

SISTAHOOD PROJECT

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ISSUES FACING THE INCARCERATED TRANSGENDERED COMMUNITY IN THE CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

This paper was presented at the Ninth National AIDS Update Conference, held in San Francisco, California on March 18th, 1997. The term transgender used in this presentation refers to the group of people who are inclined to cross the gender line. When referring to the transgendered incarcerated community, I am including cross dressers, drag queens, drag kings, transsexuals pre and post -op m-f and f-m. Some transsexuals remain pre-op and identify as transsexual. The purpose of this paper is to provide you with an understanding and to help bring to light the

health care and psychosocial issues faced by the transgendered incarcerated community within the state prison system of the

"We must open our hearts, our minds, our souls to those who are living with HIV disease. We must look beyond our fear to touch the person in the dark, so we may all walk together to the light."

Scott Cozza, '87

"behind bars", behind the prison walls. It is also the objective of this presentation to encourage action

to be taken to improve the poor medical care and mental health for transgendered persons experience within correctional settings throughout the United States. The transgendered prisoner experiences discrimination, emotional and physical abuse within the confines of correctional facilities. As health care providers, prison health care reform advocates and concerned persons of the plight of the disenfranchised, we must face these issues and begin to take steps to correct the social injustice experienced by our transgendered brothers and sisters. The data collected for this presentation was qualitative, anecdotal focus group material. The subjects were transgendered m-f.

Continued on page 4.

ALAMEDA COUNTY HPPC - HOSTS NEW TRANSGENDER ADVISORY TEAM

"It took a tremendous lobbying effort but, the Alameda County HPPC has finally endorsed the establishment of an adhoc committee to provide advice and suggestions in matters directly relative to the TG population. I am ecstatic."

At a recent meeting of the Alameda County HIV Prevention Planning Council (HPPC), a unanimous vote paved the way for the establishment of a new subcommittee to pride the

Continued on page 6.

Transgender HIV Prevention Services

AIDS Project East Bay is well into the second year of providing HIV Prevention Services to Alameda County's Transgender Community. The Staff of the project has undergone some changes, and this article is to tell you about both them and the project.

The AIDS Project East Bay Transgender Project fulfills some of Alameda County's much needed services to the large transgender population. Up until a year and a half ago, transgender people living and working in Alameda county, were thought of by county officials as non existent. Through constant pressure from concerned individuals at AIDS Project East Bay, and members of Alameda County's Transgendered Community, HIV Prevention & Education Services specific to the needs of the community were implemented.

During the first year of the contract, which was administered by two

Continued on page 5.

The Witch Doctor...

THE NIGHT CABBIE

*The San Francisco Examiner
Monday, Nov. 10th, 1997.*

In life, there are habits that have a certain social order about them, and when they're changed, things happen. Since the mayor conference in the city, Mayor Brown has changed the structure of certain sexual services here. The female hookers who use to pound the beat in the Tenderloin are now walking the streets between Geary, Larkin and Polk. They used to be on their own turf, where a woman was always a woman. It seems that mayor has ordered that the female hookers won't be arrested if they hang out with the men who dress like women. My friend on the street told me she's been kicked out of a car twice in the last week when her customer found out she was a real woman. What next?

What Next? Is a good question... To address the issue of the biological female sex industry workers being relocated to work with **TRANSGENDER** women, in my opinion that was disastrous from the beginning. The tenderloin transgender community already face many harassment and discrimination issues involving local city police officers. Any additional negative attention to their community only ignites more unmerited assumptions and causes a domino effect of discrimination.

From discussions that have

taken place in a local Transgender hangout, the girls really don't have issues of sharing the streets, because consumers always know exactly what they want to purchase. However, the girls do have issues with unwanted presence of patrol officers, which they directly attribute to the increase visibility of biological females and their overly macho, self absorbed pimp.

Talks of turf wars, and other territorial disputes have been suggested. However, PEACE & UNITY is what is needed whether they be biological or Transgender women, because a vagina does not make you a woman. Her strength, courage and ability to pull herself out of bad situations makes a woman.

This is the first appearance from CJ here, and I'd just like to say that even though I am new to San Francisco, I do know what's going on...I keep my eyes open as well as my ears, and generally keep my mouth shut, gathering info on who's who and what's what.

Now I know what's running through your mind out there, "who does she think she is?" Well, I'm 27, tall, blonde and so-so. I'm not active in the community in a sexual sense, but I am volunteering my extra time to help out my sisters, and brothers, in the community.

So if you want to talk , I'll

listen; and if you to make your views known, I'll do what I can to let others know. Remember the expert is the person who knows that sometimes the best things to do is listen. If you do, you will learn something new.

What I am, I am.
What will be, will be;
I'll change what I can,
The rest? Just wait and see!

Se Ya on the Flipside!

"Motherlode Pimps?...That's not true...Chil's Please, the only pimps that I know that deal with the TG girls are the ones hanging outside around the Motherlode late at night."

It was brought to my attention by the bar owner that an article that was published in the last NDURA Village newsletter was offensive and totally untrue when mentioning that the bar owner received kickbacks. Trust me SISTA's, most of the TG girls dont have pimps or anything that looks like a pimp, especially local bar owners. Yes maybe they are very friendly to the girls and sometimes we as community members don't appreciate their interactions, but that doesn't constitute for being a pimp or receiving kickbacks...It is important to remember that some opinions don't always come out clear...Especially when we view them from different sides of life spectrum.

Lauren,

PS. This one is for the MOTHERLODE!!!

Incarcerated TG continued...

Two focus groups comprised of 10 transgendered incarcerated individuals and data gathered from 33 subjects responding to the following research study question: "If you are a transgendered person, please suggest what corrections would provide better medical, mental and general care for the transgendered community". The study took place in a state prison in California.

I was employed as a social worker for the California Department of Correction for 4.5 years. For 3 years I served prisoners living with HIV disease at all levels of the disease. In my last 1.5 years, I served the prisoners who were diagnosed with mental illness. During those 1.5 years I served the prisoners who were diagnosed with mental illness. During those 1.5 years I was able to do outreach on my own to the transgendered incarcerated person. I developed a supportive/educational support group for transgendered prisoners. To my knowledge it was the only group of its kind within the California state prison system. When I got final approval to begin the group, all prisoners who were HIV+ and transgendered were denied access to the group. There was no transgendered specific group offered to the HIV+ transgendered prisoners. During my 4.5 years as a social worker I worked at two state prisons. This provided me the opportunity to witness many incidents of poor health care delivery not just in respect to the transgendered prisoner, but to all those living behind bars. So this presentation not only represents the many voices of the transgendered prisoner but also this presenter's "insiders" perspective.

The following represents a summary of responses from the focus groups and questionnaire:

- ♦ Transgendered individuals living with HIV/AIDS are denied hormones.
- ♦ The transgendered incarcerated community are also denied hormones. A few are

given hormones if they received them prior to incarceration, and if they are approved it can take months to receive the hormones.

- ♦ HIV positive and negative transgendered are disciplined more harshly than the general population for the similar offense.
- ♦ Transgendered prisoners are the only incarcerated prisoners housed with the HIV positive prisoners. This places them at risk for HIV infection.
- ♦ Some correctional staff demean, demoralize, humiliate and discriminate against the transgendered community.
- ♦ There is no medical clinic or mental health clinic which is transgender sensitive or specific within the correctional setting.
- ♦ The California Department of Corrections has no policy to address the needs of the transgendered community.
- ♦ Transgendered prisoners are not provided with any community resources upon release from prison, (transgender sensitive).
- ♦ HIV positive were denied access to the only support group offered to transgendered community.
- ♦ Transgendered prisoners are not allowed to wear make-up or feminine clothing.
- ♦ Many have developed breast and are not allowed to wear bras.
- ♦ They are strip searched by male correctional officers.

Recommendations:

- ♦ Correctional, mental health and other ancillary staff should be required to receive annual training on the bio-psychosocial issues of the transgendered incarcerated community.
- ♦ Correctional facilities should have a transgendered medical clinic and mental health program offering transgendered sensitive clinical services.
- ♦ Facilities should not discipline transgendered person more harshly than the general population for an equal offense and judgements should be monitored by an impartial non-correctional body.
- ♦ The transgendered prisoners should be housed in special units allowed to live their lifestyle within the limits and rules of the

facility as is expected of all prison groups.

- ♦ The transgendered prisoners should be allowed to initiate and continue hormone therapy and electrolysis.
- ♦ The transgendered prisoners should be allowed access to clothing, personal items and cosmetics that are appropriate to the gender presentation of that person.
- ♦ Peer education on transgendered psychosocial issues should be provided to the general population of the prison community.
- ♦ The California Department of Corrections needs to develop a formal policy to address the psychosocial issues of the transgendered prisoner, m-f, f-m.
- ♦ Transgendered programs developed within correctional facilities should be monitored through a Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) program.

Closing Remarks:

The issues addressed in this presentation represents the many voices of the transgendered incarcerated community within a California state prison. The poor health care afforded the transgendered in this one state prison represents a major problem epidemic throughout correctional facilities in the United States of America, at the city, county and state levels.

I will close with a summary from the many voices of the transgendered prisoner.

" We are asking for help from those outside the prison walls, cries for help from within have fallen on deaf ears... We ask that our needs be acknowledged and addressed by the California Department of Corrections... We only ask that we be afforded the same medical and mental health

Continued on page 5.

TRANSGENDERED YOUTH...

INVISIBLE, FORGOTTEN AND AT RISK

Approximately 3% of the general population has significant feeling of discomfort about their gender (gender dysphobia), cross-dress, or are transsexual. This means that 3 out of 100 teenagers served by school, agencies, counseling and recreational facilities are experiencing conflict about their gender.

The majority of young people experiencing cross-gender feelings are indistinguishable from other youth in their dress and manner. The majority do not appear effeminate or masculinized. Most have a significant investment in appearing "normal", and keep their feelings to themselves. Usually only to know you are dealing with transgendered youth is to establish with all youth that gender feelings are appropriate to discuss and that you are a caring and nonjudgmental person the youth can confide in.

Transgendered, that is, fear and hatred of gender nonconformity keeps many young people from disclosing their cross-gendered feelings and causes them much internal distress. Transphobia may be overt, such as peer pressure to fit a gender norm, name calling, harassment, or physical attacks. Transphobia may also be overt, such as not considering cross-gendered youth's special needs when developing youth programs, or discriminations against openly transgendered individuals in employment and other positions of responsibility, which in turn prevents them from being

role models for gender conflicted youth.

Transgendered youth are not mentally ill. There is no greater incidence of psychosis, personality or mood disorders among the youth population with cross gender feelings than there is among the general population. Many transgendered youth however, may internalize society's view of them as bad, crazy, or evil and suffer from feelings of low self worth and low self esteem.

More than 50% of all transsexuals have attempted suicide. Transgendered youth are at higher risk than gay and lesbian youth, and at much higher risk than the general population of youth, to commit suicider. Youth with cross-gender feelings often feel like they are the only one with these conflicts or may have picked up transphobic message from society that they are bad or crazy and don't feel like there is anyone they can talk to. Suicide may seem their only way out.

Gender questioning youth may be at higher risk for unsafe sex and thereby increases ex-

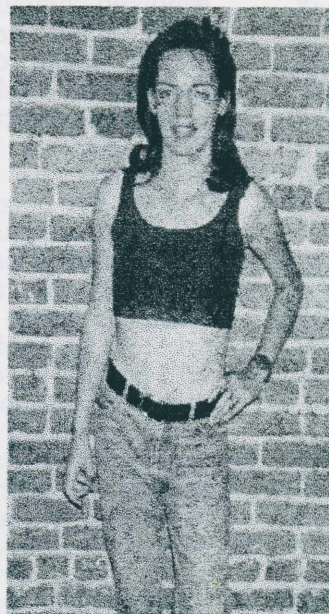
posure to sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV. Transgendered youth may be heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual. Many are exploring the nature of their sexual identity; trying to figure out who they are and who will tolerate them sexually given their cross gender identity. AIDS prevention efforts have neglected the transgendered youth population. Youth who explore their sexuality without adequate support and information are at risk for STD and HIV exposure.

Youth who openly express conflict over their gender identity, suffer a much higher risk of homelessness than other youth. Many families have rejected their transgendered sons and daughters from their homes. Additionally,

few family counseling programs know how to handle family stresses generated by a gender-conflicted family member or how to provide effective intervention to help maintain the family.

Openly transgendered youth are more likely to drop out of school than other youth. Gender non-confronting youth are ridiculed by peers and unfortunately the school system do not meet these youth's educational needs by providing appropriate support, counseling, and special services to maintain them in the school settings.

By: Luanna Rodgers, M.A.



Incarcerated TG continued...

treatment which is available to us outside the prison walls... We will not allow the California Department of Corrections to communicate who we are... We only ask to be treated with respect and dignity and to be recognized and accepted as one of the many faces of the human family..."

By; Scott Cozza, LCSW, ACSW

TG HIV Prevention Services continued...

separate agencies, AIDS Project East Bay and Tri-Cities Health Center, transgender specific services, were for the first time, provided. As with any start up project, the first year had many challenges. One of these was finding and keeping the staff to do the job. Another was finding materials appropriate to the transgender community. Even more challenging, was pulling together the many different sides of the transgendered community, to educate them about the Transgender Project and the services offered.

Not only did the first year of the Transgender HIV Prevention & Education contract meet most of it's contract objectives, it went well beyond its scope of work to include many other services, many of which are still not being met by other service providers in Alameda County. The first year started support groups for the specific needs of the male to female transgenders, called Glamour Dolls that continued throughout the year; the forming and meeting of TACT, the Transgender Advisory Committee; the formation of the East Bay Transgender Community TaskForce and it's successful meetings, as well as a number of Transgender Sensitivity Trainings at a number of Alameda County

Service Providers. Unlike San Francisco County, where Transgender Sensitivity trainings are mandatory and requested by county administrators, no legislation exists in Alameda County to protect or provide the kind of incentives to county administrators.

Also of major significance was the completion of approximately 200 surveys of Transgendered individuals in Alameda County, which was administered by Tri-Cities Health Center's Transgender Program Staff. The survey was the

first of it's kind, funded and developed by the State Office of AIDS, to provide some of the first, of much needed data on the behaviors of Transgenders around HIV risk. It is significant to note that Alameda and Santa Clara counties were both chosen to administer this survey last year, and both have completed the survey. San Francisco has just begun, a year later to collect, similar data for their county. The data from Santa Clara and Alameda Counties is in the process of being compiled for a major work around HIV risk in the Transgendered population of the State of California. With San Francisco following, for a change, it's East Bay and South Bay neighbors, by the end of the 1998, we will have a much needed boost to the legitimacy of the needs of the Bay Area's large transgender population. This kind of data is respected by funders, and we expect to see increases in funding from other parts of the counties budget's to reflect the results of the survey. Preliminary data will soon be available, and then begin our challenge of writing and presenting the Transgender Community's needs.

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AIDS Project East Bay Transgender Program Staff is gearing up to

begin this process as well as completing the second year objectives of the HIV Prevention & Education contract. The second year of the contract begun in July 1997, and saw many staffing changes. To begin with, Tri-Cities Health Center declined to continue their subcontract, and the whole contract was given to AIDS Project East Bay, and some of AIDS Project East Bay staff moved on to other things. Temporary staff was hired to meet contract objectives. Then last month, Dominique Leslie and CSeneca Greenwood came on board as permanent staff of the Project. Both Dominique and CSeneca have long histories within the transgender community and are dedicated to moving forward and have completed much of the first two quarters or work within two months.

CSeneca and Dominique have been presenting "Safer Sex Salons" in a variety of venues for the transgender community. They have been out in the streets and in the bars, at events and meetings, doing outreach, and they have been talking, at length to community members in and out HIV/AIDS and other related issues. They have begun planning with community input a community large scale event, but the reality of the needs of the Transgender community are just beginning to be addressed by this contract, and we need your help. The Transgender Project of AIDS Project East Bay is looking for transgender individuals to volunteer within the project to help us meet even more of the needs of the transgender community of Alameda County. San Francisco has legislation, we don't, but that doesn't mean we don't have the same needs and desires for our community. Help us to make all of your needs be addressed within Alameda County. Help us prove to this county we exist and deserve the same rights as other individuals living and working in Alameda County. We can begin this process by showing our hard work on the HIV Prevention & Education contract that was specific for Transgenders. Let's show them what we're all about. Let's turn them out. Peace.



CSeneca Greenwood
TG Health Promotion Specialist

HPPC Continues...

HPPC with vital information and direction in matters that will directly impact the lives of all Transgender residents of Alameda County.

It is my fervent hope that the MTF and FTM communities will set-aside any perceived differences taking full advantage of this rare opportunity, to begin a process of serious dialogue toward a realistic improvement of conditions for both segments of the community.

Historically, the Transgender community has been excluded from the political process. However, we must each share the blame for this oversight. We continue - even today - not to attend and participate in important decision making processes and/or information gathering venues. We remain the silent minority."

Recent developments have begun to insure better controls in matters of confidentiality which is of high concern for most TG persons, given the fact that some of us live in constant fear of exposure and criticism. This new plan should be put to the test. As often as possible, and in various situations. Perhaps this is one of the many concerns the new TransGender Advisory Committee (TGAC) will want to take on.

If we are to gain any measures of success in our struggle for inclusion. It is imperative that we begin to initiate a sense of comradery and solidarity in our dealings with each other. It is important that we understand our community, too, is comprised of various ethnicities and mindsets. We must cease the practice of being our own worst enemies. Bearing in mind that "helping our own" has always been our way of sustaining our lifestyle.

Now, I am asking a few of my good brothers and sisters to step up to the frontlines with me, and make sure that we have adequate representation at the tables of decisiveness in this county! We have this opportunity in auspicious

venue.

The (HPPC) works directly with local Health Department administration in preparing the Alameda County Prevention Plan. This is the final County-adopted plan by which HIV education, prevention, and treatment methodologies as well as dollars are disseminated. The HPPC is a community body, representing the diversity of area residents. The members make suggestions and recommendations in vital countywide HIV efforts. Each HPPC member represents a particular segment of the community (i.e., Gay/Lesbian Native Americans; Youth; etc.).

As a member of the TransGender Advisory Committee, you will be asked to participate in various discussions about suggestions regarding concerns and strategies that will lead to an improved quality of life, for all Transgender residents.

There are no special qualities or requirements necessary for membership. However, we do seek individuals with a serious sense of commitment. You will be required to attend a monthly meeting and, that you possess an ability to communicate (sociably) with others. There will be ongoing practical trainings in "the political process."

This is a fantastic opportunity for the FTM and MTF communities to bring their individual concerns to the county table. It is also an opportunity to begin to develop skills that will empower our community toward realistic resolutions for our concerns.

For an application package, all interested individuals should contact Sharyn Grayson, HPPC Membership Committee member, at (510) 986-0806 or, you may call Maria Cammaco, Program Specialist, Alameda County DACD, at (510) 873-6300.

By: Sharyn Grayson

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Community Volunteers Needed

If you are interested in getting involved with the progression of the transgender community, **SISTAHOOD** needs dedicated volunteers to help with the success of the newsletter. In addition, referrals can be made to a variety of bay area agencies that are in need of transgender workers as well as new transgender services. So if you are interested contact **SISTAHOOD PROJECT** at 415-921-7195. If you are interested in volunteering with a Bay Area transgender program, contact Lauren at **NEW VILLAGE**. 415-356-8150.

Our success depends on each other.

Please send all submissions for the newsletter to:

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