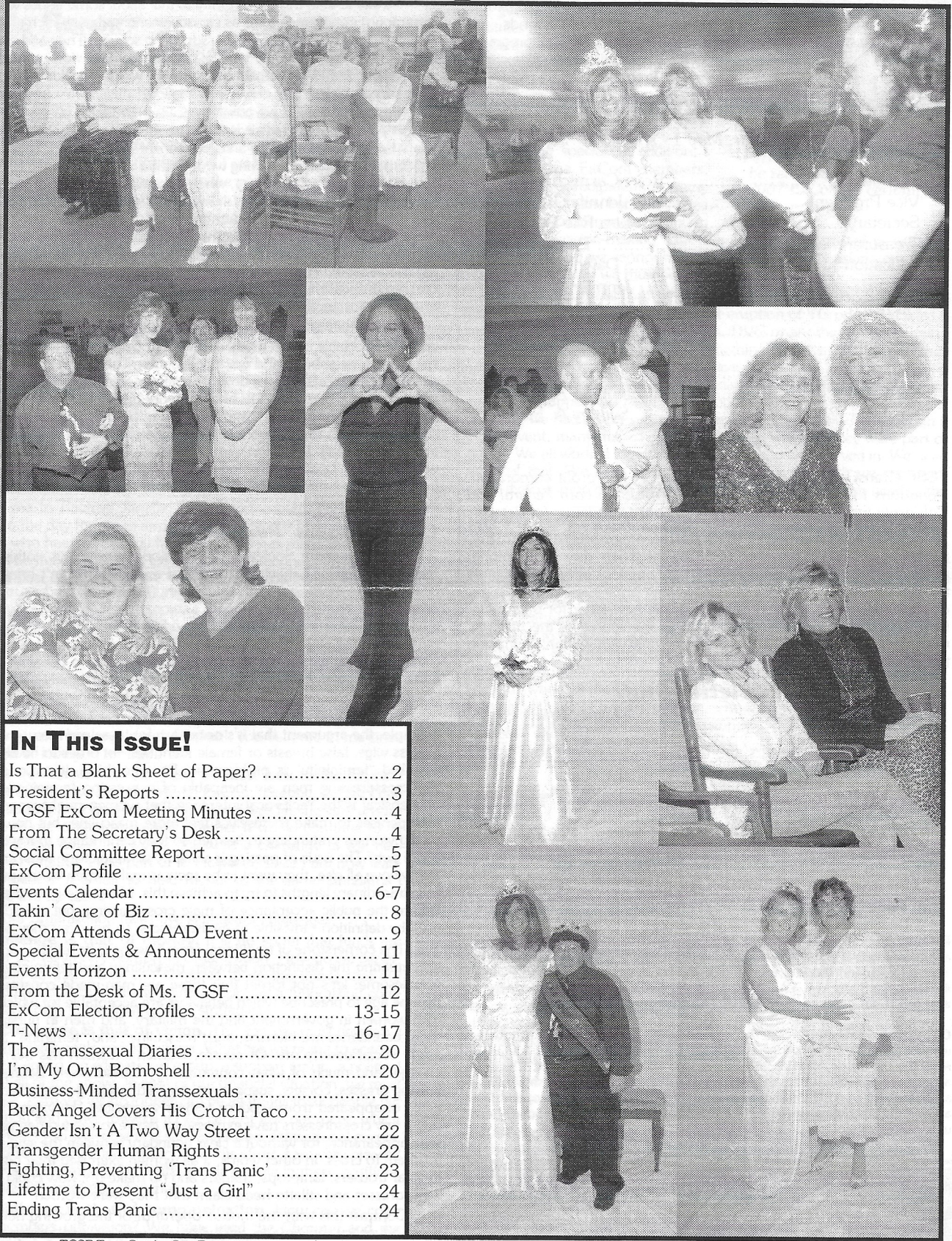
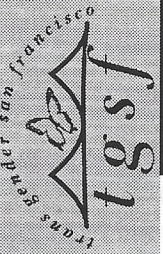


TGSF Nuptial Bliss!



The Channel



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TGSF TransGender San Francisco is a group for all members of the Transgender Community. Transgender is used as an umbrella term that includes female and male cross dressers, transvestites, drag queens or kings, female or male impersonators, intersexed individuals, pre-operative, post-operative and non-operative transsexuals, masculine females, feminine males, all persons whose perceived gender or anatomical sex may be incongruent with their gender expression, and all persons exhibiting gender characteristics and identities which are perceived to be androgynous.

The Channel

TGSF (TransGender San Francisco, a California non-profit corporation), is a non-sexual, membership based organization serving the educational, social, and recreational needs of gender-gifted people, their spouses, significant others, family members, friends, and professionals in the helping services. For details about TGSF programs, membership, article submission guidelines and classified ads, please write to TGSF Secretary, PO Box 426486, San Francisco, CA 94142-6486.

ExCom 2005 - 2006 Officers

(Fiscal Year: May 1 - April 30)

President	Roxy Carmichael-Hart
Vice President	Jennifer Kennedy
Secretary	Lisa Rae Dummer
Treasurer	Pamela Gray
Education	Dawnne Woodie
.....	Jennifer Anderson
Outreach	Allison D. Laureano
.....	Bonnie Bryen
Social	Tommie Watson
.....	Katra Briel
Ms. TGSF 2006	Jennifer Anderson
Mr. TGSF 2006	Sydney A. Mason

Fine Print

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IS THAT A BLANK SHEET OF PAPER? OR A LIST OF CROSSDRESSERS' ACHIEVEMENTS?

by Graham Holmes

Introduction

I'd like to take this opportunity to talk about some issues which ought to be of paramount importance to us as crossdressers, and yet which are considered tantamount to heresy within polite crossdressing society. They address the fundamental nature of what we consider ourselves to be, how we view - and are viewed by - the outside world, and the impact of the things we do - or don't do - on future generations of people like us.

First of all, a short personal history is in order for you to better understand my philosophy. I started crossdressing at about 6 years of age, and spent the next 12 years being interviewed by a succession of psychiatrists, based on my mother's belief that there was something wrong with a boy who wanted to wear girls' clothes. I left home at 18 for university, where I continued to dress in secret using whatever I could lay my hands on. I was in my late 30s when I decided I could no longer live this way, so I joined the Beaumont Society and TransEssex (as it then was) in March 1996 under the assumed name of Sally Watson, and launched myself onto the crossdressing scene. However, it was just six months before I began questioning the accepted crossdressing culture of masquerading as women, and I rapidly realized this wasn't going to be right for me. In creating Sally, I'd merely swapped one closet for another, and this hadn't resolved any of the underlying issues.

So I began to experiment with mixed-gendered presentations, and soon became comfortable in this mode of dressing, being accepted by the vast majority of my friends, neighbors, and work colleagues. Then around Christmas 1999, I became a "man in a skirt" full-time, having negotiated with my employer BT for the right to wear a skirt and high heels to work under their diversity policy, and being assured by the Musicians' Union that I can't be victimized for wearing a suitable skirt-based outfit for my work on the professional theatre circuit. But it hasn't all been plain sailing. I've been verbally abused, I've been threatened, and I've been warned that if I persist in going out in public without my wig, I'll get beaten up. Ironically, this behavior has come not from the public, but from members of the Beaumont Society.

Crossdressers' Perspective

The Beaumont Society's Constitution actually says nothing about required modes of dress or behavior except that members mustn't bring the Society into disrepute. Nevertheless, both the Society as a whole and its individual members promote the lifestyle of dressing up as women, which invariably includes make-up, a wig, false breasts and other body padding in fact, this is a common thread running through all major support groups. It's also widely accepted in the crossdressing community that we should learn to emulate women in behavior and mannerisms, and to try to pass when we're dressed. Along with a female name and identity, this is supposed to allow us to express our femininity, or to release our "inner woman."

But this lifestyle is riddled with philosophical and logical contradictions. For example, the argument that it's necessary for us as men to use women's clothes - far less wigs, false breasts or female identities - in order to be able to express our so-called "femininity" is problematic. For one thing, it erroneously implies that non-crossdressing men are incapable of expressing feminine emotions. Just as nonsensical is the reciprocal inference that women might wear false beards and fake penises to make themselves feel more masculine, but how often do we see young women pretending to be men so they can indulge in rowdy behavior down at the pub? The issue of passing is similarly contradictory. Most crossdressers claim that, above all else, they want to be seen as real women by the public, and they go to extraordinary lengths to try to achieve this. Many also insist that this practice will lead to the public acceptance of male crossdressing, but crossdressers who pass are - by definition - invisible as crossdressers, so how can they achieve this?

The cornerstone of traditional crossdressing is its reliance on maintaining and accentuating the distinction between masculinity and femininity. But even this is troublesome: let's not forget that these are man-made constructs designed in a bygone age to prescribe which behaviors are acceptable for which sex. Nowadays, with women in government and the military, and men in nursing and childcare, these boundaries are blurring, and "masculine" and "feminine" are becoming obsolete social descriptors. Of course, women's fashion has been a victim of this change, and much of what contemporary crossdressers define as "feminine" - flowing dresses, corsets, suspenders, seamed stockings and stiletto heels - has virtually disappeared from modern female wardrobes. However, it's worth noting that a few crossdressers have expressed a desire to see women return to a 1950s-style appearance, for without a clear boundary between the sexes, there's nothing for them to cross. In other words, if all women exercised their contemporary right to wear trousers, tank-tops, trainers and no make-up, how could men wearing big wigs, dresses and stiletto heels claim that *they were women*?

Contrast this with the *modus operandi* of the growing number of clothing-rights advocacy movements, including my own political group, TCR. These are being formed by men who simply want the same freedom of choice in what they

Continued on Page 18

This was the first President Report I [ever] wrote. It includes a challenge that I made to the ExCom, without knowing whether I would be part of it. I make the same challenge to the 2006/2007 ExCom because most of it still holds. You will be held responsible and you will be held accountable for all of your decisions. TGSF belongs to the members, not to you. You need to do what is in the interest of our members. Are you up to meeting this challenge?

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

By Roxy Carmichael-Hart

Did you ever see the movie "How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying"? It's a wonderful movie with Robert Morse, who plays a young man who starts a new job in the mailroom and by evening he is the CEO of the company. Well, my ascent to the Presidency was not quite that swift, but still, for a girl who didn't know TGSF from a cable TV Channel less than a year ago, I admit I have come very far. I realize that many of you don't really know me (even though you may have voted for me). So in the next few months I will do my best to try and get to know all of you a little better. I will be writing a monthly report as your President but I am also going to continue my "Hart to Heart" column because I think that will be important for me to sometimes address you as your sister, not just as your President.

The first order of business is to pay tribute to the old ExCom. Thank you Rachel Hill, Stephanie Ann Blythe, Ally Grillo and Gia Luisa. I am so proud of and grateful to many of you for all of your efforts on behalf of your sisters. (You'll notice, by the way, that one name is conspicuous by her absence. I'll get to her in a minute.)

And congratulations and welcome to your new ExCom members: Vice President Susan Laird (moving up from Secretary), Treasurer Brooke Miller, Secretary Rys McCusker, Education Co-Chairs Kara Flynn (who is, I am happy to say, staying on for another term) and Kelly Anne Marsh, Outreach Co-Chairs Kalani Makanani (also continuing) and Marla Selby, and Social Co-Chairs Aiyanna Eveningstar (another holdover) and Roxxanne Taylor. I sincerely appreciate you stepping up to the plate to continue the vital work we must carry out.

Which brings me to Rachael Janelle. There isn't enough room in this Channel or hours in the day for me to appropriately describe how I feel about this wonderful lady who has touched my heart and who has made me a better woman. I would not be here if it weren't for her love and kindness towards me. If you have read my past columns in the Channel, you know how I feel about her. Every time I think about what she has meant to me I want to cry as I am doing now (which is not good since I am typing this at work) and I want to celebrate because I am happier than I have ever been due, in large part, to what she has meant to me and to others. Rachael's tireless and selfless dedication and energy is a testament to what TGSF is and should be about. We should take our cue from her and look at her as a model for how we should conduct ourselves as members of this ExCom and this organization. I am going to miss Rachael as part of the ExCom but I will have her as a trusted adviser and more importantly, as a life-long friend. Rachael, you believed in me since Day 1 and I will forever love you for that.

And now that we reflected on our past, we must look to the future. I wrote some of the words below after the March ExCom meeting, before I had any thoughts about running for President. At that time, I was feeling very unsure about the direction of our organization and whether it would continue to be what it has been. I threw down the words below as a challenge to the new ExCom, regardless of whether I was part of it. However, since I am now leading that ExCom, I believe it is fair to hold myself to the same standards I challenged others to live up to.

I believe that our organization faces five significant challenges.

The **first challenge is that of money.** It is no secret that funds are tight, as they are for virtually every non-profit organization. How do we generate sufficient revenue so that TGSF can continue to do the things that our members expect and need from us? I am going to appoint a fundraising committee, to develop and help implement various strategies.

The **second challenge is that of vision.** This ExCom must develop a coherent agenda with clear goals and objectives. What are we trying to accomplish? Are we a social group, an educational group, a support group, a political group or a hybrid of all of the above. In light of our financial situation, we must evaluate our purpose. Perhaps we no longer can be all things to all people but we must set a direction and move towards it. We cannot lose our focus, which is to make our members feel welcome and safe and loved. Educational events, outreach efforts and socials are important tools in this effort. I am very pleased to see that we have some energetic and enthusiastic people in these positions so I am confident we will meet this challenge.

The **third challenge is that of communication.** How can we communicate to our members our vision? We have used the Channel and the socials but are the members getting the message? We may need to look at new ways to articulate the goals of TGSF to members and other interested persons, so that more people feel compelled to join and to participate.

The **fourth challenge is that of involvement.**

The strength of an organization lies not in its leaders but in its members. It was stated months ago that there is an overwhelming amount of work to do and very few people to do it. I am putting out a call right now, to our members and friends to get involved. I will be forming subcommittees to look at the Pride Parade, the Cotillion and fundraising, and over the course of this year. I will personally call on several of you to step up and assist. So whether you help build our Pride Parade float, act as a safety monitor, or help plan our Cotillion, our TGSF needs you. Help make it something special. In addition, I am asking all of the ExCom members, myself included, to participate in as many of our events as you can. I strongly urge you to attend each ExCom meeting and to participate in the decision-making. Our members have entrusted us with important work to do and we cannot believe that trust. If we are asking our members to get involved, then we must set an example.

The **fifth challenge is that of unity.** Remember our wonderful Christmas dinner at the Tarragon? What a radiant eruption of TG pride that was! It didn't matter if we were part of TGSF, RGA, DVG or another group. It didn't matter if we were CD, TG, TS, FTM or something else. *We worked together to make it happen!* I recognize that we have differences in our community regarding purpose and function. We are individuals and individuals disagree. But to make that happen, we had to work together to achieve a common goal and as a result, we had a very successful event. And the Cotillion. Although it was a TGSF event, many helped out that together, whether they were part of TGSF or not. We all worked together to do something we believed in. We need to do more of that. We need to look at more ways in which we can work together for the common good, which is, lest we forget, those who need us the most.

I plan to make the fourth and fifth challenges the cornerstones of my administration. And here's why.

For the last few months, I have been answering the hotline. Every day I become convinced that there is a growing need for what we do. I have answered calls from coast to coast. I recently answered a call from a young woman in Florida who happened upon our number "Where can I go?" she asked. She had no place else to turn to. It is incumbent upon each of us to ensure that the calls from that girl and the hundreds, perhaps thousands, like her, do not go unanswered. In last month's Channel, Rachel Hill mentioned my passion. She's right. The girls who call the hotline are my passion. Those of you who have just stepped into the light are my passion. Those of you who believe that we can and will make a difference are my passion.

I would like each of you to join me as we walk that road, hand in hand, ready to meet the challenges I have outlined. I am confident that we will.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT FOR APRIL 2006

By Roxy Carmichael-Hart

The Last Show

Tonight is March 6, 2006 and this is my last broadcast, at least from this chair. I hope to be writing you from the Treasurer's Chair next month but you can read about that elsewhere.

I've thought for the last several months of how I wanted to write my last column. Tonight it is difficult for me to write anything because today I lost one of my heroes - Kirby Puckett, who I idolized while living in Minnesota. 45 - far too young. It shows you. When it's your time, it's time to go. That's about the only thing my ex-wife Jacqueline said with which I agree. I almost lost her too. She had an aneurysm at age 53. I loved her so much that in spite of the hell she put me through, I nearly married her again. Had that happened, you never would have heard of me. But, it wasn't her time.

But my time has come now and time to say goodbye from a job that I didn't want but grew to love and in fact, was one of the very few things I was good at and truthfully, don't really want to give up. I'll miss this job. I'll miss writing to you every month. But who knows, in 2 years I could be back. Heck, next year the Vice-Presidency comes up. You can't keep a good woman down. I look for this as a pit stop on my journey, kind of a time out until I decide where I want to go next. But there is work to do. Until we are free of hate and discrimination and fear and intimidation, our work will never be done.

After 36 plus columns, I have thanked almost everyone that I could. Rachael Janelle, Carla, Jo-An, Tiffany, Laura, Pam, Pat Stryd, Dan Collins, Dennis

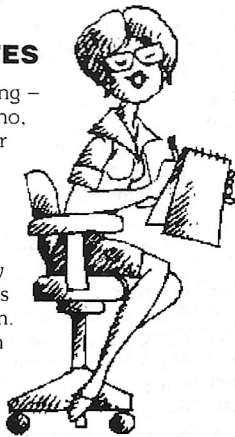


Changing of the guard at the 2003 Annual Meeting. Perhaps Rachael and I will be reunited on the 2006/2007 ExCom. I certainly hope so.

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TGSF ExCom MEETING MINUTES

The meeting was called to order at 12:09. Attending – Roxy Carmichael-Hart, Dawnne Woodie, Allison Laureano, Lisa Dummer, Katra Briel, Jennifer Anderson, Jennifer Kennedy. Absent – Tommi Watson, Pamela Gray. Guests: Becky Benton, Bonnie Bryen. Minutes of the February 4, 2006 meeting were approved



President's Report – Roxy Carmichael-Hart

Laura Marlowe has resigned as Vice President. Roxy nominated and the ExCom approved Jennifer Kennedy as Vice President to fill out the remainder of Laura's term. Bonnie Bryen was nominated and approved by the ExCom to fill out the remaining one year term of Jenni Kennedy as Outreach Co-chair. Jennifer Anderson and Sydney Mason will attend the San Jose Coronation. Final Cotillion wrap-up – With \$170 still collect, it appears that the Cotillion lost only \$636.

Strategic Planning

Revenue for the year from all sources should be approximately \$21,630. Expenditures should be approximately \$19,100, leaving us a net gain of about \$2,500. This will only occur if all sources of revenue meet expectations. Other potential sources of income are donations, joint efforts with other organizations and grants. Part of this additional income could be used to start support groups similar to the Mid-Peninsula Support group in other parts of the Bay Area and other services to the transgender community. A Significant Others support group will be a top priority. It would also be used to fund a scholarship program.

Activities for the year include June Pride month with Santa Cruz the first Sunday, San Jose the second Sunday and San Francisco the last Sunday. It was decided to march in the San Jose parade but not to sponsor an Outreach booth due to the increased costs and poor turnout last year. The theme of SF Pride is Commemorate, Educate, Liberate and Celebrate. As this is the 40th anniversary of the Riot at Gene Compton's Cafeteria, TGSF has been asked to create a float commemorating the event. We will sponsor a booth, which Bonnie Bryen will handle, but will not be a Partner in Pride. We will still earn money by handling Accessibility as well as serving as Safety Monitors. We need as many volunteers as possible to handle these duties as well as contingent monitors. A float will cost us about \$3,000 and Jenni Kennedy will be in charge of raising the money and building the float.

Events - We need events in April, May and June to raise money for the float. Some ideas were a picnic at Carla's in May, a purse party, thrift store consignments, and a fashion show by Academy of Arts, directed towards transgender shapes. A corset show will take place later in the year. TGSF may start marketing a line of merchandise, such as the whistles. We may also work to sponsor a Job Fair in the South Bay. Carla will be holding her own Halloween Party this year so we need to look for another date and location for ours. It was suggested that the halls at MCC or Most Holy Redeemer may work. We are looking at alternative venues for the Cotillion. The Yerba Buena Center was suggested. The total cost to hold it there for two days would be about \$12,000. Projected revenue with 250 attendees would be about \$13,600. A decision needs to be made quickly since we will need to let the Cowell Theater know if we will return.

Vice President's Report – Jenni Kennedy

Jenni was appointed to head up the float committee. It will consist of Alli, Dawnne, Jennifer, Lisa, and Katra

Secretary's Report – Lisa Dummer

We have several candidates for office in the upcoming election. These are:

President – Allison Laureano; Treasurer – Jessica Connor and Roxy Carmichael Hart; Outreach – Becky Benton; Education – Rachael Janelle Light and Dawnne Woodie; Social – Katra Briel

The next profile will be Roxy as outgoing president.

Education – Dawnne Woodie, Jennifer Anderson

A member survey will be included with the ballots. A draft was handed out for comments, which need to be back by March 11, 2006.

Outreach – Allison Laureano, Jenni Kennedy

The Hotline needs to be answered and updated regularly. Jennifer Anderson has agreed to handle this.

Social – The Wedding Part and Auction went very well. A full accounting is needed but it appears as if it made around \$700, including the \$400 from the auctions. Some people have asked that the auction be for a real date next time, but we will have to consider all the ramifications of this and set strict guidelines. The April End of Month, which will be election night, will be April 27th. There will be an April Fool's Pub Crawl down Geary Street. The Mid Month Social will be April 13th.

Old Business

The status of the TGSF storage locker was discussed.

New Business

There was no new business to discuss.

Next meeting – **There will be no meeting in April.**

The meeting was adjourned.

FROM THE SECRETARY'S DESK

Lisa Rae Dummer

As I sit here to write an article for this month, the tears continue to fall from a memorial service I attended yesterday. Was the person who died a close friend or family member? The brutally truthful and honest answer I must give is no, she was someone I never met. That didn't mean, however, that her passing was any less painful for me and the 15 other people who attended this ceremony.

Who was this woman who could bring tears to so many who never knew her? The answer to that is what brings the greatest heartbreak. I don't know who she was, is. Neither did anyone else among the small turnout. The only thing anyone knows is her street name – Dafni. This is her obituary, given by the Reverend Wilfried Glabach.

Thursday, February 2, 2006, Dafni, a transgendered woman, was savagely beaten and raped. Police and paramedics found Dafni crumpled and dying in the hallway of a Tenderloin residence hotel. Dafni was her street name and she could be eighteen or sixty. No one knows for certain and it's doubtful anyone ever will. The nature of heroin addiction and her injuries finally took their toll. Early in the morning of February 7, 2006, Dafni succumbed to her injuries and died. Police have not been able to identify Dafni. It is unknown if she has any survivors or if she will ever be laid to rest by her family. Today, I ask that you stand as her family. I ask you to pray for her unknown family as they cope with the loss of a child and not knowing whatever happened to that child.

Yesterday, we memorialized a sister I never knew I had. How could that happen? I am supposed to be a leader in this community, yet here was a member, a sister, that I never even attempted to reach. I never knew she existed. Safe in my little world, I left her alone to try and survive in a world so different from my own. Who knows what she went through and had to do to survive? Why didn't I reach out to her? Why wasn't I there to help her, or at least offer a helping hand?

People tell me I can't save everyone. I guess that's true, but it doesn't make me feel any better. She was part of my family, part of me, and I failed her. Saturday night, I was talking with a young woman named Nicole who commented how lucky we were to have this family and she wished she had something like it. If we are the family she believes we are, why did we neglect one of our own? That blame must fall on me. I wasn't there for Dafni when she needed someone. Probably she didn't even know where to look for help, or had been so beaten down by the life she faced that she didn't believe there was any help for her. If she couldn't find us, it was our duty to find her. A duty we failed.

What are our petty quarrels and fights for power when compared to Dafni's struggle just to live - a fight she eventually lost? The answer to that is a big, fat nothing. We say she did this, he did that. We point the finger of blame at others, but when we do point a finger, it leaves three pointing back at us. I will no longer accept it. We need to come together as a community, as a family, and work towards the benefit of us all.

I lost one sister already. I don't intend to lose any more.

EAST BAY TRANSGENDER AA

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Weekly – THURSDAYS – 8-9 PM. 3989 Howe Street (Mandana House one block from Kaiser off Broadway), in Oakland, CA 94611.

SOCIAL COMMITTEE REPORT

Katra Briel

Mid-Month Social - March 2006

There was a good turnout at the Mid Month Social. We were going to be relegated to the back room, but the other group cancelled. Three people arrived before I did, as I was with Alli as we were on a site visit for the Trans Pavilion, and were absolutely soaked when Alli dropped me off on the way to her meeting with TLC before she came to the Social. Lisa had to leave early to get to her Thursday night bowling league. Lucy and Richard announced their engagement. We had even more guests show up after Lisa Left. Just at a guess I'd say there were 20 of us.

We introduced people as they came in and everyone just sat around and talked about a variety of subjects. We did not hold any kind of raffle or any functions like that, but did have a few short announcements. I forgot to mention the April Fool's Pub Crawl, and very little was said concerning the election other than introducing the candidates who were at the meeting. I do not recall if anything was said about the ones who were not there, but the announcement was very short and to the point.

Lisa hawked her whistles. I know we sold 5 to Lisa, Richard bought at least 3, and maybe 4. He gave 2 to Juan. There were a few more sold. We had a few people pick up a sample and use it, most of whom bought the same one. Especially after we pointed out that once they blew into it, then it was theirs and they bought it! I mean, I do not think anyone would want a used whistle! The Screaming Queens screening was promoted at least twice that I know of and later I passed out all the invitation cards I had with me to other people.

Many of us went out after to Mecca and finished off the evening nicely. Richard and Lucy gave Linda a ride home as they all live in the east bay and they did not go out with us. Jennifer from DVG also went home if I recall, though she initially expressed some interest in going with us.

TGSF Wedding Party

The Wedding Party and Bachelorette Auction went very well with very positive overall results. We had a descent turn out, though less than I would have liked to see. Everyone there seemed to have a good time and a lot of fun, but the schedule went a little out of control and things more or less developed into a nice party. We were to have a few Ceremonies to kick things off, but while that was getting organized, someone thought they would start at the Buffet. So we simply had the Reception before the Wedding!

The food and kitchen needed more planning and a larger variety to choose from. We really should have invested in an actual Wedding Cake, though the one we had was nice. Having more detailed duty assignments and rotation schedule for those helping out would be nice, but it all worked out. I really think pre-event ticket sales at a discount would help to both boost attendance and be an added value to the membership.

The Wedding Photographer was a great idea and Jamie took many pictures, but had one small problem with her "Picture Corner". The backdrop was white also, so she pulled a magic rabbit out and improvised some color filters for the lighting. It took some time, but worked out well.

About the Reception before the Wedding idea, in retrospect, we need to incorporate this model (snacks and / or food before the event) for future events. Or maybe modifications like "hors d'oeuvres / snacks", "Main Event", "food / meal / buffet", "Finale!", or some similar schedule. But that was more or less self correcting in this case.

The Auction and concept worked very well and we made over \$400 for TGSF on that alone. A few people commented on the Auction as mostly good, with one thing to make it better in their view. The Auction should be for a "Real" Date outside in the real world. We would have to have a few controls so TGSF is not held liable for anything unforeseen and unwanted that could happen. We don't want any harm to come to anyone (Those Auctioned, the Bidder, or anyone else) by means of events that occur while out on an actual date.

The guests also liked the Wedding Certificates and "Clerk" along with the Preacher. We did need a pianist who knows how to play "The Wedding March" though! But we had some very nice canned music and the DJ did a very good job selecting appropriate tunes.

We appeared to be well organized. I guess if it worked and everyone thinks it was well organized, then we should continue to let them think that. We were really not to bad off and anything that was missed was either not missed or glossed over in the fun of the night. So, overall that is a good thing.

If anyone else has comments, please let me know so we can continue to improve our performance and can bring you more quality events! And thank you to everyone who attended and supported this event.

ExCom Profile

ROXY CARMICHAEL-HART

Once (and Future?) President

So Lisa asked me to write a profile for the Channel, as if after 3 years no one knows about me. I am not sure what to write so I will keep rambling until words come to me. But as Missing Persons says "what are words for, when no one listens any more?"

But, you know, it's hard for me to write anything today. Kirby Puckett died and I'm in mourning. It's been a really bad year for celebrities. Thus far we have lost Lou Rawls, Gene McFadden, Wilson Pickett, Bill Cowdill, Curt Gowdy, Darren McGavin, Don Knotts and Dennis Weaver. And now Kirby. It makes you question your own mortality.

But the show must go on...

So just sit right back and you'll hear a tale....

As you all know, I was born somewhere in the northeast but grew up in Quohog, Rhode Island, raised by the Griffin family. I was raised as a girl, even after my stepmother discovered I had a penis and it didn't faze her one bit, even though it was bigger than Felicity Huffman's and Hilary Clinton's.

My top 5 favorite movies: 1. School of Rock; 2. Fast Times at Ridgemont High; 3. Network; 4. Confessions of a Dangerous Mind (a good George Clooney movie); 5. Man on the Moon/Truman Show

But stay tuned. This could change tomorrow. Oh, and by the way "Transamerica" wouldn't even make my top 200.

My top five favorite albums: 1. Who's Next - The Who; 2. Back in Black - ACDC; 3. Can't Buy a Thrill - Steely Dan; 4. Beauty and the Beat - The Go-Go's; 5. Fragile - Yes

But stay tuned. This could change tomorrow. Did you ever notice how music from the 70's really sucked? It was mostly disco and I would rather jump into a pile of razor blades and then bathe in lemon juice than listen to disco - except maybe Donna Summer and Andrea True.

My top 5 favorite TV Shows: 1. Family Guy; 2. Married with Children; 3. Mary Tyler Moore Show; 4. Bob Newhart Show; 5. Rowan and Martin's Laugh-In.

TV pretty much started to suck in the mid-80's. I have about 5000 channels on the satellite and all I watch is ESPN and Adult Swim.

I have not figured out as yet who I want to win March Madness. As long as it is not Duke. Selection Sunday is next Sunday and then I will be working on my bracket. I deliberately scheduled my surgery during the NCAA tournament so I could have something to watch when I recovered. But this will all be over by the time you read this.

By this time next year I should be well on my way to marketing my screenplay. I need to do another re-write but my script doctor loved my story. And no, it is not about anything having to do with being transgender. I sort of have other interests than that.

Don't try this at home.

So more about me. I am on the California Dreamin' board as Secretary, I am membership chair of the San Francisco Bay Area Chapter of Women's Transportation Seminar, I serve on the National Diversity Committee and on the National Membership Committee of that organization and I have a full time job at the City of Hayward. I was a Crown Countess in the IRLM. I served for three months as Outreach Chair of TGSF, for three memorable years as President and hopefully, two more years as treasurer. And who knows? In two years, you just might find my name at the top of the ballot again. I don't believe in riding off into the sunset. My commitment to TGSF will continue indefinitely.

Planner, actress, writer, model, musician, mother, spy, inventor. I once built a time machine out of a Delorean and have influenced history. You thought Bill Buckner and Steve Bartman were accidents? Yes I am truly a renaissance woman.

And if Rachael Janelle hadn't asked me to ride on the Pride Float in 2002, you probably would never have heard of me at all. You can decide whether or not that would have been a good thing.

I've gone past my 500 words so I will say so long but not goodbye. Because it is much too late for goodbyes. It turned out to be a little more than a 3 hour tour.



My first San Francisco Pride, June 2002. You've come a long way baby!



TGSF Events in April

Saturday, April 1, 2006

TGSF PUB CRAWL

Join TGSF Members as they attempt to have a drink at every bar on Geary Street. Contact Katra at katra.briel@tgsf.org for more information.

Wednesday, April 5, 2006 / Begins 7:30pm

MID PENINSULA SUPPORT GROUP

Meets from 7:30 to 9:30 at the Full Circle Bookstore on the El Camino in Belmont. For information, contact Laura Patterson at laura@laurasoft.com

April 13, 2006/ Begins 7:00pm

TGSF MID MONTH

Another fun Mid-month is being planned by Katra Briel. It will be held at the Cathedral Hill Hotel in San Francisco on Van Ness at Geary, beginning at 7:00. For more information, please contact Katra at katra.briel@tgsf.org

Saturday, April 15, 2006

CARLA'S MONTHLY DINNER

Carla's Monthly Dinner in April will be at the Doubletree Hotel in the Coffee Garden Restaurant on Saturday the 15. For more information, contact Carla at carla@carlas.com or (408) 298-6900.

April 20 - 24, 2006

CALIFORNIA DREAMIN

Cal Dreamin is back! For more information, please visit the Cal Dreamin website at www.california-dreamin.org

Thursday, April 27, 2006 / Begins 7:00pm

TGSF END OF MONTH

The End of Month will be held on Thursday, April 27th. This is our Annual Meeting when elections will take place. All members are urged to come. It will be held at the Cathedral Hill Hotel, beginning at 7:00.

Coming in May!

Saturday, May 6 / 4:00pm

DVG FIESTA!

See add on Page 11 for all the details!

Sunday, May 7 / 1:00pm

TGSF EXCOM MEETING

Your newly elected Executive Committee meets for the first time at the Cathedral Hill Restaurant. There's a lot to absorb as we ramp up for a new fiscal year, beginning with our Pride Parade plans. Volunteers are needed desperately for this important and fabulous event. All are welcome!

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April's Birthdays

- 4/01 Michelle Nelson
- 4/02 Sherri Rossi de Guevara
- 4/06 Veronica Nova
- 4/09 Veronica Smith
- 4/09 Amy Khoo
- 4/15 Ginger Lynn
- 4/18 Wilhelmina Beins
- 4/21 Lourdes Minsan
- 4/22 Ariel Monteverde
- 4/23 Allison Laureano
- 4/25 Jamie Faye Fenton
- 4/26 Claudia K. Kenworthy
- 4/28 Stephanie Mchie
- 4/28 Tedra Thompsen
- 4/28 Wendi Allen
- 4/28 Cindi Prescott
- 4/29 Stephanie Schur

Happy Birthday To All!

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Fem Fashions
Wigs
Nails
Shoes
Cosmetics

Nails Wigs Lingerie



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Shoes
Nails
Wigs
Fem Fashions
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Cosmetics

Bay Area Calendar - April 2006

OTHER BAY AREA GROUPS

Sun Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat

Diablo Valley Girls (DVG)

Meets 1st & 3rd Monday every month. 8pm at Club 1220. 1220 Pine Street in Walnut Creek. Write to DVG, PO Box 272885, Concord, CA 94527-2885 or call 925-937-8432.

DVG Rap Group (RCC)

Meets 1st Thursday of every month. 7pm at Rainbow Community Center. 3024 Willow Pass Road in Concord 925-937-8432.

FTM International

Support group for Female-to-Male CDs & TSs. Holds open Informational Meetings and closed Support Meetings. Write FTMI, 160 14th Street, SF, CA 94103; 415-553-5987, or email: info@ftmi.org

I Love It Girl Socials

Every Wednesday night at I Love It Boutique, 45979 Warm Springs Blvd., #7 in Fremont. Call Jo-An at 510-656-4738.

Mid-Peninsula TG Group (MPTG)

TGSF-sponsored support group; 7pm, First Wednesday of each month at Full Circle Books in Belmont, CA. Contact Laura Patterson at Laura@laurasoft.com.

Pacific Ctr for Human Growth (PacCtr)

A counseling oriented growth center sponsors all-inclusive gender support groups on every Friday at 8:00pm. 2712 Telegraph Avenue, Berkeley. 510-548-8283.

Rainbow Gender Association (RGA)

Meets 1st and 3rd Friday of the month 8pm at the New Community of Faith Church, 6350 Rainbow Drive, San Jose. Mail: PO Box 700730, San Jose, CA 95170 or call 408-984-4044.

Sacramento Gender Association (SGA)

Blue Rose Chapter meets 8pm the 2nd and 4th Saturday each month in Sacramento. Write PO Box 162907, Sacramento, CA 95816 or call 916-364-7212 for meeting locations. Website: www.transgender.org/sga; email: sga@transgender.org

Santa Cruz Trans (SCT)

Bi-weekly social/support group for gender-gifted persons serving Santa Cruz and Central Coast. 1st and 3rd Tuesdays every month at The Diversity Center, 177 Walnut Avenue, Santa Cruz, CA 95060; (831) 425-5422; 7pm

SCOUT (SCOUT)

Santa Cruz Organization for Uniting Transmen, meets on the 4th Tuesday of every month at the Diversity Center (listed above); 7:30pm

Silicon Valley Gender Association (SVGA)

A new TG support group meets at the Billy De Frank Community Ctr in San Jose on the 2nd and 4th Friday of every month from 7-9pm. For more information, call 408-293-2429.

TGIF

Social group for transgenders. Meets one Saturday each month at a private home in Santa Rosa for a potluck social from 4pm until early evening. Space is limited - Reservations Recommended! Call Diane or Anne at 707-544-1540.

T.R.A.N.S

MTF support group meets every Wednesday afternoon 2pm at 1145 Bush Street in San Francisco.

TransSpirit Ministry (TSM)

Gathering @ Metropolitan Community Church of SF, 150 Eureka, SF. Second Friday each month. Potluck dinner, social, and discussion time. For information, contact Dawnne Woodie (415) 748-2396 or sf_dawnne@yahoo.com

TransVis-HWD

TransVision Social TG Women meets 7pm, 4th Friday every month. Light refreshments and a wonderful atmosphere. Contact Tiffany at (510) 713-6690, ext. 9.

							1 TGSF: Pub Crawl
2	3 7:00 PM PISSR General Meeting 8:00 PM DVG	4 7:00 PM SCT	5 2:00 PM T.R.A.N.S 7:00 PM I Love It Social 7:30 PM MPTG	6 7:00 PM DVG RCC	7 8:00 PM PacCtr 8:00 PM RGA	8 8:00 PM FWW 8:00 PM SGA	
9	10	11	12 2:00 PM T.R.A.N.S 7:00 PM I Love It Social	13 7:00 PM TGSF: Mid-Month	14 7:00 PM SVGA 7:00 PM TSM 8:00 PM PacCtr	15 Carla's Monthly Dinner	
16 HAPPY EASTER!	17 8:00 PM DVG	18 7:00 PM SCT	19 2:00 PM T.R.A.N.S 7:00 PM I Love It Social	20 California Dreamin TG Legal Clinic	21 8:00 PM PacCtr 8:00 PM RGA California Dreamin	22 8:00 PM FWW 8:00 PM SGA California Dreamin	
23 California Dreamin	24 California Dreamin	25 7:30 PM SCOUT	26 2:00 PM T.R.A.N.S 7:00 PM I Love It Social	27 7:00 PM TGSF EOM	28 7:00 PM SVGA 7:00 PM TransVis-HWD 8:00 PM PacCtr	29	
30							

TGSF MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Membership is billed annually upon enrollment: \$40 Single / \$45 Family

Special \$35 Single Membership w/ Email-Only* Delivery of CHANNEL

Please Print / Check all that apply:

New Member | Renewal Member #: _____ | with Family Member | What Year did you first join TGSF? _____

Preferred Name: _____ Birthdate (Month/Day): _____ / _____

Mailing Name: _____

Family Member's Name: _____ Birthdate (Month/Day): _____ / _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ Country: _____

Optional: Telephone: (_____) _____ What Name should we ask for if we need to call you? _____

*Email: _____ Website URL: _____

Would you like a link from the TGSF Website to your URL? Yes No

May we use photos of you taken at TGSF events in our newsletter or website? Yes No

Send Check or Money Order to: TGSF, PO Box 426486
San Francisco, CA 94142-6486, or hand to any Board
Member at a TGSF Social.

Takin' Care of Biz...

TGSF FINANCIAL REPORT

As of February 15, 2006

Assets

Cash	\$2,186.45
Decorations	\$100.00
Beverages	\$50.00
Total	\$2,336.45

Liabilities and Equity

Accounts Receivable	\$663.00
Accounts Payable	\$443.94
Total	\$219.06

Statement of TGSF Income

Memberships	\$370.00
Advertising	\$25.00
Donations	\$764.56
Cotillion Raffle	\$113.00
Cotillion Bar	\$573.79
Cotillion Silent Auction	\$760.00
Cotillion Ticket Sales and Advertising	\$342.08
Total	\$2,948.43

Expenses

Channel	\$125.00
Phone	\$50.83
Piano Rental for Cotillion	\$1,075.00
Cotillion Photography	\$850.00
Cotillion Awards	\$283.71
Cotillion Food	\$569.46
Insurance 2006 second half	\$562.50
Cotillion Programs	\$540.44
Misc. Cotillion Expenses	\$186.78
Total	\$4,243.72
Net Income (Loss)	(\$1,076.23)

TGSF DONATIONS

Our Friends Who Give
as of March 15, 2006

Roxy (Cotillion) \$200.00
Jennifer Anderson \$50.00

Bless You and Thank You for Caring!

CONTACT TGSF!

2005-06 Executive Committee

President

Roxy Carmichael-Hart roxy.carmichaelhart@tgsf.org

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Jennifer Siobhan Kennedy ... jennifer@sweetiemail.com

Secretary

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Mr. TGSF 2006

Sydney A. Mason ftmsrul@hotmail.com

TGSF.Org Webmistress

OPEN webmistress@tgsf.org

Calendar **www.tgsf.org**

Submissions can be made online directly.
Cancelling mistakes or for other problems,
please contact the Webmistress.

PISSR

People In Search of Safe Restrooms

PISSR is committed to establishing gender-neutral bathrooms. We believe that all people, regardless of their gender identification or presentation, have the right to access safe and dignified restroom facilities without fear of harassment, judgment, or violence. General meetings are always the first Monday of the month; 7 pm at 870 Market Street (Flood Building), 4th floor in San Francisco.

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FOUR MEMBERS OF ExCOM ATTEND GLAAD EVENT

On February 15th, four members of the TGSF Executive Committee attended the GLAAD Media Awards Kickoff Party, held in the Rotunda of the Neiman-Marcus store on Union Square in San Francisco. The event was held to begin the season of preparation for the GLAAD Media Awards, to be held this year on June 10, 2006, at the San Francisco Marriott Hotel.

One of four events held nationally, this event honors individuals in the media that have had a significant impact on the LGBT Community. The San Francisco Media Awards has, in the past, honored such persons as local newsperson Hank Plante, entertainers such as Jennifer Beals, and newsmakers and stars from all walks of life. It was announced Wednesday evening that this year's Pioneer Award winner, the award for the person that has made a huge impact on and has been supportive of the local LGBT community will be given to Cecil Williams, Senior Pastor of Glide Church. This year's Emcee will be Megan Mulally of Will and Grace fame.

The four ExCom members, Allison Laureano, Outreach Co-Chair, Jennifer Kennedy, Ms. TGSF 2005 and Outreach Co-Chair, Dawnne Woodie, Education Co-Chair, and Katra Briel, Social Co-Chair, attended the event. Allison, Dawnne, and Jennifer currently sit on the Planning Committee for the Media Awards event, and are involved with the entire production. Dawnne is working with the Table Host Committee and the Silent Auction Committee, Allison and Jennifer are working with the VIP Afterparty Committee, and Katra, who experienced her first event with GLAAD Wednesday evening, worked with them. This is Allison and Dawnne's second year to participate with GLAAD.

On Wednesday evening, Neil Giuliano, the new President of GLAAD, made his first official appearance in San Francisco at this event, and says he is looking forward to working with all the LGBT community to further fairness and accuracy in the media. He said that working with transgender leaders, GLAAD hopes to help overcome the negative that has come in the media over the years.

GLAAD has worked to insure that local media personnel use proper gender distinctions, and accurately report events that affect the community. To that end, GLAAD has provided several media training sessions in the Bay Area, most recently at the LGBT Center in San Francisco last fall.

The event has corporate sponsors of the caliber of Absolut Vodka, IBM, Wells Fargo, and American Airlines, among others. Tickets are now on sale, and can be obtained by going to the GLAAD website, www.glaad.org, or by seeing any of the members of the planning committee.

GenderQueer, Trans, & Gender Questioning Youth Group

Billy DeFrank LGBT Community Center
www.defrank.org

This youth program will provide space for discussion groups, workshops and activities, specifically for genderqueer youth and their allies. We are excited to be offering this new programming, for an underserved population, even in our own community. This new group is for young people 20 and under, who identify somewhere on the gender non-conforming spectrum, who are questioning their gender identity or who are considering transitioning.

This group will meet the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of each month from 5-6pm at the DeFrank Center, which is located at 938 The Alameda, in San Jose. For more information please contact T. Aaron Hans, Program Director at 408.293.3040 ext. 112 or at progdir@defrank.org.

President's Report...

Continued from Page 3

Butler, Beth Perrin-Scales, Jackie, Gelsey, Donna, Anne Louise, etc. Some of them I no longer see for whatever reason. I'm sorry for whatever I may have said or done that alienated you from me. I've met some incredible people and some friends I will have forever.

I think back to those on my first ExCom and first group of Miss TGSF contestants. Siobhan, Chrysanthemum, Marla, Silia. All have moved out of the area and in Siobhan's case, out of the country. We often lament those who are no longer part of our community. Let's celebrate the fact that they have moved forward with their lives. We are born as caterpillars; we gestate as pupae and then emerge as butterflies, ready to fly wherever the wind takes us. Let's pray that they find their happiness.

Good times, bad times, you know I've had my share. The good times were wonderful Cotillions, getting out of debt, fun events and really working together. Bad times were endless fighting and egos and self-centeredness. TGSF will never grow unless we stop pitting ourselves against one another. It's pointless and unproductive and doesn't help the community. And that is why we are here. To help the community. To give back what was given to us. To cherish the fact that we have the freedom and the right to present ourselves and to live our lives as we chose. We are part of a family. Yes, families fight but eventually they make up. We need to make up. Let's put the behind in our past. Let's remember where we came from. At one time, all of us were scared and confused. Then someone was there to help us. To help us be what we wanted and who we wanted.

When someone says to me "thank you", "you made a difference", "you inspired me" and "I learned a lot from you", those words touch me. The only reason I ever wanted to be president was to help people and if I was able to do that, I consider my presidency a success. I was always here for you and everything I did was for the good of TGSF and for the community. I was not here for my own ego, or to pad my resume or to use this as a steppingstone for something else. TGSF was and will be my first priority.

I've thought about my last words. I originally wanted to go with the words of Paul Anka, as sung by Frank Sinatra: *I faced it all, and I stood tall and I did it my way*

Or to paraphrase Neil Young: *Hey, hey, my my. The Queen is gone but she'll never die. It's better to burn out than fade away*

Or in the words of ACDC: *We roll tonight, to the guitar bite, to those about to rock we salute you*

Or in the words of the late great Ox: *The Song is Over*

Or in the words of Roscoe from "Tapeheads": *And now that I've come to the end of my tune, drop another 6 bucks and come back soon*

But I'll leave you with the words of the immortal Jack Buck: *There's a drive to deep left center field and we'll see you tomorrow night*

It's not goodbye. It's so long for a little while. Just remember that in the end, the love you make is equal to the love you take. Goodbye Kirby.

See you cats on the flip-flop.

Transcending Transgender

**Sponsored by
City of Refuge UCC Outreach Ministries**

A support group facilitated by Janetta Johnson and Portia Denard; Where: City of Refuge, United Church of Christ, 1025 Howard Street, San Francisco CA 94103, (415) 861-6130. When: Every Friday, 6 pm to 7:30 pm. Food and snacks will be provided.

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Events and Announcements!

NEW SANTA CRUZ TG SUPPORT GROUP

Thinking about transitioning? Don't know where to start? In transition and need some support? Made the journey already and would like to share your experiences or just meet new people?

Announcing a brand new support and social group at the UC Santa Cruz campus for transsexual, transgendered, questioning folks and their allies. The group is geared towards those making, thinking about making, or who have made the physical and/or social transition from female to male (FTM) or male to female (MTF).

Students, staff, and faculty are all welcome.

The first meeting will be at the Lionel Cantu GLBTI Center on the UCSC campus, Tues. Oct. 11th @ 7:30pm. The group will be deciding on a name for the group so please bring your ideas! Regular meetings will be meeting on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of the month.

Questions?

Email **Nic Winter** winter@chemistry.ucsc.edu

MID-MONTH SOCIAL VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

TGSF is looking for some enthusiastic and motivated people to help plan our mid-month socials. All it takes to plan these events is for someone to call a venue that is hopefully very TG friendly and see if they would be willing to host our event. Mid-months can expect anywhere from 10-20 people.

If you would like to help with these events, please contact roxhart72903@sbcglobal.net Thank you!

NEW TRANS ADVISORY HOTLINE OF AMERICA

1-877-427-3230

This will supply anyone in the U.S. with sources of: Referrals for Medical; Gender Therapists; Transgender groups and organizations; Peer support

Hopefully, at a future date, we will have forwarding capabilities to someone in the state you reside in; answers to questions to veterans issues, problems; and avenues to help in times of natural disasters on a transgender level.

FTM GET-TOGETHER AND SATURDAY BRUNCH

Every Saturday @ 1pm • The Crepevine 216 Church St., San Francisco, CA 94114 • Castro †Cross street: 15th & Market St. • (415) 431-4646. For further directions call Marty @ 415-845-1157.



Mid-Peninsula Support Group

WEDNESDAY, April 5, 2006

Full Circle Books

1538 El Camino Real, Belmont, CA 94002
(650) 508-9546

7:30 - 9:30 P.M.

All welcome regardless of race, age, gender, gender identification \$1 donation will be requested but no one will be turned away.

For more details please contact Laura Patterson at Laura@laurasoft.com

Please note: This is a support group. The views expressed in this group are reflective of the attendees and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the ExCom and members of TGSF.

You are encouraged to speak to your personal physician and/or therapist regarding your specific treatment and care.

TG HEALTH SERVICES AVAILABLE IN SANTA CRUZ

Beginning in October of this year under a California Endowment Grant, The Diversity Center of Santa Cruz and Planned Parenthood Mar Monte Westside Health Center are jointly working to provide therapy referrals, health care and hormone therapy services to the Santa Cruz transgender community.

They also offer a support group the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays of each month between the hours of 7:30 and 9:30pm at the Diversity Center of Santa Cruz office located at 1117 Soquel Avenue.

For more information about this exciting program, please contact **LuLu Manus** by e-mail lmanus@diversitycenter.org or (831) 425-5422.

TRANSVISION SOCIAL — HAYWARD

TransVision Social Transgender Women will meet at **7:00pm on the fourth Friday of every month** to celebrate our survival. Come and share your journey of daily living and participate in the affirmation of our lives. For each of our journeys and our vision, let us validate, support and affirm each other and celebrate our success.

There will be light refreshments and a wonderful atmosphere. Come for that good feeling. For more information, contact Tiffany at (510) 713-6690, ext. 9. Don't miss this!

Events Horizon...

Saturday, May 6!

DVG FIESTA!

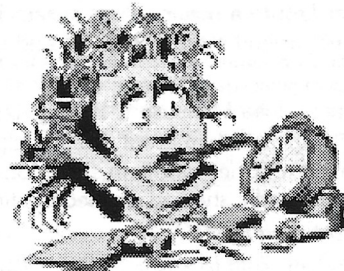


The DVG BBQ Series begun last year continues!

Hola Muchachas es Muchachos! It's time to dust off your serapes and sombreros, mix up a batch of sangria, or enjoy the premium margaritas at the Wacky Castaways Bar! Manja fajitas es frijoles and pass the guac - Me Gusta! The Mariachi music will be a-swingin' on the deck overlooking beautiful Mt. Diablo in Walnut Creek. Bring a towel if you want to use the hot tub. You MUST RSVP for this event for directions, as well as sign-up to bring something to share! Actually showing up is a plus! Volunteers to help out are welcome! Call the DVG hotline at **925-937-8432**. Party starts at 4:00pm - Viva!

TGSF & MAC Cosmetics Present:

MAC "SUNDRESSING" MAKEUP EVENT



Having troubles doing it yourself? Come learn from the MAC Team experts and be among the first to see MAC's new summer products.

When: Sunday, May 21st, 11AM to 6PM

Where: MAC @ Bloomingdale's in Palo Alto

RSVP: Lisa Dummer lisa_dummer@tgsf.org or Jennifer Anderson Jennifer.Anderson@tgsf.org

Makeovers are done by appointment and MAC is waiving the minimum purchase requirement for this event! Such a deal!!!

Contact Lisa or Jennifer for additional info, or visit the website at: www.tgsf.org

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TRANS MARCH 2006!

Friday June 23rd, the Friday before Pride
3:00pm - 7:00pm Speakers and Performers
7:00pm March

Dolores Park, Dolores and 19th Street.

**Calling all Transfolks, Friends,
Allies and Admirers!**

We are calling for this march to demonstrate that we are a significant and growing portion of the LGBTIQ community; to increase our visibility and presence in the TGIQLB community and the overall community at large; to encourage more trans and gender-variant people to come out; to build connections among ftm, mtf, bayot, crossdressers, sashin, hijra, transvestites, bantut, drag queens, drag kings, mahu, transsexuals, bakla, travesti, genderqueers, kathoey, two spirit, intersex and those with other labels for themselves and no labels for themselves, those who see gender as having more than two options, and those who live between the existing options; to support one another as a community, through all of our struggles; to speak out against violence, hate, transphobia, and the oppression of any and all of us under the existing social structure; and to be fabulous and powerful in the company of others that are fabulous and powerful. Dress up, show up, bring signs, speak out, and be what happens!

For more info or to volunteer, please contact info@transmarch.org.

The Trans March is an independent, DIY, community event. Please enhance, translate and pass this on to any groups, lists, or individuals who might be interested.

From the Desk of Ms. TGSF

ON GOLD MEDALS & TIARAS

Jennifer Michelle Anderson
Ms. TGSF, 2006

It's Friday night and the 2006 Winter Olympics are drawing to a close. The grace and artistry, the courage and daring, the speed and fearlessness all meld into a mesmerizing spectacle. Many thoughts and feelings are rolling around inside me and I find myself at the keyboard once again.

At this moment Julia Mancuso is having her gold medal moment, having just won the giant slalom event. I can't help wondering what does she think of herself and her worth in this moment? How would that evaluation have changed if she had crossed the finish line even one second slower?

Then my thoughts shift to Sasha Cohen, 2006 Olympic Silver medalist, second highest rated athlete in the world in the most popular event of the winter games. If she never skates again what will she think of her accomplishments? Will her heart swell with pride at being among the best of the best or will she agonize at what might have been?

And there was Michelle Kwan who gave everything she had for one more shot at the elusive Olympic skating gold medal. However, in the end it was not to be as she was forced by her body to withdraw. Michelle was arguably one of the best to ever lace up a pair of skates. How will Michelle look back on her skating?

These are the thoughts and feelings I consider as I contemplate our own little Olympic competition, the right to wear a tiara and be called Ms. TGSF for a year. There were three contestants for Ms. TGSF in 2006, Lisa Rae Dummer, Katra Briel and myself. Each one of us risked everything for our moment on our own Olympic stage of sorts. How will each of us look back on that night and think of ourselves in retrospect?

Just like those who compete on the Olympic stage, each one of us had all of the elements within us that night to be a fabulous Ms. TGSF in 2006. However, in a world that insists on winners and losers, and where scores are determined in such a highly subjective fashion, I scored a little bit higher in the minds of five judges. Like Julia Mancuso, it just happened to be my night. After a different night with different judges I might be reading an article rather than writing one. Would that change who I or any of these other fine ladies are? Should it diminish what we accomplished by competing?

We should each hold our heads high and take pride for our willingness to risk and reach for a dream. It was in our willingness to risk that we set ourselves apart from most others and became winners. It doesn't take a tiara to make that so. And, by risking, and holding our heads high in victory or defeat that we have hopefully cleared the path for others to follow, to reach for their dreams and become champions as well.

PAJARO DUNES - SUCCESSFUL TG COUPLES

By Jennifer Anderson

Coming Together!

I want to share a brief article about an annual event that most folks in our community are unaware of. It's an extended weekend retreat near Santa Cruz called Pajaro Dunes. How it works is that one or more event organizers reserve two oceanfront townhouses at a complex called Pajaro Dunes where members of the TG community and their friends/partners can come to spend a day (or several) sharing the company of other community members in a very informal setting. Organizers have been doing this 1-3 times per year for about 20 years now!!!

What I like about this event (though it's not really event) is the continuity of individuals and couples who have been faithfully attending for many years. It's very easy to feel at ease here. I remember the first time I came. It was about five years ago. I was a newly "out" cross dresser with a highly confused and marginally supportive spouse. However, given that the event was practically in our backyard she agreed to attend.

What both of us got out of visiting was an opportunity to visit with TG folks in long-term successful relationships; folks who had managed to make cross dressing and/or transsexualism work as a part of their coupledness. We both walked away with renewed hope for our relationship. They were so much like us. And, if they could make it work then why couldn't we?

Our community needs more events like Pajaro Dunes in order to help us see the greater possibilities. Yes, there are many members of our TG community who live in happy relationships and have successful careers. I urge you to seek events out such as these and allow your dreams of possibility to expand!

For more information about Pajaro Dunes retreats, contact Rebecca Stake at: huskers@cruzio.com. The next event is tentatively scheduled for October 2006.

For my part I plan to keep my eye out for other events like this and report them back to The Channel. If you know of events that showcase successful TG living please share your stories with us or e-mail your tips to: Jennifer.Anderson@tgsf.org.

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ExCom Election Profiles

Running for President

ALLISON LAUREANO

Transgender San Francisco (TGSF) is one of the oldest transgender focused organizations in the Bay Area. Founded nearly 24 years ago, it became a focal point for many closeted crossdressers, transsexuals, drag queens and other gender variant people to meet with each other in a relaxed social atmosphere and enjoy sharing a common non-mainstream expression of life. Over the years, the organization grew to over 400 members and some of them became popular participants in the LGBT community, organizing fundraising for various public help organizations. Seeing that we honor these past traditions and work toward revitalizing TGSF to become, once again, the premier TG organization in the San Francisco Bay Area is important to me as President. A president can encourage efforts of the membership and create an atmosphere of cooperation and interchange and genuine camaraderie. As an educator at heart and an experienced communicator, I have some definitive ideas as to how we can accomplish this.

TGSF was originally founded as a social group for transgender people to get together with other transgender people in a non-threatening, comfortable social environment. It will become one of my primary goals to reestablish this. I would like to, once again, create a safe haven for those who are just coming out, be they crossdressers, transsexuals, genderqueer, whatever. I want us to live up to our charter as welcoming to all those under the TG umbrella, as well as our family, friends and supporters/allies. I envision this event to feel like a house party with great friends, lots of guests and genuine good cheer.

Running for Social Committee

KATRA BRIEL

Hi, I'm Katra Briel and I'm one of the current Social Co-Chairs. I occupied this office for almost a year, but was not elected to this position. I have not been a member of the Transgendered Community for much longer than that. I met many of you not long after coming out and I like you and this organization. It is worth our time and effort to keep it going and seek to improve it. I have started a few projects and I have had a few ideas that I know will be fun and help our community. My being elected to the Office of Social Co-Chair with the continuity of my being in this office, and my commitment in this organization is important to making those projects a reality. So please elect me to this office for a two-year term. I ask you to help me help you as you consider your vote.

In the very short time I have been on the ExCom, I have tried to provide my vision and ideas while seeking your opinions with the many of you I have had the privilege to talk to, and with many of those members who are no longer with TGSF. My questions have always been to find what you think and how we can make this a better organization and a place where people want to come. I've asked what you feel are the things WE did that you like and what you did not like. I asked past members why they left and what would bring them back.

As Social Co-Chair, I have sought to bring you programs and events that are fun, low cost to you, our membership, do not cost TGSF much to host, promote or attend, and some that actually bring money into the organization. I hope to continue to bring these kinds of events to you. I am working on plans for our future and a way to better plan events further out and provide more details sooner so you will have more information earlier and can plan on attending the events you would like to. I hope to spread out the events throughout the year and at more locations to add more variety and a better opportunity for those who cannot always make it to functions that are farther away than they can travel. I also want to partner with other organizations and to provide events that are Family Friendly, as well as some for the Adult Only or Singles.

I am new to our community. I do not have a lot of the personal contacts. But I am introducing myself around, meeting those who can help us or put on events with us. I am integrating into the various networks of those who can help TGSF grow and become a better place where people want to come and be a part of. I will continue to work for you to bring you the events I can for the betterment of the TGSF, yourself and our community. So please, vote for me to continue my efforts. Vote for me for the commitment I have already demonstrated to you. Vote your conscience. I sincerely thank you.

I am also committed to ensuring that we develop true educational seminars geared toward all facets of our membership. As per our tradition from a decade ago, these seminars and meetings will be held near the beginning of the month and will range in topics from fashion consulting to self-defense to GRS; and any other topics about which the membership wishes to know. I will strongly encourage our membership to give feedback about their community and it is my commitment that all suggestions will be taken seriously.

Our education efforts should also extend out to the community in which we live. I would like us to be fully committed in reestablishing our speakers bureau to enhance our outreach efforts. As Outreach Co-chair these last two years, I have developed a solid track record in speaking to various colleges and other entities such as police departments and hospitals. I am confident that our outreach committee will continue the tradition established long ago of developing meaningful relationships with our outside community, both LGBT and general mainstream in addition to greeting members that come in the door to our events.

A welcoming organization is what TGSF has prided itself in being. However, recent times have demonstrated that politicization has divided the group. I wish to be clear on this point. I am not advocating that TGSF becomes a political organization that kowtows to any specific political agenda or politician. Our membership is made up of people from all sorts of political leanings and we will not create an atmosphere where one political viewpoint will be favored or "pushed" over another. We will however invite genuine communication and mature debate of issues that affect our community. It is my commitment that all sides of an issue will be heard and that any transgender related political issue will be discussed intelligently where and when appropriate. However, it will also be my commitment that TGSF will NOT force anyone to be politically active or be coerced into participating in public events. It should be each of our personal goals to honor the viewpoints of one another because there is room in this organization for those that wish to participate in the periphery and those that are activists. When we can show the world that transgender people can take pride in being involved in their community, then we can further achieve a modicum of respect as people and as being a part of a global community – not marginalized and segregated by the fears of those who don't understand.

Our essential goal is growth, and it is my hope that this revitalization can bring back some of the membership we have lost and encourage new members to join. As such, it will be our responsibility to develop some value-added membership ideas and honor our members for their pledge to the organization. It is my commitment that by the end of the summer, TGSF will have some definitive items of value that can be extended to the membership. I personally would like to see some discounts on clothing, cosmetics, hairstyling and a myriad of other services. I also will commit to demonstrating value in membership by providing incentives to attending meetings and events, including but not limited to discounted entrance fees. I believe that we can demonstrate that membership in TGSF brings some perks.

I feel that the President's role as a mentor and facilitator is extremely important. Your leadership has many ideas that are worth listening to – ideas that will make a better TGSF, ideas that will bring more revenue into the organization so that we can continue to produce high profile events like Cotillion and the return of the Really Big Shew. It is my commitment that those you elected into office will have the respect and the opportunity to fulfill their promises to you, not because it fits into any agenda I might have, but because it is what you, the membership expect your officers to do.

Tradition. Honor. Respect. These are the cornerstones to any successful organization that has survived for a quarter of a century. As President, I wish to build upon these cornerstones and lead this organization in a revitalization movement. I was a member of TGSF / ETVC in the early 90's. I understand the traditions that have been handed down to us and I will endeavor to bring some of them back into the spotlight. We can once again embrace our history of helping others as we help our own organization – an organization that is built upon a strong and active membership. I know that we need to honor our members. We need to provide educational services to them and we need to demonstrate a return value for their commitment to the organization. I have a solid track record of strategic planning, communication, education and compromise. That was only accomplished through active listening and respecting others viewpoints. An effective leader leads by developing common agendas through respect and dialogue. I hope that I can exercise the leadership skills I possess as President of TGSF, of our organization, of our family. I will pledge to listen to you, to respect your opinions, to honor your commitment and reestablish a solid tradition of community (transgender and otherwise) service.

ExCom Election Profiles

Running for Treasurer

ROXY CARMICHAEL-HART

Statement of Qualifications

Hello, my name is Roxy Carmichael-Hart, a TGSF member for the last 3 and one-half years. For the last three years, I have been proud and honored to serve as your President. Together, we accomplished many great things for TGSF and with your help, together we will make the next two years even better.

I was asked why I just didn't fade away after my term as President ended. My response is that my commitment and dedication to our community did not end with the end of my term and I desire to continue to serve as an important member of this organization that has given me so much. The financial health of TGSF has always been of importance to me. When I took office in 2003, there was \$1500 in the bank and we had incurred debts of \$4,000, much of this debt to our own ExCom members. Through careful financial planning throughout the year, we were still able to give our community a Cotillion and one that made over \$2,300, the only Cotillion to make money in recent memory. That enabled us to erase our debt. Since then, we have had some losses but good planning has kept those to a minimum and we have been able to handle all of the financial uncertainties that have come our way.

The Treasurer of TGSF should be much more than the person who pays the bills and keeps the books. The Treasurer must be an integral part of the organization's planning efforts and in fact, should take the lead to ensure that sound financial judgment is always a part of the decision-making. Thus, I have a three point platform that I would like to share with you. This is my commitment to you.

First, I will work with our program chairs and the other ExCom members to prepare reasonable and realistic budgets for our events. We must be able to ensure that events finish in the black and to not spend more than we take in. We will not spend \$3000 on an event when we know we will, at best, bring in \$1000.

Second, I will embark on fundraising efforts – not just our events but I will go beyond that to prepare grant applications to the Horizons Foundation and will evaluate other potential sources of revenue for us. I am very familiar with the "green book" for non profit agencies and will explore all options for us. We need to bring in outside money as well – from businesses, other non profits, corporations, etc. We need to show them that TGSF is a valuable organization and an organization worth investing in. And to do that, we need to show we are doing something positive for the community, as my third point will illustrate.

Third, when we get more financially stable, I will propose to the ExCom that we begin to implement some of the programs that had been established many years ago but were tabled for lack of funds. I would like to see a scholarship program whereby TGSF would provide assistance to those in our community who may be struggling, but just need a helping hand to get back on their feet. Job training, computer classes, interview dress, child care, are all things that we have the capability to fund and if we can provide some seed money, we can research the sources I identified earlier for matching funds. TGSF is a community service organization – let's start acting like one and provide some services to our community.

I think you will find my level of experience on this ExCom unmatched. I have prepared work programs and budgets for in my professional career and for non profit organizations and have managed literally, millions of dollars worth of consultant contracts, program grants and construction projects. I have been known as a person who can be trusted to stay within a budget and who will advise her superiors of any budget issues long before it becomes too late to take corrective action. I currently back up Pamela, our current Treasurer by paying bills in a timely manner and by making deposits regularly when I receive checks. In short, my experience shows that you can trust me with TGSF's finances.

It has been a privilege serving you these last three years and I look forward to continuing to work with you. I would be honored by your vote in support of my candidacy as Treasurer. Together we can...together we must...together we will. Thank you.



Running for Treasurer

JESSICA CONNOR

Members of T.G.S.F, I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself as the candidate for Treasurer of our organization. I have been active in the organization for several years in a variety of ways. Some of you may remember me helping with the "Pride" float in 2004, or providing Security for the 2005 Cotillion. Others might remember my help in earlier projects or even my suggestions and advice in more current planning meetings. My recommendations to the organization have helped implement projects raising more than \$2000 for the organization as well as saving us substantial expense in Cotillion operational costs.

Now I would like to bring some of my skills to the organization, in the capacity of Treasurer, as I have seen a need for them for some time now. I have wanted to see more information regarding the accounting's of this organization. I miss the monthly statements of the organizations financial health. I believe I am well suited to do this for our organization. I have developed database systems, focusing on financial accountability, for both high volume transportation companies and non-profits alike. I have held positions with two 501c3 organizations in the capacities of Operation Manager, Database Manager, and Office Manager. I have been responsible for the ultimate accuracy of all functions within these positions and have been credited for my thorough management. I am confident that I can bring back the accountability seen in the past to the position of the Treasurer.

This upcoming election will be your chance to tell everyone that you are interested in the financial health and well-being of the organization that you support by voting for Jessica Connor as Treasurer. Thank you in advance for your support and vote. I look forward to serving you and our community in the position of T.G.S.F. Treasurer.

Running for Outreach Committee

BECKY BENTON

Hello, I'm Becky Benton and I am running for Outreach Co-Chair. It is my firm belief that communication facilitates understanding. Though new and continuing Outreach initiatives, I hope to educate those in the community at large in order to promote awareness, tolerance, and acceptance.

I would be honored if you would elect me to the position of Outreach Co-Chair.

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ExCom Election Profiles

Running for Education Committee

DAWNNE WOODIE

I'm Dawnne Woodie, and I'm the incumbent running for the office of Education Co-Chair. I have held this office for two years, and feel that continuity and commitment in this organization is important enough to ask you to keep me in this office for another two-year term. I ask you to consider the following as you consider your vote.

I have brought to you consistent leadership, as I have brought to the forefront issues that are of paramount importance in the management of this organization. As one of your leadership, I have been a strong component in bringing this organization to its current state of financial solvency. Prior to this term of office, TGSF was seriously in debt, and as one of your leaders, I was a part of doing the things that were necessary to bring respect and financial stability to this organization, and I pledge to you that I will continue that work in the next two years. I will be your watchdog.

As Education Co-Chair, I have brought you programming in a format that allowed for the most participation at the lowest cost. I brought before you therapists, electrologists, politicians, representatives among the transgender community that were in positions of authority in the local government and the police force. I have brought you such individuals as retail representatives that openly welcome you to their establishments, opening up to the transgender community the possibility that shopping could be comfortable and safe to all segments of our community. I have brought before you representatives of the cosmetic industry, even from companies that traditionally would not cater to our own, and they welcome your contact and your business. The Education Committee has brought you information that you needed to make rational decisions concerning issues that directly affect us, whether we are the occasional crossdresser, or those who live fulltime. And I will continue to bring that leadership to you if I am re-elected.

Plans are in the works for several things in the months and years ahead. There will be a Transgender Spirituality conference that will be held during PRIDE month this year. This will bring to you leaders from various faith communities and spiritualities, where they will discuss their plans and programs to reach out and welcome and accept the transgender community into their churches, synagogues, mosques, and other places of worship. This particular event will be co-sponsored by the Human Rights Campaign, who is pledging nationally to support only issues that are inclusive of us. They are making this pledge to us, and we will hold them accountable. As a current sitting member of the HRC Steering Committee, I am in a perfect position to do this, to be your watchdog, as they work for all the LGBT community. I am working to schedule a seminar in mid- to late-summer with the TransGender Law Center, to discuss with us the issues and legalities surrounding insurance and the protections and the coverages that we can expect from our insurance carriers.

I am at this time trying to schedule a seminar that will discuss facial feminization surgery, and sex reassignment surgery, facilitated by two well-known doctors in the Bay Area. When this is scheduled, invited guests will be representatives of some of the hospitals and facilities that are open to these procedures, and the medical staffs that care for the patients.

There will be other events scheduled. I am in contact with a wig designer and stylist, who has asked to present a seminar on wig care and hair design. We hope to bring in, at the same time, professional makeup artists to instruct those of us who have difficulties in some areas of makeup application. We have been offered a free demonstration and class on self-defense. An issue of supreme importance in the Bay Area, with the occasional detractor and the prejudice that so often is followed by threats or even violence, this will be scheduled late summer, and it will be held in their studio. There have been several requests for this type of class, and it will be offered this fall.

I want to bring trainers from GLAAD to teach a seminar on how to handle the media, and our preparedness to confront the media in a positive manner, so that we can be better prepared to face the questions that come our way in our world.

Lastly, I want to remind you that I follow through and complete the work that I start. I have never been one to walk away from any task, or give up on a program, just because of a whim. I have never been a quitter, and I will not start now. I will always follow through, complete the tasks at hand, and keep my word on issues affecting this organization, the transgender community, and in reaching out to the greater LGBT community. You will always be able to count on me to continue to provide the best possible leadership at all times.

I am known for being very outspoken in the transgender community, and especially TGSF. Many times I am seen as angry, and perhaps this is true at times, but it is an anger with a fine focus. If you look beyond the visible, you will see someone with a passion only for the betterment of the organization and the community. No one will work harder, no one will stick to their values, no one will be as strong and outspoken a proponent of the community as I am, and will continue to be. I will always be there, working on your behalf, for the best that we can possibly have in all areas of our lives. A vote for me is a vote for continuity, a vote for commitment, and a vote for the best that can be in TGSF. I ask your vote in the election just days away. Thank you for your support.

Running for Education Committee

RACHAEL JANELLE LIGHT

Hello, my name is Rachael Janelle and I am a candidate for Education Co-Chair of TGSF.

Many of you know me from my past years of service to TGSF. I have served as Vice President and as President. My goal was to always make TGSF a safe and welcoming place for all.

Although I have not been involved in TGSF for the last year, I read the Channel every month and stay up to date on TGSF's activities. When I first was coming out as a transgender person, one of the things that attracted me to TGSF was the educational events. I appreciated being able to attend information seminars on hormones and self-defense and health care and electrolysis. I learned a lot from these seminars and they helped me greatly in my transition. When I became President, I made sure that these seminars continued so that I could help the new girls in the same way I was helped.

I have been dismayed that TGSF seems to have neglected education, which is the one attribute that separates it from other transgender groups. Other than a MAC event (which is not really education since you can go to MAC on your own), I don't recall one educational event being held in the last two years that was not done at an end of month. The purpose of "end of months" events are to be socials and they should not be the educational/political events every month. As a result, our new members to our community are not getting helpful information they could use. That has inspired me to run for Education co-chair.

I pledge to you that as Education co-chair, I will organize one event per month. I have developed numerous contacts in the south bay and in San Francisco from my years on the ExCom and as Empress 34 of San Jose. I have many contacts in the Imperial courts, in GAPA, in the leather community (a member of Mama's Leather family) Also was on the board of director for the Billy DeFrank Center and Received the first transgender pride award and in other community organizations. I can get people who will provide information on hormones, therapy, plastic surgery, fashion, health care, and electrolysis. I own my own business and will work with the business community to provide information on jobs and employment and hopefully, to get them to contribute to TGSF.

I am a woman of my word. I deliver. When I pledge to you I will get an event done, I will follow through. That is how I operate my business and how I build my customer base and satisfaction. By keeping my word. By keeping my commitments. By getting the job done.

I will speak out when needed. I'm not a yes girl. When I see something wrong, I will mention it. I'll shake things up if needed. I'm not just running to get a title for my own ego. I'm here to serve the community that helped me and to give back to the community I love!

But I am not a loose cannon. I know how to work within the structure of the ExCom to get the job done. I'll work with Ms. TGSF to provide educational events all over the bay area. We are all part of the same team and we need to work together for the good of the community.

One thing that has always inspired me is the message that TGSF carries on the front of the Channel describing who is welcome at TGSF. I want to make sure that we continue to honor that mission statement. It is for everyone who thinks that they need us and who want to be a part of our organization. We need to get back to that mission. We need to make sure that TGSF serves the entire community - not just a select few. Let's return TGSF to what it was - a place for all - for all to be welcomed, for all to be safe, for all to be loved.

I promise to you that I will make sure that TGSF operates with your best interests in mind and is here for you and to do what you want it to. I would appreciate your support as Education co-chair and together we will get the job done.



CHINESE TOURISTS FLOCKING TO SEE THAI TRANSSEXUALS PERFORM AT HONG KONG CABARET

Mainichi Daily News

HONG KONG — Chinese tourists love to chow down at Hong Kong's shark fin restaurants. They also load up on designer goods at the city's boutiques. Now they have a new must-do stop: gawking at Thai transsexuals prancing around in bikinis and low-cut gowns.

Busloads of holidaygoers from mainland China have been filling up the theater for the bawdy new cabaret. It's a spectacle for the visitors, who rarely get to see such a show at home because the often prudish Communist Party usually prohibits them.

As the curtain rises, dancer Thanut Waiweerayuth struts onto the stage in a red and gold ball gown and a towering beehive-like headdress. The performer bellows out a song by one of Hong Kong's biggest pop stars, the late Anita Mui.

With his meticulously made-up face, shiny mane and curved bosom, it is almost impossible to tell that the 23-year-old Thai is a man in drag. That is as long as he keeps his mouth shut, which is why the song is lip-synched.

Thanut is one of about 30 Thai transsexual and transvestite dancers performing in the show.

Many of them are veteran cabaret performers or winners of transvestite beauty pageants in Thailand, a predominantly Buddhist country where homosexuals, transvestites and transsexuals are widely tolerated. Chinese culture is less accommodating, calling such people "yan yiu" — "human freaks."

Unlike Thanut, who began taking female hormones at 15, many of the performers have undergone either breast implants or full sex-change operations.

During the show, the dancers lip-synch Western pop songs like Madonna's "Like A Virgin" as well as Cantonese and Mandarin numbers. They also perform a variety of dances, including Thai and Chinese ribbon dance.

But the highlight seems to be the performers' feminine beauty. They don an array of glamorous costumes, from figure-hugging sequined gowns to traditional Thai and Chinese dresses to bikinis, unabashedly flaunting cleavage and long legs.

Male tourists gawk when a coquettish dancer in a golden bra with pearls barely covering her breasts walks up to the audience and shakes hands with them.

Apichar Sirichantakul, the Thai organizer of Golden Dome Cabaret Show International, says he brought the show to Hong Kong because he wants to expand his business and the Thai market has become saturated with transsexual entertainment.

Calling himself the "daddy of the lady boys," he says that if the Hong Kong test goes well, he plans to explore taking the show to Chinese mainland cities. More than 80 percent of the audiences have been Chinese tourists, with smaller numbers from Japan, South Korea and Southeast Asia, says Apichar.

The theater, which began last April, holds up to 700 people for each 45-minute performance. Tourists pay 160 Hong Kong dollars (US\$21) each to tour operators, and the three shows a day are usually sold out.

Yuan Fang, a tourist from the eastern province of Zhejiang, said the cabaret is pleasing to the eyes but too shallow for her taste.

"It's exciting. But I'm more interested to learn what the transsexuals actually think," said Yuan, who together with a friend paid an extra HK\$120 (US\$15) to take photographs with the dancers after the show.

The performers often aggressively scramble for customers — some even acquiesce to being groped — to earn the extra cash and become grumpy when they fail to find any. Many spectators said they were impressed by the transsexuals' physical allure.

"I think they are more beautiful than real women," said a tourist from the northwestern Chinese province of Xinjiang who would only give her surname, Li.

Asked whether the dancers were too skimpily dressed, Li said: "It doesn't really matter because they are men anyway."

Zhou Yung, a bank executive from the eastern province of Zhejiang, slipped his hands inside a dancer's silver bra as she posed with him. He later told his wife, Tong Jingna, who also saw the show: "They are kind of hard and don't feel like a woman's breasts. They feel like a man's body."

Another mainland tourist, Zhou Qi, said she sympathized with the plight of the transsexuals for having to earn a living with their bodies. "I pity them. I don't think they have much choice," Zhou said.

DEFRANK CENTER HIRES TRANS WOMAN AS DIRECTOR

By Troy May

The new director of the LGBT community center in San Jose, Aejai Sellers, has a history of growing nonprofit community organizations and she's likely made history as the first transgender person in the country to lead an LGBT community center.

Sellers was hired in late February as the new executive director of the Billy DeFrank LGBT Community Center. She started on February 27.

For two decades, she has been working in the nonprofit arena helping others while keeping her private life very private. That has changed with her new job.

"This job offered me an opportunity to bring my personal life and professional life together," said Sellers, who is 41. "It's like a coming out party."

She has 12 years of experience in areas such as strategic planning, financial management, program development and implementation, fundraising and grant writing, and nonprofit governance. Most recently, she served as the executive director for the Court Appointed Special Advocate office in Monterey.

During her three years at CASA, she increased the agency's capacity by doubling the number of child advocates and expanding the annual budget from \$150,000 to \$500,000. Sellers also secured new private, state, and federal grants of more than \$1 million. Under her watch, CASA received the 2004 and 2005 Monterey Bay Chamber of Commerce Business Excellence Award for Outstanding Nonprofit.

Sellers received the 2005 Child Abuse Prevention Council Award for Outstanding Professionalism, Leadership and Commitment.

"She had the set of skills we were looking for: leadership, management, and fundraising," said Eileen Kopp, president of the board of directors at the DeFrank center. "We also wanted someone who could reach out and involve various communities served by the center and to our allies as well. She is energetic and has great people skills."

The DeFrank center has an annual budget of \$650,000; Sellers's annual salary is \$70,000.

Until now, Sellers hasn't talked about being a transgender person in her professional life. As director of the DeFrank center, she has an opportunity to feel safe while talking about her past.

"This is the first time in a job that I've revealed that personal side of my life," she said.

Sellers said that she doesn't fit into the typical category for a leadership role in the gay community. She isn't gay, lesbian, or bisexual. She's a heterosexual woman who has a male partner. And she has a big vision for the DeFrank center, which serves the 10th largest city in the United States.

The center celebrates its 25th anniversary this year and has 21,000 visitors a year in its new 11,000 square-foot facility that opened two years ago.

"Many Faces, One Community," is the theme of the center's 25th anniversary celebration. "Aejai's experiences as a transgender person will be invaluable in helping us create and provide dynamic programming and support that is inclusive of all members of the LGBT community," said Kopp.

The center will hold a fundraising event on Saturday, April 29, at the Fairmont Hotel in downtown San Jose, to celebrate its anniversary.

Sellers's experience as a transgender woman adds a rare element of experience, but it wasn't the reason she was hired. "Aejai was hired because of her skills and abilities to manage and grow a nonprofit," said Clark Williams, interim executive director of the center and nonprofit management consultant.



Photo by Troy May: Aejai Sellers, the new director of the Billy DeFrank LGBT Community Center.

Continued on Page 17

SCHOOL BOARD OK's RETURN TO CLASSROOM AFTER SEX CHANGE

CNN.com

EAGLESWOOD TOWNSHIP, New Jersey (AP) — To students at Eagleswood Elementary School, she used to be Mr. McBeth. Now, after undergoing a sex change, 71-year-old Lily McBeth is ready to return to teaching as Miss McBeth. Despite criticism from parents, the school board on Monday stood by its decision to allow McBeth to resume working as a substitute teacher.



AP PHOTO

After two hours of public debate and a private meeting with McBeth and her lawyer, the board took no action on calls by several parents to bar McBeth from returning to the school where she taught for five years before becoming a woman. "It was magnificent," McBeth said afterward. "You saw diversity in action."

McBeth, a retired sales executive who was married for 33 years and had three children, underwent gender reassignment surgery last year and re-applied for her job under her new name. McBeth told the school board and the crowd that she loves teaching and children, and looks forward to returning to the classroom. "This is not something I got into just as a whim," she said.

Several parents said children in the school — which consists of kindergarten through sixth grade — were not old enough to understand the concept of changing one's gender. "I, as a parent, am appalled to have this issue brought into my child's psychology," Steve Bond said. Vincent Mustacchio predicted "chaos" at the school when the students learned of McBeth's surgery.

Young children will be confused by the conflicting appearance of McBeth, who has a deep voice and masculine features but otherwise looks like a woman, other parents said. "I will not allow you to put my kids in a petri dish and hope it all turns out fine," said Mark Schnepp, who had taken out an ad in a local newspaper urging parents to turn out for the meeting.

Several people spoke in support of McBeth, including three transgender people, two former students of McBeth's and a handful of others, saying that the fact that she is a good teacher was more important than whether she appears as a man or a woman in class. "There's really nothing to fear because a person is transgender," said Karina Mari, a mother of three school-age children who said she has transgender relatives.

School board attorney Paul Carr said McBeth was a good teacher who had received favorable reviews during her tenure as a substitute. Earlier this month, the board voted 4-1 to accept her application to return to the classroom.

It's unclear how soon McBeth will resume teaching, Carr said. That depends on the need for substitutes and the availability of certified teachers who get priority when a spot opens up, he said.

Steven Goldstein, chairman of Garden State Equality, a gay rights advocacy group supporting McBeth's bid to resume teaching, called the school board's action historic.

TS Hired as Director...

Continued from Page 16

"She told us she was transgender, but that didn't play a role in her hiring," Williams added. "With that said, I couldn't help but be moved by the symbolism of Aejaië." Center leaders said they don't know of any large LGBT community center in the country that has a transgender director, so Sellers could be the first.

Sellers wants to build on the center's momentum. In her first 90 days, she'll develop a long-term plan to increase funding, create broad awareness, and build relationships with businesses in Silicon Valley.

A day before her first day on the job, Sellers was already quoted in the San Jose Mercury News about a gay rights issue in the South Bay city of Los Altos. "We will be a bold voice in the community," she said.

She wants to make sure the center has programs for people of all ages, colors, backgrounds, and beliefs. "We need to find out what the gay and lesbian community really wants or needs from us. Then there is the bisexual community, which doesn't have any program that I know of."

The center started its search for a new director when Patrick Soricone left the position last November. After three years at the center, he accepted a position as the director of community impact at the United Way Silicon Valley.

Before moving to California, Sellers founded and served as the executive director for Transitional Services for Youth & Families in Burlington, Vermont. During her six-year tenure, Sellers expanded the organization from a start-up to an organization with a \$600,000 budget.

She secured \$1.5 million in both public and private funding for the Vermont nonprofit and expanded the reach of the organization by partnering with various local, regional and state agencies.

PS - Congratulations to Aejaië Sellers and the Billy DeFrank LGBT Community Center. However, to set the record straight, she is not the first transwoman in the entire country, or even California, to lead an LGBT community center. In May 2004, Debbie Weill was hired as the Executive Director of the Rainbow Community Center in Concord, CA. The RCC serves Contra Costa and Solano Counties.

Donna Freeman

Gianna Israel - In Memoriam

Maximilian Wolf Valerio

My dear friend, Gianna Israel, [has] passed away...

Gianna was a counselor, writer, and irrepressible wit - she helped many people in the transsexual and transgender community, and left a legacy of hope, and an example of extreme resourcefulness and bravery.

Gianna was a real life JT Leroy. And, possibly, because she was the real thing, she never played the victim. Gianna was proud, and set out to prove herself - capable and whole. She helped others. Kicked out of her house by her parents as a teenager because she was transsexual, Gianna lived in the streets for a time and then, became, through sheer will and intelligence, a counselor and writer - the editor and author of Transgender Care, a community counselor who helped many of us (I got my letter from her in 1989) probably hundreds when all is said and done— and wrote a column for "Transgender Tapestry". She set out to learn Chinese on her own, and - violin. She was a paragon of someone - who challenged themselves constantly — to become more - She did this without a high school degree, let alone a college degree.

We had a lot of fun together, she was a trickster — a joker, a sweetheart— tons of fun to be around- generous — and able to see through pretense —

Her memory, and her work, will continue to inspire —

Significant Other Support East Bay

Questions or concerns about your partner's crossdressing? Please call Julie at (925) 937-8432, or e-mail julie39@comcast.net, or write to: Julie Freeman, PO Box 272885, Concord, CA 94527-2885.

wear as that already enjoyed by women - this may not always include women's clothes, but may incorporate make-up, jewelry, and other feminine styles or accoutrements. There are no hidden dress-code rules, no unverifiable claims of femininity, and no hankering after outdated social conventions. Under pressure from such people, policymakers are beginning to concede that it's discrimination to deny men this basic right to freedom of personal expression, and I'm excited to be at the cutting edge of reform programs involving human rights, social recognition, and employment protection in this area. However, most traditional crossdressers can't understand a man who wants to wear women's clothes and *not* be seen as a woman; some have even said that presenting as a mixture of male and female is simply unacceptable, and threatens the safety of the closet. But why? What's to stop the closet and activism co-existing? After all, despite their political activities, doesn't the gay minority still have a closet?

In the absence of a political forum like Stonewall, one might expect that crossdresser support groups would provide safe environments for open discussion on key issues such as this. However, years of social isolation have allowed them to degenerate into breeding grounds for hysteria, paranoia, and lies about the alleged hostility of the outside world towards men who wear women's clothes, resulting in the present situation in which crossdressers are afraid to go out in public unless they can pass successfully. Passing has thus become an obsession of pathological proportions in contemporary crossdressing circles. Yet much of the so-called "evidence" that we *have* to pass is hearsay, rumor, and anecdote, promoted by those who've never stepped outside their front doors dressed. On the other hand, I have years of personal experience which proves that passing *isn't* necessary. I *know* the overwhelming majority of the public doesn't care how we dress: it's just not an important issue to them, and an increasing number of less-than-passable crossdressers are confirming this.

But despite my best efforts at encouraging alternative modes of male presentation, one only has to look in a typical crossdresser magazine, or at the participants at a typical crossdresser meeting, to realize that the ideas of presenting as women, pretending to *be* women, and passing, have a stranglehold on our community. This presentation is too short to speculate about how many crossdressers really *are* women psychologically - while I'm willing to entertain the possibility that some are, I can't accept that it's *universally* the case: the statistics just don't add up. Compared with the female population, there are far too many men masquerading as the opposite sex in secret, and far too few exercising their right to simply wear the clothes of their choice *without* masquerade. I propose that the current crossdressing culture is the result of decades of brainwashing - specifically, the insidious enforcement of a prescribed mode of dress and behavior onto a vulnerable, impressionable, and frightened group of men. I'm certain that, had they been given a free choice in the matter, many would have chosen to present themselves in an alternative manner as I do; indeed, a half-dozen of my friends and colleagues have partially or totally rejected the traditional teachings over the last few years, and without coercion from me. Contrary to popular belief, my goals don't include *forcing* my views onto traditional crossdressers, but they *do* include blowing the whistle on the large number of traditional crossdressers who persist in forcing *their* views onto everyone else. Fundamentally, I believe that crossdressers should be presented with *all* the options, then left to decide *for themselves* how they wish to present.

Unfortunately, such freedom of choice is anathema to some in the crossdressing community, and a small number have attacked me for exposing the sinister undercurrent of intimidation and threats directed against those who question the established philosophy. They've tried to belittle my activities, discredit my evidence, and destroy my reputation amongst my friends. It's ironic that, while one might expect such macho bully-boy behavior from petty tyrants, it's here being perpetrated by men who claim to display the classic feminine attributes of compassion and caring; this simply reinforces my belief that such claims are nothing but a sham. This offensive and abusive subculture must be purged from our support groups; until it is, the transcommunity will remain backward, support groups will remain ineffective, and crossdressers everywhere will remain an oppressed, misrepresented, and invisible minority. This is not acceptable.

The Role of the Support Groups

My experience suggests that the majority of the public isn't aware of our obsession with being seen as real women, and while many people play along with our charade, they still see us as men *dressed* like women. The popular conclusion is that crossdressers are homosexual - an impression reinforced by exaggerated displays of female mannerisms from both gays and crossdressers. However, I'm much more alarmed by the beliefs that crossdressers are freaks, perverts, or pedophiles, which, because they've never been formally challenged,

have become firmly established in the public mind. When I moved house in 1999, for example, my new neighbor told me that a local man had recently been sent to jail following his conviction as a pedophile, and if I didn't want to be the subject of a hate campaign, I should keep my crossdressing secret. More recently, one of my friends had his house raided by the Police, after a neighbor saw him wearing a skirt and reported him on suspicion of dealing in child pornography. And so on. All other minority support networks have political agendas and a presence in wider society, and such offensive discrimination on the basis of an *assumed* lifestyle isn't tolerated. It's because the crossdressing minority has consistently resisted the forging of this vital link into the outside world that we're now caught in a vicious circle of events: our secretive way of life has spawned a damaging public-domain mythology over the last few decades which, although erroneous, nevertheless serves to perpetuate the secrecy today. I believe our support groups are wasted in their present role of what amounts to little more than a set of anonymous contact networks for closet crossdressers, and I maintain that we should be encouraging them to be active on our behalf in breaking this destructive cycle.

Some groups will argue that they're *already* active in this arena, citing their contacts with support organizations such as The Samaritans, Relate and MIND. However, the only time that Relate for instance is likely to have anything to do with crossdressers is when a woman has discovered a stash of female clothes in a suitcase in the attic, and suddenly her husband of perhaps thirty years has become a filthy pervert from whom she wants an immediate divorce. In fact, far from being a valuable liaison exercise, our dialogue with such organizations is mostly damage limitation; for the unfortunate crossdresser in the above situation, it's too little, too late. Effective support would seek to remove the potential for such discovery scenarios, and this can only be achieved through proactive widespread public education programs about the nature of crossdressing. I therefore strongly applaud the fine work recently carried out with Essex Police by TransLiving's president Stacy Novak. But our paranoia runs very deep, especially where the Police are concerned, and I was disappointed - although not surprised - to hear that Stacy's work was greeted by the membership with disinterest. Nevertheless, this is precisely the sort of public initiative we *should* be taking, and I urge other support group leaders to follow Stacy's example on behalf of their respective memberships.

Now before the knee-jerk reactionaries start spreading their propaganda about the potential dangers of such activism, I ask them to think about what's actually involved. I'm talking about cultivating a sense of "tranny pride" to replace the unhealthy fear and paranoia currently pervading the transcommunity. I'm talking about dissociating the image of crossdressers from the less savory elements in our society, and challenging the gutter media when they persist in making damaging accusations about us. I'm talking about persuading discriminating employers to change their conditions of employment. I'm talking about lecturing in schools and colleges to break the perpetual cycle of taunts and insults from teenagers, and instilling in them an understanding of what we are, so as to prevent them growing into ignorant and prejudiced adults. And, of course, I'm talking about making the outside world a place where crossdressers will feel safe. Do such initiatives *necessarily* lead to our unwelcome exposure? No, of course they don't - on the contrary, they can all be progressed by our support groups while maintaining the secure environment which they've traditionally offered to their members. But by shaping the social climate in our favor, support groups would *by default* encourage the development of a forward-looking agenda, thereby facilitating our personal growth as equal members of the human race.

Ultimately, of course, *real* support means making support *unnecessary* - an interesting paradox which requires support groups to work towards their own demise. However, the president of a major UK support group has recently expressed the view that support groups will be needed indefinitely because there will always be "confused people" who need to be shown "the right direction" in a world where crossdressing will "never be totally accepted." Cynics might interpret this statement as proof that support groups have a self-serving interest in pursuing an agenda which ensures internal stagnation regardless of external social change. To me, it's also confirmation that those at the top of our support groups suffer the same stifling fear and paranoia as the regular membership; unfortunately, from such a position, they can offer us nothing in terms of guidance or support. Such influential positions ought to be filled by those with the courage and the will to lead *from the front*, and we should be demanding that this is so.

The Role of the Medical Profession

Many crossdressers hold the medical profession in great esteem on account of its ability to grant them their Dream Ticket of becoming the women they claim they ought to have been. But let's get one thing straight - the primary function of the medical profession in this respect is to use counseling or surgery to remove from society those who don't conform to the conventional two-sex two-gender model which is alleged to characterize the human species, and it justifies its actions by categorizing such people as mentally disordered. It has no interest in *true* male freedom of expression, because that invariably

involves some crossing of traditional gender boundaries. In the final part of my presentation, I want to explore this offensive and archaic eugenics-type philosophy, seek the reasons for the medical profession's stubborn refusal to update it, and consider what we as the affected minority should be doing to force the issue. So I'd like to introduce The American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, DSM version IV, last revised in August 2000, which contains the current definition of crossdressing and its diagnostic criteria as a mental disorder.

Article 302.3 of DSM-IV deals specifically with crossdressing - or rather with "transvestic fetishism", TF. This term appeared in DSM-III in 1987, in what appears to be a deliberate attempt to link crossdressing with some form of sexual activity or perversion; indeed, as the associated text explains, "while crossdressed, [the transvestic fetishist] usually masturbates, imagining himself to be both the male and the female object of his sexual fantasy". However, it goes on to say that "in some individuals, the motivation for crossdressing may change over time, with sexual arousal diminishing or disappearing" - a scenario which many "out" crossdressers will recognize. Curiously, DSM doesn't make clear how this latter form of crossdressing *without* sexual arousal can still be described as "fetishism".

The article also states that "[TF] has been described only in heterosexual males". This completely frees women from the stigma of dressing-related mental illness, regardless of what they choose to wear or their motivation for wearing it. DSM offers no explanation for why the breaking of an arbitrary set of social customs is acceptable for one sex, yet results in a diagnosis of mental illness for the other - neither does it comment on why gay men are exempt from this diagnosis. However, one critic has suggested that it reflects and promotes the higher social status of heterosexual men in western society; while this is perhaps the most plausible explanation, it's nevertheless of some concern that a contemporary medical text should effectively label gays, crossdressers, and women as second-class citizens.

On the subject of males with TF, DSM further states that "although his basic preference is heterosexual, he tends to have few sexual partners and may have engaged in occasional homosexual acts. An associated feature may be the presence of sexual masochism." What's the point of such vague speculation? And where are the details of the control sample of non-crossdressers against which these statistics were compared? It's hardly worth arguing against such rubbish - however, as a point of interest, it's widely believed in contemporary crossdressing circles that the incidence of homosexuality amongst crossdressers is similar to that amongst non-crossdressers, and I suspect the same applies to sexual masochism.

The second diagnostic criterion for TF is equally vague. To quote, "the fantasies, sexual urges, or behaviors [surrounding crossdressing must] cause clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning". Once again, DSM fails to make clear whether this distress or impairment must be caused by a crossdressing-related pathology (such as latent transsexualism), or whether it may simply originate from the prejudice which crossdressing invariably attracts. In practice, the diagnosis is left up to the judgement of the specialist, who may be of the opinion that *any* crossdressing *automatically* infers distress, in which case a misdiagnosis of mental disorder is likely.

Finally, it's worth noting that TF comes under the heading of "sexual and gender identity disorders", subheading "paraphilias". I've already dismissed the notion that it's a sexual disorder, but is it a gender identity disorder? Well no, it's not that either: someone who crossdresses may feel that he doesn't fit into any of the traditional gender categories, but to classify him as having a gender identity *disorder* is to deny the validity of his particular gender identity. No-one can claim that one set of identities is "right" while another set is "wrong", and it's certainly not for the medical profession to create its own arbitrary distinction, then use it to categorize certain groups of people as mentally ill just because they have unconventional lifestyles. But what about "paraphilias"? Well, to put this in context, other paraphilias described in DSM-IV include exhibitionism, voyeurism, sexual sadism, and pedophilia. The association of crossdressing with such repugnant criminal activities is outrageous.

Let's speculate for a moment on why the medical profession has chosen not to revise these aspects of DSM-IV. Its practitioners have plenty of experience of dealing with both crossdressers and transsexuals, and will have amassed large quantities of data on their respective lifestyles. Yet they've squandered numerous opportunities over the last few decades to put this information to good use. They've encouraged the conventional two-sex two-gender system even when it's crystal clear that such a scheme is inadequate to represent the human species, and in so doing, they've

perpetrated human-rights abuses on everyone from crossdressers to intersexed children. They've done nothing to educate the public about the *true* nature of sex and gender, leaving transsexual activists and gender warriors like me on the front line to deal with the consequent threat of violence from a handful of small-minded bigots. They've witnessed in silence both the mountain of human misery and the staggering waste of human potential in one-sided relationships where the husband must crossdress in secret while the wife is allowed to "crossdress" in public. Then they've taken what in most instances is a benign activity, surrounded it with pseudo-scientific gobbledegook and invalid statistics, and placed it in a manual of mental disorders alongside voyeurism, sadism, and pedophilia where it clearly doesn't belong. I suggest that the medical profession is failing crossdressers by deliberately misinterpreting their embarrassed silence as some form of tacit agreement with its diagnosis of mental illness, because it doesn't want to be held responsible for the social, sexual and cultural upheavals which would result from the fundamental redefinition of gender values which it knows is long overdue.

Maybe the medical profession is afraid of losing public confidence by admitting that crossdressers are mostly just regular men with an unconventional dress sense - but that doesn't justify our being used as a scapegoat. DSM's worthless description and diagnosis of transvestic fetishism must as a matter of urgency be replaced with unambiguous criteria designed to determine when crossdressing is a symptom of a more serious underlying problem; where these criteria aren't met, crossdressing should be viewed simply as a social or cultural matter. I regard this as the single most important issue affecting crossdressers today, because as long as the medical profession believes we're all mentally disordered, what chance do we have of convincing a skeptical public that we're not? In fact, transgender advocacy groups already exist with the aim of reforming DSM, and all we crossdressers need to do is empower our support groups to work with them; it's simple, it's secure, and it's in all our long-term interests. However, I've already shown in this presentation how our obsession with secrecy and anonymity is holding us back on every single issue to do with realizing our future as members of the human race, and I have no doubt that we'll treat this new opportunity with similar contempt.

Final Thoughts

I make no apologies for placing the blame for our current predicament squarely at the feet of individual crossdressers. In many respects, it's unfortunate that we can become invisible by assuming the guise of regular trouser-wearing men when our safety is at stake, and I try to imagine how things might have turned out had we not been able to do so. For instance, would we still in the third millennium be disguising ourselves as women and meeting in secret - or would we have been forced to stand up for our individuality, our human rights, and the freedom of expression for which countless people have given their lives? Would we be expending so much energy on excuses about our "inner woman", our femininity, and the comfort of the closet - or would we have turned those energies to something infinitely more useful, namely securing our future free from harassment and abuse? Clearly, the reason we're all still in the closet today is because we can be - we've found ways of avoiding having to face the outside world as crossdressing men, and we've manufactured all sorts of fantastic lies, excuses, rules and rituals to ensure that this remains so indefinitely. And as if that wasn't bad enough, we've prostituted our so-called "support groups" into a trivial role where they provide nothing more than an extension to our personal closets. So instead of sitting around congratulating ourselves for all the advances we believe we've achieved for our minority, we should be in disgrace for our complacency, our closed-mindedness and our cowardice - for *those* are the reasons we've achieved so little.

About the Author

Graham Holmes is a professional communications systems engineer, a semi-professional musician, and a staunchly-political clothing rights advocate. For nearly four years, his everyday presentation has included women's clothes, but not a female name or identity. While he remains a member of the Beaumont Society and TransLiving International, he believes that the current crossdressing philosophy relies too heavily on secrecy, anonymity, and female masquerade, and he works within these groups to encourage support for mixed-gendered modes of presentation. Graham is a co-founder of the advocacy group Total Clothing Rights (<http://totalclothingrights.org>), which lobbies the government, academic institutions, educational establishments and the media in an effort to dispel the myths and taboos surrounding male crossdressing, and to gain a measure of legal protection, employment rights, and social respect for crossdressers everywhere. He's also a member of the LGBT working group headed by Suffolk Police as part of their public liaison initiative. Graham is the author of a number of essays on gender politics, and with his wife Kim has featured in *Woman* magazine (3 December 2001), and in an internet-based Video Nation for the BBC (http://www.bbc.co.uk/suffolk/videonation/man_in_a_dress.shtml).

THE TRANSEXUAL DIARIES

Veronica Klaus is brassy and confident onstage discussing her sex change in 'Family Jewels.' In person, though, she protects her privacy.

Edward Guthmann
SF Chronicle Staff Writer



Veronica Klaus is both campy and serious in her performance of *Family Jewels: The Making of Veronica Klaus* at Theatre Rhinoceros. Chronicle photo by Kim Komenich

In her one-woman show, "Family Jewels," the flame-haired chanteuse Veronica Klaus picks up an antique tuba, hoists it over her shoulder and plays the upbeat lament "All of Me." It's a great image for a cabaret performer to offer a crowd — a slice of 21st century vaudeville — but also an ironic one, given that Klaus, 5-foot-10 and gorgeous, is a transsexual.

The song is mildly masochistic: "Can't you see, I'm no good without you," Klaus moans. But in her hands "All of Me" becomes an outsider's declaration, a demand for respect.

"Take me as I am," Klaus seems to purr between the lines. "This envelope, this reconstructed body, this hair color that doesn't exist in nature. This is good enough."

Klaus, 41, is one of an estimated 12,000 transsexual women in the United States, a population that's not only growing but inching toward social acceptability. Felicity Huffman won a Golden Globe and an Oscar nomination this year for playing Bree, a hapless sex-change candidate in the comedy "Transamerica." And Larry Wachowski, one of the co-directors of "The Matrix" film trilogy and producer of "V for Vendetta," has changed his sex and is now living as Lana Wachowski.

"Family Jewels," playing at Theatre Rhinoceros until April 1, might be subtitled "Everything You Always Wanted to Ask About Transsexuals But Were Afraid to Ask." Through music and anecdotes, Klaus takes us back to a small-town, Midwestern childhood and broken home, an adolescent passion for Bette Midler and showbiz roots in a puppet ministry called the God Squad. She was a "big-boned girlie boy," a red-headed kid with a Huck Finn face before she transitioned — as we see in an onstage slide show.

Klaus doesn't scrimp on details, but devotes a funny chunk of the show to the gender reassignment surgery that resulted in a neovagina — "my remodeled rumpus room." During the procedure, the male genitalia isn't so much discarded as "rearranged," she explains. "It's like 'organ-gami.'"

Shifting from campy to serious, Klaus says she "wasn't trying to change who I was" through gender reassignment, "but to become who I truly was."

For that reason, when I meet Klaus at the downtown perfume salon where she works, she won't reveal her birth name. "I find that when people want to know your name," she says in a soft, modulated voice, "usually it's because they think that's who you really are. And that is not who I really am. That other person was an illusion, not this."

Brassy, big and playfully raunchy on stage, in person Klaus is demure, a bit wary of the visiting journalist. She's wearing a fedora over her copper-colored hair and looks smart and pulled together, creatively mixing colors and fabrics with a chartreuse skirt, velvet black smock, black boots and olive-green fedora.

"I'm very lucky to have an amazing couturier, Mr. David," she confides. "It's a little tricky finding things in stores because the proportions are slightly different."

Klaus started her transition in 1989 by taking female hormones that softened her skin and redistributed body fat. She had breast surgery in 1996 and in 2000 completed her "art and science project," as she calls it

Theater Review

I'M MY OWN BOMBSHELL

By Jason Zinoman
NY Times



Bradford Louryk plays the title role in "Christine Jorgensen Reveals."

She had Marilyn Monroe-style hair, silky smooth skin and a knock-out figure. But Christine Jorgensen wasn't always a beautiful woman; she wasn't a woman at all until she entered a Copenhagen hospital in 1952 and had a sex-change operation. The Daily News broke the story: "Ex-G.I. Becomes Blonde Bombshell," read the headline that launched her celebrity, briefly making her one of the most famous women in the world.

Based on a fascinating historical document, "Christine Jorgensen Reveals," which has already had runs at 59E59 Theaters and Dodger Stages before moving to Theater Row, is not your average biographical play. In a meticulous performance, Bradford Louryk lip-syncs an hourlong interview conducted in 1958 with Ms. Jorgensen by Nipsey Russell (Rob Grace), who struggles mightily to think up euphemisms for sex. "Have you ever had any sincere entreaties for a romantic interlude?" he asks with typical formality.

Sitting in a chair opposite a television set that features a recording of the interviewer, Jorgensen, who starred in her own nightclub act, remains unruffled despite discussing the most personal aspects of her life. She articulates ideas about gender and homosexuality that sound well ahead of her time, while also projecting a demure model of femininity that seems distinctly of the 1950s. It's a bravura persona that manages to be radical and conservative at the same time.

Mr. Louryk, who also created the show, directed without fuss by Josh Hecht, looks a little like Austin Scarlett from the reality show "Project Runway." It's a skillful turn, but while his erect posture and carefully timed blushes are highly scripted, this performance remains a minor, if compelling, project. Without any distance from the material, Mr. Louryk's work more closely resembles Ashlee Simpson's than that of Lypsinka, who practices a sophisticated brand of lip-synching.

"Christine Jorgensen Reveals" begins with a short documentary, and the show leaves you wanting another. How long did Ms. Jorgensen, who died in 1989, remain in the public eye? Did she continue performing? And if you will excuse my prurient interest, were there sincere entreaties for romantic interludes?

in "Family Jewels." She never bothered with facial surgery and, unlike Felicity Huffman's gawky "Transamerica" character, didn't consider coaching or image consultation to help her look, walk, sit or dress in a convincingly feminine manner.

"I don't feel that it's anybody else's job to teach me who to be," she says. "You know, everybody has a mixture of elements of masculine and feminine ... and it was not ever my goal to eliminate one or the other. If you're modifying your behavior to suit someone else's expectations of what a man or woman is, then who are you living for?"

"It's more about being comfortable with yourself."

"Transamerica" was a breakthrough, Klaus allows. "There were some great moments in it, but I thought it had some problems: That whole premise that she had to go across country to meet her son before the psychologist would give her a letter authorizing the surgery. That wouldn't happen. Also, the movie spends the first hour making jokes at her expense.

"It's a step in the right direction, but there is still a long way to go."

Klaus lives in San Francisco with her husband of five years, Yoaz, but doesn't like to give many details. They met 10 years ago at a neighborhood cafe. He works in a hotel.

She saw the recent Rolling Stone piece about the former Larry Wachowski, now Lana. What advice would she give her? "Take your time, because you've got a whole life ahead of you to figure it out. What's important is what you want and are you happy when you get it. Making sure that each step along the way is coming from within, and not from other people's expectations or approval."

Asked if she misses anything about being a man, Klaus says no without hesitation.

"I live my life as Veronica. I look and feel like a woman, but at the same time I don't really know what that means. Does anyone know what that means? Nobody has the same experience in life. I can't feel like Oprah, you know."

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BUSINESS-MINDED TRANSSEXUALS A CUT ABOVE YOUR AVERAGE SALARYMAN

By Ryann Connell
Mainichi Daily News



Salarymen have been around for decades. Even salarywomen are not such a strange sight on Japan's streets. Now, according to Friday (3/3), there are also salary-in-betweens.

As the IT sector has proved in recent weeks, there's more to Japan's high tech biz than meets the eye and nowhere is that more evident than at New Gauge, one of Japan's fastest growing companies staffed, it seems at first glance, by women.

But take a closer look at the employees and things like Adam's apples, relatively large hands and five o'clock shadows become evident. New Gauge is a company of

"nyuu haafu," or New Half, the Japanese term used to describe post-cut transsexuals.

"All our company's executives and half its 15 employees are nyuu haafu. Our company handles all sorts of information for mobile phones, like beauty needs, fashion, as well as information useful for the gay and lesbian communities and anything you need to know about cosmetic surgery," New Gauge's CEO Neru Kisaragi tells Friday. "We're using the fact that we're nyuu haafu to the hilt."

Kisaragi is running a business she says can only be run by nyuu haafu and aims to become a 100 million yen a year operation — a goal that has got off to a good start by reaping in 20 million yen in its first two months in business.

Kisaragi's rise to IT magnate, however, would have seemed unlikely even to her not so long ago. "Until three years ago, I was a Western-style cook in a posh hotel. Of course, I was still a man at that time," she says. "I've always wanted to do work that had a creative bent, though, so I gave up being a cook after a year."

Following her, or his as it was at the time, unsuccessful stint as a hotel cook, Kisaragi went to work at the family noodle restaurant for a while, but began an e-mail magazine service for mobile phone users, which he operated in his part time. Before he knew it, Kisaragi had a subscriber list of over 300,000 and was racking in 4 million yen a month in advertising revenue. Using the money he was making, Kisaragi left his hometown in sleepy Hokkaido and headed for the bright lights of Tokyo, setting up New Gauge in the capital's posh Nishi Azabu district late last year and becoming a woman at around the same time.

"Regular companies aren't equipped to deal with minorities like us, no matter how skilled we are, so we can't work for them. It's a fact that the only options available for us to make a living are jobs like nightclubs or sex joints," Kisaragi says. "So, me and a couple of the other girls got together and decided to go into a real business for ourselves and show the rest of the world that we are more than capable. I invited a couple of the other girls to join in. We decided on the company name of new gauge because we wanted it to encompass the fact that we're nyuu half, but didn't use that term specifically because we didn't want to differentiate between transsexuals, gays and lesbians."

Unlike when she was back home and running her business through a single mobile phone, Kisaragi is now in charge of a fully fledged company — one in which she has invested 4 million yen of her own money.

"I got that back in no time. I want to stress that we have parts of ourselves that are more feminine than females, so we can understand what's going through women's minds, but at the same time have also experienced life as men, so have manly attributes that we can draw on and know what it takes to get by in what is a man's world," Kisaragi tells Friday. "On top of that, simply becoming a woman meant we had to overcome a lot of hardship, which has had the benefit of giving us greater maturity and mental strength. My goal now is to use my own money to repay all the 700 trillion yen in debts that Japan has built up. We want to find a product to export overseas that will save the Japanese economy."

La Dolce Musto

by Michael Musto
The Village Voice

BUCK ANGEL COVERS HIS CROTCH TACO

The inevitable first question for BUCK ANGEL, the female-to-male transsexual porn star who's billed as "a real man with a real cunt"—is, "Is it true, dear?" "Yes," Buck told me matter-of-factly last week. "That's my claim to fame. Look it up." I already had, naturally—I was merely seeking cunt confirmation. But I didn't quite understand how much of a real man Buck could be, considering that his crotch taco has not only survived, it's thrived beyond all expectation. Buck explained all that, saying he's gone the male-hormones-and-chest-reduction route, but he's held on to his vagina "because I didn't think that particular procedure was going to work for me. It's not as advanced as male-to-female surgery. And I don't need a piece of meat between my legs that doesn't work." "Like mine?" I smirked. "Let's just keep that silent," Buck said, laughing.

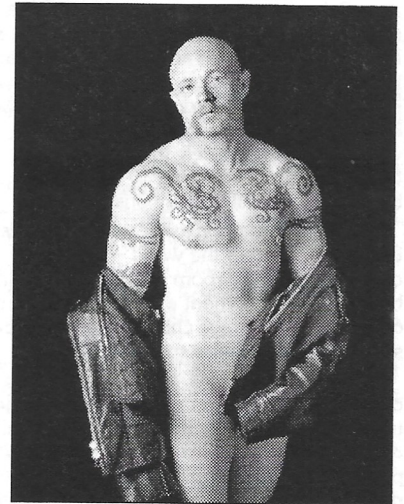


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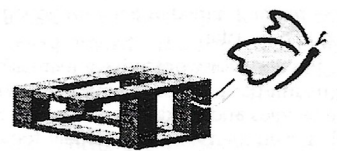
The tattoo-sporting, cigar-chomping stud-with-a-gash makes no secret of the fact that, growing up the ultimate tomboy, he was the proverbial straight guy trapped in a butch woman's body. He ended up dating the ladies, "but it was more as a man, though in female form. I never related to the lesbian community." I guess he was closer to a Jodie Foster/Janet Reno type than a Portia De Rossi or Elton John.

Actually, he was most like a Brandon Teena, but minus the trickery and the tragedy. After transitioning, Buck became a one-of-a-cunt porn icon, not only making movies with gay men (among others), but making them largely for gay men. You heard me—no, really, kids. Throngs of normally "fish"-hating queers not only refrain from throwing battery acid at this vagina, they actually get aroused by it. Did someone slip them some Cooze-Aid? "Gay men are totally pussypophobic," Buck admitted, "but I'm opening doors to them. Finding me hot doesn't make them not gay because as you can see I'm totally a man—I just happen to have a vagina. A lot of guys want to fuck a pussy; they're just not attracted to a woman. And here comes Buck Angel! Two holes are better than one!" (So true, so true. Hand me the power drill.)

Hetero males, it turns out, are far less willing to give at the orifice, at least in this kooky case. "I'm generally very threatening to straight men," said Buck, not worried. "In my work I'm saying you don't need a penis to be a man. What does that say about them? Straight men are all about their cocks!" Which in far too many cases means they're all about two to four lifeless inches of failed menace.

A couple of open-minded straighties do get off on Buck's freak appeal, but the star has resisted attempts to market himself as an oddity, preferring to be sold as a hot, sexy guy with a serious following (and who never fakes orgasms, by the way). "I'm shaking people up," he told me, excitedly, "saying the world isn't black and white. People want everybody to be in a box and be this or that. I'm not this or that." But of course he has a box—and though I may not necessarily want to fuck it, I definitely want to watch it. But let's just keep that silent.

legal questions about gender?



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by Gwendolyn Ann Smith
Bay Area Reporter

GENDER ISN'T A TWO WAY STREET

Being transgender provides one the unintended consequence of becoming very aware of how society reinforces and polices gender among its members. We see it as we grow up, placed into gender roles that don't speak to us. We see it, too, as we begin to shift away from such, whether moving entirely from one gender to another, or simply choosing to move into spaces beyond the typical conventions.

The first question asked when a child is born is the one that tells the world – or at least everyone in the delivery room – if a child is a girl or a boy. From the moment a blue or pink blanket is doled out, the average child is placed in a lifelong series of rigidly gender specific situations.

Some households, and some locations, are better than others. Yet even in the most gender transcendent spots, one might still find a false dichotomy in action. Such is the nature of participation in a society that requires one to walk a path – and one path only – specific to a determination about your genitals by a delivering physician.

It has not always been so rigidly defined, though such a division among the sexes has likely played a role in human society since there were humans around to have a society. Even as late as the 1920s little boys and little girls were dressed and groomed largely identically – in dresses – until males reached their breeching age, typically before age 5. Such a quaint practice fell out of favor in the era of the depression and World War II, and never returned in the post-war era.

When I was a young child in the 1970s – yes, even in those days of so-called unisex clothing and other attempts to break down the barriers between the sexes – gender was very much policed. Young girls lived in the era of Holly Hobbie, hot pants, and Easy Bake ovens in fashionable avocado green. Boys had Big Jim dolls, "Toughskin" jeans, and Evil Kniveel.

I pushed every line I could, trust me. Still, even then there were lines one simply could not cross. In an era that brought the fight for equality between the sexes, some things were still treated as immutable. Women remained – as a general rule – the homemakers; men the breadwinners.

Fast forward a couple decades, as I worked on coming out in the era of grunge. The roles had 20 or so years to shift. Kurt Cobain could perform "In Bloom" while wearing a dress, but he was a rare exception. This was the era of Spice Girls, after all, and women were being signaled to be, well, girlish. Into this world I had to learn to move from one gender to another.

As I worked toward my own transition, I became acutely aware of how rigidly gender was still being enforced. I would say that it might be even more so today.

Yes, one can argue yet again that there are both trends and people defying gender roles today. Yet, like Nirvana's frontman a decade ago – or David Bowie in my youth – these were not the standard, but were, perhaps, reactions to it.

Take a moment to consider how many things one encounters in a given week that are specific to one of two specific genders. Clothing stores focus toward two roles, but so do the toy aisles at your nearby Toys 'R' Us. Even seemingly generic toys like Lego building blocks are sold with a specifically feminized version cast in pastels and focusing on home and family sets: no castles or construction sets to be found. Barbie – Web site polls to the contrary – remains aimed as a toy for young girls, and the Bratz dolls follow right along in her wake.

Fashions for women have increasingly begun to focus on low-cut jeans and midriff-baring tops. Clunky heels have had their renaissance, as have large bangles and beads. Men's fashion remains a little more toward the center, but even then the styles remain focused toward a masculine ideal.

We live in a time when the ideals of masculinity or femininity can be seen embodied by the celebrities of our era. I feel we can do so much better, though, than a female ideal that is Britney Spears or Jessica Simpson, or the male role models of Ashton Kutcher or Curtis "50 Cent" Jackson. There is little room for those who might otherwise take a place outside the space of a genitals equal gender dichotomy.

In my own life over the last several years, I have tried to be mindful of gender presentation. I have even sought to make it clear that I am not going

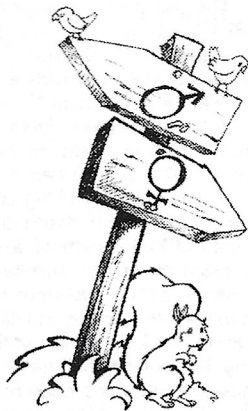


Illustration:
Christine Smith

TRANSGENDER HUMAN RIGHTS

By Ryan Miller
Daily Texan Columnist

Last month, in New Bedford, Mass., a man walked into a gay bar, asked if it was a gay bar and began firing a gun, wounding several people.

In the wake of the incident, national queer advocacy organizations are renewing their call to the U.S. Congress to pass a federal hate crimes bill, a task which will remain unfinished if the Senate and the House cannot agree on the protection of transgender people.

While both houses' version of the Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act include sexual orientation as a protected class, gender identity is not included in the Senate version. In September, the U.S. House passed a hate crimes bill that included gender identity and expression. The gender identity clause was included specifically to protect transgender individuals, those who defy conventional notions of gender as simply male and female. Transgender individuals may identify and present themselves as a gender that does not match the gender they were assigned upon birth in some or all aspects of their lives.

In a world bent upon ensuring a dual check-box system for gender – man or woman, only – it is no wonder that the transgender community is at great risk for violence and faces discrimination on a daily basis. The Harvey Milk Institute in San Francisco estimated in 1999 that transgender individuals face a 1-in-12 chance of being murdered, versus a 1-in-18,000 chance in the non-transgender population.

In spite of institutionalized mistreatment and a lack of support for transgender individuals at all levels, inclusion of the group is a familiar question in the push for equality: Does a community accept any sort of gain as positive, or insist that the entire community actually be represented and included, risking possible losses?

Leaders within queer communities should make it clear that inclusion without recognition of transgender communities is not inclusion at all. Allies to LGBT communities should make it clear that their alliance includes all members of queer communities.

As members of a marginalized group, LGBT people have been lead to believe that there are only so many seats at the table for who identify as LGBT. Queer communities – as with other underrepresented groups – have been trained to endlessly thank and support those of the dominant culture who briefly champion their causes or support their basic rights as humans.

In queer communities, this idea of tenuous acceptance has led national organizations and activists to accept policies and support that do not recognize the existence of transgender people.

A Texas hate crimes bill, passed in 2001, includes "sexual preference" but fails to mention gender identity and expression. Ditto the UT non-discrimination policy, which added sexual orientation to its list in the early 1990s but has yet to add a statement of protection for the transgender community.

There is much work to be done to recognize the full humanity of transgender individuals. That work will include re-evaluating everything from textbooks and popular culture to restrooms and medicine. It will require us all to take a hard look at the notion that only two genders exist in the world and the idea that all of us – trans and non-trans – have been somehow limited by this idea in our lifetimes, whether we realize it or not.

Unfortunately, few in the world have even broached this conversation. To get to that point, protection from discrimination must no longer be an issue of disagreement. Simple acts such as the addition of non-discrimination laws and policies are among the most basic of culture shifts. I want to remain optimistic that transgender identity will be celebrated and accepted, but for now, the U.S. Senate stands in the way of trans rights.

to fit myself into a stereotype simply because I identify as a woman: I would rather chart my own course than fit into someone else's arbitrary designations.

This doesn't change who I am, or what I may identify as. I know who I am, and I need not worry about trying to act as something I'm not.

I'd like to offer a challenge to each of you, though. I'm not going to ask you to go out there and march against gender – at least not today. No, rather I want you to consider, just for a moment, how gender has defined your own life, and consider for a moment if some of that might have held you back from time to time. Maybe, just maybe, you could even consider a change in your own life against these constructs, and just briefly explore a road less taken. It might be worth the trip.

Gwen Smith has little reluctance in wrecking a perfectly good set of polished nails when it comes to working on her car. She's online at www.gwensmith.com.

FIGHTING, PREVENTING 'TRANS PANIC'

When to reveal bio status remains tough subject for trans people, experts say

By Dyana Bagby

Gwen Araujo died a brutal death. After partying with a group of friends in September 2002, including having sexual contact with several young men, Araujo, 17, was invited to party with them again on Oct. 3, 2002.

But when the young men learned that night that Araujo had male genitalia, they beat and strangled her, leaving her body in a shallow grave. And when Araujo's attackers went on trial, they claimed their discovery justified their actions.

Late last month, the California Assembly approved a first-of-its-kind bill putting the state on record against the so-called "trans panic" and "gay panic" defenses used by some killers to receive lighter prison sentences. Passed by the Assembly Jan. 26 and now pending before the state Senate, the bill is named for Araujo, and its approval came just one day before her assailants received the longest sentences allowed by law.

Michael Magidson, 25, and Jose Merel, 26, were sentenced to the mandatory terms of 15 years-to-life for second-degree murder. Jason Cazares, 26, pleaded no contest to manslaughter in a plea bargain and was sentenced to six years. As part of their defense, the assailants said they believed Araujo to be female, had sexual contact with her, and then snapped when they found out she was biologically male. One defendant cried over and over, "I can't be gay, I can't be gay," according to court testimony.

California Assemblywoman Sally Lieber (D-San Jose), who authored the Gwen Araujo Justice for Victims Act, said her bill is dedicated to leveling the judicial playing field. "It was exclusively Gwen's trans status that made her a target," Lieber said in an interview Feb. 8. "This murder was something we in the Bay Area thought only happened in rural, isolated places, and this crime really stuck with me and the residents here."

Obligation To Tell?

Cole Thaler, staff attorney for transgender rights with the gay litigation group Lambda Legal, said the jury's decision to bestow the harshest punishments in the Gwen Araujo case is a hopeful sign the tide is beginning to turn against "trans panic" and "gay panic" defenses.

"These kinds of defenses are 'heat of passion' defenses," Thaler said. "And the heat of passion defense results from how we as a society expect reasonable people to react in certain ways. When these kinds of defenses are successful, they are simply confirmation of homophobia and transphobia as being part of our values—and I argue that we don't want these as our societal values."

Courts haven't found that transgender people have any legal obligation to disclose their status to potential sex partners, Thaler said, tending to side against any kind of "sexual fraud" defense made in cases involving trans victims.

Society needs to be educated that trans people are who they say they are, regardless of their genitalia, he added. "If you meet someone at a bar and decide to go home with them, there is no obligation to reveal your racial ethnicity or your religion," Thaler said. "A trans woman is accurately representing herself as a woman ... The fact Gwen Araujo was born with male genitalia did not make her any less of a woman."

Disclosure 'Really Big Issue'

Rachael St. Claire, a transsexual psychologist from Colorado, has experienced disclosure issues both personally and professionally, particularly with male-to-female clients. "Disclosure is a really big issue for them," she said. "Male-to-female transgender people who are attracted to hetero-

sexual men have a difficult time. And generally what I counsel is for the person to identify what their values are and what their intentions are." St. Claire said.

If a trans person is going to disclose to a partner for the first time, they may want to do it in a public place or even over the telephone to be safer, she said.

And as a transsexual woman who has faced disclosure many times in dating relationships, St. Claire said it's often a "relationship killer" with the heterosexual men to whom she is attracted. "I don't think it is very safe to be having a relationship with a heterosexual man without telling them because of the potential violence," she said.

But even if a transgender person doesn't disclose her status to a date, it doesn't justify a physical attack, St. Claire stressed. "That's like equaling a woman's responsibility for not being raped," she said.

Randi Ettner, a Chicago therapist and transgender specialist whose books include "Gender Loving Care: A Guide to Counseling Gender-Variant Clients," said the issue of disclosure is the most frequently asked question in her practice.

"Unfortunately, there is so much ignorance and prejudice about this condition that trans people have to be very careful who and how they tell someone," she said. There is no "universal answer" when it comes to disclosure, she added. "This is the most personal and private information about someone. You have to have some sort of trust," she said.

Ettner said she understands transgender people often walk a fine line, but she advises not waiting very long to disclose being transgender to someone you are dating.

"You don't want to let too much time go by so that the other person feels blindsided," Ettner said. "But in casual dating, there's also not the responsibility to bring up such a personal issue. I do think for pre-operative people engaging in sex who are not honest, they may be putting themselves in unsafe situations."

Still, revealing transgender status is not a first-date conversation, either. Ettner warned. Instead, she advocates getting to know a person and having that person get to know you, as well as trusting intuition about how the partner might react. "You want them to know you have more value than just your genitals," she said.

No '100 Percent Protection'

Gordene MacKenzie co-hosts and produces "GenderTalk" radio with her partner, Nancy Nangeroni, a transgender woman. MacKenzie said trans women, especially trans women of color, are particularly vulnerable to violence.

Education on every level—in schools, in state legislatures, with federal lawmakers—needs to occur to make the world safer for trans people as well as for people are simply different, MacKenzie said. "We are dealing with a human rights and civil rights issue here," she said.

"Trans panic" defenses simply shift the blame to the victim, she added. "These strategies are defending bigotry and saying that because someone is of a certain gender, their deaths don't matter as much. We need to change our way of thinking."

Gwen Smith, a trans activist and writer, said she still faces some fear living openly as a transgender woman, and she has had friends murdered simply because of their gender identity. "Being trans threatens a lot of people. It's the most visible form of homophobia, and it frightens people," she said.

In Araujo's case, she was simply living her life as honestly as she knew how, Smith said. Perhaps precautions could have been made, but the truth is there is no universal way to be safe in today's world for trans people. "You can take self-defense courses, you can be more forthcoming with partners and be more careful about who you are with, but that does not guarantee 100 percent protection," she said.

Balancing Safety, Honesty

Law student Victoria Steinberg examined the Gwen Araujo case in an article titled "Heat of Passion Offense: Emotions & Bias in 'Trans Panic' Mitigation Claims," published in the 2004-2005 Boston College Third World Law Journal. Blaming trans crime victims for not disclosing their status removes responsibility from their attackers, Steinberg wrote.

Araujo "did not wear a sign on her forehead that said, 'I am transgender, this is what my genitalia look like,'" Steinberg argued. "But her killers didn't wear a sign on their foreheads saying, 'We might look like nice high school boys, but really, we are transphobic and are planning to kill you.' That would have been a helpful disclosure."

A very deep distrust of gender non-conformity pervades our society, Steinberg observed, and that distrust is often acted out through violence against transgender people.

"We do not currently live in a society that is very tolerant of transgender identities, and so the transgender community is stuck with the difficult task of balancing two essential goals: safety and honesty."

"To this tricky balancing act is added the problem that even when a transgender person feels that he or she is honestly expressing their identity, that expression might feel to someone else like a lie or a surprise," she said.

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LIFETIME TO PRESENT SLAIN TRANSGENDER TEEN'S STORY WITH "JUST A GIRL"

Queery.com

LOS ANGELES, March 15 — Oscar(R), Tony(R) and Golden Globe(R) award-winner Mercedes Ruehl ("The Fisher King," "Married to the Mob") and J.D. Pardo ("Veronica Mars," "American Dreams") will star in the Lifetime Original Movie "Just a Girl," a moving drama about a loving single mother who prevails upon her close-knit Latino family to accept her teenaged son's daring decision to live as a girl, who is then shockingly murdered by a group of boys who discover her secret. Famed attorney Gloria Allred serves as co-executive producer. Based on a true story, "Just a Girl" will premiere this June on Lifetime Television.

"The issue of transgender sexual identity remains controversial and still considered a taboo subject," said Trevor Walton, Senior Vice President, Lifetime Original Movies. "This true story portrays with compassion and empathy a remarkable family's struggle to understand Eddie's choice to become Gwen. It also examines the terrible consequences of ignorance and fear that exist around this issue. Mercedes and J.D. are perfectly cast as these extraordinary characters, and will beautifully capture the emotional minefields these characters navigate in this painful yet inspiring story of tolerance and acceptance."

"Just a Girl" is the true story of Sylvia Guerrero (Ruehl), the mother whose son, Eddie (Pardo), begins to dress and act as a girl. Defying his traditional Latino heritage, Eddie insists on wearing makeup, growing his hair and eventually changing his name to Gwen, after the singer he idolizes, Gwen Stefani. When Gwen's transgender status is discovered by four young men at a local party, they savagely beat and kill her. The shocking and senseless murder shakes the community and Sylvia dedicates her life to bringing her daughter's murderers to justice and advocate for the rights of all transgender people.

Ruehl earned an Academy Award, a Golden Globe and a Los Angeles Film Critics Society Award for her performance in "The Fisher King." Her breakthrough film role was in "Married to the Mob," which earned her a National Society of Film Critics Award. Ruehl's additional film credits include "Last Action Hero," "Slaves of New York," "Big," Woody Allen's "Radio Days," "84 Charing Cross Road" and "Heartburn." She has numerous stage credits and most notably won a Tony Award for her performance in "Lost in Yonkers" and won an Obie for her performance in "The Marriage of Bette and Boo." Ruehl recently starred in the Lifetime Original Movie "Mom at Sixteen," opposite Jane Krakowski.

Pardo recently appeared in episodes of "Veronica Mars" and "American Dreams" and was a series regular in the CBS drama "Clubhouse," opposite Dean Cain. His feature film credits include "Havoc," with Anne Hathaway and "A Cinderella Story," with Hilary Duff and Chad Michael Murray.

Famed civil rights attorney Gloria Allred, who represented Sylvia Guerrero at the murder trial, also serves as co-executive producer on the project. Having practiced law for over 30 years, Allred is a partner in the Los Angeles law firm of Allred, Maroko and Goldberg. She is a three-time local area Emmy nominee for her television commentary on KABC-TV. Allred most recently served as co-executive producer of the CBS television movie "Amber Frey: Witness for the Prosecution." "From an early age, the child that was born Eddie Araujo, Jr., felt like a female trapped in a male's body," said Allred. Adding, "Dressing as a female and calling herself 'Gwen' was an expression of her identity. Unfortunately, her honesty and courage cost her her life. I am very excited that Lifetime has decided to present this important and emotionally compelling project. Once again Lifetime demonstrates that it truly is an innovative and pioneering leader in television."

Executive producer Zev Braun adds, "Even in the twenty-first century, society is still separated by race, religion and gender. It's time those walls be taken down and for people to be accepted for who and what they are — human beings." Fellow executive producer Philip Krupp agrees, "Indeed — we need to remember what Sylvia Guerrero simply told the defendants as they were being sentenced, 'Gwen deserved the right to live her life.'"

As part its continuing commitment to inform and support viewers about the issues explored in "Just a Girl," Lifetime Television will work with Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) to develop a public service announcement (PSA), which will air immediately following the film. In addition, visitors to Lifetimetv.com will have access to links to several key organizations working to promote tolerance.

"Understanding the tremendous challenges that Gwen and her family faced in their day-to-day lives and the horrible end that she met communicates an important message - we need to pay attention and take action," said Jody M. Huckaby, executive director of Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG). "More importantly, 'Just a Girl' exposes the hate that Gwen and other transgender individuals too frequently face, along with the uphill battle they encounter in the eyes of the law in trying to gain equal treatment and justice."

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ENDING TRANS PANIC

San Francisco Bay Guardian, CA

Not even the most crass and sleazy defense lawyer these days would try to argue a killing was less heinous just because the victim was black.

We're normally on the side of the defense lawyers when it comes to criminal-justice legislation. The state has gone way too far down the road toward a lock-'em-up mentality, and most bills that come through the state legislature limiting the rights of criminal defendants are dangerous and deserve to die.

But AB 1160, by Assemblymember Sally Lieber (D-San Jose) is different. The bill would limit the use of so-called gay panic or (more frequently) trans panic defenses: the argument that a killer was driven to rage by the discovery that a person who appeared to be female was, in fact, biologically male, and thus is not fully responsible for the murder.

We don't know of anyone who's actually been acquitted in modern times with this kind of claim, but it's been used in a number of big cases to try to win reduced sentences. In 1999 one of the defendants in the killing of Matthew Shepard in Wyoming tried to avoid the death penalty (which requires premeditated first-degree murder) and win a verdict of manslaughter by claiming Shepard's homosexuality drove him into an uncontrollable rage. Then there was Jonathan Schmitz, who killed his friend Scott Amedure after learning on the Jenny Jones show in 1995 that Amedure was gay and found Schmitz attractive; he argued he was driven to kill by a gay-panic reaction. More recently, the defendants in the Gwen Araujo case argued they were guilty only of manslaughter because they had been unable to control their anger upon learning that Araujo was biologically male.

When you think about it, the claim is pretty bizarre: Not even the most crass and sleazy defense lawyer these days would try to argue a killing was less heinous just because the victim was black. But the Araujo case, which first ended in a hung jury before two of the three defendants were eventually found guilty of second-degree murder (a third pleaded guilty to manslaughter), shows just how utterly marginalized transgender people remain in society, even in the liberal Bay Area.

The vast, vast majority of TG people face regular, chronic discrimination in employment, a new survey sponsored by the Guardian and the Transgender Law Center shows. They live with overt harassment, cruel jokes, and pervasive, subtle abuse every day. It's shocking - but not all that surprising - to realize that almost two-thirds of all transgender people have been in jail: They are often locked out of the legal economy, and as one person told us, "the police think the very fact that you are who you are is grounds for arresting you."

And jail time, which is never pleasant, is almost unimaginably harsh for male-to-female transgender people, who see themselves as women, and often have typically female traits, like breasts, but (unless they've had expensive gender-reassignment surgery) are locked in cages with men.

You can't stop transphobia with legislation, but good public policy can lead the way in fights against discrimination, and that's what the Lieber bill would do. Critics argue it interferes with a defendant's constitutional right to present a defense, and if it passes, it will no doubt wind up getting challenged. But the very statement it makes - that the state of California believes killing someone is no less terrible because that person happens to be trans - is worth fighting for.

The bill cleared the Assembly in January on a party-line vote and is now before the Senate Committee on Public Safety, chaired by San Francisco's senator Carole Migden. She should make sure the bill gets a timely, full hearing and should help push it to the floor.

Meanwhile, the Legislature ought to look at the situation in state prisons. With all the money California spends building and staffing penitentiaries, the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation ought to be able to do (at the very least) what the San Francisco Sheriff's Department does: give transgendered [sic] people the option of being housed together, without punitive isolation. How hard can that be?