

# F. O. R. G. E.

For Ourselves: Reworking Gender Expression

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## Race & Spirituality

This issue is not the typically one-topic-specific newsletter – at least not in the traditional way of highlighting the topic of the next FORGE meeting. This newsletter stems out of issues that were raised at the April 1, 2000 meeting. (See page 3 for more details.)

The April meeting's topic is Spirituality. Many would question what spirituality has to do with transgenderism; but for many, the two subjects are often intertwined. Whether we are religious and/or spiritual, many of us have strong beliefs that construct our guiding principles. At times, some of us have felt that only our Higher Power/God/Goddess was hearing us when we struggled to find ourselves. Perhaps, for some of us, our faith held us together, offering guidance and strength to enable us to transition/be with our partners as they transitioned. Some of us found familiarity in Native American spiritual traditions and constructs such as the Berdache. For some of us, the way we interact with fellow parishioners at our churches or synagogues was significantly impacted as we discovered and explored our gendered selves. What role does gender play in "organized" religion? What happens when your religious "obligations" have shifted because of a gender shift? Do you become more observant, maybe because you finally can do what you've always felt you should be able to and were denied? Do you become less observant, maybe because there is no one to show you the "new" rituals, or because you no longer are sure how to fit in? Do you seek a new way to worship/celebrate the Spirit? For some of us, we reached a higher plane through out gender journey, connecting us on a deeper level with our Inner Spirit.

Come to the next FORGE meeting to discuss these topics and many more.

## April 29, 2000 Meeting

**When:** Saturday April 29, 2000  
**Time:** 2:00 – ? (\*Followed by Pool Party)  
**Where:** Michael's Condo  
1633 N. Prospect Ave (Solarium)  
Milwaukee, WI  
**Fee:** \$5 donation suggested/appreciated

## Upcoming FORGE Events

Mark your calendars now!  
The next 60 days are filled with many great trans events!

### Pool Party!!

Directly following the April 29, 2000 FORGE meeting will be the second FORGE pool party! Bring your swimming suits or other attire to swim in, as well as a towel, pool toys and your childlike spirit! Enjoy the warm water of the hot tub, or float around in the hotel-sized pool. Locker rooms (unfortunately, gendered, but not strictly enforced) are available for changing and showering, as well as soaking up some more heat in the saunas.

### IML Cocktail Party: Bring a Leatherman

IML (International Mr. Leather) is just around the corner, over Memorial Day weekend (May 26 – 29). Once again FORGE will be hosting an FTM cocktail party in the lobby bar of the Congress Hotel (Michigan Avenue – Chicago, IL). This year, we are encouraging *everyone* to bring a Leatherman (a bio-gay-male)! It's a great opportunity to cruise hot men (and for the bio-boys to cruise us), do some one-on-one education that FTMs are "legitimate" parts of the gay male leather community, as well as show them that we make awfully hot leatherfolk! You don't need to be into leather to attend, but remember to wear jeans/boots/leather if you own any to help fit in better (unless you want to stand out in the crowd of thousands of leatherfolk!). (Check out the next FORGE newsletter for more details.)

### IML Trans Play Party

Once again – the second year in a row – FORGE/STRIKE will be hosting a trans-focused play party. Details regarding location are still being ironed out, but you won't want to miss this hot, sex-filled, heavy-play-oriented dungeon party! (Check out the next FORGE newsletter for more details.)

### Milwaukee LGBT PrideFest

Milwaukee's notoriously fun pride celebration is June 9 – 11, 2000. For the first time ever, the parade will be on Friday evening (step off at 7:00 pm). As many of you know, Pridefest is at the Summerfest grounds, and is filled with live entertainment, freshly cooked food, lots of Milwaukee beer, and tons of LGBT people!! In year's past, we have marched with the Gemini Gender Group. Look for their banner in the parade line up to march with other trans-family. Pride in Milwaukee is a three-day-event. Join the fun for the full weekend, celebrating being trans (or lesbian/bi/gay, if those identity labels fit you), partying and enjoying the hopefully warm early Wisconsin summer weather.

## FORGE Calendar

(All schedules are tentative and subject to change.)

### April 29, 2000

Topic: Spirituality  
Location: Milwaukee, WI

### May 27, 2000

Topic: Leather and SM  
Location: Chicago, IL

### June 17, 2000

Topic: "Passing" in the Summer's Heat  
Location: Chicago, IL

### July 15, 2000

Topic: BBQ/Party  
Location: Milwaukee, WI

### August 19, 2000

Topic: Hormones  
Location: Chicago, IL

### September 16, 2000

Topic: SOFFAs  
Location: Milwaukee, WI

### October 14, 2000

Topic: Race & Privilege  
Location: Chicago, IL

### November 11, 2000

Topic: TG Aging  
Location: Chicago, IL

### December 9, 2000

Topic: Holiday Party!  
Location: Chicago, IL

Submit your ideas for future meeting topics!

### FORGE Newsletter

Published monthly, since '96  
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voice: 414-278-6031

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## From the Editor...

### Race Matters: "White Male Privilege"

The joke's on the many of you Forge-ites who chose not to join us for April Fools at Ann Sather's. In addition to mountains of cinnamon rolls and other fine carbs, the dozen or so attendees brought a lively discussion of why there weren't more people to help eat the rolls. And so instead of the scheduled topic of GenderQueer, we looked at who came versus the myriads of individuals on the mailing list who did not. One member remarked upon looking around the table, that there were no visible members of color, and was FORGE doing enough outreach. This led to a longer, and somewhat louder, discussion of white privilege and the question of inherent racism within the FTM community as a whole. Which is why this edition of the newsletter contains articles on or about issues of race....

FORGE is an organization, like many across the country, in which the few who attend may or may not be representative of who actually comprises our community. Does *community* really only equal who is visible, or does *community* symbolize those who are not visible, and even those who may not know they could be included in that very community?

The "membership" of FORGE – at least the demographics of the newsletter distribution list – is quite diverse in many aspects, not just racially. Approximately 80% of our snailmail readership is white, while at least 20% are people of color. The ages of our "members" range from 16 to late 60s; ranging from perfectly able-bodied, to people who cannot stand from their wheelchairs. Some of our members are transitioning (or transitioned) FTMs who fully live as men, and relish their identity as men who easily blend into a bi-polar gender system, while others of our members are butch female identified, genderqueer, gender benders, masculine women, or people who pride themselves on their non-conformity. Many of our members are SOFFAs – paired or unpaired to FTMs. Several of our members are "helping" professionals (some LGBT, some not). Some of our trans+/SOFFA members earn minimum wage working at Starbucks or living on Social Security/Disability, while others are physicians who bring in incomes in the six figures.

One perplexing issue which (d)evolved concerning the act of outreaching to people of color with the broad-based assumptions that all POC are also economically disadvantaged. It's ironic that we as trans+/SOFFA people can make such blatant assumptions that limit and minimize the realities of others. Why do we need to create additional assumptions about the lives of transgendered/SOFFA POC? One person suggested that one way to outreach was through Black churches. This is a great idea, presuming that we are outreaching to *African-American* trans/SOFFAs who are Christian/religious. Others suggested moving our meetings from Saturdays, when many lower income individuals might be working. This might be a great idea too, but this wouldn't account for marketing to our Hispanic real estate agent who works mostly late afternoons through every evening and each weekend. Another suggested we could advertise in the LGBT BlackLines or other POC LGBT Chicago zines. While, this too, is a great idea, does it reach only those

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## F.O.R.G.E.

### Mission

We're a social support group for female-to-male transsexuals and transgenderists; butches; drag kings; gender queers and radicals; gender outlaws; people assigned female at birth, raised girl -> woman, with fairly unambiguous female bodies at some point in their lives with masculine self-identification (at least some of the time); and our significant others. We meet monthly in order to form friendships, share information, compare experiences and strengthen ourselves and each other.

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## **Working to Eradicate Racial Privilege and the Rules of Racial Standing in the FTM Community: Critical Self-Inspection as a Pathway to Equity**

*[Description for a workshop held at True Spirit Conference 2000. Reprinted with permission from presenters.]*

None born American can assume a male identity untainted by white male standards. Having failed to anticipate and organize against the standard, a predominantly white FTM and MTF leadership has become established in our organizations as the rule and not as the exception. Faced with evidence of white male supremacy within our organizations, the disturbing problem of non-white alienation is on the rise as more FTMs of color leave or never join us, despite the fact that some have no difficulty. We see this in FTM organizations run by people who have not yet learned to question and remediate the racial privilege packaged with their cultural sense of whiteness.

But, if taken for granted, white privilege runs rampant without being constrained, re-channeled, and transfigured into something liberating, then FTMs of color may support our movement, given no alternative, but they may never be supported by it as fully as they otherwise might be.

Worse, white FTMs may never achieve a non-supremacist practice of white masculinity.

A goal is that one would embrace what is good about white male identity by resurrecting it from the pit of racial privilege. This racial privilege demonically wreaks havoc by ignoring the needs and views of people of color while keeping white FTMs locked into defensively claiming their racial enlightenment while behaving in racially exclusionary or discounting ways.

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Do you have ideas of how to make FORGE a better organization that will more fully serve your needs? Do you know of others who would benefit from FORGE? Do you belong to a church or LGB(T) group or other organization that might like information about FORGE to share with their members? Does your therapist or physician want a subscription to the newsletter? Might they have other trans clients who would benefit from FORGE?

I encourage everyone to spread the word about FORGE. While numbers of attendees isn't key, it's important that we outreach to all people who would gain from attending meetings or receiving the newsletter.

Please send your ideas to [tgwarrior@execpc.com](mailto:tgwarrior@execpc.com) or call 414.278.6031.

## **TG-POC Email List**

TG POC is a discussion-oriented listserv for Trans People of Color as well as our significant others and allies.

This listserv was created in 1998 by Nadyalec, an Arab/Muslim FTM activist, so TG/TS People of Color could "have a place for us to talk about the issues that we face, share support and information, and build communities."

To our knowledge, this is the only international listserv for Trans People of Color in the world.

We look forward to having you as part of our community.

To subscribe, send an empty email message to

[tg poc-subscribe@egroups.com](mailto:tg poc-subscribe@egroups.com)

from the email address that you will use to send and receive email. Or visit <http://www.egroups.com> and fill out the form there. Confidentiality: Our policy of confidentiality is informed by our own experiences of oppression. We respect the confidentiality of all list members BUT as this is not a closed list, and as we do not have full control over who joins and what they do with the information they receive here, we cannot guarantee confidentiality of information shared on the list. As such, we recommend that those concerned about confidentiality sign up for an anonymous email account and e-address with yahoo, hotmail, or another service before posting or subscribing to the list. Please note that all posts are archived and available to the list members at a later time.

## Resources

### Transgender Asian/Pacific Islander

Nat'l Asian Women's Health Org: NAWHO@AOL.COM  
 Kelly McGowan: GirlGang@msn.com  
 April Weiss, Educator, HIV Preventive Svc,  
 Life Foundation, 233 Keawe Street Suite 226,  
 Honolulu, HI 96813, 808 521 2437 x 245

Kiki Whitlock  
 Chameleon Program  
 Asian & Pacific Islander Wellness Center  
 730 Polk Street, 4th Floor  
 San Francisco, CA 94109  
 (415) 292-3420 Ext. 351  
 kikiwhit@aol.com  
<http://members.aol.com/kikiwhi>

Willy Wilkinson  
 Dragon Club Coordinator  
 (510) 482-2825

Doan Thai  
 Dragon Club Member  
 e-mail: thaidd@aol.com

Dragon Club  
 c/o Kiki Whitlock  
 Chameleon Program  
 Asian & Pacific Islander Wellness Center  
 730 Polk Street, 4th Floor  
 San Francisco, CA 94109

Asian TS Club  
 c/o FTM Nippon  
 Adachi-ku  
 Adachi-Nichi Post Office  
 Tokyo 123 Japan

### Latino/a

LLEGO, the national organization for lesbian, gay,  
 bisexual, and transgendered Latinos/as.  
 1612 K Street Suite 500  
 Washington, DC, 20006  
 Email: AquilLGBT@llego.org  
 URL: [www.llego.org](http://www.llego.org)  
 URL: [www.llego.org/Links.htm](http://www.llego.org/Links.htm)  
 202-466-8240

### Whazzup! Magazine

Free magazine for African-American gay/  
 lesbian/bi/transgenders

I have published a magazine that will be distributed free monthly in the SF Bay Area. I will be happy to send copies to any one outside of the area, provided that you send a self-addressed envelope with postage for a 9" x 12" envelope.

Our goal is to entertain, educate, inform and provide positive representation of and to the African American Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Community and their friends. We feel that this community is not only deserving but has been deprived of positive commentary and images about themselves for far too long.

All submissions welcome and must include a self-addressed stamped envelope.

Send Submissions (Imagery and Writings) to:  
 Whazzup! Magazine -  
 Concept & Design Marketing  
 2501 Ivy Drive Suite 19  
 Oakland, CA 94606  
 E-mail: [Whazzup411@aol.com](mailto:Whazzup411@aol.com)

#### FORGE+ /FTM Webpage

Please check out some of the revisions at:  
[www.execpc.com/~dmmonson](http://www.execpc.com/~dmmonson)

While this page is still under major construction, it offers a place where FORGE events will be posted, as well as other topics of interest to FTM + s in the Midwest and around the country. I welcome any feedback you care to share!

## When Groups Aim for Diversity

By Loree Cook-Daniels

[Reprinted with permission of the author. First published in *The Washington Blade*, May 8, 1992.]

In the aftermath of the Rodney King verdict and a heightened sensitivity to a racial issue throughout the country, many male-dominated and/or white-dominated organizations within the Gay community may redouble their efforts to recruit "minority" members. This is not necessarily a good thing.

For some time now, it's been politically incorrect for Lesbian/Gay organizations to be dominated by one race and/or sex. We've been striving for internal diversity for so long that we may have forgotten why we think our organizations ought to be integrated by sex and race.

I can think of three answers, none of them very compelling.

**Increasing membership:** Many organizations believe bigger is better. Some of these groups target their recruitment efforts to populations that aren't already well represented within their ranks, thinking that these are their "untapped" markets": if they did a better job of outreach to Lesbians, they'd have more women members.

Like the goal of diversity itself, increased membership is not an ultimate goal – it is a means to an end. Except for relatively rare events such as marches, public hearings, elections, and the like where high numbers truly do make a difference, activist groups don't need bodies. They need people with energy, time and skills to devote to achieving the group's goals.

By asking questions like, "How do we make ourselves known to African-Americans?" organizations lead themselves astray and squander resources. The question that needs to be asked is, "How do we make ourselves known to people who will be interested in what we're doing?" While the differences between these two questions may seem subtle, their answers can lead to very different strategies. Think of it in marketing terms: If you're selling Mercedes, it's not white people you want to advertise to (even though most of your customers may be white), it's people with money.

**Being non-oppressive:** Sometimes the unspoken reason why majority-white or majority-male organizations seek women and racial minority members is to prove to themselves that they aren't sexist and racist.

I applaud and encourage anyone who is trying to eliminate racist and sexist behavior. But having "minority" members does not mean an organization is free from oppressive components. Conversely, a lack of "minority" members should not automatically brand an organization racist or sexist.

Those of us who are double minorities – Lesbian, Gay Latino, etc. – often need the safety and comfort of being surrounded by others who share our experience of the world, we want to experience being in the majority in our social and/or political circles. We choose these safe havens because we want the unique things they have to offer, not because they're our only alternative to the "first choice" of a mixed organization.

On the other hand, some of us choose to remain a minority even within our social/political circles. We do so not because the groups are completely free of oppressive behavior (I've certainly never found one that was!) but because the positives outweigh the negatives.

**Representing the community:** The last major reason why some organizations seek a more racially and sexually diverse membership is that they believe this diversity will allow them to be more effective and/or more responsive in meeting the community's needs. While this is a truly laudable purpose, it usually doesn't work out the way people expect.

Many organizations recruit non-majority members in order to benefit from their different perspectives. What these groups don't often realize is just how different those perspectives can be. As local activist Courtney Williams pointed out in last month's First Person commentary "Black Gays doin' it for ourselves," many Lesbian and Gay male African-Americans don't agree that eliminating homophobia ought to be their priority. Nor do they have the same sense as many white Lesbian and Gay men about who our natural allies are. Integrating these radically

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## A Brief Intro/The Heart of the Matter: One TG Latino Perspective

By Jolee Galloza <alayande@earthlink.net>  
[reprinted with the permission of the author]

*This communication has 2 parts. The first a brief introduction that segways in to the second part: "The Heart of the Matter".*

### "A Brief Intro"

It is disturbing at times to discover that what one presents isn't always received as one thinks. I am a Latino TG, and have lived in NYC for most of my life. At other times I have lived in Puerto Rico. I have had the wonderful opportunity of having "mixed it up" with persons from all social economic, ethnic backgrounds and I have learned much about my culture in many ways. I have been a student of human behavior for all of my life, and I still am.

I was raised during the time of the sexual revolution and was brought up to feel that integrating ourselves on a personal level and on a social level was very important. I had to face my culture and look at where the hindrances are concerning how we relate to each other and, search out how problems concerning Machismo and Marianismo has played it self out, and to what extent I as a Latino have internalized them as well as other issues concerning class, race, at one point homophobia, and now Transphobia. I have come to resolve many of these issues painfully but fruitfully.

As a pre-op Hispanic Transman, I have accepted and integrated many aspects of myself that makes me a unique and wonderful human being. I have raised and continue to raise a beautiful Puerto Rican hetero-son (20yo), and when he asked me last year "so what do you feel about my development as a man", I answered that I was very proud of the fact that he has chosen to become (like his Trans-Daddy) a kind man.

A man who accepts responsibility for how his actions and words can affect others. A man who understands why in our societies, certain norms have been established and how we do not have to have that "cattle-mentality", and that we have the

ability to think and judge people and situations with some measure of flexibility, kindness and openness because no one's perfect.

Like his Daddy, he can totally love and appreciate the beautiful feminine aspects in ourselves and revel in the magical creative force of femininity. So yes I told him I was proud of his evolvment so far.

With every step and every change that I have learned to understand within myself, I have shared all these things with him and he has shared these things with great respect with his peers, and so on. Here is where some integration into the fabric of our society is happening, with this next generation.

I was forced to learn to live in the challenge of opposites. To learn courage from fear and sometimes terror. To learn Love from hatred. To Love Peace from violence. To uphold the dignity of woman kind in the face of the injustices presented in our world, on a one on one basis. To learn kindness from stark-cold corruption.

### "The Heart of the Matter"

On a social/personal level, there is much fear and Pre-judging that I am approached with from Latina Women or Latina Femmes at first glance. I think that the immediate expectation is that the issues that I will address here, "have not" been worked-out, and sadly, so many of us do fall through the cracks of prisons, addictions, alcoholism and other issues.

I am extremely fortunate to have been placed on the path of continual personal evolution (on spiritual, emotional, mental and social economic levels), and have been able to address some of these issues, so that I can try to create change both in my personal life and within all the communities that I walk through.

I feel I am in a minority in this way, or we are just not highly visible at least not in the communities I have known so far, so I hope to be presented with understanding and in-depth investigation from

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## How Race Inter-plays with Trans

By Yosenio Lewis

The thing that irritates me is the assumption that we as poc are able to just separate our race and ethnicity from our trans selves, so that we don't complicate things further. i for one \*cannot\* stop being a dark skinned latino, being a person with a hidden disability, being a transman, being a political activist who is not afraid to highlight injustice, even when it is perpetrated by others who are also dark skinned, latino, living with disabilities and/or political activists. i cannot and will not compartmentalize myself so that others will be comfortable dealing with me. it's astounding how some feel comfortable asking me to just "put that race stuff aside for a while, will you?" as if i could just take off my skin and my features and my culture and my day to day experiences in this world.

it never ceases to amaze me how each new group that comes along "pledges to do things differently and be inclusive/thoughtful from the get go" and then ends up in the same colonialist, hierarchical trap that every group before was in. it just shows how deep the need to protect one's piece of the pie goes. if you find your life has gotten better, even though people know "x" about you, if you are not looked at as strangely, if you are not harrassed as much, if you are accorded certain privileges, you forget what it was like to be on the outside. then when the next group comes up, saying "hey, we deserve to be on the inside too, we want our piece of the pie too" you do everything in your power (consciously and unconsciously) to keep those people from moving up and in, cause you think it will mean you might lose some of what you've gained. we all know how difficult the struggle has been to have bi and trans inclusion in what is essentially the lesbian and gay community. i was never in the lesbian community, so i cannot speak about what that was/is like. i can say that time and again i have been accused of being a traitor to women because i chose to be out about being true to myself and refused to accept the "lesbian in denial" charge. (i suppose it speaks to the biphobia rampant in the various communities that i was never accused of being a bisexual in denial.) likewise i have been ostracized because i refuse to stop acknowledging that some (and i stress \*some\*) white trans people feel that they have "made it" and to start paying attention to the different, yet just as important needs of pocs/poor people/disabled people/etc. means they

will have to give up some part of their piece of the pie. that is the colonialist, hierarchical trap alive and well. the thing is, i don't think that those who are trapped realize that they are as ill-served by the trap as we are.

it certainly does seem that anything that deviates from the "norm" of how pocs are supposed to behave scares people. it reminds me of the extremely thoughtless comments i get about "how articulate i am" for a (fill in the blank). i realize that some people really are trying to compliment me, but if they would only stop after saying "you're so articulate" that would be great. instead they've got to include the silliness "for a transgender person" "for a latino" "for someone who does not have advanced college degrees" etc. that is condescending on so many levels. usually now when i encounter that i have no reaction and just look at whomever made the statement. they get really uncomfortable and immediately start blabbering about anything to fill up the silence. that's another thing that really gets people--silence. you are supposed to have a reaction--and it better be an immediate reaction--to everything that comes your way and if you don't then you are plotting something or you are not listening.

there are some people who recognize shortcomings and bullshit and are trying to make a difference. my friend tom kennard, an older white ftm, noticed the racist, classist, homophobic, ageist behavior that was going on in the support groups we attended and decided not to keep burying his head in the sand. he started a group that addresses these very issues and asks participants to "go there" and be uncomfortable. he just put up a website that describes the group Transmen's Alliance Against Racism (<http://hometown.aol.com/tmkennard/myhomepage/index.html>). i'm really proud of tom for taking this step and not letting what could easily be an ignored phenomenon escape his attention. the group is not perfect, a lot of mistakes and assumptions are made, but it is one of the first places i have been where ftms, mtf's, partners, family, friends and allies of all races/ethnicities/classes/ages gather and agree to address the difficult issues with honesty and grace.

*From the Editor, cont.**(Continued from page 3)*

who are Black and who identify as queer – queer enough to be reading BlackLines?

While it may sound like I am shooting down every suggestion of how to outreach and create a more diverse, welcoming environment for POC within FORGE, it is not my intention to be negative. Each argument/suggestion for how to outreach, in and of itself often has built-in assumptions and prejudices. If our goal is to be as unprejudiced as possible, how can we move forward with integrity and implement the outreach methods suggested? Who are we missing by outreaching in these ways?

Perhaps I have an altruistic notion that color doesn't matter (when I know it really *does* matter). Perhaps I have fallen prey to my own "white male privilege", and have been blinded by all of the possibilities available to me. However, I doubt that I have been negatively (positively?) influenced by any of the words within "white male privilege". While I am white, part of my racial heritage is Hispanic, so that word isn't necessarily even true, even though my appearance is Caucasian. Male is rarely a word that I used to define myself, even though others may choose to define me as such based on my visual appearance. Privilege is hardly a word that I associate with myself – at least in relation to being perceived as white or male. Do I have privilege, and how does it related to my other identity labels?

I used myself as an example here, only to try to illustrate that even though people may appear to be one thing, it doesn't mean that their looks = their identity(ies). Nor does it mean that a person will want all of those identities addressed in one place. Can FORGE address the transgender needs of people with multiple identities? Can we meet the needs of people of color within our FTM+/SOFFA organization? I sure hope so.

*When Groups Aim for Diversity, cont.**(Continued from page 6)*

different perspectives into an existing group means that the older members must be willing to abandon many of their traditional goals in order to make room for the priorities of the new, minority members. I know of few groups that are willing to make these wholesale revisions in their purpose.

Instead, what usually happens is that the older members put implicit or even explicit pressure on the minority members to make only small demands for incremental changes in the group's agenda. Sometimes the minority members are convinced that once the organization's chief goal is met, the group will then focus on the minority's goals. So they put their priorities aside and concentrate on the majority's priorities. Not only does this compromise defeat the purpose of having "diversity", it also doesn't serve the community as a whole.

Human energy is finite. Each day, it only lasts so long before we have to collapse into bed. It is also a strangely classic commodity. We have more of it when we're doing something we love, less of it when we're doing something we don't want to do. When people work in groups or on causes that they don't feel passionate about, the community as a whole loses twice. We lose because they're not giving their best to the job, and because the job they could put their heart and soul into is going undone.

As Gay people, we ought to understand right down to our toenails that one size never fits all. We know that one brand of sexuality doesn't work for everyone. Why is it so hard for us to accept that one organization, one set of priorities, will never meet everyone's needs? Instead of trying to make our existing organizations internally diverse, we would be better served by fostering a diversity of organizations.

*[Loree Cook-Daniels is a columnist and freelance writer who focuses on building bridges and alliances within and among the Lesbian, Gay male, Bisexual and Transgendered communities and our allies. She has been an activist in the LGBT community for 26 years, and is the long-term partner of an FTM. This article was written several years prior to her partner's transition for a*

**The Heart of the Matter, cont.**

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Latina Femmes and Latinos.

The Madonna/Prostitute complex was mentioned, well, I have found that it exists in many cultures. And most of this evolved from low level religious attitudes about womankind and survival of the species or tribe type attitudes of old.

I have learned that it has contributed to the Machismo and Marianismo in our cultures. And this has aided the error in putting man ahead of woman in general. When woman is the higher species.

For me as a Latino Transman, I am attentive to subjects such as chivalry and manners. I have learned that each individual relationship has to be open to communicate and decide how to relate to each other progressively and fruitfully taking into account each individuals needs, wants and desires as well as expectations.

That we have to discuss how these issues should be addressed. So yes lets raise the bar not just within this community but for human kind as well.

I can easily relate to the male aspect of creation because I gravitated more toward them for camaraderie and kinship. I have integrated many aspects that is male that being sophisticated and not so sophisticatedness within me.

And I value these integrations, however, I also, value what I have integrated within myself what is considered feminine or of femme energy. And because I value these aspects, I have learned to remain open because, "the creative process of life" is within the feminine aspect of the world and, is continuously on going, and with much love appreciation and respect, in my opinion, its pure essence is woman. I worship truth and the creative process of life, and so, I worship woman so I am a Feminist.

I may not understand all of the ways of woman or the femme mentality, because femme energy is so complex, mysterious (like life) and intricate, but, I remain as open to learning and understanding the femme mentality as I am to breathing air.

And, hablando do todo un poco, By the way, we are in the beginning of a new type of sexual/sensual revolution of the mind and spirit.

Its 1:43 am and if this communication isn't well written, I apologize. But it is the longing of my lonely spirit to communicate on this subject, to make a connection with "our world" tonight.

**Submit !**

Contribute an article, short story, personal experience, poem, news brief, anecdote, cartoon, anything! Let others hear your voice – your story.

Each issue of the FORGE newsletter has a topic, accompanying the upcoming month's meeting topic. Submit articles on the following topics by the press deadline noted!

Let the FORGE newsletter be an extension of your voice, an expression of yourself.

- ⇒ GenderQueer/Spirituality/Leather-SM (Submission deadline: May 1)
- ⇒ Passing (Submission deadline: May 15)
- ⇒ Hormones (Submission deadline: June 15)
- ⇒ SOFFAs (Submission deadline: August 15)
- ⇒ Race & Privilege (Submission deadline: September 15)
- ⇒ TG Aging (Submission deadline: October 15)

## New Book

### The Transgender Debate: The Crisis Surrounding Gender identities

Stephen Whittle :

"The Transgender Debate: The Crisis Surrounding Gender identities",

Garnet Publishing Ltd.,

March 2000.

ISBN 1 -902932 16 1, Price £3.50

This short book is intended to be a resource primarily for non-trans people who wish to get a simple grasp on current transgender issues. Perfect for older high school students, university undergraduates from many fields who need a simple explanation to the back ground of their project work, and for family and friends of trans people who simply want to understand.

It addresses the historical, social, legal and medical issues surrounding the new community. The book throws light onto what are complex issues, clarifying them in a way that all those who think they know what gender roles mean, will be called to question the certainties they are no longer about.

Transgender has become a cultural obsession. From the high camp of Ru Paul to the working class transsexual icon, Hayley of the UK's longest running soap "Coronation Street", it pervades our lives. Yet for many it remains a freakish interest on the sidelines. For transsexual and transgender people, though, it is a reality bound up in complexities, legal contradictions, family discord, and a desperate need to explain what it means to be a man or a woman, or neither, orb both.

*[This book is just out – US copies may be difficult to obtain. Contact Stephen Whittle to arrange purchase and shipping from England. <S.T.Whittle@mmu.ac.uk>]*

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## Can you Commit?

*Review by Bear*

If your gender is bent and you enjoy science fiction tales with more than just run of the mill bug hunts, check out *Commitment Hour* by James Alan Gardner. I have a habit of reading through an author and then moving on, and having devoured two other books by Gardner which were Heinleinesque fare, picked this one up expecting more of the same. By the third page, it was clear that this wasn't just another space soap when the narrator Fullin laments, "Cappie had also started to ask what sex I was going to Commit to. The laws of the Patriarch expressly prohibited discussing the choice, but that didn't matter; when Cappie was a woman, she disregarded any law that didn't make sense to her." Some fifty pages later, my gender bent head was swimming as Fullin tried to explain Commitment to a visitor, "In all the world, our secluded village was the only place where the gods allowed children to switch sex each year..." Sound ideal?

Although this is not a novel destined for a Hugo award, it is very thought provoking. What if you could choose your gender/sex? What, if having experienced both sides, you HAD to pick one? What would you choose? Male? Female? Could you choose? What would happen if you went against your culture and wanted to keep both sides of yourself? Sometimes predictable, sometimes truly insightful, Commitment Hour transcends gender, and makes a genderqueer question what Wonderland could really be like....

**FORGE**  
**PO Box 1272**  
**Milwaukee, WI 53201**

**Next Meeting**  
**April 29, 2000**  
**Milwaukee, WI**

