

F. O. R. G. E.

For Ourselves: Reworking Gender Expression

Inside this issue:

December's Party	2
Hawks and Pilgrimages	3
Reasons to Cherish being TS	4
Differently Gendered Snowman	5
Sometimes Boys <i>Should Cry</i>	6
Finding my Place at the Table	7
Letter to the Editor	7
REMOVED by AUTHORS request	8
A Cry Against Boys Don't Cry	9
DV Resources	9
Home for the Holidays PFLAG	10
True Spirit Conference	10

Holiday Issue

Inside this issue are several articles related to the holidays, and the interactions with our families that often occur over these busy and stressful winter days. Two people have written commentaries on the pre-Thanksgiving release of the mainstream film, *Boys Don't Cry*. While neither are reviews of the film, both critically comments on aspects of the film that affected them most. Cubby shares a poem on hir family's affect on celebrating Jewish holidays. Tamlin offers a humorous, yet serious account of her interactions with her family. PFLAG gives some hints on going home for the Holidays. Also included in this issue is an uplifting, almost mystical, piece of writing on how special it is to be transgendered.

Blake volunteered to write his life-altering hysterectomy experience, so that others could read and benefit from his surgical adventure. Beau has submitted his letter to the editor that was originally published in one of the GLBT papers in Chicago, regarding the recent convergence of trans and non-trans people at Horizons on trans-inclusion in all "womyn" spaces.

Mark your calendars for the next meeting, **January 8, 2000!** Once again, we will be meeting with the "girlz" of Gemini Gender Group to share our unique experiences, build bridges, find commonalities, and educate each other about the trends and individuality within our communities. Following this Milwaukee meeting will likely be a social gathering.

December 999 Event/PARTY!!

When: Saturday December 11, 1999

Time: 2:00 – 5:00 pm

Where: Buddies

3301 N Clark St
Chicago, IL 60657
(773) 477-4066

Buddies is a queer-owned, trans-friendly restaurant and bar.
People of all ages are welcome.

December Holiday Party

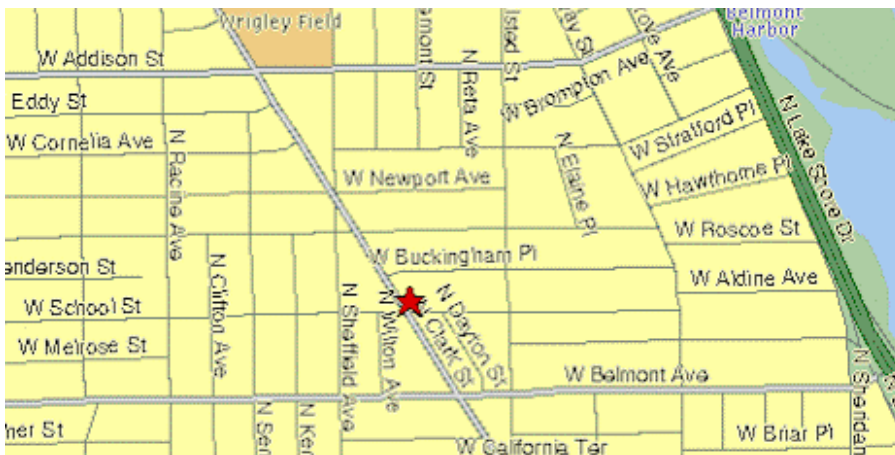
It's party time!

Join FORGE at our yearly winter holiday gathering – pre-Solstice, pre-Hanukah, pre-Christmas, or for an agnostically *good time!* As always, all are welcome – partners, friends, family. This is a chance for folks to get to know each other, to build friendships, and make connections that aren't always possible at topic-oriented meetings/gatherings.

Let's have some fun!

Directions From Wisconsin

Directions	miles
Take the I-94 E	39.3
I-94 E becomes TRI STATE TOLL S.	24.3
Take the I-294 SOUTH/TRI-STATE TOLLWAY exit towards INDIANA/O'HARE.	11.7
Take the I-90 EAST/I-90 WEST/KENNEDY EXPY/N-W TOLLWAY exit towards CHICAGO/ROCKFORD.	0.1
Take the I-90 EAST/KENNEDY EXPY exit on left towards CHICAGO.	0.6
Merge onto I-90 TOLL E.	0.8
I-90 TOLL E becomes I-90 E.	7.2
Take the ADDISON ST/3600 N exit	0.2
Turn LEFT onto W ADDISON ST.	3.2
Turn RIGHT onto N CLARK ST.	0.4



FORGE Calendar

(All schedules are tentative and subject to change.)

December 11, 1999

Topic: Coping with the Holidays
Buddies Bar and Grill
Chicago, IL

January 8, 2000

Topic: Bridging the Gap:
MTF/FTM Dialogue
(with Gemini Gender Group)
Location: Milwaukee, WI

February, 2000

Topic: Hormones: effects, side effects, how to inject, brands of testosterone, medical maintenance and more.
Location: Chicago, IL

March, 2000

Topic: Spirituality and Transgender
Location: TBA

April, 2000

Topic: Genderqueer:
Understanding non-bi-polar gender
Location: Chicago, IL

May, 2000

Topic: Leather and SM
Location: Chicago, IL

Vote on meeting topics for June through December 2000 meetings! Submit your ideas!

FORGE Newsletter

Published monthly, since '96
Editor: C. Michael Munson
Assistant Editor: Bear
Copyeditrix: pet femme

Send all correspondence and contributions to:
FORGE, PO Box 1272
Milwaukee, WI 53201
email: tgwarrior@execpc.com
www.execpc.com/~dmmunson/forge.htm
voice: 414-278-6031

Copyright © 1999 by FORGE
Rights revert to individual authors.

From the Editor

Hawks and Pilgrimages

By C. Michael Munson (tgwarrior@execpc.com)

Hawks line the highways. Mile after mile, huge birds of prey face with us as we drive the snow-covered roads between Milwaukee and Ames, Iowa. Never before have we seen so many birds, so many immense birds, all facing in the same direction, paying homage to a soul that they only knew in spirit, in the wind, in a plane greater than the one we were immersed in, of asphalt, fallen snow, high tension wires, and corn fields covered in a heavy white blanket.

We were on a journey that was unimaginable just a few days prior. We embarked on a pilgrimage to embrace family, to praise god, and to be reminded of all that should never be taken for granted.

Like in the Wizard of Oz, we were off to see the Wizard, a magical journey that started out plainly, simply, and became more mystical by the moment.

The hawks didn't fly. They sat perched on top of the telephone poles, the billboards, huge green highway signs. We started counting them, but lost count after we had reached dozens. This was no simple drive.

We were going to visit a family member in Ames, a young man who had recently been accepted into a doctoral program at the University of Illinois at Champagne-Urbana, on a full scholarship. A brilliant, sensitive man, who never released the wonder of the little boy in him, his shy, sensitive, caring temperament, yet adventurous nature. A fellow who cared for others, often more than he cared for himself. A devoted son, cousin, grandchild, who loved his family more than words had ever expressed. A young man who would wake at ungodly early hours (what I typically only saw from the night before), to head to the woods, perch up in a tree, and wait with his camera to photograph the birds he loved so much. Sometimes he crawled into places where few humans could ever have reached, rescuing newly born chicks in nests abandoned by their mothers, liberating these fragile little birds, literally saving their lives and aiding in their species survival.

Click. Freeze frame.

I walked into the living room late at night. The lights were all off, except a reading lamp on low. My father sat, with the current issue of Newsweek closed in his lap, tears streaming down his face. While I had seen my father cry before, I never before – or since – saw the pain that was within him, the ache that was keeping him from sleeping, reading, eating, functioning. Grief had taken over his existence. I could feel his paralysis. I, too, was paralyzed too, and reverted back to a very old childhood behavior... I patted him on the head, running my fingers through his hair – the pact that we made when I was old enough to understand about death and dying. I promised him that if he was unable to speak, I would run my fingers through his hair – something that gave him one of the greatest comforts in the world.

Click. Freeze frame.

My mother was busily arranging the flowers on the alter, politely avoiding being with family. The only way she was able was to turn a sacred event into an art project. Her grief was just as deep as the rest of us. She grieved in motion.

(Continued on page 11)

F.O.R.G.E.

Mission

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

© C. Michael Munson

Reasons to Cherish Being Transsexual

Author Unknown

Because being transsexual is often so hurtful, so filled with sadness and longing, with shame and loss and difficulty, it is easy to come to the conclusion that the whole thing is utterly a curse, perhaps inflicted by arcane and evil ancient gods.

Oh, probably.

But there is an upside too.

Most human lives are utterly mundane, devoid of any real uniqueness, the average person somnambulates through an existence devoted to filling the roles expected of them.

But to be a transsexual is a magical, wondrous thing.

Consider. We are given many gifts in compensation for the terrible loss of our childhood as ourselves, and for the pain we endure. We are by some as yet unknown mechanism statistically far more intelligent, as a class, than perhaps any other kind of people. We are almost universally more creative, and we often possess incredible levels of courage and self determination, demonstrated by our very survival, and ultimate attainment of our goal.

We are rare as miracles, and in our own way, as magical, or so has been the belief of all ancient cultures on the earth.

We are given awareness that others would never experience, understanding of gender, of the human condition, of society and the roles and hidden rules unquestioned within it. We are given a window into the lives of both sexes, and cannot help but be, to some degree, beyond either. From this we have a rare opportunity: to choose our own life, outside predetermined and unquestioned definition or role. We can do new things, original things, only because our experience is so unique.

We get to be true shapeshifters, and experience the sheer wonder of melty-wax flesh and a real rebirth into the world. Our brains and bodies gain benefit from having been bathed in and altered by the hormones of both sexes.

We appear to retain our visible youthfulness where others wrinkle, and for years longer. We possess neural advantages from both sexes, such as the language advantages of the feminized brain, and the spatial abilities of the masculinized brain both. We are shocked into waking up, if we allow it, to a life we create for ourselves...we are not automatically doomed to sleepwalk through life.

After our transformations, after the full-moon lycanthropic miracle that the modern age affords us, we can live lives of success and love, and genuine specialness, if we choose. If we can get past our upbringing, past the programming, the bigotry, the messages of disgust from the culture around us, if we can stand as ourselves in freedom, then our special gifts grant us a heritage of wondrous power.

We have a proud and marvelous history. In ancient days we were magic incarnate. We were Nadle, Winkte, Two-Souls, Shamans and healers and magical beings to our communities. We possessed the ability to give the blessings of the gods and spirits, and were prized as companions, lovers, and teachers.

We were the prize gift of ancient tribes, entertainers, designers and dreamers. Sometimes we were the - somewhat reluctant- rulers of empires, and the consorts of emperors. We were champions and warriors too, who were feared for our unique gifts turned to inevitable victory.

Know that it is only in recent centuries, with the rise of the single minded, monolithic and monotheistic desert religions, filled with harsh single gods and twisted, narrow morals, that our kind have become reviled, the objects of scorn. Once, we were the kin of the gods.

To be transsexual is not easy, and it is not a birth that could be envied, but neither is it a damnation. It was once considered a rare wonder, if a mixed one; a faery gift that cuts as it blesses.

And in the modern age, of hormones and surgery, we are the first generations of our kind to finally know the joy of complete transformation, of truly gaining our rightful bodies. No other transsexuals in history have been so fortunate.

I say that we are unicorns, rare and wondrous, with still a touch of ancient magic and the kinship of the gods. Though it is agony, beyond the fire we have the opportunity to become alchemic gold.

We have much to add to the world, and to give to ourselves and those who love us.

We have always been, we are still the prize of the tribe, for only the world around us has changed, the desert harshness branding us vile. We are still the same.

Our compensations are real, and our lives are special; we have but to grasp the gifts born of our sufferings.

When I look around me at the mundane lives, there are times I think that maybe I am glad I was born transsexual, for I would never have been what I have become without that curse. I cannot help but be grateful for my uniqueness, so I am brought to a strange revelation:

Deep down, I cherish having been born a transsexual.

Be a unicorn with me, and cherish it too.

The Differently-Gendered Snowman

By Tamlin (tamlin@mindspring.com)

Two weekends before Thanksgiving, I went down to my parents house, about an hour south of mine, to spend the weekend.

For my parents, the weekends before Thanksgiving signify the start of the Christmas season, and the start of their extensive Christmas decorating.

This year, I arrived to find a smiling, two and a half-foot snowman "statue," made out of felt and stuffing, on the table by the kitchen doorway. It carried a broom and wore a black beret. "His name is Monica," my dad explained.

"His name is Monica?" I echoed.

"Well, blame it on one of your mother's famous 'Mom-isms'," Dad grinned.

He proceeded to tell the story.

Apparently, Dad and Mom had been out shopping together for decorations, when they found the snowman. My mother, who is prone to sometimes bizarre but hilarious leaps of logic, shouted out loudly, "Oh, look! The snowman is wearing a black beret, just like Monica Lewinsky!"

Needless to say, several customers, as well as my father, nearly collapsed in fits of amused hysterics.

"So," Dad continued, "we named the snowman Monica. But the problem is, you know, one tends to refer to a snowman as 'he,' so..."

I jumped in. "So it's a transgendered snowman!"

I've often said that it is very hard to strike my dad silent, with nothing to say in response to a situation. But I could tell from the uncomfortable pause that followed, I had done just that.

We quickly changed the subject.

I've always considered myself extremely fortunate to be very close to my parents. Despite their initial shock, they've managed to acclimate to having a lesbian/queer daughter quite well. We've maintained a strong and supportive relationship, in a situation where I very much feared my Catholic-raised parents would back away from me in sadness and anger. They are even aware of my involvement in the s/m community, and although my father especially was very concerned about making sure my motivations for my behavior were emotionally healthy, and that I would not be harmed, my parents are now accepting that my intimate and sexual behavior is my business alone.

However, in that brief but seemingly-endless pause in my conversation with Dad, I could see, clearly illustrated, a rift between us that I had not previously even considered.

Two of the closest people in my life are transgendered. Two people who have influenced my life considerably, held me up through a very difficult period in my life, who know me better than most people in my life, who I consider part of my chosen family. Yet, when it comes to my birth family, my mother and father, there remains no way that I feel I could explain the depth and importance of these people in my life - and how their identity as transgendered people, to me, speaks of their

uniqueness, their strength, the complexity and depth of their spirit.

Just as I spend the holidays with my parents, around the dinner table or tree or fireplace, I often fantasize about doing the same with my chosen family - sharing special and happy times together in a place of support, respect, and love.

However, in that conversation with my father, I came to a sad realization. My link to my transgendered loved ones is a concept that my birth family would never understand, certainly not as the important and profound connection it represents in my life. Instead, I suffer comments about how one of my partners, a very close friend and "big brother" to me, is "too masculine" in his looks and dress and mannerisms. I endure uncomfortable stares and pauses if I ever mention the word "transgendered" in front of my parents. I refrain from telling them that my friend in the Midwest to whom I've become so close, and care about so deeply, is also an FTM.

Why? Because I harbor the perhaps-justified fear that my parents will see my friends as "abnormal," as "sick," as "freaks." And beyond that fear, - even if it were not to be justified, - I know that my parents and I do not share the background and language I would need to fully explain the role my transgendered loved ones have played in my life. The gifts they have given me. The reasoning behind the deep respect I hold for them.

I feel that to try to explain would be somehow defiling sacred space, since there is no language, between my parents and me, to explain.

Throughout that weekend with my parents, Monica the Differently-Gendered Snowman stood as a silent reminder of the rift that exists between my birth family and an important part of my chosen family.

At this point in my life with my parents, I don't see any solution towards bridging that gap. Perhaps someday, there will be a space in which I can explain.

Until then, Monica will stand at the doorway each Christmas at my parents' house, a smiling reminder of a reality that lives within their house, within their daughter, so close to their home, yet so far from their minds and understanding.

Pet Femme Quotes

"don we now our gay...uh...trans apparel...
fa la la la la, la la, la la"

Sometimes Boys *Should* Cry

By Bear (devitt2@execpc.com)

While MTFs have had a place in American popular culture since 1970 with the release of both the Christine Jorgenson Story and Myra Breckenridge, FTMs (not counting John Waters' Frankendick scenes nor Victor Victoria in 1982) have not been so blessed until the last few years. It is important to note that the advent of FTM films brought little humor or enlightenment, rather a brutal tale of rape and murder. Both the Brandon Teena Story, a documentary, and Boys Don't Cry, a dramatic mainstream film, present the short life story of Brandon Teena and his demise in the seedy Nebraska countryside. An informal discussion of both films followed the FORGE meeting at Howard Brown on November 6, 1999, and the majority of those who had seen both films rated the documentary as excellent and the dramatic film as a letdown.

While Boys Don't Cry had a "cute" star, it felt long and boring. It certainly captured the essence of a community filled with ignorant drunken rednecks. The local bar had that sleazy, smoky, down-home quality, and was filled with all kinds of scum. And if the locals weren't out drinking, they were drunkenly driving their big trucks through the mud and the muck, or at home drinking more beer and acting like trailer trash. It was an incisive portrait of rural American life. Unfortunately Brandon's character was not afforded the same depth.

As we enter Brandon's life, he has already left home and is in trouble with the law although we aren't told the reason. His primary goal is to "pass" with women and to get laid as a guy. Even though a male friend warns him of the dangers, the underage Brandon packs and heads off to the local bar with his fraudulent drivers license to try and pick up girls. He is successful, and the stage is set for disaster as Brandon meets some nice girls with a pair of very nasty male friends. The film presents some of the more idiotic male bonding rituals such as bumper skiing and high speed police chases through the Nebraska countryside by which Brandon proves himself to be one of the guys. A traffic stop leads to another ignored notice to appear in court, and alludes to the unlawful nature of Brandon's identity. We also see Brandon as the charming date brought home to meet mom. The filmmaker plays upon the inference that Brandon was born female and therefore is better prepared to please women than the average guy from Nebraska. (Such a lesbian viewpoint!) We then watch Brandon as the adolescent Romeo making out with his girlfriend. Some viewers commented that the multiple heavy petting scenes demonstrated the sexual nature of Brandon's relationships. Others thought that the scenes were there to titillate the hetero males in the audience rather than to provide some deeper meaning, and that one such scene would have been sufficient.

Eventually, the locals discover Brandon's gender-crossing and confront him, demanding to see his dick. His

girlfriend tries to fend them off, claiming that she has seen Brandon's genitals, and that he's normal. Her attempts fail, and Brandon is taken away, raped, and beaten. Local law enforcement does little to help Brandon, focusing on his gender variance rather than his assault, and his attackers go free. By this time, the film has started to move away from history and towards Hollywood. The final scenes of the film, including the death of Brandon, are highly fictionalized. Although the murder is staged very well, it should be noted that in reality the only survivor was a toddler--no adult lived through the rampage as shown in the film. The young black man who tried to shelter Brandon was never mentioned in Boys Don't Cry, even though he died with him in the farm house.

Perhaps the greatest failing of Boys Don't Cry was its inability to convey the gender issues which drove Brandon to change gender presentations as well as his identity. There was no background information provided, and viewers were lead to make assumptions. Brandon's childhood certainly contributed to his law-breaking lifestyle. Many law violations from shoplifting to grand theft auto, from a fraudulent drivers license to forged checks and other charges, are attributed to Brandon under several aliases. Ultimately, only Brandon could answer our questions about his gender identity. We can only make inferences. It's very likely that Brandon had only the most cursory of information about FTMs. Both films imply that he knew "the surgery" was very expensive, but what else did Brandon know or not know? It's close to certain that he did not have access to support organizations like FORGE. He probably did not have a therapist or physician in whom he could confide. And to be isolated in the Nebraska countryside...it is remarkable that Brandon was as successful as he was.

Boys Don't Cry Resources and Web Addresses

Interview with the director of the film: Boys Don't Cry

<http://www.theavclub.com/index.html>

Finding My Place at the Table

By Cubby J. Sherwood (cubby@links.magenta.com)

Judaism.
Men wear yarmulkes.
Women light candles.

Begging to have one of the yarmulkes flipped to me
like a Frisbee,
the way my uncle is flipping them to all the guys.
Watching my pleas go unnoticed.

Being asked to light the candles,
say the blessing
i feign ignorance of the words.

Why can't they see i should cover my head the way
they do?
joining with the men in this, one of the few traditions we
adhere to, if only on the holidays?

Memories.
of the time long ago when my uncle caved into my
request,
Handed me a yarmulke because there were extras.
Having to weather my grandfather's questions,
beating down like hail.
"Why are you wearing one? Take it off!"
"Girls don't wear them!"

i sat, silent.
Unable to come up with a strong defense
i offer no defense at all.

i never asked again.

My grandfather is gone now.
Perhaps it is time to ask again.

Perhaps i should bring my own.

FORGE+/FTM Webpage

Please check out some of the revisions at:
www.execpc.com/~dmmunson

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

Letter to the Editor

By Beau Lee James (beaulj@juno.com)

[Editors Note: This letter to the Editor pertains to an event hosted by Horizon's, focusing on MTF inclusion at the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival and the Mountain Moving Coffee House (in Chicago). It was a formal, supposedly moderated, debate on the general subject of the inclusion/exclusion of transpeople in/from "womyn-born-womyn" spaces. This event was very highly attended, with some lively discussion, and some genuine listening, even though there was no real progress in the end. Hopefully, there will be more discussions and forums for trans and non-trans people to try to better understand each other.]

I was excited upon seeing that Horizons [was] hosting a trans forum (Oct 20 issue) Nov. 1, but after perusing the entire article was extremely disappointed to see learn the forum is only addressing the male-female issues of the "trans" community.

I realize that the entire transgender topic is diverse and complicated, but for us male identified, female to male (FTM) "trans" forums should include our issues too. 99% of all "transgendered topics, forums, issues, articles, etc. deal only with male-to-female issues. Somehow, this makes us FTMs feel we are not included and "outside" of the realm of "transgendered."

Of course this is not true in reality, but Horizons should be much more sensitive to the needs of the ENTIRE "trans community" if hosting a publicized "forum." I cannot stress how many times in the past 8 years that I have been physically and/or verbally attacked by men in gay establishments not accepting my presence (I identify as a gay male), and all the cruel, hurtful comments made about a "lesbian" in a man's bar, or general assumptions about anyone who looks/acts butch, being a lesbian, etc.

I understand the problems MTFs are encountering at lesbian gatherings, but a "trans forum" hosted by an organization such as Horizons, should either encompass a broader range of issues, or call this special seminar something completely different--using a title that is more MTF specific, and not just "trans." There are quite a few FTMs in the Chicagoland area, not to mention an ever-growing worldwide group of us, and though we certainly have some very different issues from MTFs, the most basic one of not being accepted in places we DO belong, is shared by ALL transgendered people! But MTFs/lesbian problems seem to be the only ones addressed at this mislabeled forum. Hopefully, Horizons will use better judgement in planning/labeling "transgendered" forums in the future, and choose event descriptions with more sensitivity, and awareness.

**This article has been
removed by the request of
the author (1/5/2005)**

A Cry Against Boys Don't Cry

by Christopher C. Faust

When I heard that a major film had been made about a FTM transgendered person had been made, I was thrilled. While gays and lesbians have been well established as regular characters on TV and in motion pictures, transgendered persons have not received the same widespread media roles. I do acknowledge MTFs and male to female drag personas have been seen in films like the Crying Game and Priscilla - and everyone seems to know who RuPaul is. But aside from talk show trash and a fleeting cameo on an FTM character on NYPD Blue that I happened to catch (who was referred to as a hermaphrodite by "Andy Sipowicz", Dennis Franz's character) we have remained invisible to the media. All considered, I had high hopes for the film.

I emphasized with Brandon's romantic struggle in the film. I was shocked and sickened by the humiliation and violence forced upon him before his savage murder. My insides were crushed when his assailants raped him, forced him to expose his genitalia, then shot and stabbed him. I know that in very bad circumstances this kind of violence could also happen to me or other transgendered persons I know.

My insides also began to churn when it was uncovered that Brandon was not a biological male--the discovery of his discarded tampons, the bloodied jeans, the search of his belongings. The search revealed a pamphlet about F to M treatment and surgery. The cast whispered and gossiped the discovery from one person to another and called Brandon a freak--a very sick and disturbed person. It was painful to hear the negative and transphobic reactions as I personally prepare to inform extended family members of my transition before the holidays. Seeing and hearing the terrible reactions against Brandon was seeing and hearing what I fear most for myself.

Where I have trouble with the film is that the stereotypic bigoted and violent responses are what carried the most intensity and were at the end. This I why I fear that "mainstream" audiences will remember that negative intensity toward FTMs the most. I am afraid they will forget how positive and confident Brandon

seemed to feel about himself and his happiness in living as a male.

The film further frustrated me in that it was not a first person story and did not bring us into Brandon's head. It did not show us why he chose to transition nor all of those things FTMs come to learn about upon entering manhood and what a struggle that process can be. We don't know how he made the choice, how he got a male ID. We are not told why he does not pursue hormone therapy or surgery, although dialogue with his male roommate suggests there is fear. We don't know if he had a former identity as a lesbian. Finding male peers and work as a male are some major transition issues but we really don't know how Brandon feels about these things in his life. We see Brandon incarcerated as a female but the film ignores the dangers incarcerated TG's may face. He develops a sexual issue with Lana but it is never made clear why she chooses to accept him as TG even when it appears she knows that he is not a biological male.

Brandon is portrayed as a drinker, liar, womanizer and thief. I tried to put myself in his shoes and sensed that if I were him, I would not like how this film made me appear. It is clear that the other players in his real-life story aren't either because of the litigation now involved with the film--that the film appears to incriminate those who were not a part of the crime scene and that Lana is depicted as white trash. Also, individual's real names were used. On those two counts, I believe the film maker acted irresponsibly. On the final count, I don't think the film maker was responsible to the FTM community either. While I realized it was Brandon's life story being shown, the film failed to show a positive and meaningful portrayal of the scope of dilemmas FTMs face in life. Instead we are only depicted as victims of transphobia and violence.

[Ed. Note: This article is one man's reaction to the film, and not intended as a review.]

Domestic Violence Resources

A list of Chicago/Midwest domestic violence resources will be published in an upcoming issue of the FORGE newsletter. Lindsay McBride and Rich Jentzen facilitated a lively discussion at the last FORGE meeting (November 6, 1999). They will be sharing with us their professional and social support resources.

Home For The Holidays Tips For A Happy Holiday

From PFLAG

If you are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender...

1. Don't assume you know how somebody will react to news of your sexual orientation [gender identity] - you may be surprised.
2. Realize that your family's reaction to you may not be because you are gay [transgendered]. The hectic holiday pace may cause family members to act differently than they would under less stressful conditions.
3. Remember that "coming out" is a continuous process. You may have to "come out" many times.
4. Don't wait for your family's attitude to change to have a special holiday.
5. Recognize that your parents need time to acknowledge and accept that they have a gay [transgendered] child. It took you time to come to terms with your sexual orientation [gender identity], now it is your family's turn.
6. Let your family's judgments be theirs to work on, as long as they are kind to you.
7. Create your own holiday gathering with friends and loved ones, if it is too difficult to be with your family.

Before the visit...

1. Make a decision about being "out" to each family member before you visit.
2. Discuss in advance with your partner how you will talk about your relationship, or show affection with one another, if you plan to make the visit together.
3. Don't wait until late into the holiday evening to raise the issue of sleeping arrangements. If you bring your partner home, make plans in advance.
4. Have alternate plans if the situation becomes difficult at home.
5. Find out about local g/l/b/t resources.
6. If you do plan to "come out" to your family over the holidays, have support available, including a Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) publication and a phone number of a local PFLAG chapter.

During the visit...

1. Focus on common interests.
2. Reassure family members that you are still the same person they have always known.
3. Be sensitive to your partner's needs as well as your own.
4. Be wary of the possible desire to shock your family.
5. Remember to affirm yourself.
6. Realize that you don't need your family's approval to sustain an excellent relationship with your partner.
7. Connect with someone else who is gay [transgendered] - by phone or in person - who understands what you are going through and will affirm you along the way.

True Spirit Conference 2000 Creating a Vision for the Next Century

February 18-20, 2000

Hilton Alexandria Mark Center
Alexandria, Virginia,
5000 Seminary Road
Alexandria, Virginia 22311
Tel: 1-800-HILTON (for reservations only)
1/703/845-1010

The American Boyz are pleased to announce the Fourth Annual True Spirit Conference to be held at the Hilton Alexandria Mark Center, Alexandria, Virginia, on February 18-20, 2000. This three-day conference focuses on the social, physical, emotional, spiritual, and relational health of all gender variant people on the FTM spectrum and their significant others, friends, families, and allies.

Workshops and panel presentations to be held during this fourth annual event address such topics as: health and wellness issues, relationships, special needs populations (including youth, elders, people of color, and individuals who have physical challenges), legal, political, employment issues, and spirituality.

Other events scheduled for True Spirit 2000 are: authors readings and chat sessions, exhibit hall with information and merchandise, art show, and the American Boyz Award Ceremony.

Conference fees range from \$40-\$80. Those registering before January 1, 2000 will enjoy a discounted registration fee of \$60. Some work scholarship and housing assistance is available on a first come, first serve basis. There are two options for registration: download and complete the registration form from the internet at <http://ambooz.org/TSC/TSC2000reg.html> Or, request a conference flyer from The American Boyz/True Spirit 2000, 212A South Bridge Street, # 131, Elkton, MD, 21921.

To offer programming suggestions or requests, please contact Michael Munson at tgwarrior@execpc.com or 414-278-6031.

The American Boyz is an organization for female to male gender variant people (FTMs) of any orientation, including but not limited to tomboys, butches, f2ms, transmen, drag kings, masculine females, crossdressers, intersexuals, and those who support us, including our Significant Others, Friends, Families, and Allies (SOFFAs). The American Boyz, Inc., 212A South Bridge

Submit !

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

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

- ⇒ Bridging the Gap: MTF/FTM Dialogue (Press deadline: December 15)
- ⇒ Hormones (Press deadline: January 10)
- ⇒ Spirituality (Press deadline: February 10)
- ⇒ Genderqueer (Press deadline: March 10)
- ⇒ Leathersex and SM (Press deadline: April 10)

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

Hawks and Pilgrimages, cont.

(Continued from page 3)

Click.

"This is a family event. You are riding with us", bellowed my parents as I refused to go "alone" to Iowa. "This is a time for *family* not a time to have fun with your friend." For the first time, the power of my emotions, gave me the gift of strength I didn't realize was within me. I stood my ground and assured that my support system surrounded me through this journey.

Click.

The neighbors came, one by one, bringing food, leftovers from their own Thanksgiving dinner, or freshly made turkey, salads, breads, pies. They came regularly, quietly, knowingly. Only the women came – they stayed in the kitchen, laying out food, washing dishes, quietly observing. Total strangers to me, they welcomed me and my partner – two butch, gender-variant dykes – encouraging us to eat the food they thoughtfully prepared, taking time away from their family celebration to be with total strangers.

Click.

We arrived first. The woman greeted us warmly, with respect, making sure that we were immediate family, since only family could visit. She led us to the small room at the end of a short hallway, pulling open the door. She knew little of the history, only the few details that she was able to glean from the police reports and the minimal interactions with his parents.

We informed her that Granny would soon be coming, he was her favorite – two ornithologists, two gentle souls, that mirrored each other, allowed each other to thrive. Assuredly, she reached out and smoothed his hair, tenderly running her fingers through his hair like a comb, pulling up the sheet just a enough to cover the scar. The makeup was impeccable, fully covering his ashen face and the depressions where the chain had encompassed the soft white flesh of his neck.

Click.

The snow remained on the cornfields, the birds on their perches, though they had changed their direction. We headed home, the birds guided our way, facing us, again. Their beautiful white and speckled bellies, their necks outstretched, eyes peering straight ahead, but likely still hunting for food. Mile after mile, birds of all sizes, shapes, colors, attitudes, greeted us, comforted us. We weren't alone as we traveled, the hunters, the free-spirited birds assured our safe journey home, this cold Thanksgiving weekend.

Click.

Erik was one of the most sensitive people I have ever had the privilege of knowing. He was kin, my familiar, my mirror. Although a year younger than me, he was sure of himself and not afraid of his gentleness, the sensitivity within him, his connection with nature and things that so few others are ever able to understand. His ability to scoop the chicks out of their nests, hold long enough to band them, sit still in the trees just waiting in stillness. He was a young man who freely showed his emotions, crying at injustice, never afraid to go out on a limb, in reality or metaphorically.

Click. Close shutter.

Not a Thanksgiving goes by without focusing on Erik's life, and the injustice of a brilliant, young 23-year-old, who could not withstand the pain that accompanied his greater-than-average-sensitivity.

As I continue forming an identity as a masculine person in this world, I often think of Erik, knowing that all men are not created equal. I look in the mirror and see him over my shoulder, sweeping back his golden blonde hair with his slender fingers.

As I've neared suicide at times in my life, Erik emerges – seeping into the mirrors' edge, shining a light that catches my eye, flying above the freeway floating on the thermals. His spirit has always been in the hawks and the sandpipers, soaring high above the fields and trees and lakes, not immured within his body. Just as my spirit is not housed within my body or within just two genders – our spirits unite. From the moment of his death, I knew that I must face what lies within me, or I, too, would leave this plane, leaving yet another place setting missing from the Thanksgiving dinner table.

His death strengthening everyone in his life by forcing us all to start living honestly, to not hide our true feelings, our identities, our passions.

I still shudder at the reality and permanence of his death – so many years past. And I still tremble at the truth that in his death, he allowed me to see a masculinity that embodied gentleness, and granted me the courage to emerge as a masculine person not bound by the chains of socially constructed masculinity. In his death, the pain and richness of his life's truths, forced me to be less afraid to be my genuine self, a person who can soar with him, above the rigors of cultural constructs.

FORGE
PO Box 1272
Milwaukee, WI 53201

Next Event
December 11, 1999
Chicago, IL

