes were teary.

She's looking out at the road with a million miles in her eyes.

Evening coming, I go back to the Ashram, a bigger hut that faces the ragpicker's weighing shed. I enter, salaam the guru (not Ratnaa, but a man, the big guru for the whole camp), and sit beside Ratnaa. Everybody smiles. The guru smiles at the two of us and says, "Guru and chela look good together."

I haven't the faintest idea what the religious tenants of this place are. They told me I should ask Ratnaa about God every day, but my Hindi isn't good enough to talk about abstruse things. So I just sing the praises of Allah and I'm happy. It's a simple, Franciscan sort of thing to do.

People sit in a circle, gossip, snack, smoke ghanga, and talk about the problems of the basti. Pretty soon the instruments come out and we all sing. The night the guru returned, we all chanted "Ai guru" for two hours. It was nice.

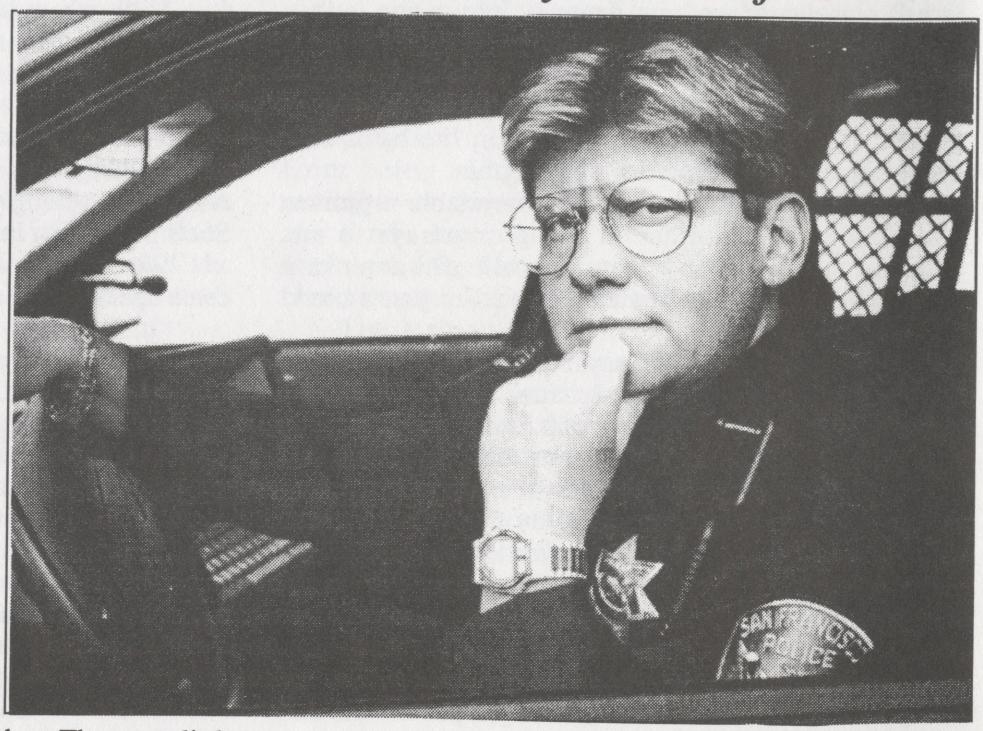
At some point during the singing, Ratnaa says to me, "Go back. Kal subah, nau bugee. Meri ghar." - Go back. Tomorrow morning, nine oclock, my house. I salaam and leave the Ashram. I go back, watching for the children (this is always the worst time) and let myself in.

Upstairs I read a bit, write up my notes about the day, and fasten the mosquito net back over my bed. Soon I'm as asleep as I ever get in India. Tomorrow is another day.

Anne Ogborn is currently seeking a grant to enable her to return to India to complete her film documentary on the Hijras. Anyone wishing to make a donation to this project may do so by writing her in care of this magazine.

SERGEANT STEPHAN THORNE SPEAKS OUT

--An Interview by Max Wolf Valerio



Sgt. Stephan Thorn

On May 5, 39 year old Sergeant Stephan Thorne came out to the San Francisco Police Department and to the entire world as a transsexual man. Although he is not the first transsexual police officer, he is the first to make his decision public and to stay in the same department he currently works in when he was a female officer. Sergeant Thorne gave a rousing speech at the Human Rights Commission hearing for transgendered rights on May 12th. He plans to implement a training program for police officers that will foster more understanding of transgender/transsexual people and help to eliminate transphobic attitudes in the police force.

Originally from Nebraska, Stephan Thorne has been on the SFPD for ten years. I first met Stephan Thorne a little over a year ago at an FTM meeting and was impressed with his sensitivity, integrity and intelligence. (First of two parts)

Max Wolf Valerio: *When did you begin thinking about doing your transition?*

Stephan Thorne: I had thought about it first when I was 17 and decided against it after discovering feminism. I had come out as a lesbian at 15. I knew some transgendered MTFs that were transitioning and I understood it as an option. I decided to do it and I talked to my mother about it. She said that was ok, she could understand wanting to do that. But then, I discovered feminism and became a lesbian feminist.

MWV: *That happens to a significant number of us. What was it about feminism that made you diverge from the path of doing your transition?*

ST: I decided at that time that maybe it wasn't so much that I needed to be a man but that I wanted what men had -- the privilege, the power. This was 1971, The women's movement was just picking up and starting to surge and I moved into that surge. I thought, "OK, this is the body that I have, I am a female, just because I am a female doesn't mean that I can't have what I want, I'll just take it." So I did that. I was very happy for a number of years. I became a radical lesbian feminist, very politically involved and active. I was very much a part of a coalition of lesbian feminists which included other feminists such as African Americans, Hispanics and Native Americans. In Nebraska, the leftist community was small, we all needed one another. Instead of accentuating our differences like happens in the Bay Area, where everybody seems to be really at odds with one another, we all looked for our commonality, because we needed the strength of the numbers. So I was very much a part of that and I was very happy.

MWV: *When and how did that begin to change?*

ST: I was in my mid-twenties and I began to experience this dissatisfaction. It was many things. I moved from Nebraska to the Bay Area. I went into therapy, seriously and for a good length of time. This was in '86. I didn't understand that part of what was going on was my gender identity stuff coming back. It's like I took an alternative path but it wasn't where I was going to be all my life. I didn't realize that. I felt so disconnected. It was as if in my relationships with other people, my friendships included, I couldn't connect, I couldn't feel anything. I couldn't feel people, I thought,"What's wrong with me?"

MWV: *You were coming up against that wall. The place so many of us get to when everything should be ok and we realize that it isn't, that something is off. Inside of ourselves, something is very out- of-sync.*

ST: Yeah, so I started into therapy and I started looking at my incest issues. I always preferred to initiate sex with my lovers. I didn't define as a stone butch. I did like to be made love to and share in intimacy but I didn't ever really like having my breasts touched.

MWV: *Most of us can relate to that.*

ST: Yes. Now, I believed, as a lot of women did in my community, that these issues came up with incest. So what I needed to do was to deal with my incest issues and then it would be OK.

I think transsexualism and transgenderism are a natural extension of lesbian and gay issues, which are often related to gender.

MWV: *Makes sense logically.*

ST: Makes sense. So -- I dealt with my incest issues and it didn't make a whit of difference!

MWV: *Right.*

ST: We each have our own unique experience, especially some of us who lived as heterosexuals prior to the change, that's a fairly different history than those of us who were in the lesbian community.

MWV: *For me, the lesbian community definitely clouded my vision for awhile in terms of my gender stuff. Now I understand that I confused gender role and gender identity. I also thought that a lot of my discomfort with being a woman had to do with the oppression of women. So therefore, if I just became a feminist and did the things that men do it would be ok. But gender identity is a deeper thing, a feeling you have with your body. So you went to therapy and at what point did it become clear?*

ST: It was a gradual process for me. There was a line I couldn't cross about being too butch. So I was careful with that one. I always identified as butch but I sort of disavowed the masculinity inherent in that. It was a terrible thing to be male-identified and be a lesbian.

MWV: *Tell me about it! Not something you wanted to advertise.*

ST: So I was with this woman who I couldn't be too butch for and being in that relationship I became more butch. It became more and more ok.

MWV: *I was in a similar situation in that I was with somebody who gave me permission to push that line. It was really scary. Is that what happened with you? -- as soon as you pushed that line in the sexual areas of your life, did you start thinking of yourself as more male in other areas of your life?*

ST: It pushed the gender issue big time. At some point, I had an experience I call my "epiphany". It all became clear to me, and I understood...

MWV: *So you had a moment where you understood the connection between your gender identity, your sexuality and your body?*

ST: Yes. That's a good way to express it.

MWV: *Do you also think part of the reason it took awhile to get to the point of beginning your transition is because, until very recently, there has been so little visibility for FTMs? It just wasn't something I thought of as an option.*

ST: I knew it was an option when I was 17. For one thing one of my lesbian friends became actualized. Became a FTM.

MWV: *I like that way of describing it, "actualized". So this person did transition?*

ST: Yes, he was a little older than me.

MWV: *I didn't know anybody. I knew that there were people who did this, but I had no idea what it would look like, what it would sound like. I thought "It's better to stay a butch lesbian because I would probably look absolutely silly if I tried to become a man!" You were lucky to have that. So, you've been in on hormones for six months now and you've been living as male for how long?*

ST: Well, I didn't come out until late in April 1994 to the Chief of Police and then on May 5th to the whole department and the whole world. That's one of the things about the Harry Benjamin Standards of Care that I vehemently disagree with -- the requirement that you live in the opposite gender role before hormone therapy. I think that is terribly difficult and painful!

MWV: *I don't see how you can do it!*

ST: You can't do it and pass. Well, many of us can't do it and pass. And that's humiliating and I disagree with it. The requirement that you live full time before beginning hormones needs to be changed.

MWV: *I think that is completely outrageous*!

ST: So, it was a couple of years ago that my epiphany occurred. And within a couple of months of that I was checking out the transsexual support groups at Civic Center and my first FTM meeting was in April of last year.

MWV: *I understand that in Palo Alto you were the first open lesbian police officer?*

ST: Yes.

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IN SUPPORT OF NWC POLICY

by Janis Walworth

A major controversy has erupted in the community over whether pre-ops should be allowed into the New Women's Conference, which is currently restricted to only post-operative transsexual women. The following two articles state the two opposing sides of this debate.

Seeing ourselves mirrored in others like us is an important piece in the life-long process of constructing a self-identity. For people who are different from the vast majority of the culture they live in, this can be done only by purposely gathering in groups based in similarity. I strongly support the right of any group to meet on an exclusive basis for the purpose of personal growth. NWC services this purpose for people who have lived as men, now live as women, and have had genital surgery as part of the transition process.

Riki Ann Wilchins and others are fond of likening NWC to the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival; however, this comparison is fallacious. First, there is a difference in how these groups define themselves. Michigan represents itself as an event for all women and then excludes some women by defining them as men. NWC states that it is an event for post-ops and does not exclude any post-ops. (It does not bill itself as an event for all transsexuals and then try to claim that pre-ops are not transsexuals.)

Those who argue for inclusion are still drawing a line about who should be welcome — they're just drawing it in a different place than a consensus of NWC participants has drawn it.

Second, the purpose of the two events is different. Michigan is a recreational event at which you can plop your blanket down on the grass next to strangers and listen to the music and get up and leave. NWC is a personal growth event based on the trust that develops among participants. Much of the appeal of Michigan is that it is huge and women can bask in the immensity and diversity of it all, whereas the very premise of NWC is that its smallness permits women to experience intimacy and find their common ground.

Third, the power dynamics are different. At Michigan, nontranssexual women, who are in the vast majority and are relatively empowered, are excluding transsexual women, who are a tiny, disenfranchised minority. On the other hand, it is not clear that post-ops are a majority of transsexuals or that they wield significantly more power than pre-ops. (Elitism, by the way, does not translate into a power differential unless all parties buy into it. Pre-ops can choose to empower themselves rather than hand power over to post-ops.)

A fairer comparison would be to small personal growth and support groups in other disenfranchised communities. In such groups, as at NWC, the effectiveness of the group depends on rapport established via common experience. As people who work with small groups are aware, the dynamics of a group depend on every person present; it is not possible for a person to be present without affecting what happens, the chemistry of the group, and the content of the discussion. Other groups that have suffered discrimination and exclusion recognize the importance of relating some of the time in small, narrowly defined groups; they do not insist that all events for ANY of their members must be open to ALL of their members. A support group for Jewish lesbians does not have to welcome all Jews or all lesbians, and people who are excluded from such a group are generally content to be excluded. Why, then, is NWC the focus of dissension in the transsexual community? Are the rules different here? I suspect that some people feel they are because there are so few events for transsexuals. But does it make sense, in addressing this issue, to endanger these few events?

NWC is a fragile effort, run largely on the personal funds of a few individuals and a break-even budget. Finding a suitable site that will welcome transsexuals is a tremendous hurdle each year, and the many hours needed to organize the conference are donated by women who are already overextended. NWC has provided an important growth and healing experience for a few dozen individuals over the past few years. This effort should be applauded and supported. Directing anger at NWC for not fulfilling the needs of all transsexuals is misguided and destructive. Confrontational tactics could cause the cancellation of the conference, as well as discourage would-be organizers of other transsexual events.

The idea that exclusion is bad and inclusion is good is very simplistic thinking. If inclusion is always right, why aren't the inclusionists advocating opening

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Let Our Sisters Attend!

by Denise A. Norris

Ed. Note: This is the text of a letter was sent to all New Women conference attendees in May, 1994.

A storm is fast approaching our community and we are all going to need to keep a clear perspective on the issues to ride it out. Its name is 'EXCLUSION' and as NWC participants, we are all squarely in the middle of the problem.

I finally 'qualified' to attend NWC last year. It was a fantastic experience I hope to be able to repeat this year. Several of my close friends have been involved with NWC since the beginning and I have always maintained high hopes for its success.

When I first heard of NWC, I had not yet decided on surgery. Oh, I was pretty sure I was going to do it, but there was still a good deal of healthy doubt. When an attendee shared with me a very general description of what had happened at the first NWC, I became jealous. I wanted to go. I wanted the bonding, the friendship. When the second NWC rolled around, about six weeks before my surgery date, there were already cries of exclusion from the Gender community. But I really wnated to go. I told a friend that I might 'crash' the gate. My friend suggested that I wait. For once I listened to someone else's advice. When NWC3 arrived, I was ready to go, having had my surgery. On the first night of the conference, as we discussed the exclusion problem, I shared my plans for NWCs with the other attendees. I also remarked that I felt that NWC should remain closed.

As I see it, we're all members of the Gender community, first. We always have been. Until forty years ago, there were no Post-Op or Pre-Op people. We didn't divide ourselves along these lines. We were all just well...Gender Outlaws. After Christine Jorgensen, we have allowed ourselves to become a population classified and divided by the medical and psychiatric community and treated as sick individuals who needed to be fixed. We tolerate the so-called professionals who still refere to us as 'HE' even though they are going to perform the much promised and sought-after operation that will make us into *real women.* We have dressed in extremely feminine clothing and hid our true sexual orientation to please the doctors who held the approvals for the life-saving procedure. We accepted the lie that we should stop associating with other transsexuals and act like *real women* once the surgery was complete. We were told we were the lucky ones. We were the few who could have the **OPERATION**! We sold our soult to the devil, er, doctors who promised us salvation.

Now, in the 1990s, we are beginning to reclaim our power. Instead of perceiving ourselves as crippled, diseased, broken and needing repair, we have begun to realize we are 'people of transsexual experience'. It is this common transsexual experience that is the strength of our community. And there is diversity in that experience. The person who decides NOT to transition because of family or other obligations has an experience that I'll never understand. The person who desires surgery, yet is HIV+ and cannot, is still another. Each person's unique flavor or experience contributes to, rather than diminishes, our community.

We who have had surgery need to stop defining ourselves as 'Post-Op' women and discard the assumed privilege that goes with it. We are not at the top of the ladder of transsexual experience. There is no ladder even to be on. We are people who share the common experience of genital surgery. The experience affects our lives in ways that are special to us. In the same way it's very difficult, if not impossible, for non-transsexuals to understand the transsexual experience and its ramifications. Nevertheless, there are experiences that other people have had that are equally important and we will never understand their needs, either. There is nothing special about the surgical experience except to the individual who experiences it. The decision not to have surgery is as important to a person as the decision to have it. Equal but different.

We who have had surgery need to stop defining ourselves as 'Post-Op' women and discard the assumed privilege that goes with it.

Several important questions face NWC this year. How we answer them will reverberate throughout the community. They are:

Does the surgical experience create unique requirements for an individual?

Without a doubt. No one will argue that.

Do we need a conference that focuses solely on the needs of people with a surgical experience?

Unquestionably yes. We need to learn so much more about our experience.

Should we include people who do *not* have surgical experience in such a conference?

Absolutely YES! By limiting diversity, we limit ourselves.

"Never!"

"NWC will never be the same, no more magic."

"NWC will become a pre-op conference."

"The live penis-monster will get us."

Okay...okay...Listen, I know how you feel. The thought of including the rest of the community struck fear in my heart, too. I said it all. Heard it all. Thought it all. Felt it all. And I changed my mind.

Since NWC3, I have reflected deeply on this issue and discussed it with some NWC'ers and other people of transsexual experience. I've discussed my fears with many people and finally separated the rational from the irrational. I listened and learned. I found the answers I was looking for and overcame the objections that had been haunting me.

Now for the BIG irrational reasons: THE LIVE PENIS MONSTER and NWC WILL LOSE ITS MAGIC.

NWC will cease to be a conference for our needs.

Why should it stop meeting our needs? No one is talking about changing the subject matter of NWC. No one wants to make NWC into a 'Full Circle of Women'. People with surgical experience need to explore themselves. Many wonderful things have already happened because of NWC. Stating that NWC is a conference to explore and meet the needs of people with surgical experience and keeping it that way is NOT exclusionary.

We will be outnumbered by the Pre-Ops at NWC.

1) Remember, there are no such people as Pre-Ops. The term is of very recent origin and given to us by non-transsexuals who'll never understand us anyhow. 2) If NWC is a conference about our surgical experience and designed to meet our needs, why would anyone else want to attend? Sure, we'll get a few people who are vicarious. But not many people will pay several hundred dollars in addition to airfare to attend a conference that has nothing to offer them

We will lose control of NWC.

How can we? The overall agenda is set by the sponsors of NWC. I don't expect this to change much, regardless of who is allowed in. NWC's charter (or by-laws) should state that NWC is a conference for the needs of people with surgical experience. Also, NWC is an idea. Whatever the name, the idea of meeting our own needs without doctors, psychiatrists, lawyer and the rest of the non-transsexuals has been born and will always be with us.

Well, so much for the rational reasons. Now on to the BIG irrational ones: **THE LIVE PENIS MONSTER** and **NWC WILL LOSE ITS MAGIC.**

Someone might want to use the Hot Tub naked and their genitalia might offend me.

So what? Still having a penis is part of their experience. I'm sure we have offended many separatist lesbians by having surgery. Our 'imitation' vaginas are disgusting to them. Whose problem is that? Ours or theirs? There is nothing wrong with penises. The real problem is too many of us still have BIG issues with penises. Once we got rid of ours, we wanted nothing more to do with them as long as they reminded us of how painful it was for us before surgery. Seeing transsexuals with penises reminds us of ourselves, whether it was a year ago, five years, ten years, or fifteen. Having a penis around is kind of handy to help prod us back into reality. Make us deal with issues of growing up perceived as male and hating it so. When we restructured our genitalia, we are able to pretend we have resolved these issues, when in fact we simply have removed the stimulus. A penis in the hot tub simply dredges up our old issues by serving as that trigger.

NWC will lose that special quality and never bee the same.

NWC will be different, I agree. But NWC will still have magic and a special quality. It's the people who make the magic, not the event. What NWC3 special (and NWC1 and NWC2) was almost everyone's focus on becoming empowered and healing. The gestalt of everyone's power is what we felt. Yet at NWC3, there were people who were felt out of place or had vastly different experiences than the rest of the attendees. These people did not detract from the magic, but they added to it by coloring it in such a way that'll never be repeated. Nor are people of surgical experience the only ones with power. Everyone has some form of power. By blocking people from attending NWC, we not only hurt them, we hurt ourselves. Stopping the discrimination of people because they are different is what the Human Rights movement is all about.

Since NWC, I've had women in my home who have penises. Finally facing the 'live penis monster' was one of the best things that had ever happened to me since surgery. Many times I was surprised by the things I learned. Things that helped me understand my own surgical experience. The irrationality behind these last blocks to inclusion was exposed and then faded away.

There has been much talk about an action against NWC to force us to open our doors. As far as I know, no one is planning a show of force at NWC4, and at most, a small group of people may register and show up. If they

LET SISTERS ATTEND continued

are turned away on whatever grounds that NWC decides, they'll ask for supporters to join them, request a refund and go quietly off the conference grounds.

Of course, should they be turned away, it'll only deepen the rift in the community. The balance of the community is beginning to become annoyed with the elitist position taken by some of the people who have had surgery. And rightly so. Recently, I chanced to have a conversation with a NWC alumni and she referred to herself as a 'Complete' and everyone who had not had surgery were 'Incompletes'. And she is not an isolated case; I have heard this before from other women. We must put a stop to this. The origin of this caste system is not from within our community, but it is a construct perpetrated upon us by the doctors, psychiatrists, clinics and the Benjamin Standards of Care which generally and incorrectly assume the object is to reach surgery and that most members of the Gender community want to or will have surgery. While not at fault for starting it, we are responsible for the perpetuation of this classism and now must pay the bill for 40 years of Post-Op Elitism. We must face the fact that women with surgical experience are a minority in the Gender community and we need to get off our high horse. The community is quickly dispelling the 'Post Op' myths and we need to change our act before we find ourselves unwanted and unneeded.

Also, internal exclusionary policies will make it harder to ridicule and ill-favor the exclusion of transsexual women by separatist lesbians. We can't confront them when they can point back at us for doing the same thing. And it is the same thing. It's not a question of body count, but of the relative level of empowerment. When an empowered group of people excludes a disempowered group because of an attribute undesirable to the empowered group, it's called discrimination. It can be racism (whites to blacks) sexism (men to women), genderism (lesbians to transsexuals), or classism (NWC) and it's still wrong.

Let's stop dividing ourselves. We're few enough in numbers already. Let's work together to build a strong community based on diversity, not conformity. There are bigger issues that face us: Health Care, the Religious Right, AIDS, just to name a few. Show your support of community unity and diversity, tell NWC to let our sisters in. Let's welcome them to NWC4 and put this matter to rest.

Denise Norris is a co-founder of The Transexual Menace and a political activist fighting Gender oppression. She is divorced with one child and lives in downtown New York City.

NWC SUPPORT continued

NWC to female-to-male transsexuals? Why should inclusion stop with transsexuals? Maybe NWC should be open to crossdressers (don't look now, but didn't we deal with this at NWC1?). Why not drag queens, gay and bisexual women, and men, even ordinary straight people? Obviously, those who argue for inclusion are still drawing a line about who should be welcome — they're just drawing it in a different place than a consensus of NWC participants has drawn it.

NWC was never meant to be all things to all transsexuals. Nor does NWC attempt to solve all the problems of society — it cannot undo sexism, classism, transphobia, homophobia, and all the other ills that affect our community. Recognizing that resources, both personal and financial, were limited, participants at the first NWC made decisions about where to focus their energy. It was decided, for example, that NWC would remain an event for women, not for men; that NWC would be for post-ops, not pre-ops; and that NWC would remain small and not try to become a large gathering. These decisions do not imply that women are better than men, that post-ops are better than pre-ops, or that small is better than large — only that the scope of this conference is limited. Discussion of these issues continues every year, and the shape that NWC should take in the future is an area of deep concern.

It is easy to set NWC up as a target for our frustrations and blame it for all that is wrong with the community; it is harder to look within ourselves for sources of healing power. The energies of all of us who care about the transsexual community would be better spent on positive efforts to promote unity and create a rich assortment of structures. We should be asking what events are needed and how we can make them happen. How can we nurture what's good in our community, and what challenges do we need to overcome? What kinds of support are needed by different parts of the community? Do we need a better flow of information? Outreach to transsexual youth? Legislative efforts? Financial aid for surgery? Education for the general public? We can create what we need. But not with anger and provocation. If we trample each tender seedling because it's blossom is not all we had wished for, we may be left with a very barren landscape indeed.

Janis Walworth is one of the original protestors at MWMF and founder of the Full Circle of Women. She lives in Maine.

Sgt. Thorn Interview Continued

MWV: *So you've been a pioneer before. You've had practice!*
ST: Yes.
MWV: *Living in the lesbian community for so long, what kind of effect is this going to have on you in terms of being a man?*
ST: Well, you know my conscicusness has forever been raised. So, it will inform and guide the man I am becoming. First of all, I think transsexualism and transgenderism is a natural extension of lesbian and gay issues, which are often related to gender.
MWV: *How are they related?*
ST: Drag queens and bull daggers. Before technology enabled us to alter our bodies, it's the community where we could exist, where we could belong and find partners and express some of the gender differences we have. I think the transgender and the lesbian and gay community overlap in that way. Now, we can become clearer about the distinctions between those of us who are transgendered and those of us who are lesbian and gay. And how far, if we are transgendered, on a continuum some of us are. Some of us are transsexuals who want the hormone therapy and all of the surgery and others of us want only part of the surgery and the hormones or want only the hormones and no surgery. Some of us just express our gender identity and acknowledge our identity and don't want to do any of the physical changes, hormonal or surgical, but only cross-dress for instance.
MWV: *So would you see it as a continuum of gender identity?*
ST: Yes. There are also lesbian and gay men who do not relate to the idea. Say, for instance, within the lesbian community of butch/femme, who do not identify that way. I respect that. You see ads all the time in the personals, "Feminine woman wants same."
MWV: *Right.*
ST: Or "Passing woman wants same."
MWV: *Or lesbians who just don't seem to think about gender identity that much; it's not an issue for them. Stephan why did you decide to make your transition public in terms of calling a press conference?*
ST: Because I knew that as soon as the general members of the department knew, somebody would drop a dime on me to the press. Be it to Herb Caen or the Insiders or something like that, I knew when it became known it was not going to be a quiet issue. First of all I wanted to be prepared for it. I wanted the Chief to be prepared for it and other affected people. In discussing it with my Captain, the suggestion came up to call a press conference instead of having it come out sideways like it was a scurrilous or shameful thing that I didn't want to have made public or that the department didn't really want to have made public. I wanted to take control of it. You could steal their thunder, disarm them and their ability to shame you. Because I am not ashamed of what I am or who I am. So I stepped forward with my chief and the captain and made the announcement for the reason of rumor control within the department. And to take away the ability to turn it into something shameful.
MWV: *Do you think this decision was the right one?*
ST: Absolutely. I continue to be in the public eye and the reason for continuing is different than the initial press conference. The reason for continuing is evidenced by the Brandon Teena murders: we exist with the threat not only of being discriminated against verbally, physically harassed, threatened or harmed; but also being killed just for being who we are.
MWV: *I know you are going to initiate a training program for police officers to become sensitized about transgender issues. What sort of training program?*
ST: I don't have the details worked out. I already have had contact with the Deputy Chief Fred Lau, who is very interested in getting the training together. I will probably be meeting with him this week as well as with Lee Molatello, who used to be the Lesbian and Gay Liaison officer in the department, and we will begin to meet and work out what kind of training. I think we will use the framework of a sensitivity training class in the department. Just as we have other sensitivity training to other minority communities in the city -- the Asian community, Hispanic, Lesbian and Gay. We would add this training. I think we should have a required State Mandated Officer Training where you would have to refresh and update your knowledge. I think we should have transgender sensitivity training included in all of the Advanced Officer classes.
MWV: *So you want it to become mandatory?*
ST: Yes. As to how it will be fleshed out, I don't know the details yet. We need to communicate with other members of the transgender community to find out what kind of problems exist with their interactions and treatment by the police.
MWV: *So this is something that you've contacted Fred Lau about and you're in the process of setting this up and getting the curriculum together?*
ST: That's not done yet. It will be done.
MWV: *Does Fred Lau also believe that this should be mandatory?*
ST: Yes. I mean that's basically what kind of training we're putting it into. The Police Academy and the Advanced Officer Courses, those are mandatory courses.
(Cont'd Next Issue)

MZ. DOG

By Zachary Chartkoff

I.
medusa, look at me:
i hardly recognize
you now that you
scrapped off
the tattoos & shaved
your head bald
letting each snake
go snick-snack
into the sink
how the media
sensationalized
the scandal of your
bath:

II.
my fingers slip & slide
all over your lips:
you say you don't want them
inside so i assume you mean
mouth: the night you left me
i masturbated to the scene
where susie sexpert hustles out
dildos on the street in virgin
machine: falling asleep
with my pants around my ankles
& yes, you went through with
your operation in a black
rubber dress but something
went horribly wrong:
you came back from switzerland
with a mongrel bitch grafted
onto your hindquarters:
saying i could sink
my teeth into your veins
above your six hatchling
breasts & feel you big 'n pregnant
rubbing your latex cock hard harden
ing between my hands:

you'd think i've never been good
with my finger: they lose their
balance & slip right into you:
never telling the time i first
french kissed you in long red hair
electric go-go boots & see through
blouses while reeking of patchouli oil
& got junk sick all over you in your
lap your hair on your bed while i kept
trying to pull my fingers out but
they kept sliding in, my thumb going
up side to side to side
knocking my hand
back & forth between
your fingers
& falling in again:

i never told you i once found an entire box
of sweet 'n low & it took me an hour to eat
the entire thing ending up jealous of you
because you spent my last $25 on this "plastic
purple penis" 2 weeks c.o.d. & i was hall
ucinating so much i thought the latex was
really part of you — no one writes dildo
poems, mz. dog:

i never told you
next to my bed there's a picture
of you & me in halloween drag
near an old black sixties chevy
looking for someone who could
sweat-fuck like a dog:

HEY WRITERS!

TNT is on the lookout for stories, articles, cartoons and photographs. We want you to send us material to print, but we are selective: we don't do reprints and ***only*** *want original work. A partial wish list of articles we're interested in includes:*

Transsexual prostitution (both ftm and mtf)

Doctors who trade hormones for sex (and doctors who do the same for plastic surgery)

'Roid Rage - Real or Imagined?

Children of transsexuals and transsexual familiies

The recapture of transgender history

AS WELL AS

Stories, poems, photographic essays, and reviews of movies, articles, books and plays. We want articulate commentaries – a well-wrtitten piece gets more points with us than whether we agree with all the opinions expressed in it. We're very interested in reviews that are critical of currently accepted icons (does anyone besides Gail think that Marjorie Garber's Vested Interests *leaves a lot to be desired?)*

Anonymity and use of pseudonyms is acceptable. Just be sure to include your address and phone number so we can reach you (don't be so anonymous we can't call you back). Send your stuff to:

TNT
584 Castro
Suite 288
San Francisco, CA 94114-2588

All written materials MUST be typewritten. Disk preferred, either ASCI or MAC format. Disks and photos will be returned, but not text. Sorry. So – ***SUBMIT!*** *You'll feel so much better afterwards.*

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WITCH DOCTOR Kara

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MAN: YOU'LL NEVER SHOOT SPERM. YOU MUST BE SOME KIND OF FREAK. I CAN'T BE WITH KIND OF SHORT, AREN'T YOU? YOU PISS LIKE A WOMAN. YOU DON'T BELONG HERE.