

Volume 7, Issue 1

# Connectivity

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## WELCOME!

We are extremely proud and excited to bring you this very first edition of *Connectivity*.

It's marked Volume 7 because it has grown out of the distinguished 6-year history of the previous FORGE newsletter. Each of those newsletters focused in-depth on one topic, featuring essays by a variety of community members and a round-up of relevant resources.

*Connectivity* will continue to feature themed issues, essays shining light on each theme from various viewpoints, and useful signposts for those who want to learn or do more. But *Connectivity* also aims much higher: we want to create a community out of the richly diverse group of people linked by their involvement with trans and SOFFA (significant other, friends, family and allies) issues. We intend to do that by exploring our different experiences and strengths, and turning those differences into ties of compassion, understanding, and commitment. That means that we will work hard to reflect the diverse experiences, voices, interests, needs and concerns in our community, but we will do so through the lens of *connections*.

What kind of connections? Well, reading this issue will give you an idea of the many levels at which we want to forge connections. We've chosen a topic, Stealth vs. Out, that provokes intense, often conflictual, reactions. We explore it through essays that illuminate a range of experiences and thoughts, including:

- A couple in which one is more "out" than the other;
- A male-oriented transgendered librarian who others perceive as a straight woman;
- A police officer who transitioned FTM while on the job without explicit discussion;
- A femme who struggles to be out as anything other than "lover of a trans person";
- A widow exploring how disclosure issues survived her partner's death; and
- A trans person discussing being outed by accident and how he and his SOFFAs handle the question, "disclosed by whom?"

(Continued on page 29)

*Connectivity* illuminates the dynamic, multifaceted, challenging, and interrelated process by which personal, interpersonal, and community growth and development occurs. It is dedicated to helping move the fragmented trans+/SOFFA communities beyond identity politics and forge a movement that embraces and empowers our diverse complexities.

*Connectivity* is a publication of F.O.R.G.E. (For Ourselves: Reworking Gender Expression). FORGE is the parent organization of constituency groups including TAN (Transgender Aging Network), STRIKE (Strong TransRadicals Into Kink Everywhere) and TransWords.

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Welcome to *Connectivity* - the new and improved newsletter, produced by FORGE (For Ourselves: Reworking Gender Expression)! We are thrilled to be publishing a nationally available newsletter that offers a unique alternative to other FTM/trans publications.

*Connectivity* is a newsletter based on the principles of honoring all aspects of the FTM+/SOFFA (Significant Other, Friends, Family and Allies) community. Through providing a forum that respects equality and deconstructs structures of hierarchy, *Connectivity* blends topics, identities and experiences to highlight the rich diversity within the trans+/SOFFA community. This unique publication embodies a holistic approach towards healing wounds from within or from outside of our community; stimulating new ways of examining issues by widening the lens to view a fuller picture; inspiring national action and momentum on controversial issues; and offering unique perspectives, advancing the movement by incorporating and giving voice to identities and experiences that are often unheard.

*Connectivity* holds that our community advances when individuals are empowered and encouraged to express their unique journeys. As we move to a place of personal empowerment and validation, we gear up for a paradigmatic shift in how our community functions and supports itself.

*Connectivity* celebrates and utilizes diversity to create a place of freedom, where complexities, challenges, and new constructs are welcomed.

*Connectivity* is the dynamic, complex, challenging and ongoing process of forging new connections, nurturing old ones, and creating an environment that embraces and empowers.

Upcoming *Connectivity* themes are:

- Depression and Mental Health Issues (March 2002)
- SM/Leather (May 2002)
- The Economics of Gender (July 2002)
- "Only" Space and Diversity (September 2002)
- Hormones (November 2002)
- Rituals (January 2003)

Each issue will contain many of the following segments:

- Themed Articles
- Interviews
- Book Reviews
- Conference Updates
- Letters to the Editor
- Personal Stories
- Book Discussion Questions
- Ask Gearhead
- Reviews of Resources
- News bits and analyses
- Allied Organization Watch
- Polls and Surveys
- Special Topic Inserts
- Research Synopses
- Events Calendar

We hope you will join us on this exciting challenging journey.

## Stealth vs. Out Survey Report

It was supposed to be a simple survey asking a relatively simple question: what proportion of the people around you know you (or your partner/family member) are trans? Since we knew people present different sides of themselves in different contexts, we asked about “outness” in several key environments: with partners, at work, with family, at school, with friends, at social clubs, and with acquaintances. We expected few people to answer the survey, and we expected those who did would only spend a few minutes filling it out. We also expected that we would be able to summarize the results fairly easily.

We were wrong on all counts.

First, we want to thank the 160 of you who responded, oftentimes providing long explanations of your decisions, opinions and concerns. Obviously the survey form itself wasn’t as clear as it should’ve been, and forcing people to choose among a finite list of identities was a problem.

More importantly, however, the responses showed that the concept we called “stealth versus out” is far more complex than we initially thought. It involves not only the environments people are in, but whether they (or their partner/family member) are “visibly” trans; whether they define themselves as trans, formerly trans, someone with a birth defect, or in some other way; how they feel about language and its connection to certain groups; and much, much more.

TABLE 1

	Socially Perceived Gender			Total
	Male	Female	Depends, uncertain, both	
<b>Masculine gendered</b>				
In-transition FTM	25	0	8	33
No or low hormones FTM	2	0	7	9
Non-transitioning FTM	1	1	2	4
Post-transition FTM	27	1	0	28
Pre-transition FTM	2	0	8	10
Subtotal:	<b>57</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>GenderQueer/Questioning</b>				
Genderqueer	1	0	10	11
Questioning	0	0	1	1
Subtotal:	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Feminine gendered</b>				
Crossdresser	2	0	0	2
In-transition MTF	3	1	2	6
Non-transitioning MTF	0	0	1	1
Post-transition MTF	0	16	2	18
Pre-transition MTF	0	2	1	3
Subtotal:	<b>5</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>30</b>
			<b>Total:</b>	<b>126</b>

**Who Responded**

One hundred twenty-six (126) of the 160 survey respondents (79%) were themselves trans. Twenty (12.5%) were partnered with a trans person, 13 (8%) identified themselves as friends, family, or allies of a trans person, and one person did not answer the identity questions.

We asked trans respondents not only whether they were FTM, MTF, or genderqueer, but also what stage of “transition” they were in (if applicable) and how others typically perceived their gender (see Table 1).

Of the 126 trans+ respondents, 84 (67%) were masculinely gendered, 30 (24%) were femininely gendered, and 12 (9%) were genderqueer or questioning. Approximately two-thirds of both the masculine-gendered and feminine-gendered groups “pass” in that observers consistently perceive them as the gender with which they identify. However, two FTMs are typically perceived as female, and five of the MTFs (including two cross-dressers) are typically perceived as male. Twenty-five (30%) of the FTMs are sometimes perceived as something other than male, and six (20%) of the MTFs are sometimes perceived as something other than female. Eleven of the twelve genderqueer or questioning respondents were not consistently perceived as either polar gender.

Of the 20 partners who responded, 18 (90%) were female and 2 (10%) were male, as shown in Table 2. Thirteen of the females (72%) were partnered with FTMs (in-, pre-, post-, non-, and questioning), four (22%) were partnered to MTFs. The other three partners (1 female, 2 male) were partnered to people of unknown gender/trans-status (see Table 2, next page).

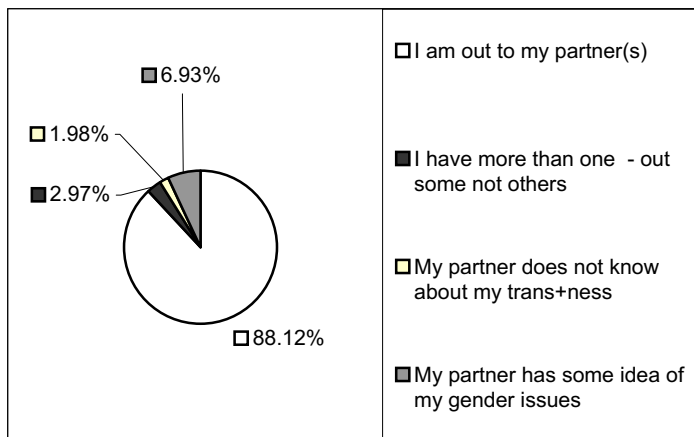
**Out to Partners**

Nearly a third of the trans+ respondents did not answer the question of whether their trans status is known to their partner/s, which could reflect either that they are not partnered or that they found the question confusing or did not wish to answer it. An additional 11 said they had no partner. Of

TABLE 2  
**Relationship of Partners  
to the Trans Community/person**

	Female Partner	Male Partner
Partner of a...		
Post-transition FTM	5	
In-transition FTM	4	
In transition MTF	2	
Pre-transition FTM	2	
Non-transitioning FTM	1	
Pre-transition MTF	1	
Questioning FTM	1	
Non-transitioning MTF	1	
Unspecified	1	2
	<b>18</b>	<b>2</b>

Graph 1  
**Outness to Partners**



the 101 respondents who indicated they did have one or more partners, the vast majority – 88% -- is “out” to their partner/s. Two individuals – an in-transition FTM and a post-transition MTF – have a single partner who does not know they are trans. Three individuals with multiple partners – all in-transition or no- or low-hormone FTMs – are not out to at least one of their partners. Seven individuals – three genderqueers, two no- or low-hormone FTMs, and one in-transition and one post-transition MTF – marked the category, “my partner has some idea of my gender issues” (see Graph 1, to left).

**Gender Congruency**

Because we asked the trans+ respondents not only their own gender identity but also how observers perceived them, we were able to analyze how “out” people were based on how they were perceived. We grouped those who were perceived as male and whose internal gender identity was categorized as some variation of FTM as “congruent – masculine.” Likewise, those who were perceived as female and who identified as MTF were grouped as “congruent – female.” Those who were genderqueer, were perceived as female even though they identified in a masculine way, or who experienced inconsistent social perceptions of their gender were all classed as “non-congruent” (see Tables 3a, b, c, next page).

These classifications produced very interesting results. MTFs with gender identities congruent with their social gender presentation were significantly more out than FTMs with internal/external gender congruency in *every* environment (with the exception of school, which pertained to only one MTF).

Those whose gender identity is not consistently congruent with social perception were more spread out in terms of how “out” they were. It is clear to us in retrospect that we did not ask enough appropriate questions of this group to be able to interpret their responses. What, precisely, does it mean to be “out” when you’re visibly genderqueer versus being “out” when you are a pre-transition FTM, for instance?

**Environments Where People are Most Out**

Where people are most out varies based on whether the person is FTM, MTF, or a SOFFA (see Graphs 3, 4, and 5 on next pages). Both FTMs and MTFs (those who are gender-congruent) are most out to family members, with 81% of the MTFs and 58% of the FTMs “out to everyone” in this category. In contrast, only 30% of the SOFFAs are out to all family members; SOFFAs are most out to friends, with 70% of them “out to all” friends. Friends are the second-most-out category for both MTFs (71% are “out to all”) and FTMs (43%). Overall, MTFs are most out (in descending order) to family, to friends, at work, at social clubs, and to acquaintances. FTMs are most out to family, to friends, at

Tables 3a,b,c

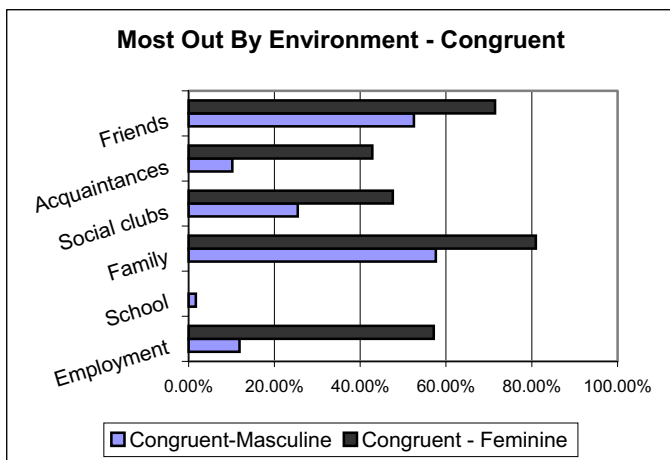
Congruent - masculine (59)					
	1	2	3	4	5
Employment	25.42%	8.47%	40.68%	10.17%	11.86%
School	15.25%	1.69%	6.78%	11.86%	1.69%
Family	5.08%	8.47%	3.39%	22.03%	57.63%
Social clubs	13.56%	1.69%	28.81%	22.03%	25.42%
Acquaintances	16.95%	11.86%	28.81%	25.42%	10.17%
Friends	1.69%	13.56%	10.17%	18.64%	52.54%

Congruent - feminine (21)					
	1	2	3	4	5
Employment	9.52%	0.00%	14.29%	14.29%	57.14%
School	0.00%	4.76%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Family	0.00%	4.76%	4.76%	9.52%	80.95%
Social clubs	9.52%	9.52%	14.29%	14.29%	47.62%
Acquaintances	9.52%	4.76%	33.33%	9.52%	42.86%
Friends	4.76%	9.52%	4.76%	4.76%	71.43%

Non-congruent (46)					
	1	2	3	4	5
Employment	17.39%	15.22%	32.61%	17.39%	15.22%
School	0.00%	13.04%	13.04%	4.35%	10.87%
Family	15.22%	6.52%	23.91%	17.39%	32.61%
Social clubs	10.87%	8.70%	26.09%	23.91%	28.26%
Acquaintances	13.04%	8.70%	36.96%	21.74%	19.57%
Friends	0.00%	4.35%	23.91%	13.04%	58.70%

1 = out to none; 5 = out to all

Graph 2



social clubs, at work and to acquaintances. SOFFAs are most out to friends, then at work, to family, and at social clubs (tied), and finally, to acquaintances. (Figures for those out at school are too small to analyze.)

**Environments Where People are Most Stealth**

Looking at the data in reverse – where people most frequently said they were “out to no one” – gender-congruent FTMs and MTFs again differ (see Graph 4, below). About a quarter of perceived-as-male FTMs are not out to anyone at work. Five percent are not out to any family members, and fewer than two percent are not out to any friends. In contrast, MTFs tend to be most closeted with acquaintances, social clubs, and at work, with approximately 10% of those answering saying they’re out to “no one” in these categories. (The figures for SOFFAs are too small to analyze.)

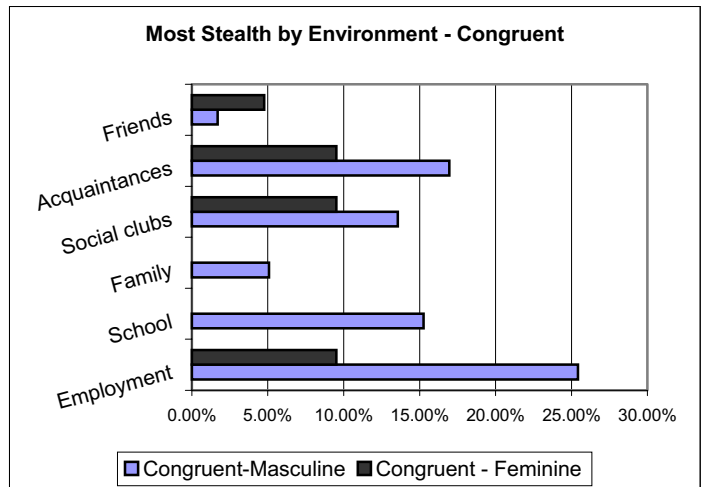
**Influences on Disclosure Decisions**

A couple of our respondents felt we should have asked about income, race, and age, as these influence how “out” someone is able to be. This data would have been interesting, but none of the literally hundreds of comments respondents made referenced race or age (with the exception of one American Indian who pointed out that given that his family included more than 100 members, it was difficult to be out to all of them). The comments, did, however, illuminate many other influences on how respondents thought about the issues surrounding disclosure.

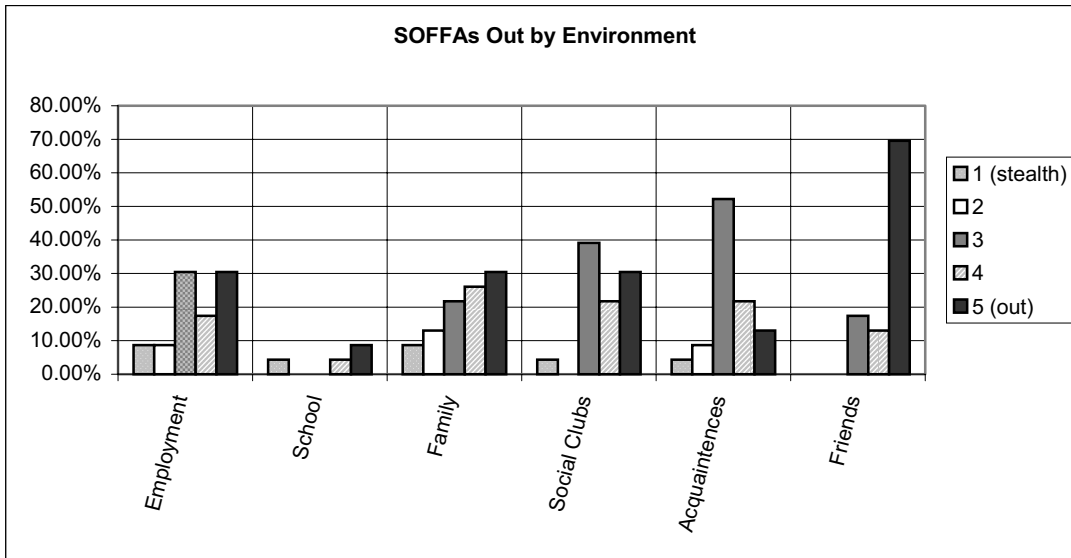
**Passing Questions**

It seems obvious that being able to keep a trans status pri-

Graph 4



Graph 5



*coming out slowly bit by bit as i develop relationships with people."*

In addition, the dearth of language to express genderqueerness makes coming out verbally a challenge.

*"As a genderqueer who looks and is often perceived as genderqueer or ambiguous or blurry or just plain odd, being out happens on a number of levels, some of them non-verbal, some of them verbal. And then there's the whole question of out*

*(Continued from page 5)*

vate is at least partially determined by whether one is perceived as firmly fitting into one binary gender box or the other; for some folks, the fact they are transgender is obvious.

*"I can't tell when I pass or not. I hate binding so I usually don't but it compromises my outward appearance. I have no partners/lovers because of shame about my body and I don't want to involve others needlessly in my process. I live in a very small town on an island with a very small queer population, so I'm not out. If I lived in a larger town or a city I would probably be more out."*

*"I consider myself very 'out', but that does not mean that I feel the need to tell anyone and everyone. I simply assume that people can read me in most situations. Although this assumption is not really valid, it does relieve me of the need to wonder whether any one person reads me or not."*

**Genderqueer**

Genderqueers are often visibly "trans." Some genderqueers view their very existence as being "out." Other genderqueers may see their status as allowing for a staged or partial coming-out approach.

*"I pass like a gallstone'. As a person whose goal is to be visibly genderqueer, I have to be out. The only people I'm not out to, for the most part, are the people who don't see my scraggly beard, notice people using male pronouns about me, etc."*

*"as a genderqueer it is both easier and harder to be stealth. to some degree my presentation brings up issues of gender in any long term relationship (work, family, friendships etc.) however it is possible for me to be semi-out, which is not true for people who have transitioned. i also have the option of*

*as what: as a butch, as a fag, as a queer, as a tranny? All of those identities are true but not complete. Often being out or being stealth are framed as diametrically opposed. I think not. In my life it's much more complex. Some of the complexity is about language. There's more language available to describe myself as butch than there is language to describe myself as some other gender outside the binary but somehow connected to masculinity."*

*"on the other hand, as i dont have a 'specific' gender identity, it can be harder to come out to trans people. trans people always want to know "what i am". my answer is always so convoluted that sometimes its easier to avoid it all together. also when discussing gender identity with trannies, there are so many implications to every word you say. sometimes I feel like i can be more out with non trannies that with trannies."*

**Safety Concerns**

For many, passing, being read, and being out are safety issues. Many trans+ people are rightfully concerned about hate crimes and violence. Some are concerned about safety with intimate partners. Others don't wish to be verbally confronted or harassed, or risk losing their job because of the revelation of their trans status.

*"It's dangerous to be out in some places."*

*"I live on the west coast of Canada, in Vancouver, where there's a large trans population & I work in a very large, predominantly straight org but my job is working with the queer community. That makes a huge difference as to how out I am & feel safe to be at work. My workplace also protects staff & clients on the basis of sexual orientation & gender identity, which makes me feel a lot safer to be*

*(Continued on page 19)*

Editor,

The following is my response to the Connectivity survey entitled, "Stealth vs. Out."

I am professionally, medically and publicly trans (an FTM). I am 21. I did not have a choice at first whether to be out as trans or not. That was the label the mental health team at the inpatient unit I received services at labeled me. When I moved to Boston to transition, because that is where the doctors are, part of my program from hospital to the real world was to go to the GLBT Youth group, BAGLY. There, I learned that my feelings were called trans. I don't live in between. I am male. In my personal life I am honest about my past, but at Church or with my family or at a restaurant I just want to be left alone and be a guy. I hang out in queer space but that is changing, as I feel I have outgrown the gay community and am more comfortable in heterosexual land. I useta go out with men (as a straight tomboy) now I find I like women and am still heterosexual. For me, transitioning was never about the gender of the person I was sleeping with (I was never ok with my body to even get naked and have sex before transition); it has always been about ME and how I relate to my own body. So when am I out? I think that there is a wide spectrum of outness, sometimes based on my safety, my self-esteem, my peers and my health. Yes, I pass as a non-transsexual. But in truth I have a trans body. My mom is a double amputee. She has no legs. That does not mean she cannot walk. She uses artificial limbs; but to her, they are real. They function. She functions as a non-handicapped person. My mom inspires me a lot. Yes, I am born without a penis, but I do not function like a trans person, I function as though I always had one to me the one I have is real. Overcoming a disability is as much a state of mind as it is a state of physical reality and capability. By the way, when I think about Stealth, I think about people who have no connection to the trans community at all. Like, hello. If one is answering this survey, they acknowledge a part of themselves as trans, how else would they know the language or have the resource to respond? Stealth vs. Out is one of those ketch phrases that limits the movement by polarizing the issue. It's not as if one is either out or they are hiding something. Sometimes I get so frustrated by the petty fractions in the community and the barriers between identities that I want to go back in the closet. However, it on my sad days when I feel like all hope is gone, when I feel I am the only one that is when I need the community and ya know what, the community

needs me. Once that door is open, they won't let you go back in, no matter how hard you try or what town you move to, your past goes with you. My basketball coach once told me that when guarding an opponent who has the ball look at the belly button. They will try to fake you out with their eyes or their feet but if their body moves right, then the mid-section is going with them. The moral here is that being Out for me is a matter of being true to my core self, following my heart and my gut. If I listen to myself then I need not worry about how anyone else is living their life. I need not play the passing game or the outing game, ya know. Bring the mind, and the body will follow.

Written by: Jeff Johnston, (c) January 2002

### LOREN CAMERON GIVES US HIS "MAN TOOL"

New eBook explores female-to-male surgery

Photographer Loren Cameron, author of the best-selling [Body Alchemy: Transsexual Portraits](#), has now released his second book, which takes advantage of the World Wide Web to deliver a new look at female-to-male surgery.

His new book, "[MAN TOOL: The Nuts and Bolts of Female-to-Male Surgery](#)" addresses urgent and intimate questions about plastic surgery options for the female-to-male transsexual. Through anecdotal text and over forty, close-up photographs of body modifications, it explores personal issues about sex and gender relative to transsexual men.

Cameron's new book is only available as a World Wide Web-accessible eBook, which will allow a greater distribution than many transgender-themed books are able to attain. It can be reached by anyone with a modern web browser and computer access at <http://www.lorencameron.com/mantool>.

The site for "MAN TOOL" was designed by noted transgendered web developer Gwendolyn Ann Smith.

*By Lori*

When I first met the man I would eventually marry, I knew about his gender history up front. He told me his story. I told him mine. We listened and learned from one another, taking in the intimate details of each other's life and savoring those early days in our relationship where so much is still a mystery.

As we got to know one another, we delighted in the discovery of mutual interests while tentatively exploring new or unfamiliar territory together. As our relationship deepened, we became more than just two people sharing stories, at once familiar yet distinct.

Inevitably "his" story and "my" story converged, with the separate threads of our lives overlapping, at times intersecting and then diverging, to form the intricate tapestry that has become "our" story.

Entering into a committed intimate relationship with someone else can make you pretty vulnerable. I've bestowed precious trust on him as he has with me, along with a promise to be worthy of this gift. Together we face the world, stronger than we could be as individuals, but each knowing things that no other person knows about the other.

By nature, I am a very open person, willing to talk your leg off given the chance, whereas my husband is a very private person. Nevertheless, we agree that his stories are his to tell, as mine are mine alone. We do not share those stories without being sure it is okay with the other person first. The distinction between what is and isn't fair game to disclose is sometimes pretty difficult to figure out. I often find myself trying to strike that delicate balance between which parts of our story are okay to share and which parts of "our" story would reveal too much of "his" story.

To help keep that line in focus, we spend a lot of time "checking-in" with one another to gauge where we're at, where each of our comfort zones are, because they have been known to change over time. So, without further ado, let me tell you a bit of his, mine, and our story.

In general, I've been more out about my sexual orientation and activism than my husband. Unlike some transguys, he did not make a pit stop in the lesbian community before transitioning, so queer community was

not a familiar space for him. On the other hand, I had worked as a community organizer and activist in both the queer and, to a lesser degree, transgendered community for several years prior to meeting him.

While some transfolks are out to everyone: family, friends, co-workers, strangers on the street, either of necessity because they cannot pass or by choice because they do not wish to pass, my husband is not among these guys. He is selective about who needs to know his gender history. Partially this is due to his naturally private inclination, but when pressed, he admits that personal safety also plays a part.

His tendency to be "stealth" does not usually make much difference, but it has caused some difficult situations for me. I particularly felt the need to share this part of our lives with my own immediate family. Before meeting my husband, I had come out to my parents about my own sexuality after finally deciding that trying to keep secret such a major portion of my life was just too damaging to my relationship with them.

When faced with the possibility of marrying a transguy and keeping his secret from my family for the rest of our lives, I was seriously torn. I wanted to respect his wishes, but I also wanted to be honest with my family. I had lived through years of lying by omission and it was terribly corrosive to our family ties. When I came out and they were receptive, I had promised myself then to trust them to be able to handle anything I might have to throw at them in the future.

Even though this was technically his story to tell, I knew that keeping this from my parents would only get harder and harder. How would we answer when asked seemingly innocuous questions about our "vacation" to DC in February for the True Spirit Conference? What if he ended up having additional surgery? Where we just going to completely fabricate a story to explain his recovery time? What would we tell our children if and when we decided to have them?

The notion of being completely stealth with my immediate family really concerned me. So we talked

*(Continued on page 9)*

*(Continued from page 8)*

about it and decided together that it was okay to talk to them about his transsexuality. I'm so glad that he was receptive to the idea, because his worst fears of rejection did not materialize. My parents now know. My sister and brother-in-law also know. They are very accepting and have never treated him any differently since finding out about his past. It has been very affirming and empowering to receive this sort of love and acceptance.

Part of my own story involves being a committed activist in the gender community. I have conducted workshops and sat on panels. I have served as programming director for an LGBT community center and write for various trans+/SOFFA publications. I also moderate a list for a local support group. I am a web developer by trade and have also put this skill to good use in the non-profit/volunteer sector. Being this active is pretty difficult to do and remain completely anonymous. So my name, and by extension his name, tends to get out there and associated with trans issues.

This past summer, I was approached by a national organization that works for transgender equality and asked to run for a seat on their board of directors. I was reluctant at first, partially because of the extra time commitment, but also because I was not sure how my husband would take the idea of his wife being on the board. Would he see it as tantamount to outing him?

Again, we talked about it. We considered how it might impact him and our family. We considered the time commitment and how that might strain our relationship as well as the possibility of major press coverage that might accompany events or activities I might be involved with in such a role. Would his job be in jeopardy if my association with the organization were discovered? Could we handle an interruption in his employment if that came to pass?

It was precisely because his employment might be in jeopardy that we decided it was worth the risk. The hard work of establishing basic civil rights for trans people needs to be done, and I am competent and able to do it. I offered to use my old name, but he said it was okay to use our married name. I ended up running for the board seat and was elected to a two-year term. Within three weeks of the election, our last name was indexed in the major search engines with that

organization's website being pulled up as the number one hit. All this nascent Java programmer could say was, "Hello World!"

My husband continues to be very supportive of me and is understanding in the extreme of the considerable time commitment my activism involves. In fact, he often "subsidizes" my own activities by doing extra chores around the house, thus freeing up more of my time to work on special projects. While I'm spending hours on the latest release of a website, updating a database, conferring with other activists on a marathon phone call or IRC meeting, writing newsletter articles or press releases... he can often be found doing laundry, vacuuming, mowing the lawn, cleaning the kitty litter, or more directly helping by proofreading articles or troubleshooting database glitches--he's a geek too--all without complaint.

Knowing that he too is contributing in an equally compelling though perhaps less visible way to the movement, we sometimes joke that behind every great woman there is a great (trans)man!

I feel very blessed knowing that such a great partner has my back as we face the world together. Though we each have our own approach, as the tapestry of our lives becomes more tightly interwoven, we find our paths more often convergent now. We are both striving to find a mutually comfortable balance between when and how to occupy that safer "stealth" space and more risky "out" space together.

### Resources in Spanish and French

PFLAG's Transgender Network announces a new Spanish translation of its popular booklet, *Our Trans Children*. This booklet has sold over 30,000 copies in English. Both language versions are now available on the website: [www.youth-guard.org/pflag-t-net](http://www.youth-guard.org/pflag-t-net)

Also recently translated is Just Evelyn's book "...Mom, I Need to be a Girl". It can be found online at: <http://ai.eecs.umich.edu/people/conway/TS/Evelyn/French/Evelyn.F.html>

by Debralee Kraemer

I am new at this challenge of identifying as transgendered. I have read books and articles by gays, lesbians, transgendered individuals or straights who have been that way for years or even decades, but I'm not there yet. I'm still a queer on a quest, so to speak--a mere baby in this world I am just discovering. It has only been in the last year that I've finally found a term I could live with as an accurate representation of how I perceive myself. Transgendered. Or, more accurately, male-oriented transgendered individual. Gay man assigned female at birth? Fag in disguise? Maybe someday I'll find a term that I like better, but for now I'm sticking with it.

If there has been one thing I've learned in my years of queer research and my months as a transgendered-identified person is that there is no end to the number of terms that exist out there. Definitions, however, are up to the imagination, for they are as fluid as sexuality and just as much fun to play with. Thank the Goddess! With a term, however, comes a gaggle of questions and loads of misunderstanding. Perhaps it was easier when I told people I'm straight. At least then they could easily reconcile my female appearance with my desire for men.

I don't pass as a man; I don't even try. My goal in identifying as transgendered has been to accept myself, not change who I am. Though I do have dreams of a glam drag show where I dress up as fairy rocker Curt Wild (from the cult movie *Velvet Goldmine*) and prance about on stage, I don't see that I should have to change who I am everyday to fit into an accepted mold for transgendered individuals. We are not a stereotype; we are individuals who deal with our transgendered status in a myriad of ways. I like my feminine name just fine, and my breasts don't really get in the way most days. However, being myself has made it difficult to be accepted as transgendered. People look at me and see a straight woman. It makes me better appreciate those who have gone through a more drastic change to make their gender more apparent.

I want to be out. I mean really out. I want to announce it to the world, put it on a T-Shirt, wear it on my sleeve, snarl at anyone who would dare hiss at me as I mount the stage and scream, "I am transgendered!" Perhaps that is just a fact of being so young and new to this identity term. I don't actually tell everyone in my life; I figure if a situation comes up

when it is important, I'll tell the truth. I don't try to hide it, but in a way I have more "protective coloring" than most FTMs because I am also self-identified as being a gay man. My "faggish" tendencies translate into a more female mode of behavior as I continue to live as a female. While I wince at being a stereotype, some days I am just a screaming fairy--and no one notices!

I am out in that I am who I always have been, just with a new title and an extra sense of comfort in acting how I feel. I sometimes wish, though, that I were more visible. I am a professional librarian entering the terminal semester of my Master's degree. I work in the reference department of my university. As a librarian, my work is information access. I constantly face the stereotype of being Marion the Librarian--uptight, narrow-minded, unsmiling Guardian of Morals utterly unapproachable and hostile to those who waver from the norm. Never mind that I'm a kinky trans gay man who will defend the Right to Access with my life. I want my GLBT patrons to know that I am just as much a part of this minority as they are, even though I look like a rather straight woman. I have the training and the resources to help them find information to answer their questions, and I will not judge them, nor will I whisper behind their backs that they are doing something wrong. I am just like you, and I want to help.

As a professional librarian as well as a transgendered individual, I want to help others find out more about who they are. Helping others helps me to learn more about myself, and to learn what the important issues are in the lesbian and transgendered world. I've yet to find an openly FTM transgendered librarian to have as a role model, and I'm still new enough to this that I'm wary about approaching someone. I long for a role model, someone who is just like me that I can measure myself against and know that I am doing something right. In asking to be recognized as transgendered, and in searching for a role model, I realize that I am really looking for validation--for someone to authenticate that I am transgendered. Again, I find a greater appreciation those who have undergone a total physical change to match their bodies to their minds.

I suppose that part of my out-ness comes from my desire that others not go through life without some sort of history or role model; I can be a bit of budding activist, I'm afraid. I don't think of myself as a role

*(Continued on page 12)*

## Work Never Really Said Much

By AJ

We all face special challenges this time of the year. Will our families accept us, will they honor how we see ourselves, will they respect our decision to do what we have to do to survive? I wish everyone the very best of luck and happiness in the season.

Like everyone, I have struggled and continue to struggle with the OUT v. STEALTH question. For some, the question represents the answer they need to find. Once they have been able to form the question in their mind, they can then find the solution. Some men stride boldly into their gender, telling the world, "this is how I am, and you can accept it or not, it's up to you, but it will not change who I am or how I live my life." I have such a great respect for these men; they pave the way for all of us, they make it a better world for all of us.

I will take that path some day, and do my part to be an OUT, contributing member of our society, educating others on our diversity. But for now, I have chosen, and continue to choose, a different path. I am a police officer for a small municipality in a suburb of a big city. I was happily, (or not so happily as I see now,) existing as a "Dyke, female," cop for the first 5 years of my police career. This is what other people saw. Minding my own business, I knew I was transgendered, but I had never dreamt of exploring just what that meant to me in hard core terms. I thought that since I had lived with it for this many years, that I could just exist this way forever, and never act on what I knew to be the truth. I also thought that I would never have the strength to act on anything, that I wouldn't be able to stand up to my family, friends, and society.

Then WHAM, it hit me one day. I could no longer live full time as a female. I panicked, what was I going to do? How was I going to deal with this? I loved my job, and couldn't dream of quitting. Why quit you ask? Because society and the medical profession still has GID or Gender Identity Disorder listed as a "diagnosis." I'm not sure what the medical wording is, but a diagnosis of a psychological anything is a no no in the police world. As I researched future, I also found out that GID is not protected from discrimination. I snuck into a room to take a peek at the BIG BOOK OF STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES or SOP's for short. Police Officers are held accountable for these SOP's and General Orders, and they are somewhat

more strict than some private sector jobs or other public servant jobs. We sign off on them, saying we know them, and agree to live by them. The SOP's frown on psychological mumbo jumbo, and they definitely frown on controlled substances which is what testosterone is. I can take it, but I have to tell my boss, "Um sir? I have to take T but I can't tell you why. Okay, thanks, bye."

I was stuck between a rock and a hard place. I knew that I had to do something but I wasn't sure what. I decided to take the first step and seek out a counselor who was well know for treating transgendered individuals. I went to see her every month over the course of a year, and then took the tests associated with the Harry Benjamin Standards of Care. After that, I agreed to go to group counseling as a support base, and every month, I trooped up north, two and a half hours one way, to go to a meeting for two hours. But as soon as I connected with these individuals, I knew that I had found the one group in the world that I could identify with totally. But the whole time, I told not one person except my SO, who by the way is the BEST SO IN THE WORLD. She has stood by me, every step of the way, and supported every crazy decision I have made.

I say crazy because that is how I feel sometimes, in a good way. I found a Dr. in the big city, that treats transgendered patients. And before I even had a letter that said I had been diagnosed with GID, I went and plead my case. "I must have testosterone," I said. "I need this to survive, I cannot stand even one more day, looking and being treated as female." The kind Dr. took pity on me, after I unwrapped my arms from around her ankles, and made me promise not to sue her if she provided me with the testosterone. I assured her that I would not, and took my script to the far away drug store where they would never know me. Slowly, everyday I looked in the mirror, and waited for the changes to appear. I didn't think, couldn't think, what work would say when the changes started to appear. Later, I took my letter, more precious than gold, that says I have GID, to the kind Dr. in the big city, and gave her a copy, and thanked her for saving me from I don't know what.

Slowly, the changes began. At first it was just my voice, and then my appearance started to change too. I started to grow hair on my chin and jaws, and sideburns, gotta love those sideburns. But the whole

*(Continued on page 12)*

### ***Out, But Not Obvious, cont.***

*(Continued from page 10)*

model in any way, but I'd like to think that there is another FTM--either in my library or out in the professional world--who is comforted by the fact that there are more of us out here. I try in subtle ways to clue in co-workers and patrons at work. Every time I man the reference desk, I try to make sure I have some sort of GLBT resource on the desk in front of me. I have bought some tasteful rainbow jewelry that would be obvious to someone looking but not "in the face" of someone who didn't care. My apartment is referred to as the "Den of Slash" by my friends for the homoerotic artwork covering the walls. ('Slash' is a term for homoerotica.) I come out in little ways everyday to let people know without making them uncomfortable. I may not measure up to their expectations when it comes to female-to-male transgenderists, but I know who I am, and perhaps I can change their preconceptions just a little by being open about it.

### **Day of Silence—Wednesday, April 10, 2002**

"Please understand my reasons for not speaking today. I am participating in the Day of Silence, a national youth movement protesting the silence faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people and their allies. My deliberate silence echoes that silence, which is caused by harassment, prejudice, and discrimination. I believe that ending the silence is the first step toward fighting these injustices. Think about the voices you are not hearing today. What are you going to do to end the silence?" - *Quote from "speaking cards" passed out by participants during the Day of Silence.*

On April 10, 2002, thousands of high school students, college students, and allies will join a growing non-violent protest to raise awareness of the silence of LGBT's caused by harassment, prejudice, and discrimination.

Consider joining this national youth movement by supporting local youth organizations, Gay-Straight Alliances in schools in your area, or by joining the large number of people who will be silent on April 10, 2002.

More information can be found at [www.dayofsilence.org](http://www.dayofsilence.org).

### ***Work Never Really Said Much, cont.***

*(Continued from page 11)*

while I didn't tell anyone from work. My friends and family started to ask questions, and I answered all of them. Even the ones my Mom didn't want to hear. She is still having a hard time with it. My work on the other hand, never really said much. My boss asked me one question, one time, that wasn't really relevant and never asked anything again. But what has happened, is that I appear more male than female, and most of the time, the general public calls me sir. Even the officers that I have worked with for years, occasionally slip and call me him, or he. And these guys have only known me as female. There is even a running joke between me and one of my best friends at the department where he calls me "Tom" because a citizen thought that was my name, and I say back, "Yeah, whatever," and we both laugh, hard, every time.

It seems like for the people that I work with, it's just not a big deal. Which make me think hard about upsetting the apple cart. I think about how great it would be to be male full time, to have everyone see me as male. But then I think how crappy it would be for people to see me from the parameters of the diagnosis, and speak about me in the past tense. Like how much fun they had working with me till I got fired for opening my big yap and telling everyone. I'm reluctant to throw anything in anyone's face for just this reason. If I tell them, then they HAVE to deal with it. If I don't, then it can stay in the closet with the other non-issues like "I just thought she was a hairy dyke."

When I'm away from work, I pass as male, all the time. I get to have that reality away from work. I have a new daughter, one year old, that has known me as Dada since before she was born. She will probably be the one that OUTS me in the end. Small children have no pretenses. Thankfully, they have no shame, and she will probably be very happy to tell everyone that I'm not a girl, that I'm a man, and she should know because I'm her Dada. Peace, AJAXQ

### **Connectivity on the Web**

See *Connectivity* (and much more) in full color on the web at

[www.forge-forward.org](http://www.forge-forward.org)

## Transgender Monologue

*By Carrie E. V. Tune-Copeland*

You're probably wondering why some girly-girl is standing here before you at a program entitled "The Transgender Monologues." In fact, I think I overheard someone earlier asking their neighbor about whether or not I thought this was supposed to be a reading of "The Vagina Monologues." Well, I was asked to speak to you about what it's like to be the partner of a transgender-identified person.

Being with my gender-queer partner CJ through her gender journey has been quite an experience, to put it nicely. When I first started seeing her, I knew that this little unsuspecting butch dyke had a lot to learn about her gender identity... and who better to teach her than yours truly?

I remember saying to her several times throughout the beginning of our relationship, "Honey, you're transgender," and grinning knowingly whenever she expressed a glimmer of gender-queer hope. "I really don't feel like a girl," she'd say. "I know, dear," I'd think.

She struggled, wavered, swayed... She now understands that, even though society expects it, she doesn't have to claim one of two normalized genders. Her claiming a neither/both identity has certainly been... fun.

"Honey, which pronoun should we use today?" I often think. In the presence of FTM friends and their longtime partners, I feel like an unsupportive or unknowledgeable partner when I say "she" to refer to CJ when they claim her with "he." On an FTM significant others list serve, I often have to put an asterisk next to each pronoun I use, which, at this point of CJ's gender exploration, is usually feminine, and explain why I used that particular pronoun later in my email. It just saves me from being defensive later.

Another fun part of our journey together has been the quest to find a name. We've been through Dixie, Christina (her given/legal name), Chrissy, Chris, Tweek, and finally CJ. It was kind of hard for me to not know what to call my own partner, and often had to rely on cutesy - like Honey and Love. Through this particular challenge, I have learned a very important lesson: expressing my feelings of love to her and supporting her through this confusing time is much more important than finding the "correct" name to use when expressing this to her.

Probably the most difficult and personally challenging

part of being a SOFFA (which, for those of you who aren't down with the lingo, stands for significant other, friend, family, and ally) is the invisibility I face. How, you ask? I'll warn you... this part of my story isn't pretty, and probably won't make some of you very happy.

What I really wanted to talk about tonight is how I, personally, fit into the transgender community. I wanted to address my femme identity as a gender queer identity. When I mentioned my intent for a monologue, I was told that I should discuss, instead or also, what it is like to love a transgender person. While I agree that it's rare to hear from SOFFAs of transpeople, and important to hear about our joys and struggles as significant others, I hate being made to feel that my identity in the context of my relationship, or rather how I deal with my partner's identity, is more important than my own identity and how that relates the transgender community, and that's exactly how that request made me feel.

Now that CJ has come out and found support within the transgender community, I often feel shut out. I feel like the trans community has latched onto her because her voice as a gender-queer with FTM flavor is often an underrepresented one. I'm happy that my partner now has the support that she needs as well as the chance to get involved in gender activism. However, I'm feeling more and more that people are so excited to have her in the community that they forget that I've always been here, that I've always been, at the very least, an ally, if not a transgender-identified person, depending on the specific time of my own gender exploration. I feel like now, I'm only remembered in the context of my partner's identity, like, "Oh, let's get CJ's partner to talk about what it's like to love a trans person!"

When I first came out as queer, I immediately knew that my gender expression was strange. My first experience at the gay bar proved that to me when I was pulled aside by two lesbians who asked me if I was aware that I was at a gay bar. Apparently they were too put off by my lipstick and coiffed hair to see my rainbow rings. I never felt truly accepted in the lesbian community because of my femme identity, and felt the only way to fit in was to shed some of my femme attributes and attitudes. The only community that ever felt warm and accepting to me regardless of my gender expression was the transgender commu-

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**Transgender Monologue, cont.**

*(Continued from page 13)*

nity, though now that I'm partnered with a person who identifies as transgender, I'm expected to hide my own identity. I'm expected to talk about my partner because apparently my partner's identification with the trans community is easier to understand or accept. I'm expected to be okay with the fact that my partner's identity is more important somehow than my own, such is the plight of the significant other of a trans person. I'm expected to tolerate the fact that my opinions and gender theories no longer matter, if they ever did at all. I'm expected to come out here and smile when I talk about my partner even though I'm still pissed off and hurt about being made to feel invisible from the request that I talk about what it's like to love her instead of what it's like to love myself.

You wanted to know what it's like to love someone who's transgender? Well, it's not easy, especially when you make me feel invisible in the process.

*[Reprinted with the permission of the author. First printed in Your SOFFA Voice, November 2001. (www.tgcrossroads.org/yoursoffavoiced/)]*

**Survey Quotes**

"I also feel like I could never (again, in the harsh reality of things) say I'm a 'man' because I didn't have that background of growing up under the influence of testosterone and in the culture of maleness or masculinity as it would typically be defined."

"Out or stealth covers many issues beyond gender, such as disability and race. Do I tell people about my mental disability (narcolepsy) or only about my mobility impairment? Will I experience different stigma or responses based on what I disclose?"

"The only place where I am concerned about being out is gay male space."

"I am not out at work at all. I do like this time. It gives me a chance to settle into my gender. It's a great study about myself and others. It's just so odd to sit between a lesbian and a gay man and to feel the queerest of the queer but to be treated straight. Very odd indeed."

**Disability and Queerness Conference**

The First International Conference—June 2-3, 2002 at San Francisco State University

In the last three decades disabled people and lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgendered people have taken to the streets and entered the academy. We've built movements for social change, created culture and community, and shaped our own theory and analysis. But the issues, concerns, and experiences of queer disabled people have rarely been placed front and center. The Queer/Disability Conference aims to bring together artists, activists, and scholars to explore the matrix formed by queerness and disability.

**INTERESTED? COME JOIN IN:**

- Disability activists engaging in issues concerning queer identities
- Queer activists grappling with disability issues
- Artists pulling together strands of crip and queer cultures
- Scholars making connections between Disability Studies and Queer Studies
- Queers/crips looking for community
- Advocates and allies invested in these intersections

**Possible topics include:**

- Histories of disability, homosexuality, and transidentities
- HIV/AIDS, cancer, and disability
- Genetic testing, the notion of a cure, the medicalization of our bodies
- Intertwining of race, class, sexuality, gender identity, and disability
- Sex, sexuality, desire, erotica
- Representations of queerness/disability
- Deaf/Queer issues
- Global LGBT disability activism
- Impact of disability on gender identity and of gender on disability
- Passing, Pride, and non-apparent disabilities
- Violence, hate crimes, and abuse
- Compulsory heterosexuality and able-bodiedness
- Q/D marginalizations: bi&trans identities, cognitive&psych disabilities
- Ableism, homophobia, and transphobia
- Queers, disability, and services
- Blind/Queer issues
- Connections between intersexed people and disabled people

**FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO VOLUNTEER:**

QDprogram@hotmail.com  
 Alison Kafer, 310 N. Indian Hill, Box 325, Claremont CA 91711. <<http://www.disabledwomen.net/queer>>

## FTM Post Mortem

*By Loree Cook-Daniels*

Although the trans person's struggle with "stealth vs. out" ends at death, the question lives on for the trans-person's survivors. [Trumpet](#) (reviewed on page 22) is a fictional exploration of how one set of SOFFAs coped with the issues. Here are two real-life accounts.

Both stories involve what can only be called "successful" FTMs. Both were fathers of sons. Both had very supportive wives, and it was through those wives that their stories became intertwined.

I'll call the widow who contacted me Jenny. Her husband Sam had recently died, and Jenny now needed help. She'd never been in contact with anyone in the FTM/SOFFA community before, but since her husband's death she was facing issues she couldn't figure out alone. Sam and Jenny had been very well-loved community leaders, especially known for their Scouting activities. They had a son, Jeremy, who was about 14. But Sam had died of cancer, and Jenny now faced the prospect of trying to support Jeremy alone. One of the things she'd done was file with the Social Security Administration (SSA) to get survivor's benefits for him.

Unfortunately, SSA turned her down. They said that since Sam had a female birth certificate, he couldn't have been Jeremy's father as it said on his birth certificate, and there had been no adoption. Hence, Jeremy was not legally Sam's child and not entitled to survivor's benefits. They also said Jenny and Jeremy's marriage certificate was invalid, so they refused her widow's benefits, as well.

I tried to link Jenny with as many transgender family law experts as I could. Ironically, she already knew the name of one of them; Sam had been told to consult her to make sure his family was legally protected, but he had refused. She was a "known" transsexual, and he wanted nothing to do with transsexuals. No one but Jenny knew his history.

Marcelle and I were exactly the opposite; "everyone" knew our history. So I never thought to ask Jenny what happened when Sam first died, whether he died in a hospital or not, and how she managed with the myriad death officials. I therefore cannot compare her experience to mine or the fictional Millie Moody's. And quite frankly, my memories of my own experience are fuzzy – that's one of the blessings and curses of shock.

But I do know that when I woke the April 21, 2000 morning Marcelle and I were scheduled to leave on a romantic weekend and found his body, I immediately recognized there were implications to him being FTM. I knew that MTF Tyra Hunter had been ridiculed and undertreated by paramedics who responded to her auto accident. I knew people dealing with transgendered persons often take their cues from those around the transgendered person. As out as we were, chances were good that most of the people who showed up at our house would not know. I knew, in short, that in the first minutes of coping with my life partner's suicide, I would need to come out and be both his advocate and a role model.

The paramedics were easy. I remember telling them Marcelle was a female-to-male transsexual, so to expect chest scars. (I don't remember if I told them about the lack of lower surgery, or decided I'd told them enough that they wouldn't be surprised at what they found.) The police quickly removed me from where the EMTs were working, and I turned to what ended up being the harder task: explaining to the policewoman that yes, I was married to the victim, it was important he be marked male, but yes, he was a transsexual. She was dense and confused, and I remember her questions making me feel even more panicked and lost. The coroners, thank god, were quite respectful. They understood when I said it would be important for Marcelle's documents to be marked "male," and promised to notify people down the line.

That was the first half-hour.

One person I did not expect would need to be notified was the funeral director. He and I had attended a weekly business meeting together for years, and I'd come out more than once at that meeting. It turned out he was on a few-day vacation. I told his father and staff that John would know the story, to call him, and that I would only deal with John. Unfortunately, when John returned he gently chided me for not telling him; it turned out he hadn't been listening the times I came out and the grapevine had been uninterested in spreading the news I was married to a transsexual. I prefer not to think about what happened in that funeral home, given that they were not prepared as I'd thought. I hope that the fact I'd made clear I was a "friend" of John's made them treat Marcelle's body with dignity.

*(Continued on page 16)*

### ***FTM Post Mortem, cont.***

*(Continued from page 15)*

You'll forgive me if I can't remember when in the time period immediately before and after Marcelle's death that Jenny confided that she'd broken down and told Jeremy that the reason she couldn't get Social Security benefits for him is that his father was FTM and not, biologically, his father. Both Jeremy and Jenny were struggling to figure out the context in which to put the information. I tried to locate stories of FTMs who had *not* come from the lesbian community, and Jenny and I talked – perhaps for Jenny's first time – about what it meant to her to be married to an FTM. Our backgrounds and approaches to life were "opposite" in terms of sexual orientation and outness, but we were united in our concern that Jeremy come to terms with his father's and his own history in a way that both made sense to Jeremy and was respectful of the choices Jenny and Sam had made.

Tragically, that process was cut short. Just two months after Marcelle's suicide, I got an email Jenny's brother sent to everyone in her address book. She'd died unexpectedly and suddenly of a blood disorder. Jeremy was orphaned, dealing now not only with that horrible fact but also having to struggle in complete isolation from anyone who knew his dad's "secret" and what it meant to him and his mother.

I thought about Jeremy often and wanted to try to contact him, but my life was in shambles and I had my own fatherless child and widowhood with which to deal. It wasn't until last month that I was finally able to sit down and search the Internet and my files for clues as to how I could contact Jeremy and offer, now or in the future, to be his bridge to information. I struggled to word the email carefully enough that Jeremy might understand what I was offering him without outing him or his parents, in case the adults around him still didn't know.

I believe I found Jeremy's uncle's address, and I guessed at what Jeremy's might be based on what his parents' had been. Neither email bounced.

Neither email was answered.

Kai's and my story has a more hopeful ending. Because Marcelle had birthed Kai, Kai's right to his Social Security survivor's benefits was not in question. Either because a court had already ruled Marcelle legally male

and he and I legally married when they granted my adoption of Kai or because I came equipped with ample documentation, an attitude of "I'll help you manage your own red tape," and a very nicely veiled threat that I would be very public and persistent if they turned me down, SSA ruled my marriage valid and hence granted me survivor's benefits, as well.

Kai still has me and his stepfather to help him understand his father's gender-related thoughts, feelings, motives and decisions. Should he, too, get orphaned, he has our writings and interviews and will know how to contact "others like him" with whom to talk. He will, in short, have access to many clues to his father's and mother's life and decisions.

I cry for Jeremy, hoping he somehow has found or will find the same.

### **2002 Lambda Book Award Finalists**

#### **Category: Bi and Trans**

- Best Bisexual Erotica, Volume 2, Bill Brent and Carol Queen, eds., Black Books/Circler Press
- Crossing Over: Liberating the Transgendered Christian, Vanessa Sheridan, The Pilgrim Press
- Dragged!! To His Senses, Jonathan Branton, Yellow House Press
- Omnigender: A Trans-religious Approach, Virginia Ramey Mollenkott, The Pilgrim Press
- Synthetic Bi Products, Sparrow L. Patterson, Akashic Books

## Freak

By michael munson

"It's a fucking freak!"

All trannies and SOFFAs hear of, and frequently fear, bathroom horror stories. Those of us who have been around the block a few times are repeatedly discouraged when discussions lead back to often primitive bathroom dialogues – at support meetings, in educational trainings, in defining transition at work, or any number of situations.

For some, they hope to pass well enough, so they don't encounter any confrontations when using bi-sexed bathrooms – "This **is** the women's room!". Others are frustrated with the reality that most places have gendered rather than unisex or single unit bathrooms.

While passing is often integrally linked with comfort in bi-sexed bathrooms, it is by far not the only concern of risk.

Bathrooms, like locker rooms or the beach, are places where trans+ people can feel exposed and vulnerable. We worry about who will see what, how we can "protect" ourselves from the configurations of our genitals being exposed to others. We fear being mocked, or worse, being attacked because our bodies may not be congruent or may house scars that reveal our past.

There are places, though, where there is a sense of comfort and safety. How relieved we can be to discover a locked changing room or a unisex bathroom that offers a safe harbor. But does a locked door or a single-stall bathroom equal safety?

"I wanna see, I wanna see!!!"

A small child, while simply filled with curiosity, is being nudged to warp that healthy sense of wonder of the unknown to hate-filled words and an exploitive desire to expose.

"He's a freak. He's got no dick!"

The door to the unisex family bathroom at a large mall slowly closes after six or eight pair of eyes scan my body, fixating on my crotch as I struggle to pull up my pants – to cover myself, not out of shame, but out of fear of what was unintentionally revealed, because of a faulty lock and assertive eyes.

Knowledge is a powerful thing. No one can take it away from you after you acquire it.

*As I scrambled with my zipper, I realized that not only was my body exposed, but my physical safety was at risk – even after walking out of the "safe haven" of this "safer" bathroom, out of their sight. Knowledge is powerful. Would their biting words draw blood if they saw me again? Would they remember the "freak" whose body shocked them, perhaps making them question their own masculinity, stimulating their aggression? Would their two small children equate "freak" with the unique brand of masculinity I embody? Would they automatically respond with hatred when faced with difference?*

*Leaning against the cool tiles of the bathroom, trying to regain my balance and building courage to emerge, I continued to hear the loud discussion about the "freak". That one word could make anyone understand the depth of hatred. That word could strip any person of their sense of security. That word could erase privilege – even the right to use a public restroom.*

Early in my gender journeys, I was warned of "male privilege" by lesbian feminists; I was knighted with it by MTFs. I was shunned because of its potential by some who feared that testosterone would erect the patriarchy within me.

I heard over and over how "lucky" I was, that FTMs always pass so well and I would never have to worry about being in danger of being "found out". While therapists, and even others who had already transitioned from female to male, meant to reassure me (or themselves), they were filled with many presumptions about what I needed, and in most cases were just plain incorrect to equate "passing" with safety.

*Splashing water on my face, still hearing the hate-filled words ringing in my ears, or maybe still actually coming from outside of the door, trying to drown out "freak" and flush down "he's got no..."... I can't hear their angry words over the running water; hoping they would grow impatient and move to another rest room.*

In public, I pass 100% of the time. My bearish build, long beard, thinning hair, and deep voice are all strong indicators of others' perceptions of undeniable masculinity and maleness. But passing doesn't automatically bring the safety the MTF friends used to

*(Continued on page 18)*

### ***Freak, cont.***

*(Continued from page 17)*

talk about and long for. Passing doesn't change the fact that while I may not be in as much risk on the streets from violence, I am at an increased perceived danger to women who cross the street when they see me walking at night out of fear of the violence they project *from* me. Passing has also not meant I now have higher paying jobs or other privilege associated with being a man.

I have chosen to live as an out tranny – a transactivist, a poly trannyfag with the twist of female-identified or born partners, an organizer who focuses on trans+/SOFFA events. Some believe that I strip myself of privilege by being out. If they are right, I hope it does remove the privilege constructed by some arbitrary social cues and secondary sex characteristics.

Some believe that by being out, I risk exposure and danger. By wearing a "subvert the dominant gender paradigm" t-shirt, or freely discussing trans+/SOFFA and queer issues in public, referencing my female past... I open myself up to stares, jeers, criticism, and potentially even physical violence.

*I'm not wearing my Transexual Menace T-shirt. I have no publicly visible markers today, of my transness, my queerness. But they know. They've stolen a piece of my history - taken against my will, without my consent.*

I refuse to deny my history – to construct a "little boy" childhood – when being raised as a girl strongly influenced the person I am today. I refuse to shift my passions of activism to avoid possible violence from others' knowing my transness.

Many people presume that being out increases the potential for discrimination, harassment, or "embarrassing" explanations. Some say that by maintaining one's outness, it places undue pressures and burdens on friends, family members, and co-workers - putting them in awkward situations.

I am voluntarily out to my parents, my siblings, my partners, healthcare providers, co-workers, activist colleagues, many local merchants, and others. Part of the respect I show those around me is to clearly discuss with them that it is MY choice to be out and that might not be their choice. I turn over to them, the decision(s) of how out *they* wish to be, and how they wish to deal with my transness or how out *they* want to be. In honoring that family and friends transition – not just me – I recognize(d) they need to make choices about if

THEY wish to be out or not.

One of my brothers is a high-ranking officer in the military. While I'm not sure how "out" he is in his every day interactions, I know he has taken risks and ended up being able to help a co-worker by his willingness to be out. His co-worker's "daughter" was becoming increasingly more masculine and wanted support, but had no idea as to how to access any resources. My brother's co-worker also needed support. My brother was able to offer support to his fellow officer, because he was open about his kid "sister" who is now male, and he was able to ask me for resources for his co-worker. That support and sharing would never have occurred if my brother remained stealth about my transition and his family history.

My parents live in a very small town. They have chosen to be fairly out about who is in their family. While I'm not sure they fully understand some of the risks of being so out, I'm thrilled to continue to hear back from them about how positively people have responded. It gives me hope that a small town, with some fairly conservative and not-always-very-progressive thinkers, have continued to welcome them. My parents' outness normalizes the "freak factor".

Everyone defines that "freak factor" in different ways. For some, it might be being the only male-appearing person in the OB/GYNs office. For some, it might be ending up in the emergency room and having to explain that their husband is a non-op, passing FTM before the physician steps in. For some, it might be clarifying why their resume only has work experience dating back 4 years. For others, it might be not putting up their spouses picture at the office. For some, it's always carrying cash so as not to have to provide identification or credit cards that may house a different name/gender. For some, it might be never walking shirtless down a sandy beach. For others, it's erasing their child's history so as not to have to explain how their little girl is now a successful, talented man.

*I emerge from the bathroom, refusing to be defeated, knowing I did nothing wrong. I exit knowing that my body is not like other peoples' bodies. I imagine the string my mother used to talk about, running through my body - pulling that string up to the ceiling, my back straight, my head held high - just like in ballet class. I make eye contact with each one of these people who ridiculed my body, affirming that I heard them and that I am not ashamed.*

*(Continued from page 6)*

*somewhat out & wear suits / ties to work (while most people perceive me as a butch dyke) but I'd feel a lot better if they did some proactive trans 101 & 201 stuff with all staff, & without it being about me specifically."*

*"As far as being Out or Stealth, it really depends on the situation and the comfort and/or safety levels. I have no problems and would be Out all the time if I constantly lived in one type of environment. Reality is, I move too much and encounter new people too much to have the comfort of that consistency."*

### **SOFFA Negotiations**

For transgender people who are partnered or parenting, the degree to which any one member is out is often a negotiated decision. The decision-making process may include weighing the safety, comfort, social and economic needs and political stances of both/all members of the family.

*"While I am out, my wife is still not comfortable with this. She has not told anyone in her family or anyone where she works. When we have things like the annual company picnic, I dress and go as a guy."*

*"My spouse is not out but is living as a straight male. My coming out thus outs him as well. Our business is geared towards straight tourists so my coming out would also affect our business at a time when tourism really sucks. This means I do not grow the beard out... "*

*"I would be more out but for my spouse's professional obligations; she has a very high profile position contingent on fundraising."*

*"As a partner, I am very out. I work at a resource center for youth in my city, and also facilitate a support group for partners of trans identified folks. In my social life, I am also out. When I first moved to the city and realized that there was a community, being out was great, and still is, as I am able to find the support and resources both my partner and I need. Though, as he is headed into starting T[estosterone] very soon, I realize that I would like to be able to provide him more privacy with his own transition at this time."*

Sometimes it's not a family member who influences the "outness" decision, but some other pivotal SOFFA. One person noted that she was not out at work because her boss prefers that she not be vocal about her trans status. However, the car she drives to work sports a license plate that reads: 2M2FTS.

### **Time Frames and Stages**

Both negotiated and individually determined disclosure decisions often change over time as the trans person or couple moves through the transition process or as circumstances or

preferences change.

*"My 'outness' is a work in progress since my partner decided to transition this fall as I moved to the opposite coast for a new job after finishing school. ...Now I'm working on coming out as an FTMSO to my friends, family, and colleagues. Will be interested to see how out/stealth I will be when my partner is passing 100% of the time."*

*"I am currently out to all my friends and most of my acquaintances as trans because I'm in early transition, however, I don't plan to stay as out as I am now regarding my trans status. I'm looking forward to the time when a percentage of my acquaintances (especially those folks I just know casually) just view me as your average gay man. I didn't use to feel this way, but hav[ing] been in intermediate space for over two years now, I find the prospect of constantly explaining and re-explaining who I am too daunting to expand the effort for casual acquaintances."*

### **Respect and Disrespect**

Timing is related to the issue of respect. Being "out" for someone who is pre-transition or early in transition may mean telling people what will happen in the future and is not yet visible (i.e., the intent to transition). These individuals may come out in part to gain respectful treatment, by getting people to use appropriate pronouns and names.

On the other hand, someone who is "post" transition may view coming out as an invitation to others to *disrespect* their gender identity. They are already being treated in the way they wish to be treated (i.e., appropriate pronouns, name, etc.); coming out may mean others begin to confuse pronouns or names and make other assumptions based on this new information.

*"Whether people read me or not does not really matter. What DOES matter is how people treat me. I expect to be treated with dignity and respect, and I carry myself accordingly. As a result I seldom encounter even a hint of a problem."*

*"I prefer to have my identity as a transman on a 'need to know' basis and frankly, in most cases, its none of their business. I'd rather be known as 'that guy' rather than 'that guy... Who's really a girl who's had, like surgery and stuff.'"*

*"I choose not to tell those people who I feel will treat me differently or be stupid about it. For instance, I have a friend who is a lesbian and prides herself on being "queer". She did not know I was trans when I met her, she simply took me as the man I am. Someone else told her I am a transsexual. Ever since this woman found out I am trans, all of a sudden she started occasionally called me 'she' to my face. I am not female looking at all. I am six feet tall, I have a deep voice, I am muscular, I have a receding hairline and facial hair. It's*

*(Continued on page 27)*

**Connectivity:** What parts of your life are you "out" in and what parts not?

**Mike Hernandez:** I'm out with friends and family and within the trans community. Several times a year I participate in public speaking engagements where I speak with students at colleges and universities. I've written a number of articles on trans issues and have, with a great deal of good fortune, managed to get published.

Work is a unique situation. The majority of the work that I perform is for a sole practitioner who is now in a partnership. The partnership rents space, as do a number of other sole practitioners and small practices, from a larger defense firm who has the master lease on the floor. The primary attorney who I work for knows because I was his law clerk pre-transition. As for the rest of the office, I have not come out and yet, I gave an interview to the Los Angeles Times, in which I am identified as an attorney in Woodland Hills, California. Other attorneys in the local bar association read the article and know. However, my trans status is not something that I would have disclosed at work barring some compelling reason.

I'm not out at the Hindu Temple that I attend on a regular basis.

**Connectivity:** When you think about what and where people know you are trans, what kinds of language or concepts do you use? Out, Stealth? Disclosing, Private?

**MH:** I use "out" or "out of the closet" because the issues of disclosure versus non disclosure are quite similar to those experienced by the queer and bi communities. Frankly, disclosure is an issue of privacy. Each of us pick when and how we come out, if at all. It's a personal choice and there is no wrong decision or answer. I don't believe that people should be faulted or vilified for choosing to live life where no one knows about the fact that they are or used to be trans. There are many ways to serve or advance the needs and desire of our community and being out is not the only way to do that.

**Connectivity:** As a person with a high profile within the FTM+ community, are you ever concerned that people who you choose not to disclose your trans status to will find out about

the work you do in the trans community?

**MH:** I'm not sure I qualify as high profile. If I am known, it's predominantly through writing which is far different from face-to-face. I tend to stick close to home for the most part to enjoy the solitude of the desert.

To answer your question, being "discovered" doesn't create a concern for me. Trans is who I am. I'm not ashamed of it and won't allow someone else to make me feel bad or "less than". I feel that I'm no better and no worse than the next person. That doesn't mean that the situation isn't awkward or have its moments of stress. I just don't spend any time worrying about who knows and who doesn't.

**Connectivity:** Can you set the stage a bit by discussing the basic framework of your relationships and sexuality?

**MH:** I'm in a primary relationship with another transman. We've been together for 10 years, although we've been friends for a lot longer. We've only lived together for the past six years. There was quite a bit of opposition for our relationship as an FTM/FTM relationship was unique. Now, transmale couples are quite common and accepted within our community.

I have a polyamorous relationship meaning that we both have sex and/or relationships with other folks. I have an ongoing relationship with a gay man (polar bear\*), but we've seen far less of each other since he moved to Southern California. He is now in a full-time primary relationship.

I identify as queer. On occasion I attend men's only spaces and clubs. Even less often I attend a women's event which allows the attendance of FTMs. The women's leather community was very much a part of my life and despite the fact that I no longer feel comfortable there, it's nice to hang out and raise Cain with old friends.

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\* Polar Bears are a term from within the Bear community. Bears are typically considered to be hairy, sometimes larger-sized, frequently gay men. Polar Bears, tend to be white or gray-haired Bears.

(Continued from page 20)

**Connectivity:** Some people say that it's impossible for FTMs to have sex or be intimate with a partner without their partner knowing of their transness. Can you comment?

**MH:** That's absolutely untrue. Not all intimacy requires sex. Non-sexual intimate relationships can be maintained without the necessity of disclosure. However, the more intimate the relationship, the greater the difficulty in maintaining your trans status private. Also, intimacy is founded on trust. The danger with not disclosing to a sex partner, with the exception of anonymous interactions, is that when they do find out, they may feel betrayed which would ruin the intimacy.

As for sex, not all sex requires you to be naked. I know trans men who have attended sex clubs and spent the night on their knees giving blow jobs. If the sex is truly anonymous, you don't exchange names let alone personal details. I have attended a club that is dedicated to anal sex. The men who attend this club are more into hands and dildos than flesh and blood cocks. I have talented hands and have had sex with a number of men without disclosing the fact that I am trans because I have not had to disrobe. Then again, they were all the fuckees.

**Connectivity:** Many people have a difficult time imagining how a sexual interaction could be satisfying without genital reciprocation. What do you get out of these types of interactions?

**MH:** Under the right circumstances, I can orgasm without reciprocity. I think that's why one of the sex clubs worked fine. Of course, if you bring your own partner, there's someone to go home with at the end of the night. If all else fails, you can always jack off in private. Is it ideal? No. Could it be worse? Absolutely. I could be so afraid of being discovered that I did nothing and allowed fantasies and/or desires to remain unfulfilled.

It isn't all about the orgasm either. There's a rush involved in sex. In giving someone else pleasure. There's an intensity and passion that can be communicated through eye contact that is incredibly satisfying. Then there's the thrill of being desired. Everyone wants to be sought after. It's a nice ego stroke to have someone come onto you and then come

back for seconds.

**Connectivity:** As a lawyer, I know you make very conscious choices about what you do. What factors contributed to your choice not to reveal you're FTM to some sexual partners?

**MH:** It wasn't so much about an in-depth analysis of whether to disclose or not. As I went along, I developed some guidelines for myself. If it was anonymous sex, I wouldn't disclose. If I didn't need to get naked and I was at a public space (as in a club), I wouldn't disclose. If I hooked up in a situation other than a club, which required nakedness, or which would involve future interactions, I'd come out. If it seemed more of a hassle to not disclose, I'd come out.

I don't always follow them to the letter and on some occasions there will be some cross over which is the greatest risk. For instance, meeting someone at a sex club who wants to get together in private. You have to either disclose and being involuntarily outed if the other person takes the news poorly OR say no and possibly ruin what was a good time.

**Connectivity:** Where do you find sexual partners?

**MH:** Through prior sexual partners or at events. I used to attend a couple of leather events each year. Some were local and others in various parts of the country. Those times of intense, short, highly sexually charged events have the greatest promise although timing can be quite complicated.

Lately, an interview that I gave for the upcoming book "Bears on Bears" has gotten me half a dozen e-mails from potential partners. I'm going to be meeting one of the guys next month to discuss whether our respective sexual desires might be compatible. If they are, we'll do something about it and if not, we'll part company, but more than likely continue to communicate. Rarely, I will meet or be approached by a woman.

**Connectivity:** You've been living having sexual contact with partners and not always disclosing your transness for quite some time. Do you have any advice or "lessons learned" you would be willing to share?

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## Trumpet: A Novel

**Trumpet: A Novel**

By Jackie Kay

(Pantheon Books, 1998)

Reviewed by Loree Cook-Daniels

**T** = Full trans inclusion = Full SOFFA inclusion

Yes, post-transition you can move somewhere where no one knew you "before." You can change your name. You can keep your family in the dark. You can come out once to a very discrete potential sexual partner, marry her, and stay monogamous for 40 years. You can live lawfully at all times, so you are never troubled by police. You can be lucky and avoid any serious accidents that render you unconscious. And you can refuse to ever see a doctor, even when you know you are dying.

But can you avoid the coroner and the undertaker?

Joss Moody couldn't, but by then, keeping the secret no longer mattered to him. Trumpet is the story of those to whom the revealed secret DID matter, including his widow Millie and his son Colman.

*Trumpet* practically tells my story. Like Millie, I, too, am the white widow of a Black FTM and mother of an adopted multiracial son. I, too, know what it is like to deal with multiple death professionals who feel shocked and personally and professionally challenged by the body of an FTM. I, too, know what it is like when friends all disappear, unwilling to come near what they perceive as a scandal. I, too, have had to wonder: why can't those who are making up and spreading stories about my life just leave a grieving widow in peace?

But don't let those parallels mislead you. *Trumpet* is far, far more than a very particular story. It is a nuanced, very rich exploration of what can happen to a family (both its individual members and as an entity itself), and to those around that family (both those who are only fleetingly touched and those whose roots go way back) when one individual's secret is publicly revealed.

Each of the voices Jackie Kay uses in her book is distinctive. Colman's voice is full of outrage and pain as he struggles to reconstruct who his father was, given what he's now learned. Millie's is brave but lost as she tries to survive her first weeks without not only her

beloved Joss, but also their son and everyone they knew. The hack writer who is exploiting Colman is lost, too, but she has constructed so many defenses that there's nothing left aboveground to make you care. The undertaker also knows loss, although his came from knowing too much; Joss Moody is the first dead person he's met that he could not understand. Mohammad Nassar Sharif treats everyone who enters his realm with reverence, but knew when Millie Moody had her moment with him that he could "sit silent with this particular woman in his registrar office for a year, maybe two." The drummer in Joss's band, the doctor, the housecleaner, Josephine's mother, the old school friend...Kay gives each one their moment, their chance to reflect on how Joss Moody's life, body, and/or "secret" has touched them, changed them.

Joss Moody may have kept his history private, but that does not mean he was the only one who wrestled with what difference, if any, that history made.

***Sex without Disclosure, cont.****(Continued from page 21)*

**MH:** I don't think that I've learned any "lessons" per se. Just honed some cruising skills and gotten better about identifying what I want. If anything, I developed a thicker skin around rejection and have been quite pleasantly surprised when a no turned into a yes, several years later.

Patience certainly pays off. Most of the time I am now sowing the seeds for interactions that won't happen for years into the future. I find that if I have expectations or preconceived notions, that I get disappointed. If I expect nothing, I'm always pleasantly surprised. I also don't get upset or take it personally if someone decides to pass. Most of the time the person who wound up rejecting me wants to chat and I do. So long as they aren't complete utter assholes during the conversation, I usually try to discuss things objectively. Correcting misconceptions or ignorant assumptions with a dose of humor. You can't believe just how far humor goes. I've been lucky to have men in my life who have encouraged me and who offered support while I was off licking my wounds.

I wrote an article on disclosure that appears on my website. The URL is <http://www.otherbear.com/dislframe.html>

## Mental Health Survey

1. What types of mental health services have you received (at any point in your life)? (check all that apply)
  - None
  - Individual therapy
  - Group therapy
  - Social support group
  - Hospitalization
  - Professional services for addiction
  - Psychotropic medication (e.g. Prozac)
  - AA/NA/OA/Addiction self-help group
  - Nutritional counseling (dietary changes to improve mental health)
  - Bodywork/energy work
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. If you have seen a therapist at any point in time, what was the primary reason(s): (check all that apply)
  - Not applicable - no therapy
  - Individual therapy
  - Couples or relationship therapy
  - To acquire a letter for hormones
  - To acquire a letter for surgery
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. If you have mental health issues, which category (ies) would best describe your issues (either self-classified or based on a professional diagnosis)? (check all that apply)
  - Not applicable
  - Gender Identity Disorder
  - Depression
  - Anxiety
  - Adjustment Disorder
  - Sleep Disorder
  - Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
  - Psychotic Illness
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. If you are a SOFFA (Significant Other, Friend, Family, or Ally), have you sought professional help in dealing with trans issues?
  - Yes, to deal with my partner/family member/friend's transness
  - Yes, I needed to examine my own trans issues that came up when dealing with my loved one's
  - No, but I have considered it
  - No
  - Not applicable
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
5. Have you ever been prescribed a psychotropic medication for a mental health condition? (e.g. Prozac)
  - Yes, currently taking medication
  - Yes, took medication in the past
  - No
  - I have a prescription that I haven't yet filled
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
6. If you have a mental health condition, how much has it interfered with your daily function?
  - Not applicable
  - Some
  - Not at all
  - A fair amount
  - A little
  - It is debilitating
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
7. Do you attribute any mental health issues in your life as being related to being trans or being the SOFFA of a trans person?
  - Not applicable
  - A fair amount
  - Not at all
  - A significant amount
  - A little
  - 100%/totally
  
8. Has a professional (psychotherapist, psychiatrist, physician, or other professional) ever denied you access to hormones or surgery because of a mental health condition?
  - No
  - Yes
 If yes, what reason was stated?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 If yes, did you get a "second opinion"?
  - Yes
  - No
  
9. Have you ever INVOLUNTARILY received mental health services?
  - No
  - No, I don't believe so
  - Yes
 If Yes, what types of services did you receive without your consent?
  - Therapy
  - Hospitalization
  - Medication
  - Electroshock therapy
  - Any "treatment" to address your gender identity
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_

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*(Continued from page 23)*

10. Have you ever attempted suicide?  
 No  
 No, but I've considered it  
 Yes  
 If yes, how many times \_\_\_\_\_  
 If yes, by what method(s)  
 \_\_\_\_\_
11. If you have a long term mental health condition and are on any form of hormones (testosterone, estrogen, progesterone or other - for reasons of birth control, HRT after menopause, same/ dominant hormone enhancement, or "cross-gender" hormones), have you noticed if the hormones have had any effect on your mental health condition(s)?  
 Not applicable  
 None that I know of  
 I have only had a mental health condition since after starting hormones  
 My condition has improved  
 My condition has gotten worse
12. What "techniques" do/have you use/d to maintain or improve your mental health?  
 Therapy  Body work  
 Medication  Energy work  
 Journaling  Crystals or rocks  
 Exercise  Meditation  
 Herbal supplements  Prayer  
 Vitamins or supplements  Diet  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_
13. Do you have health insurance that covers mental health services?  
 Yes, my health insurance covers mental health services  
 No, my health insurance excludes mental health services  
 I don't know  
 I don't have insurance  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_
14. If your insurance does cover mental health services, how are those services restricted, if at all?  
 Not applicable  
 I have to select a therapist from a list of providers  
 I can see any therapist  
 I am only allowed a certain number of visits/sessions  
 I can see a therapist for an indefinite number of sessions  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_
15. Age  
 <18  45-54  
 19-24  55-64  
 25-34  65+  
 35-44
16. Where do you live?  
 Urban  
 Suburban  
 Rural  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_
17. Economic influence  
 Lower class  Student  
 Working class  Disabled  
 Middle class  Retired  
 Upper middle class  
 Upper class
18. Relationship to the trans community  
 I am trans+/genderqueer/butch/intersexed/questioning (++++)  
 Significant Other  
 Friend  
 Family member  
 Ally  
 Helping professional  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_
19. Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about your mental health status or experiences?

*Please send your survey responses no later than March 5 to **Connectivity**, PO Box 1272, Milwaukee, WI 53201, or fax to 414-278-6031. Survey results will be published in the next issue of **Connectivity**, expected to be published in March 2002. If you have questions or comments, please email the **Connectivity** editors at [editor@forge-forward.org](mailto:editor@forge-forward.org).*

## Opening Doors

### Opening Doors: Working With Older Lesbians and Gay Men

(London: Age Concern England, 2001)  
spiral bound, 70 pages; £5 (about U.S. \$7.25) plus s/h;  
for information on ordering, e-mail pat.boon@ageconcern.org.uk.



= *Trans in name only*



= *No SOFFA Inclusion*

Because humans tend to experience an increasing number of disabilities and chronic conditions as they age, old people on average have far more contact with health care providers than do younger people. It is common for old people to live at least for a time in an institutional setting such as a hospital or nursing home. Even if we're able to continue living at home, frail, impaired elders often need others' assistance with such intimate personal tasks as bathing and toileting.

What these facts mean for transgender persons is that the option of being completely "stealth" shrinks as one ages. Although some post-operative MTFs look completely female even unclothed, that is not the case for FTMs, MTFs who could not afford or didn't want genital surgery, crossdressers, and other transgender and intersex individuals whose secondary sex characteristics and/or genitals don't "match" their dressed appearance.

The fact that, unlike their non-transgender lesbian and gay male peers, most trans elders can *NOT* be closeted in health care settings, makes it even more imperative that efforts to educate aging and health services personnel and institutions about sexual orientation and gender identity diversity include detailed information about trans elders. Unfortunately, that transgender inclusion is in name only far too often.

A good example of this "disappearing T" phenomena is a resource packet for aging services providers on LGBT issues created by Age Concern England, "Opening Doors: Working with Older Lesbians and Gay Men." Despite its title, the Introduction states that the packet uses the term "lesbian and gay older people to encapsulate lesbian, gay, bisexual, **and transgender** older people." (p. 2, emphasis added) Unfortunately, that is the *only* time transgender people are mentioned.

As "Good Practice Guidance" for including lesbians and

gay men in aging services, "Opening Doors" is pretty good. It's written by a mainstream aging organization for mainstream aging organizations. It addresses why lesbians and gay men are different from their heterosexual peers; talks about such diversity within the gay community as ethnic minorities, rural lesbians and gay men, disability issues, and economics; explores some common myths; and offers a very enlightening (although skewed toward gay male) history of what current elders in Great Britain have lived through. It gives advice on gaining input from older lesbians and gay men, conducting outreach to elder gays, and designing both gay-specific and mainstream-but-welcoming programming.

Much of what's in the packet could pertain to trans elders, with the addition of language like "gender identity" and "transphobia." Language adjustments alone would not help in the areas where trans elders' needs are distinctly different from the needs of non-trans lesbians and gay men, such as the segments on couples and partnership rights (since many trans people have legal marriages), and health care. There is also, of course, nothing on the needs of transitioning elders or their families. The extensive list of resources includes no mention of the programs that do serve trans elders, there are no trans-related terms listed in the glossary, and there's nothing about trans history and its impact on the transpeople who lived through it.

To address the "disappearing T" phenomena in services and programs that claim to serve LGBT elders, the Transgender Aging Network (TAN), an arm of FORGE, recently produced, "Is Your 'T' Written in Disappearing Ink? A Checklist for Transgender Inclusion." It is available for downloading at <http://www.forge-forward.org/handouts/InclusionChecklist.pdf>. Feel free to print it out and pass it along to your local LGBT aging project; it's one small step you can take to start making that disappearing "T" fully and permanently visible.

### New FORGE publications on the web

Community Resource Guide for Milwaukee, Madison, and Chicago, complete with local social support groups, therapists, physicians, area surgeons, alternative care providers, and more.

[www.forge-forward.org](http://www.forge-forward.org)

## Youth Issues at True Spirit Conference

Dear Gearhead:

*I've been hearing a lot about possible issues for youth at the upcoming True Spirit conference. I'm getting worried. I've heard about carding everyone to mark name badges by age, and a friend of mine was sent a medical release-type form thingy because they assumed he was under 18. They asked him for stuff like when his last tetanus shot was—but also asked for his legal name. They also wanted his parents to sign said form.*

*I don't know what to make of any of this. It doesn't apply to me, but it bothers me that it's going on. Any thoughts would be welcome—I'm always highly suspicious of any attempts to separate out and label the youth... What COULD they do to youth, what would they want to bar youth from? —Worried*

Dear Worried:

At *Connectivity's* press time, it was not clear precisely what youth would be barred from at TSC 2002, although the decision to card everyone and mark name badges by age seems to be firm. TSC co-chairs did promise, however, that those under 18 would not be turned away from TSC if they didn't have the medical waiver form signed by a parent.

There is a legal issue here, in that it's against the law in D.C. for minors to see certain images. Some of the TSC organizers are worried about staying on the legal

side in order to avoid risking police closing down the whole conference. However, we've certainly heard others charge that some organizers are pushing the age issue because they wish to impose their morality on youth and/or because they hold stereotypes about youth.

Because legality of trans+/SOFFA gatherings; the need to support young trans+/SOFFA individuals; and questions of stereotyping, morality, and exclusion are all ongoing issues in our community, *Connectivity* will devote part of its May issue (theme: sexuality and SM) to an exploration of the legal, moral, political, and personal issues surrounding youth and sexuality. We encourage everyone to write us with your experiences and opinions.

In the meantime, if you are not connected to other trans youth, we'd like to point out two resources. TransFamily runs a youth discussion email list for people who are younger than 21 and who are transitioning. For information on this, go to [www.transfamily.org/emailist.htm](http://www.transfamily.org/emailist.htm). TGTS-youth is an email list for people under age 26 who are transgender, transexual, or questioning. For information on this list, go to [www.queernet.org/](http://www.queernet.org/) and search for "tgts-youth."

We would like to feature more resources for trans youth and SOFFAs in our May issue. Please send information and leads to [editor@forge-forward.org](mailto:editor@forge-forward.org).

Gearhead

## Call for Submissions—TS/TG/IS Film &amp; Video

Boyd Kodak and Cat Grant are looking for submissions. Boyd is a transman, and together with his partner Cat, have been involved with curating trans programs for festivals, for a number of years. We are currently curating a TS/TG/IS program for the Toronto **Inside Out** Film and Video Festival, May 2002, as well as programming for the Toronto **Counting Past 2** TS/TG/IS Festival, September 2002. The **Counting Past 2** Festival first occurred in September 1997, and then subsequently in 1998 and 1999. After a 2 year hiatus, it will be returning in 2002 for a 3 day run. The festival will include film, video, presentations and performance. We encourage you to showcase our communities aesthetic, and not focus on a projects budget or production standards. We would be interested in seeing your work as soon as possible.

Please send a VHS screener to:

Grant/Kodak

1201 Islington Ave.

Toronto, ON, Canada M8Z 4T2

[countingpast2@yahoo.com](mailto:countingpast2@yahoo.com), [www.countingpast2.com](http://www.countingpast2.com), [www.insideout.on.ca](http://www.insideout.on.ca)

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*not that she thinks I look like a woman or that I act like a woman or that she senses female energy. It's that she is an idiot about it. Since coming to terms with these types of people, I have learned that to protect myself from them, I have to disclose less often to avoid annoyances like this. I have just learned the HARD WAY that not everyone will respect you once they know you are trans. And I don't like to go through life having to steel myself against the bastards all the time, if I can help it. I have a real job and career, I have to live in the real world, not some insulated gay ghetto, and I have established myself as a man in the world."*

### **"Trans" as a Temporary Condition**

There is more to how people approach the question of being "out" than what has already been enumerated: the practicalities of "passing" and "telling," other people's needs, and considerations of safety and respect. How one *defines* one's trans/gender status also has a huge impact; certain constructions seem to render the question of being out moot. For instance, many people define being trans as a transitory state through which one passes.

*"I transitioned to manhood, not transhood. In all honesty, the only people who need to know about it are my sex partners and my doctor. This is not because I am ashamed, hiding, in the closet or anti-trans. It is not because I think gender roles should be enforced onto everyone. It is because I am a man and that educating everyone as to the complexity of gender and transsexual procedures is a huge pain in the ass. And unless someone wants to get it, they won't."*

*"Being stealth to me is an odd term and almost gives me a sense that I am hiding something from some people. It seems that if we come out as male, then once transitioning is complete or the process is primarily done, then we are living as men and what sense is there to return to a previous state where we needed to tell everyone that we are 'trans', if our purpose was to live as our true selves which is male."*

*"I find the term 'out' to be an interesting word. It assumes that being 'out' denotes trans, that we come out 'trans'. That seems to only apply when considering transition, starting transition. Once one transitions then it seems 'Out' is to be male. Truthfully, I came 'out' as male. The fact I was born in a female body meant that I had to transition to a male body, but I came out as male not trans. Trans is a process to me, not an identity per se."*

*"To me, being a transsexual is simply not an identity. I am a man. I transitioned to be a man, not a transsexual. I transitioned to be part of society as a man, not a freak."*

### **Birth Defects and Bodily Faults**

Similarly, many trans people view themselves as having a

birth defect or hidden disability. Within this construct, being publicly "out" about the shape or size of an intimate body part doesn't make sense, as that type of information is typically known by only a few intimates.

*"How do we talk about people with other kinds of hidden birth defects? Is the person with a defective heart 'closeted' or using 'stealth' because he/she discusses it with only the doctor and his/her best friend? Do we call diabetics who wear a medical tag 'out'? How many guys does anyone know who have only one testicle, or a defective penis? Unless it's your brother, probably none. As a society, we don't expect people to divulge every anatomical deviation from the norm that they have -- and we don't think of them as being sly, stealthy, sneaky, living a lie, being devious, etc., either. Some things are still considered to be a person's own business, at least according to Mom and Miss Manners!"*

*"That, of course, means that people with bodily defects also have the right to tell every person in sight, or just a select few -- if they want to. But confessing to one's bodily faults is by no means compulsory or even necessarily expected, thank goodness!"*

*"So, since TSs also have physical defects having nothing to do with choice or moral perversity, I vote for the more neutral words "disclosed" and "undisclosed" for the divulging of physical faults of any sort, including transsexualism."*

*"By the way, I have disclosed my extreme myopia to everyone who drives with me! However, I've only disclosed my TS condition to my doctors, my wife, and two friends. 'Partial disclosure,' you might say."*

*"I'm out to the extent that diabetics are 'out' or deaf people are 'out.' I'm out if it comes up and not if it doesn't. Trans is an identity for me because I don't get a choice: I don't get to be both trans and non-trans identified at the same time. I want a 'don't care' category. I'm 5' 3" but I don't 'identify' as short; I just am."*

*"Since when did the information about my genitalia become something that people have a right to know about? Since when did we all start talking about the size and shape of our genitals? Are people who don't discuss their genitals with everyone single person in their life 'hiding'? Or are they having a measure of privacy about the most intimate part of their body?"*

*"To me, transsexualism, despite all the hype, etc., is nothing more or less than a physical birth defect. As such, we should be given the same sort of medical attention that persons with any other physical defect receive -- even though most doctors don't, as a rule, see it that way yet."*

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### Political Considerations

In a world where the existence of transgender people threatens many widely-accepted social norms, declaring oneself to be transgender or a SOFFA has political as well as social ramifications. Some individuals do not particularly want to threaten those social norms; others do.

*"These terms seem to apply most easily to people whose identity is trans or more genderqueer, to those who feel their community is the queer community, and not to the population of persons who see themselves living within the gender they feel best identifies their true self."*

*"Being 'out' is not such a big deal for me personally since I always identified as 'male' my entire life. For me it's important to be honest about who I am and I'm well aware that I'm not a bio-man. When I share this with people it's always a great opportunity to educate them on trans-issues and the existence of trans-folks."*

*"It can get frustrating always being out, feeling like a token to some, hated by others, and embraced by few. I would like to just live normally, I would like our relationship to be seen as normal. But as my boyfriend said 'We are a minority in a minority. A femme dating a trans boy, and actually liking it. Now that's a whole new kind of radical revolution.'"*

### Trans Community Contexts

How the trans community itself discusses issues of disclosure had an impact both on how people reacted to the wording of the survey and how they thought about their personal disclosure status.

*"If it was identity politics, then 'stealth' and 'out' would make sense, because if you're going to participate in identity politics, you're supposed to be giving your power to the group, right??? So of course it would be undesirable for a person to be 'closeted', we have to do ego trips on them and tell them they're just afraid to be loud like the other sects of the faithful (in democracy) liberal-humanist mob that says that the greatest number must be 'right'-and what is this 'right', anyway?..."*

"I do not agree with the belief that some trans "activists" have - that you have to disclose to be active, educating or caring about other transsexuals. That disclosing is the only way to equal rights and education for transsexuals. We can all play a part in that cause. In fact, I think that the transsexuals who disclose in only a few choice instances are the ones who educate others about the true meaning of all of this."

### Individual Histories

Finally, we cannot forget that individuals make personal decisions based on their own very particular histories and

beliefs about themselves.

*"It is always a question in my mind who to come out to. I realize that I don't get close to people because I will have to come out to them because it doesn't seem natural for me not to. Even at the gym I isolate so I don't get close to people. I try not to form relationships in those situations. I do have many friendships and a great support system but I think it odd that I should pull back on purpose. It seems unnatural to work at being detached rather than to work at forming bonds. I have watched people take the other approach and they come out once a week to somebody. I'm just not that strong but I wonder if the effects are healthier all the way around for ourselves, our communities and our relationships."*

*"One day we were talking about kids and she asked, 'Did that happen when you were pregnant?' To answer the question I told her I was the father not the mother of the child. I am easily passable as a female but I have chosen not to hide my past. ...I have chosen not to get into a new closet labeled stealth where I always have to fear someone discovering my past. I like being all of me. I do not feel like trading a closet named denial for a closet named stealth."*

*"Because of mitigating factors, I live 2 separate active lifestyles at present...with 2 separate living addresses... I am at present slowly integrating my TG friends into my other life and only where necessary have introduced my traditional friends to my TG lifestyle."*

*"One workmate has been incredibly disrespectful, verging on nasty, which has been my first experience of transphobia. Initially I felt intimidated and defensive, but in standing up to her I have affirmed my right to my identity. I feel like a young Jedi, learning the ways of the warrior."*

*"Although I respect the right of some people to be stealth, I feel that it is my duty as a leader, shaman, and role model to be as out as I can be at all times that it is practical. Every person that I am out to is one more person whose life I have changed. This is a sacred duty to me. I could no more be stealth than I could lie to everyone in my life. My partner is also a post-transition transsexual, and between the two of us we've done more front-line educating than you can imagine."*

### In the End

We want to thank everyone who answered the survey, and particularly those who took the time to comment on your answers or the survey itself. We knew going into this issue that being out wasn't a simple yes-or-no proposition. But we had no idea just how complex and rich a question it really was. We thank all of you for helping to make that very important point clear.

**Welcome to Connectivity, cont.***(Continued from page 1)*

We also report on a survey we conducted that ended up giving us (as we hope it will do for you) a far greater appreciation of the many considerations people grapple with as they decide to what extent they will make their trans+/SOFFA status public. We review a book that is devoted to what happens as a result of (non)disclosure decisions. Because one of our survey respondents said "I don't know any FTMs, with or without bottom surgery who would be able to be stealth with the lights off, Billy [Tipton] aside," we also interview a man who does not tell some of his sexual partners that he's trans to explore how that works for him.

And that's just some of what this *Connectivity* covers. We also make other connections. One of the services *Connectivity* will provide is analysis of publications and projects that purport to be pro-trans, to both identify tools we can use in our own education and advocacy efforts and to hold accountable those who are "T in name only." Our ratings will cover not only how well they address transgender issues, but also how well they reflect SOFFA and genderqueer experiences and concerns.

In order to connect with you, our readers, and begin building our community, *Connectivity* needs your input. Each issue will include a survey related to the next edition's topic, and we urge each of you to take a moment to fill that out and send it back. We also urge you to consult the "Coming Next Issue" box and seriously consider submitting something that reflects your experiences and thoughts. "Ask Gearhead" is designed for your questions, as Letters to the Editor is designed for your opinions.

Join us. Read. Think. Write. Connect. Create community.

*Connectivity***Coming Next Issue****Depression and Mental Health**

- Interview of Dylan (Daphne Scholinski), author of "When I Last Wore A Dress"
- What the major LGBT health groups have to say about trans and mental health
- Needs of kids with trans parents
- Coping with others scriptwriting our lives
- Review of *Arise*: A magazine for LGBTs of African Decent
- Mental Health Survey Results
- True Spirit Conference 2002 Review
- And much, much more!

**"FTM GroupLeaders" Email List**

Group Leaders is a list for people who are Group Leaders, Facilitators or Coordinators in the FTM or Transmen community in their area. FTM or Transmen here means FTMs, Transmen and other people who affirm their masculine or male identity. The list is designed for individuals to **share information**, specifically about organizing and facilitating these sorts of groups and community based services.

It is a place to share what works for you and what doesn't - about starting a group, managing the group dynamics, how to lead and facilitate networks and connections, as well as picking the brains of those who have experience as FTM leaders. It is also a place for community leaders **to network**, to keep each other in the loop, to offer strategies and borrow good ideas from each other. It's also a place to support each other in our passion and for those who need support when dealing with issues around burnout.

To join this group, send an email of inquiry to [portal-subscribe@topica.com](mailto:portal-subscribe@topica.com).

"Out is a LGB word. I do not feel it relates to transsexuals because what I have in my pants is not the business of anyone who isn't intimate with me."

"[Out] means 'Out of the Closet'. The Closet is a place where gay and lesbian people hid their sexuality from the general public. When people began to express their sexual preference openly and gays and lesbians gained more rights, a voice, visibility, etc., is when that term came into vogue."

"...I feel the term Out does not apply to transsexuals, and here is why. Gender and sexuality are two different things. If you call people who disclose that they are transsexual 'Out', what you are doing is appropriating a term that already has a different meaning - gay and proud. Trans people are not inherently gay or 'queer', in fact, the great majority are bisexual and straight. In addition, the term out can be seen by those who do not disclose as a put-down. Those who are not out are 'in the closet'. A shameful place. A hiding place. A boxed-in, dark, stuffy place where you are alone. I think that's a really rude thing to say about someone you know nothing about."

"I think that the term 'out's' allusion to 'the closet' has (at least to some people) the connotation of being related to some aspect of oneself that one's mother wouldn't approve of -- as in the phrases 'closeted' alcoholics, 'closeted' kleptomaniacs, etc. For that reason alone, I wouldn't use it to describe TSs. (The prevalent use of the term among many gay people is certainly their business.)"

"As far as the term 'stealth', I am not hot on that either. It has some meaning attached to it as well, like 'hidden' and 'secret'."

"Similarly, 'stealth' suggests furtiveness, sneaking around, and being less-than-aboveboard (to some people, including myself). So I wouldn't use 'stealth' in connection with TSs, either."

"Stealth is reminiscent of spying and covert operations, as in military 'stealth' technology. I did not transition to get a peek in the men's room or get into the 'good ol' boys club.'"

"I don't like the terms stealth and out, it's a put-down to those who choose not to disclose and slants it as a gay thing. How about disclosing and non-disclosing? Or Private / Disclosing? Stealth means hidden. I am not hidden to those I don't tell."

"My suggestion is that those who choose to stop using the terms Stealth and Out begin looking for new terms that are more respectful to both parties. Disclosing and

non-disclosing comes to mind. Private and Non-Private are another suggestion. I am open to suggestions."

"Also, there is no distinction made between being "in the closet" (still being perceived as your birth sex / assigned gender because you have not started transitioning or have not told people of your identity) and "stealth" (passing as the gender you have transitioned to, with few people knowing your birth sex)."

### Upcoming Newsletter Themes

- Depression and Mental Health Issues (March 2002)
- SM/Leather (May 2002)
- The Economics of Gender (July 2002)
- "Only" Space and Diversity (September 2002)
- Hormones (November 2002)
- Rituals (January 2003)

## Mental Health Call for Submissions

Submissions due no later than: March 10, 2002

One in three Americans will experience depression or a mental illness in their lives. It is believed that LGBTs experience a higher rate of depression and mental health concerns than non-LGBTs. What particular issues do trans+ and SOFFAs face?

- Trans+ people often have unique relationships with mental health providers. How do we balance therapeutic needs with "hoop jumping" (or getting what we want or need from a therapist)?
- How do trans+/SOFFAs deal with having to educate their provider(s)? Does educating your therapist jeopardize your quality of care?
- Some people seek out gender clinics to work on gender and other issues so they don't have to educate their provider. However, many gender clinics charge a flat "entrance" rate. Is this ethical? What services are received for these fees? Does this represent "buying" a letter for hormones or surgery?
- Therapists have (some) control over access to hormones and surgery (if following the Harry Benjamin Standards of Care). How does this affect the therapeutic relationship's honesty and integrity?
- A trans+/SOFFA person may have non-trans issues they wish to focus on in therapy. Some therapists get stuck on gender issues or believe it is the cause of all the consumer's issues. How can this problem be dealt with?
- Many young people have been subjected to mental health services to "cure" them of their gender variance. What are the long term effects of those involuntary "treatments"?
- What is known about how hormones react with psychotropic medications?
- Relationships often experience some level of strain around trans issues. Do others encourage separation or ending that relationship more often than they do when other issues are involved? How do relationships get support?
- Good mental health often includes having integrated history and being fluent with one's past through present. How does gender play a role in remembering, reporting, and dealing with historical events that may be gender-incongruent?
- Some believe being trans equals being mentally ill, and the Gender Identity Diagnosis doesn't help. What is the relationship between being trans and mental health?
- Being trans+/SOFFA (or being a racial minority, disabled, fat, or any other stigmatized minority) often means being subjected to prejudice and other assaults on one's mental health. What are the techniques people use to maintain emotional balance?

Send submissions for consideration to:  
 Email: editor@forge-forward.org  
 Fax: 414.278.6034  
 PO Box 1272  
 Milwaukee, WI 53201

[www.forge-forward.org](http://www.forge-forward.org)

**Connectivity**  
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**Next Issue:**  
**Depression and Mental Health**

