

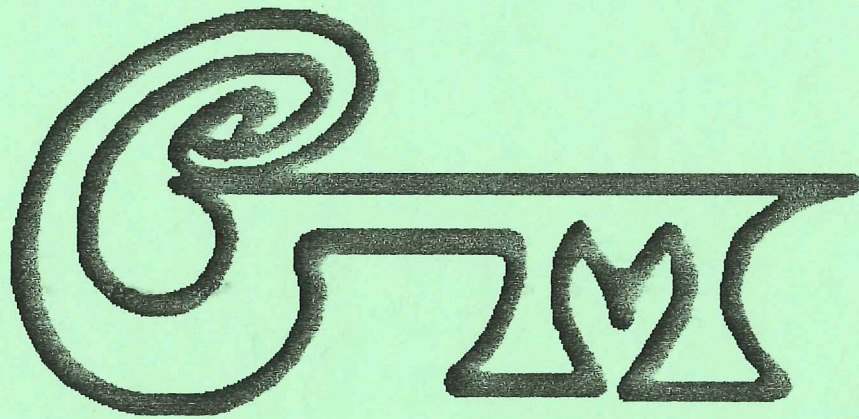
GENDER MOSAIC'S

Notes From The Underground

News From Ottawa's Transgender Community A Free Bimonthly Publication

July 1998

Issue 3-98



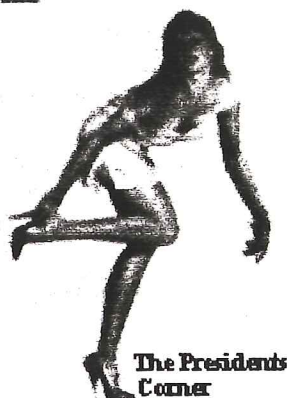
Proud To Be Part of
Ottawa's Pride Week
1998



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From the President's Diningroom in down town Hull, Quebec.

Where do I start, it seems that every day some sort of community event is inviting Gender Mosaic to be a part of the dialogue or just listening to what

is being said. Now we are ready to help them, by being there, asking and giving advice, or helping in making decision. Did you like our new safe place for our socials, let me know?

Our 10th anniversary celebration, May 9th 1998 was a huge success. over 100 attended. Everybody had a good time, my compliments to the people that made it just right. To all the volunteers who helped taking tickets, and setting up the buffet. Thanks to A&M caters, RPM Mobile Music, Sylvia's disc sounds, and to Deb our cake maker.

Another special event, on June 7th "The Association of Gay Lesbian and Bisexuals of Ottawa" ALGBO in their general meeting, voted to have the "T" included in their name now known as "The Association of Lesbian, Transgender, Gay, Bisexual of Ottawa" ALTGBO. For some this association is 28 years old, one of the oldest in North America, I am also the Vice President of this organization. It was a "yea" vote to all that attended.

I attended the first "Queering The Nation" conference at York University in Toronto, June 24-27 and yes there were several workshops on the Transgender issue. It was nice to see all the university students from across the nation. Each from the GLBT(q) centres. Delegates from the social service

industry, interested community leaders and policy changers. Members of our federal parliament, members of provincial parliaments, social and political action groups telling of the history of human rights movements. All fighting for our rights as Canadians. Four days of workshops dedicated to the cause of human rights. Next year it will be more inclusive and we hope all the bugs will be removed. My congratulations to Jeff Zoeller, Conference Coordinator and to all the volunteers that made this event real.

PRIDE in Toronto; An estimated 750.000 people lined Young St and Church St. With the temperature about 85 F. and the humidity 60% all I can say is that a few people did not wear their sun screen and a few are feeling it the next day. I did not have a chance to see the parade because I was in it, as part of the Ottawa's "Pride in The Capital" float. Fun, sunburned skin, talking to wonderful people, seeing wonderful people and just being a part of the festival, "Wow".

That wraps up my dialogue for this issue of NFTU so until next time. Ta Ta...Joanne



Page One.....



The Editors Desk

With our 10th Anniversary sadly behind us, one can't but wonder what will happen before our 20th Anniversary. It was delightful to experience an interaction with friends from both the West Coast as well as the East Coast. There can be little doubt, that since the inception of the Internet, the Transgendered world has discovered many new horizons. Equally important, it was a pleasure to have the presence of

our friends within the GLB communities as well.

In a recent article in the Capital Xtra (June 26 1998) a great deal was written about whether or not the Gay community is obliged to embrace Transgender issues? It goes without saying that our primary issues are vastly different, those being sexual orientation vs gender identity. However, it also goes without saying that many of our issues are not so different. Transgendered folks, be they male to female or female to male, are still the object of hate crimes, just the same as gay bashing seemed like the "thing to do" We are the target of anything that a hetro-sexist society deems "not normal" The "not normal" being anything that they don't understand or choose not to. When a male to female Transgendered person comes out to his spouse, more often than not, that disclosure will put them in the same line to the divorce court as the male who just disclosed to his wife that he is Gay. Once through the divorce court, both will have the same opportunity to successfully nurture their children.

Lets assume that two male to female Transgendered persons decide to tie the knot, can they legally? Certainly not, but then lets look at that, are they gay, lesbian or bisexual? Or, are they just Transgendered?

The services burden implied by PTS President Barry Deeprise, would be superb, if they were to provide costly ones such as therapists, psychologists, surgeons, cosmetologists, access to hormones to name but a few. All we seek is to be included in areas such as discussion groups. Both communities have much they can learn from each other with no price. But richer in the long run. Yes the youth are questioning and calling, because they are uncertain who to contact. It takes very little effort to direct those who feel they are Transgendered, to Gender Mosaic, with over 10 years experience and a great deal of proficiency, not only in dealing with the entire Transgender spectrum, but the sexual orientation within.

Transgender is coming of age and many closet doors are beginning to open. Especially to those who don't have Internet access.

Lets not loose sight of the fact that within the Transgender community exists a great deal of expertise and resources of our own, there for the asking.

Oh yes, let us not forget AIDS, not a disease limited to the GLB community. Many a Transgendered person has died as a victim to AIDS, selling their bodies to pay for the services that they can not receive from any social organization. Those same grave yards are also filled with Transgendered folks who have sadly taken their own lives, because of rejection and a society

who has failed to meet the simple basic needs of someone Transgendered. Fear and rejection are not unknown to us, but from the GLB community as well?

No the Transgendered community isn't looking at taking over the GLB communities or beating a path to steal services. We are looking for a means to live in our own unique lifestyles, not so very much different from the wants and needs of the gays, lesbians or bisexuals.

For the most part, many folks don't realize that the GLB communities have roughly a 25 year jump on the Transgender communities and many of those are only just coming to understand who they are and the issues they are about to confront. Is it then any wonder why the Transgender movement throughout North America have chosen an Alliance with the GLB. Yes, GLBT is not unique to Ottawa, in fact we are behind many of the states in America. Ottawa has the prestige of being one of the first in Canada.

The words "sexual orientation" did not come without a price in the Canadian Human Rights Act, nor will the words "gender identity". A great deal of the lessons learned by the GLB community, will become invaluable to the Transgendered community as we seek our own right to self determination. We seek little more than an alliance and nurturing from a community who is reaching maturity, to a community still in it's infancy.

If you feel you may be Transgendered and need help, call our Hotline at 770-1945

The views expressed are those of the editor, Michelle Renee and are not necessarily those of Gender Mosaic. And she stands behind them with conviction



Gender Mosaic's Executive ready to cut Anniversary Cake. From left foreground, Sharon - Treasurer, Joanne Law - President Right background Margo Ross- 1st VP, Michelle Renee 2nd VP, Lynn Lefevre-Secretary

New This Month to NFM
Profiles

Who is Micheline Montreuil?

Name: Micheline Montreuil

Profession: Consultant in management

Residence: Quebec city in Canada

Measurements: 40C-32-40

Dress Sizes & Styles: 18-20 From ankle length to 1 inch below the crotch

Turn-ons: Nice lady or gentleman who offers me flowers, treat me as a lady and who caresses me softly and gently in telling me nice words in my ears

Turn-offs: Impolite persons, too aggressive or macho persons

Fantasy: To live a full year as a woman and to play a female role in a movie

Born on June 7, 1952, Micheline is a Gemini and a Dragon. With her 5'11" height, her blue eyes, her classic look, her graceful attitude, her dual personality and her sizzling but gentle temper, her friends call her the Princess of Gemini and the Daughter of the Dragon.

I have put on my first bra and panty at the age of 13, dressed myself completely at the age of 16 and done my first complete make-up at the age of 25 when I have done my first outings. Since this time, I have never stopped to dress myself as a woman. At the beginning, I have used bras and slips from my mother and elder sister. However, swiftly, I have decided to have my own female clothing. So, I have begun by buying some stuff by catalogue from Sears; I have bought bras, panties, slips, pantyhose and shoes. I have also bought some skirts, blouses and dresses in regular stores without, obviously, trying them. I was lucky because I have always bought the right size dresses.

At the age of 30, I moved in my own apartment and since this time, I dressed myself more and more as a woman. From time to time, I may stay dressed as a woman 24 hours a day for period as long as one month and usually, when I go in vacations, I left my home dressed as a woman and with only female clothing in my suitcases. So, I have no choice; I must live as a woman as long as I will be in vacations. During these times, I live as a full-time woman like any standard woman. I shop, eat in a restaurant, go to a cinema, walk in a park, take the airplane, the bus or the train, stay at hotel, rent a car, etc. every thing like a woman and it is certainly the most rewarding part of my life.

When I am in a restaurant, I like it when everyone calls me Miss or Mrs. I really like when a man opens me the door or places my chair. When I am dressed in female clothing, I accept invitations from man and I conduct myself exactly the manner that a man expects from me or from any other woman. When I am with other girls, I act exactly like a girl.

When I am dressed in female clothing, not only I feel much more free and comfortable, but this is really the way that I like and this is the reason why I would like to wear female clothing 24 hours a day. In fact, I find it more "standard" for me to live and to work dressed as a woman than dressed as a man. So, day after day, I become more feminine. I am a Shemale and I am proud of that and very happy. So, when I am dressed, I am just a woman; no more and no less than any other woman. I have considered to pass through surgery to have breast implants but at this time, nothing is done. Actually, I am looking for a job as a woman, I send application as a woman and I go to interview as a woman.

I am also a little bit exhibitionist, extravagant, maybe eccentric like a show girl, but I like very much the fascinating and flaring girl that I am.

For my friends, Micheline is a very happy and kind person and a good female companion for all occasions. All the friends of Micheline say that "Micheline is a very nice person" and I think that this is right.

If God came on Earth and asked me Micheline, you must choose to live just as a man or just as a woman: what do you choose? I will answer I would like to live as a woman.¶

Love

Micheline

If you would like to have your profile here, send it to the editor in either a plain text file or virtually any word processor file. It must be in English.

Send to: nftu@canadamail.com

Transsexual Journeys

Lynn Nicole Lefevre

I am surrounded by friends,
yet I am alone.

I have lived long,
yet am only a child.

I have seen the heights of ecstasy
and the pits of despair.

I have traveled a million miles,
yet my journey has only just begun.

For those who are contemplating the Transsexual journey, know now that it is fraught with many difficult passages. Even when you think you have conquered all, you will find places that will challenge your ability to survive. You must be strong to succeed.

So how do you make it through this journey? You will find that you have an inner strength that will help you through the rough times. You will find many friends who will go out of their way to help. You will find a way to succeed.

It has been said that Transgendered people have special powers and abilities. We have a unique view of life - experiencing both ends of the Gender spectrum. We also have the ability to draw on our inner strength - knowingly or not - to survive and to help others find their way.

I have only been traveling on this journey for a short while, yet have been fortunate to travel far in that time. I have also been fortunate to make a lot of friends along the way, and share their experiences. I have friends who started their journey when young, old, and everywhere in between. Each has found unique obstacles and opportunities along the way.

For many young people, the journey can be particularly difficult. Many have difficulty finding jobs. Many lose the support of their

family. Far too many end up on the streets just to survive.

Those who transition later in life also have many difficulties. For those who have been fortunate to build a successful career, family, home, etc., they risk losing it all. Others who have not been able to build a successful life, have the burden of starting from the bottom. Some have few job skills, which is complicated by the fact that they are a Transsexual.

So why do we do it? It is certainly not something we would choose to undertake, yet we find ourselves driven to follow this path - sooner or later.

The key, I think, is we must do this in order to remain sane, to be happy, and to get some fulfillment out of life. In addition, many of us have been living a lie for much of our lives, and eventually find that we can no longer maintain that facade.

How does one know this is the right journey for oneself? This is perhaps the toughest question I have had to answer. All I can say, is the knowledge comes from within. For me, I have always known this was a path I would have to follow. As with many though, I did not accept this until the night I sat down and talked at length with two other TS's. That was the day I KNEW what I had to do. I can only hope that others have the opportunity to discover where their journey must take them.

This article is just the first in a (hopefully) long series that will be exploring the Transsexual Journey. If you have any topics you would like to see covered in future columns, please feel free to email me at lynnlefevre@geocities.com or write to me at Gender Mosaic's address.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

From: "Fraser Sinclair"

"Where's Veronica?"

I attended the 10th anniversary Gender Mosaic party, reluctantly. I would not have even gone if it weren't for Gail and Rhonda. I felt uncomfortable about the possibility of attending because there would be no dress to identify the "female" part of my identity. Gail insisted that I attend because it would be fun, and it was, and it was important to demonstrate the 'Mosaic' part of Gender Mosaic.

After much soul-searching, I have come to the conclusion that, no matter how people try to convince me, I am a proud man with no woman inside me trying to come out. I am a man with some "female" tendencies and traditional "male" tendencies trying to blend them into one and be proud of the outcome. I like long nails and nail polish, women's shoes and boots (not spiked but I could work them well, girls) for the sleek and tapered look, some fashions such as vests, sweaters and accessories and the fine art of knitting, crocheting, sewing, etc....Do these things define me as a woman? No, I am simply a man who likes traditional "female" stereotypical traits.

My goal in life is to take all aspects and roll them into one to create my own unique identity. That is what I am proud of. I was not feeling more comfortable each time Veronica went out and I started to make excuses why she didn't show up. I was being made to feel uncomfortable about not wearing a dress and I got angry. I was about to resign my membership when I was helped to realize that it was OK to be me and I could be a valuable member. I will not be forced to be something that I am not because, before I came to terms with my sexuality, I felt forced to conform to straight society's expectations. I will not succumb to the same pressure when it comes to my gender identity. I can say the same thing in a goatee as I can when I wear a string of pearls and why can't Fraser wear a string of pearls if he wants to without feeling forced to wear a dress and a wig as the accessory.

In conclusion, I would like to say that I would cherish the idea on continuing my membership with Gender Mosaic but you must decide if I could remain a welcomed member. I believe that I could be a valuable voice when helping society to look beyond traditional gender stereotypes. When asked, upon my arrival to the party, "Fraser, where's Veronica?" I responded, "She's here!"

Fraser Sinclair (Veronica)

Dear Fraser:

As both the Editor and a member of the Executive, I am certain that I speak for all. You would be most certainly welcome at any time. Very often we lose sight of the fact that Gender Expression means different things to different people. As those of us Transgendered come in many shades of grey as we have come to recognize, so does Gender Expression. There is no right, and there is no wrong. The perfect choice is the one that you feel at peace with. Gender Mosaic has always stood by the belief that you don't have to "pass" to belong. I hope that you will always feel that you belong.

Michelle Renee

MAKING OVER.

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My name is now Julia. I am a member of the shadowed company of the twin souls, born with male body and female psyche.

As last winter began to pass into spring, I was in hospital, expecting to die, and indifferent to the prospect. When, instead, I was given life, I knew that I would not, could not, continue it as a man. I determined that if I live, it must be as the female I truly am.

With this resolve, finally, after a lifetime of inner turmoil, came peace of mind.

For the first time it was possible to abandon the inner censor, to let go of instilled patterns of behaviour and to move, to speak, and to gesture naturally. I could now think of myself as female, still locked in a male body, true, but no longer a lunatic.

With this freedom came a change in personality. Now I can, and do, cry. Where I was aloof, now I delight in hugs and kisses.

Now I have woman friends and talk with them about things a man never hears of. (How mens' ears would burn!) Oh, what a delight to be able to talk! How exhilarating to have friends! I find an exuberance in living that I had never imagined possible. Every day dawns fresh and clear with crisp promise of delightful things to do. Withal, I possess a calmness of spirit I have never previously known.

Now while true femininity springs from and exists in the mind, gender is expressed physically; partly in body, partly by attire. There are priorities in these expressions, and I found that I needed to arrange them in sensible order. I adore nice clothes, but clothes are only the illustration of a woman, they do not make her, and quite attractive women sometimes do not care much about them.

First in importance then is the mind, next the body, and here the differences between male and female assumed new importance for me.

Little can be done about masculine shoulders, hands, and feet, but something can be done about other characteristics. The body can be feminised by hormone treatment, and the beard can be removed. Surgery can make physical changes ranging from minor to significant. Very well, I thought, begin with the face. Off with the beard!

This decision took me to Silde's salon in Ottawa, which is where discerning women go to be made gorgeous. Luckily, we of the shadow world may go too; hoping to be made, well, passable.

Silde has higher ambitions for me, she says; she is determined that I shall be beautiful. I cannot decide if this is an attainable goal or merely kindly encouragement. We shall see, I think, we shall see. *Contd.....*

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LETTERS TO THE EDITORContd

In the beginning was electrolysis. La la!

Electrolysis ranges from uncomfortable to exquisitely painful. I try to bear it, but am no stoic, and complain bitterly while Silde toasts away with her needle. We struggle through each session with a running joke about Silde qualifying for a Torturer's Diploma. I leave each session with a blotched and distorted face, and at home turn the mirror to the wall for three days. I have become vain.

Silde and I also divert ourselves with cosy talk about important feminine matters. Silde has diplomas for courses in everything from hairdressing, to nail care, through aromatherapy and skin conditioning to makeup, and can discuss these vital subjects with engaging authority.

We reach the subject of personal colours. Every woman needs to know her own set of colours. They are essential to every article of clothing she wears, to her makeup. They are the foundation of her home decorations. The colour co-ordinated woman is a lovely woman, regardless of shape, size or features. Age cannot wither her, nor Fashion stifle her infinite variety. (Master Shakespeare, excuse this wench.) Colour determination requires training and experience, and is expensive, but has only to be done once. Knowing one's colours saves money on makeup, and on clothes, because everything matches. Silde is trained to determine personal colours. Personal colours depend on skin tone and hair. It seems that I am a Winter. I could cry over the money wasted on Autumn clothes, but, alas, they don't suit and out they must go. I tell myself I shall look the better for this harsh exercise. Next comes the makeover, and no face can need it more than mine.

The first makeover is a two hour session, timed to suit an evening outing. I watch and learn, as Silde cleanses, tones, and moisturises my face. Next comes foundation, carefully blended, then dermablend to cover blemishes, for I am no longer young and have other disadvantages, too. Gradually my face changes shape. We spend a long time on the eyes. Eye make-up is the most important of all, says Silde. I observe carefully, for next time I shall be doing this for myself. When finally I am allowed to escape, I go over to the mirror, and I stand there for long minutes, staring at the woman I see. She is not young, nor am I of course, and her hair is silvery; but she is wearing a simple well cut black knit dress with a flame red chiffon scarf, which are entirely her colours. She is elegant and feminine, and she stares gravely back at me from a flawless face. Is this really me?

"I said you would be beautiful!" Silde tells me. I gaze at the mirror. It is true, this woman is beautiful. Is this a dream? Silde hugs me, "Believe in yourself," she tells me. I step onto the street in that glorious state of self delight that only a woman can know. I have taken the first steps of the longest journey I shall ever make.-

To: Michelle Renee NFTU

From Susan White TS Gainsboro NC

Subject: Transgender Task Force

Greetings Michelle, how are things up there in cold country? I know you are in Ottawa, what's happening with the Transgender Task Force up there?

Canadian Task Force for Transgendered Law Reform

The Canadian Task Force for Transgendered Law Reform or CTFTLR is indeed based in Ottawa Ontario.

The purpose of the CTFTLR is to use legislative reform or any other jurisdictional or regulatory means to facilitate the acceptance of Transgendered people in Canadian Society, to safeguard their basic rights and freedoms and to define and protect their particular needs.

We hope to provide laws and regulations which safeguard the Transgendered and which demonstrates the resolve of the nations leaders to accept us into Canadian Society. In doing so we will eliminate guilt, shame and fear from the lives of Transgendered people and replace these with a sense of acceptance, pride and safety.

In order for the CTFTLR to become effective, it requires the support and solidarity of individuals and groups across the country. Not just Transgendered individuals but members of local unions (to help with issues regarding transitioning in the workplace) The Medical and Legal professions and so many more. People well versed in fund raising activities.

You need not worry about public speaking or a breach of confidentiality. For the most part, the Ottawa based team will meet with the various Ministries and Commissions as well as select individuals who are comfortable with public appearances and speaking in their professional lives, across the nation.

We do need individuals who live and will work with Support Groups in every Province.

What ever you do, please don't underestimate the difference that just one person can make. Our time has come and we need you!

Inquiries may be sent to our e-mail address at ctftlr@geocities.com

or you may call and leave a message at (613) 233- 4024

"Male to Female Transsexual" and "Female to Male Transsexual", are terms used extensively not only in the gender variant community, but by medical professionals who make a great deal of money humoring an illusion. The terminology is not only a disservice to transsexuals, discouraging an uncomplicated understanding of self, but a disservice for other gender variants who might otherwise seek transition. The implication is that Sexual Reconstructive Surgery (SRS) is possible, when it is clearly not possible. Sex (any attempt to clarify by saying 'biological' sex would muddy the waters more, implying that there is other than biological sex) is multi-faceted and ranges from male dominant with recessive female physical characteristics to female dominant with recessive male physical characteristics and an almost infinite mix of internal (intellectual and emotional) characteristics thought, in our society, to be reflective of whether we are born with a penis or a vagina. **Recognition that each individual is an anomalous singularity with a mix of male and female genetics appears to be a difficult concept.**

Conversion from one sex to another is a fiction, a fiction that a 'male to woman' transsexual is encouraged to believe in, in order to be considered credible. It is only one of the fiery hoops a person must be willing to leap through for the medical trainers. Another hoop is the fiction of 'passing' as a woman and living full time for some given period of time before 'approval' is given. If you are able to blend invisibly into society, taking your place as a woman, you are considered 'a good risk.' We are encouraged, as grown adults, to act like little children with a secret that must be hidden. This despicable deception demolishes any sense of self-pride we might have left in this gender dysphoric culture that tends to denigrate what it doesn't understand.

When we deceive others we discredit our own sense of integrity, abuse the person we deceive, and dishonor reality. When medically trained professionals set us up for such fabrications, what they are saying is, **"We don't want to deal with this subject in the first place, but since you force us to do something then prove you won't rock our conception of the sexes. Additionally, after S.R.S., with no apparatus left to do so, we want to hear that you are fully orgasmic. That you might be happy without the ability to orgasm is a thought we don't want to know. Finally, we want you to disappear into the mainstream of society. We will convert your legal documents to 'female'; your birth certificate, your educational credentials, your work history, and your drivers license. We will cater to your facade if you swear an oath never to challenge our view of mankind."** Never mind that you were never purely male in the first place. Never mind that you will never be purely female.

Why are we encouraged to live our lives as a lie? Are we that despicable? Still an abomination, as we are considered to be in most of Christianity, only slightly mitigated when we agree to transition? **Why would medical professionals recommend deception? Is it for our benefit, to protect us, or to protect themselves from our reality?**

There are honorable choices. Take a long hard look at yourself. How does your physical body appear on a spectrum between male and female? Mostly male, mostly female, or

characteristics of both? All of us are a blend. Sylvester Stallone has nipples. Now look inside of yourself, at the working of your mind. Mostly male, mostly female, or characteristics of both? Absolutely! If the blending of these characteristics within you suggests greater comfort as a woman than you should strive to become a woman, not a pseudo-woman, but a real woman.

No one is born a man or a woman. We become men and women, developing ourselves as we grow to adulthood. There are many choices. We can become men who desire other men, or women who desire other women. Some homosexuals cross-dress; the majority do not. Usually gay males have no internal difficulty identifying as a man. It doesn't offend their sense of self so another category of (O)ther, although it might be more accurate, isn't necessary. This, it goes without saying, is true of lesbians as well.

Conflict between the individual and societal labeling stems from pigeon-holing people as male and female at the very beginning of life. The terminology is inadequate to describe countless numbers of people. Why do we feel the need to label people according to their ability to become pregnant or to impregnate? We have our names and/or our pictures on our identification. Shouldn't that be sufficient? Why is it made a central issue on almost every legal document? If it is so important, than why are we only given two choices? Why do we focus on sex and not on gender? Males living as woman are not female, but we are not given any other choice. Any answer we make is inaccurate. In protest we could refuse to check the boxes. Then one will be checked for us. If we check both boxes, then one will be erased. **Who in this picture is demonstrating neurotic behavior? I submit, not the transsexual!**

We, as a society, are so obsessive over this issue that when a hermaphrodite is born we assign sex anyway, knowing that this person is something (O)ther. We even surgically alter hermaphrodites, making a choice for them shortly after birth, and think we are doing them a favor. It is true that some hermaphrodites have been satisfied with the choice, but many have been miserable. Are we mad? **To force such a change on a living human being before (s)he can tell us what (s)he wants is a perversion of the most elementary principles of decency.** Arguments that we are doing it for (he)r good make it no less ignoble.

Does making a choice for a newborn hermaphrodite make sense? It doesn't make sense to me, nor does it make sense to label any newborn infant male or female. We are in such a rush to categorize people that we lose all perspective. It doesn't appear to matter if some males grow up to be women and some females to be men. These people, after all, aren't normal. They don't fit neatly into our classification system and our classification system can't possibly be in error.

We are all a mixture of male and female physical traits.

We are labeled males if we can impregnate and females if we can be impregnated. Simple! Right? Not quite that simple. We have neglected the hermaphrodite, some who have been able to impregnate and to be impregnated. It is from the hermaphrodite we learn of the reality of the (O)ther. Those of us who are a blending of male and female, depending on the strength of our blended genetics, have a desire to express ourselves as something other than our apparent sex. **We are also the (O)ther, kissing cousin to the hermaphrodite.**

Gay males, lesbians, bisexuals, transvestites, transgendered, transsexual, and fetishists, are a different expression of the exact same phenomenon, the blending of sex and gender characteristics in the human species. In actuality, the heterosexual male who grows up to become a man has some female physical qualities. Show me a male who doesn't have nipples and/or a male who didn't begin life undetectable in form from a female fetus and I might withdraw this statement. Each of us then is a composite of the masculine and feminine and we all struggle to grow up as men or women and to take our place with other adults. The difficulty comes in dealing with our emotional needs, needs generated by our mixed nature, and fitting into one of the only two roles provided. **Those of us who recognize and face these quandaries have come to understand that none of us are entirely male but neither are we entirely female.**

We discover we have feelings, urges, and inclinations demanding expression and find that we can not express them as the gender normally associated with our apparent birth sex. Therefore, we express ourselves in variations of the only other choice we are offered. The cornucopia of expression is awesome to behold and is suggestive evidence for the assertions I am presenting. Gay males can also have cross-dressing characteristics and not only as drag queens. I have met gay males who were fetishists, transvestites, transgendered, and even those seeking transsexual transformation. Just as there are fetishists, transvestites, transgendered, and transsexuals who are drawn to men, women, and to both men and women.

We need to take a long hard honest look at ourselves and ask ourselves why is there such confusion over sexuality and gender? Sex is, of course, a biological term we have explored thoroughly. Gender, man and woman, are what we become and, yes, they are to a great extent imposed by our biological nature. **A not-quite-male inclined to live as a woman is no less a woman than a female inclined to live as a woman.** However, that not-quite-male is not quite a female either. Physical and chemical modifications only modify secondary characteristics including softening emotional perspective and sway the balance a little more toward the female. (S)he, however, does not become a female because of the modifications. Claims to the contrary are misleading, deceptive, and ultimately do a disservice to the person making them. Not only does such dishonesty eat away at your own self-esteem, but it undermines your relationships with others. What then, if dishonesty is not used, is a better way to present ourselves to other people? Personally, I rely on honesty and trust that people, certainly the people I would want to be friends with, will understand. Meeting someone for the first time, if I expect this person might become a friend, I mention I am a transsexual woman. Much with the same emphasis I might declare I like computers. Then having been honest up front I get on with the budding friendship. I don't say anything

more about my transsexual nature unless asked and if asked I answer briefly and get off the subject. People who might be looking for friendship usually are delighted to find an honest courageous person but they will want to do those things with you that friends do together, not dwell on what you are or what they are either, for that matter.

Born as a male, should you be considered a woman by other people? Yes, including the use of personal pronouns that fit your gender and appearance. It would be rude and insulting to do otherwise and mendacious. As a male woman you are a real woman, not a pseudo-woman. You deserve to be treated as such and to be proud of yourself as a male woman, not just because you are a woman. You have capacities and abilities that are predominant in both males and females and your need to present as a woman, whether fully or partially, is a genuine extension of those characteristics. **We have something unique to offer the world, but the world will never know if we don't stop indulging in petty deceptions concerning our birth sex.**

Can openness jeopardize our jobs, our current relationships, our status with other people? Sure! Do you want to be a liar consumed with fear that one day you will be found out? Do you want your friends to know you for a coward and a liar? Let's not mince words, deception to prevent loss is still deception. It is unethical and lacks decency. There is nothing noble or decent, or justifiable in living a lie. If you, in your own heart, feel you must be deceitful at least be honest enough to acknowledge you are deceitful and don't ask your confidantes to understand and forgive you. You dishonor your friends when you involve them in your falsification. You disrespect those you deceive and, most of all, you dishonor yourself.

We, (O)thers, gallae, whatever we call ourselves, are challenged by grievous attitudes aimed directly at us. If we rise to that challenge, stand up and demonstrate integrity, strength, compassion, and fortitude we become part of the smallest minority on the planet ... mature adults. This minority is so small that no one asks questions about your sex, gender, or identity. They simply embrace you with open arms and welcome you to their fellowship. Hope to see all of you there.

Well that concludes the series. I hope that it has accomplished what I had intended, some good discussions and I know of a few. Know of a good related series or article? Let me know where to find it and it will be reprint if we have the consent.

Michelle Renee, Editor

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Until Next Time.....Stay Strong & Proud!!