

# Putting on a Happy Face!

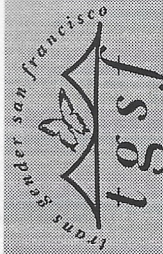


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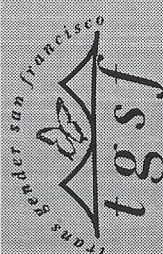
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TGSF TransGender San Francisco is a group for all members of the Transgender Community. Transgender is used as an umbrella term that includes female and male cross dressers, transvestites, drag queens or kings, female or male impersonators, intersexed 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



# 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.

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(Fiscal Year: May 1 - April 30)

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	Per Issue	Six Months	Per Year
<b>Business Card</b> (3-1/2 x 2)	\$ 25	\$125	\$ 250
<b>4x5</b>	\$ 60	\$300	\$ 600
<b>Full Page</b>	\$100	\$500	\$1000

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## SUICIDE NOTES

### ***Gender outlaw Kate Bornstein's Hello, Cruel World offers alternatives to offing yourself***

**An Interview By Mattilda,  
a.k.a. Matt Bernstein Sycamore  
SF Bay Guardian**



In April, Kate Bornstein, author of *Gender Outlaw* and *My Gender Workbook*, was scheduled to appear at Fox Lane High School in the posh suburb of Bedford, NY. She was invited to the school's annual Wellness Day to speak about her new book, *Hello, Cruel World: 101 Alternatives to Suicide for Teens, Freaks and Other Outlaws* (Seven Stories Press). Following a complaint by a local businessperson, however, Bornstein's invitation was revoked. According to local paper the *Journal News*, he asked, "Why would a person, who is neither man nor woman, who is obviously confused, come to speak about gender, much less teen suicide?" For obvious reasons, says Bornstein, who shares nearly 60 years of her own strategies and struggles to stay alive in order to make it a little less difficult for the rest of us.

SFBG In *Hello, Cruel World* you talk about things to do instead of killing yourself, rather than reasons not to. I wonder if you could talk about this tactical shift.

KATE BORNSTEIN There are a lot of books out there that tell you not to do it, and how to prevent yourself from doing it. But most of the books that I've read are all about how to be good, and that's the way to stay alive. "Good" being such a relative term, generation to generation. I thought it would just be better to give some alternatives that weren't necessarily "good."

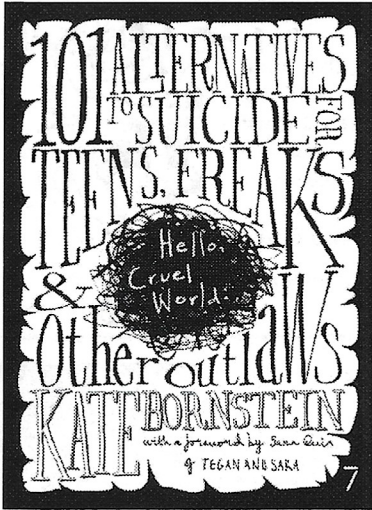
SFBG I think the riskier ones make the book so different from other things out there. I'm so glad, for example, that you include sexuality as a central focus. That's very threatening to people who want teens not to be sexual.

KB People want teens to be the perfect people that they never really became. Teen, like man and like woman, is an impossible identity. I mean good teen — that includes not a sexual teen, not mean, not a bully, not afraid, not a wuss, not smart, not too smart, and on and on and on. I think that sex is just a normal part of life. That's what you find out when you're allowed to do it. But by loading it up with so many negatives from when we're kids, that can be quite damaging.

SFBG You invoke a quote by Minnie Bruce Pratt, who says, "Our imaginations are in thrall to the institutions of oppression." Building on that, you say, "You don't have to look at yourself with their eyes ever."

**Continued on Page 3**

*Continued from Page 2*



KB Growing up in the '50s, I was part of the first generation of television babies. And this was before there was any kind of real filter. We watch television, we watch the ads, we learn how to be real men, real women, real pretty much anything. Real white, real heterosexual, real married. We were watching the world through the eyes of the sponsor, and that's OK, but it's not OK uncritically. If we're not careful, we'll start looking from television to mirror, television to mirror, and we're always

going to come up wanting. It's like me going to Transamerica and believing that's a trans woman and that's what I should look like and act like. Ha!

SFBG Felicity Huffman.

KB It's kind of like Felicity Huffman in blackface or something. You know, look at how ugly I can be.

SFBG Yeah, I haven't seen Transamerica.

KB Neither have I. I won't go.

SFBG I can't help wondering, then, about your recommendation of various Hollywood movies and mainstream TV shows throughout the book.

KB I'll stand by every one of them. Abso-fuckin'-lutely. Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Firefly — that's radical television. So is V for Vendetta; so is The Matrix. This is radical art masquerading as, I don't know, action.

SFBG You see it as sort of hiding its intentions, but in the end still being subversive?

KB I don't think it's hiding it. I think it managed to slip itself in when people weren't looking. And that's, I think, what outlaws get to do with their art and their creativity. That's what you're gonna do. There's gonna be a hole in the culture, and your stuff is gonna go plop, and everyone's going to go, "Whoa! Dude! Dig that! Look at this!" And you will. You'll see. Don't you think?

SFBG It's a good question. I do think that people in the margins very much influence the mainstream. But I also think that people who are subversive, once they get a certain amount of mainstream credibility, lose their original intent. And so I guess I become sort of suspicious. I think that everyone who's doing interesting work should have access to as wide an audience as possible. But I think sometimes what happens is that the compromises become so extreme that they outweigh the benefits of the actual work.

KB There is always a danger in using written language in talking about complicated issues. You can't go, "Wait, wait! That's not quite what I meant!" That's why, for example, e-mail is so much less of an intimate communication venue than telephones. And books? Books are etched in stone. Oh, if you dare to write a book, you're already saying, "I'm a big fuckin' deal. Listen to what I've got to say." So you've gotta keep your head the right size. Like, at least talk the language that you yourself understand. SFBG One of the dictates of Hello, Cruel World, in some ways, is "Don't be mean." I wonder whether, taken out of context, that could be used to silence people with critical perspectives.

KB Well, let's first off address the notion of taking things out of context. People use books on gender to invisibilize transsexuals. "Kate Bornstein says you don't need the surgery, it's all social construction. And we, (fill in the blank) insurance company, don't need to pay for it." People use what they're going to use. I can't imagine how "don't be mean" means "don't be critical." Especially — hello? — am I being critical in this book? I think so. Have I been mean to anyone? Maybe to George Bush, a little bit. A little bit. But I'm really doing my best not to be.

SFBG Speaking of those people in power ... at the beginning of the book you invoke the path laid out by the so-called founders of this country. I guess I got a little scared, because you champion the fight for "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Those are all great ideals, but when I think of the founders of this country, I think of slavery, genocide, and imperialism — and I wonder if your citing of these founders is an example of being, in Minnie Bruce Pratt's words, "in thrall to the institutions of oppression."

KB Sure it is. I'm an old fart. I'm enthralled. This is true. And, frankly, I think, going back — the Declaration of Independence doesn't fuck us over. The Constitution on which it's based starts to. I think that if you were to look at the political structure that would take us out of the bully culture and into some kind of world that would allow for the good guys and gals to win, then we need to go back to that moment between the Declaration of Independence and when they said, "Well, I'm entitled to this shit," and proceeded to fuck it all up. I don't think that democracy works anymore. I think democracy has been corrupted to the point where anyone with half a brain or half a million dollars can manipulate to get whatever they want. So we need to back our way out of democracy, either gently or by completely dismantling the fucking government, but it needs to come back to those basics.

SFBG One of my favorites of your suggestions is "Become a more frightening monster than they think you are."

KB I would have thought you would have said, "Moisturize."

SFBG No, my skin has gotten so much better since I stopped moisturizing.

KB Oh, well, you live in San Francisco. You don't need to moisturize in San Francisco. "Become a more frightening monster than the one they think you are." Yeah, I like that one too.

SFBG On a similar note, I liked "Go on a serial suicide spree."

KB That's one of my favorites. I think we can use the urge to kill ourselves, which comes up in many freaks, outlaws, geeks, queers, nerds, whatever. Well, that is not a useless or unnatural impulse. But instead of killing our bodies, I think we need to kill off one of those "who's" we've constructed who really desperately needs to die. And if you keep doing that over and over again, what we're going to be left with is a pretty cool "me," a pretty cool "you," a pretty cool "who" that we can actually work with.

*Mattilda, a.k.a. Matt Bernstein Sycamore (www.mattbernsteinsycamore.com), is the editor, most recently, of That's Revolting! Queer Strategies for Resisting Assimilation.*

**HEY!**

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## **Transgender Civil Rights Movement Commemorates 40 Years Of Activism**

A plaque commemorating the first known instance of transgender resistance to police harassment in the U.S. [was] installed on June 22nd at the corner of Turk and Taylor Streets in San Francisco. A brief ceremony [was held] at Noon at Oshun Center, 101 Taylor Street. Representatives of the Office of the Mayor, the Human Rights Commission, and the Police Commission will speak, along with transgender community members who were active in the community when the Compton's Cafeteria Riot took place 40 years ago.

101 Taylor is the site where Gene Compton's Cafeteria once stood. The Compton's Cafeteria Riot was not publicized when it occurred in August 1966, but was discovered in historical research by Susan Stryker, Ph.D., and is the subject of the documentary film, "Screaming Queens: The Riot at Compton's Cafeteria."

The film won an Emmy for "Outstanding Achievement, Historical/Cultural Program Special" at the Northern California Emmy Awards last month. "This is a great honor for us and a real recognition by the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences of the importance of recovering the lost history of transgender militancy," said film co-producer Victor Silverman. Filmmakers Stryker and Silverman will also speak at the June 22nd ceremony.

The ceremony also honored retired SFPD Officer Elliot Blackstone, who was an unlikely early champion for gay, lesbian, and transsexual civil rights and community development. Mara Keisling, Executive Director for the National Center for Transgender Equality in Washington, D.C., will also speak. Author and community activist Jamison Green will serve as master of ceremonies.

Commemoration activities were sponsored in part by Good Vibrations, San Francisco's legendary destination for accurate information about sex.

For more information, please visit:  
[www.comptonscafeteriariot.org](http://www.comptonscafeteriariot.org)

## **GenderQueer, Trans, & Gender Questioning Youth Group**

**Billy DeFrank LGBT Community Center**  
[www.defrank.org](http://www.defrank.org)

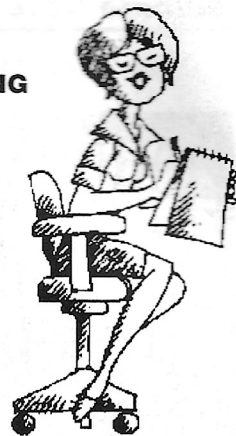
This youth program will provide space for discussion groups, workshops and activities, specifically for genderqueer youth and their allies. We are excited to be offering this new programming, for an underserved population, even in our own community. This new group is for young people 20 and under, who 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](mailto:progdir@defrank.org).

June 2006

## **TGSF ExCOM MEETING MINUTES**

The Minutes from the June 2006 ExCom Meeting will be published in the August issue of *The Channel*.



*TGSF Members at the Miss TG South Bay Event,  
hosted by SJ IRLM*

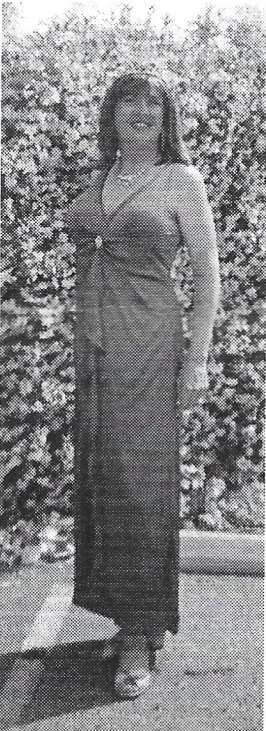
# From the Desk of Ms. TGSF

## WHY DO I DO IT?

By Jennifer Anderson

The process of being Ms. TGSF has been as much about self-discovery and pushing boundaries as it has been about attending events and representing our organization. I have had more exposure (and faced more challenges) as a transgendered woman in the past 6 months than I have had in the past 5 years.

But let me back up for a moment. I am a crossdresser. What that means is that I have the relative freedom (somewhat) to move freely between two different worlds and two different personas. I spend most of my time in my given role as a male. And I live a pretty ordinary life. But then I also have this strong feminine side that insists on opportunities to experience life as a woman out in the world. People often ask me why I choose to do this and I have always passed it off as one of those unanswerable questions. I tell them it's just who I am and I'm happier when I get to express who I am.



Then came the San Jose Pride parade. As I was preparing for another day of fun in the sun, laughing and looking fabulous, I was cornered by a reporter and camera crew for the 10 O'clock News. "We saw the tiara and we had to talk with you," they said.

Now, anyone who knows me knows that I am far from camera shy (silence Carla!) but I was taken aback as they started to ask me questions. Here was my shining moment to be the Ms. TGSF I wanted to be and represent our organization and community to the greater bay area. And the interview began - "Why do you do this and why are you here?" A softball question? My mind went to mush!

I think I went on to give a coherent answer. I must have, as they went on to use a bit of it in the feature story. But what was really important was that I learned something that day. Before the reporters left they talked to Roxy Carmichael-Hart who was present as a part of our march contingent. They hadn't intended to interview her. But as

soon as Roxy started to talk they decided to do a second interview, with her. You see, Roxy wasn't wearing a tiara, but she did know why she was there and why it was important. And because of that a very positive and important message went out about the transgender community and why we matter.

What I learned was the importance of being prepared. It's a lesson I hope I can impart to anyone reading this column. You never know when you might be that person who is called on to explain why we do what we do and how much we matter. And it will be your turn to get the word out to our less public brothers and sisters and those who might love & accept them.

The parades will all be over by the time you read this. But there will always be other events and other parades. The next time you are getting ready to attend please take a moment and think - why am I here and why does it matter. That way when you are called on to be an ambassador for our community you will be ready and you will shine!

## MY CONTINUING ADVENTURES

By: Jennifer Anderson

I can't believe how quickly the time passes. It's already been another month and here I am writing for you again.

This month has been jam-packed with activity. Rather than tell you about everything I did and every place I went (much of which you will see or read in the rest of your Channel) I would like to focus on a few events that I'm particularly excited by.

The first was my participation in the Miss Gay Southbay and Miss TG Southbay event sponsored by the IRLM court of San Jose. One of my desires when I became Ms. TGSF was to reestablish connection between the bay area court communities and TGSF. I have already had the privilege of working with Donna Sachet from the San Francisco Imperial Court on her TV show Outspoken, but had yet to make connection with the South Bay counterpart court. Then, thanks to a dear friend and supporter of both communities, Madam Steele, I was invited to be a co-announcer for the event. What made this an especially fun and memorable event was that several members of the ExCom also came down to lend their support to the event. Hopefully this will help to re-ignite what was once a great and mutually supportive relationship.

Another amazing event for me was the following day (what a weekend it was!!!). I participated in my first ever Santa Cruz Pride parade. Other than being a gorgeous day and an incredibly enthusiastic/supportive crowd was the fact that this is my hometown. It's really the first major event for me in my own backyard in the 6 years that I have been out and about as a transgendered woman. And, it gave me a chance to introduce members of my local community (such as The Diversity Center and Triangle Speakers) to my TGSF sisters. I've never been so proud to show off my local community.

Then there was the San Jose Pride parade and festival. This one was made special by so many opportunities that just landed in my lap to do outreach for our community. First, Sydney (your Mr. TGSF) & myself were interviewed by The 10 O'Clock News! Excerpts from our interviews were actually broadcast as a part of the story! In addition, each of us got the chance to record a public service announcement with Outlook Video, which broadcasts on a local LGBT community channel out of the Billy DeFrank Center. We got to promote TGSF and RGA big time! Finally, in addition to some great networking at the afternoon festival, we both had the opportunity to contribute time and support the work of Transpowerment at their outreach booth. Thank you Auntie Anita!

Finally, I had the privilege of speaking on two LGBT panels at San Lorenzo High School, just a few miles from my home. I'm really passionate about doing youth education/outreach and it is especially gratifying getting a chance to serve so close to home.

I could go on but I fear I've already filled another column. In closing I will just say one more time - I love being your Ms. TGSF. Thank you so much! Next up, San Francisco Pride!



**Potluck Gathering**  
Friday, July 14 @ 7:00pm  
Room 108 @ MCCSF

### Experience Transformation

Q-Sangha Buddhist, Mon. 7pm

Taize, Wed. 7pm

Sundays At MCCSF ...

8:30am, 11:00am & 7:00pm

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# TGSF Events in July

**Wednesday, July 5 / 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 The Mid Peninsula Support Group is on hiatus for the summer. It will recommence in September

**Monday, July 10 / 7:00pm**

## **TGSF ExCOM MEETING**

The next ExCom meeting will take place on July 10, 2006. It will be held at the LGBT Center, 1800 Market Street, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, beginning at 7:00. All members are welcome to attend.

**Thursday, July 13 / 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](mailto:katra.briel@tgsf.org)

**Saturday, July 15**

## **CARLA'S MONTHLY DINNER**

Carla's Monthly Dinner in June will be at Scott's Seafood Saturday the 15th. If you'd like to join Carla's girls, please RSVP to Carla at [carla@carlas.com](mailto:carla@carlas.com) or (408) 298-6900. RSVP is absolutely required.

**Saturday, July 22 / 1:00pm**

## **TGSF EDUCATION EVENT!**

TGSF will sponsor a self-defense class on July 22, 2006, at 1 PM, at the Krav Maga Training Center, 1455 Bush, San Francisco, CA 94109. See notice elsewhere in this issue for all the details.

**Saturday, July 22 / 7:00pm**

## **TGSF FINAL BLUE MUSE FAREWELL**

The final TGSF farewell to the Blue Muse will take place on Saturday, July 22, 2006, beginning at 7:00. Come say goodbye to an old friend of TGSF who has meant a lot to the organization over the years. The Blue Muse is located on Gough, between Grove and Hayes.

**Thursday, July 27 7:00pm**

## **TGSF END OF MONTH**

The End of Month will be held on Thursday, May 27<sup>th</sup>. It will be held at the Cathedral Hill Hotel, beginning at 7:00. Come and join your friends and family for a fun-filled evening.



*Celebrate Your Independence!*

## *July's Birthdays*

7/08	Jessica Ames
7/08	Wendy Schultz
7/09	Teri Pack
7/09	Ayme Kantz
7/09	Dani Marie Kleist
7/14	Jennifer Gulkis
7/16	Lauren White
7/17	Juliette Holiday
7/17	Davis Bob
7/18	Carmen Gomez
7/18	Mary McHugh
7/21	Jennifer Hope
7/24	Kelli Wellington
7/24	Roshelle Cunning
7/28	Donna Wilson

*Happy Birthday To All!*

Cosmetics  
Lingerie  
Fem Fashions  
Wigs  
Nails  
Shoes

Nails      Wigs      Lingerie



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Shoes  
Nails  
Wigs  
Fem Fashions  
Lingerie  
Cosmetics

## **CARLA'S Salon & Boutique**

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San Jose, CA 95126  
(408) 298-6900**

*Serving the Cross Gender  
Community's needs  
with sensitive help  
and understanding.*

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# Bay Area Calendar - July 2006

## OTHER BAY AREA GROUPS

### 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 Diversity Center (SCDC)

1st & 3rd Tuesdays 7:30pm. All gender-different persons are invited to attend. Primarily a support group for those who are trans-questioning or in transition (MTF & FTM), but all are invited to come and share personal experiences in a safe, caring, and moderated environment. 1117 Soquel Avenue, Santa Cruz, CA 95061 • (831) 425-5422

### 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 Dawne Woodie (415) 748-2396 or sf\_dawne@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.

Sun Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat

						1
2	3 7:00 PM PISSR General Meeting 8:00 PM DVG	4 7:30 PM SCDC	5 2:00 PM T.R.A.N.S 7:00 PM I Love It Social <b>7:30 PM MPTG</b>	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 7:00 PM TGSF: ExCom Meeting	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	17 8:00 PM DVG	18 7:30 PM SCDC	19 2:00 PM T.R.A.N.S 7:00 PM I Love It Social	20 TG Legal Clinic	21 8:00 PM PacCtr 8:00 PM RGA	22 1:00 PM TGSF: EduCom Event! 7:00 PM Blue Muse Farewell 8:00 PM FWW 8:00 PM SGA
23	24	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	31					

## 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...

June 2006

## TGSF FINANCIAL REPORT

No financial report was submitted by press time.

## TGSF DONATIONS

*Our Friends Who Give*  
for the period June 15 - July 15, 2006

There were no donations reported by press time.

*Bless You and Thank You for Caring!*

## 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.

## **KIM HRACA, M.A. MFT** PSYCHOTHERAPY • CONSULTATION

*Helping you find the path  
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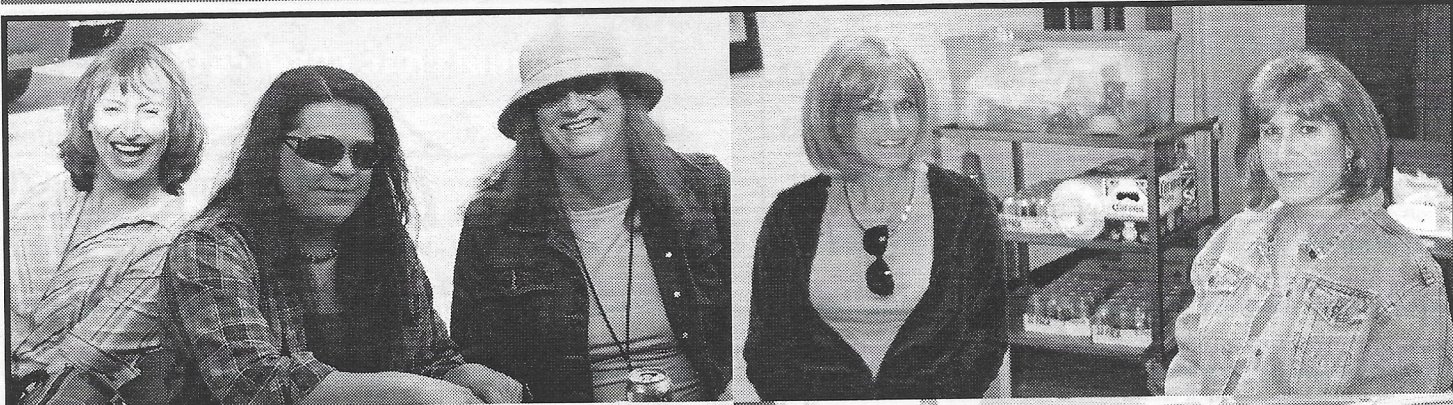
Jennifer Anderson ..... webmistress@tgsf.org

**Calendar** ..... [www.tgsf.org](http://www.tgsf.org)

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



# TGSF Summer Kickoff BBQ!



# 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](mailto: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](mailto: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, July 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](mailto: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](mailto: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 and Announcements!



## Krav Maga San Francisco

Saturday, July 22 / 1:00pm

### TGSF EDUCATION EVENT!

TGSF will sponsor a self-defense class on July 22, 2006, at 1 PM, at the Krav Maga Training Center, 1455 Bush, San Francisco, CA 94109. The instructors will base their instruction on the basic needs for self-defense we all face in our daily routines living in the Bay Area. Techniques that will be demonstrated will be such that when the class is over we should know of ways to protect ourselves in cases of attack. Attire should be comfortable workout clothes, with tennis shoes. There is no charge for the class; however, a suggested donation of \$5.00 will be greatly appreciated.



Krav Maga was developed by Czechoslovakian-born Imi Lichtenfeld, the son of a renowned police officer in Bratislava. Imi was a champion heavyweight boxer, an expert in Ju-Jitsu and Judo as well as a dancer and trapeze acrobat. Imi's family was forced to emigrate, eventually landing in what was then Palestine and is now known as Israel.

Soon after the Israeli state was established in 1948, Imi was asked to develop a system of fighting and self-defense for the Israeli Defense Force (IDF). Imi carefully refined Krav Maga during his career as chief instructor of hand to hand combat for the IDF. Beginning with special forces units like the Haganah, Palmach, and Palyam, Krav Maga became the official combatives training for all military personnel, Israeli police and security forces. Faced with the task of preparing both fit and out-of-shape soldiers, Imi developed a comprehensive system that relied on simple, instinctive moves rather than rigid techniques requiring years of training.

In 1964, Imi retired from the IDF and began teaching Krav Maga to civilians, law enforcement, and military applications. In 1978, Imi and several of his students created the Krav Maga Association, which was aimed at promoting the teaching of Krav Maga in Israel and throughout the world.

Krav Maga Worldwide Enterprises was formed in January of 1999 to expand and promote Krav Maga in the U.S. and around the world. Krav Maga is rapidly gaining in popularity and almost 10,000 people are currently studying the art. It is widely used by members of the U.S.'s local, state and federal police agencies, including the FBI, Secret Service and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco & Firearms. Celebrities practicing Krav Maga include singer/actress Jennifer Lopez, and actresses Jennifer Garner ("Alias"), Shannon Elizabeth ("American Pie"), and Mia Kirshner ("Wolf Lake").

**Krav Maga is not a traditional martial art.** It was developed in a hostile environment in which combatants could not devote many hours to hand to hand combat training. Therefore, the Krav Maga system was created to bring students to a high level of proficiency in a relatively short period of time. There are no forms (katas) or rules or set combinations as reactions to attacks. Instead, Krav Maga training focuses on teaching simple self-defense techniques, which are specifically catered to reality-based attack situations.

The art of Krav Maga is much more of a survival system dealing with personal safety issues. It is considered to be a modern, highly refined, street fighting system, designed to be used against armed and unarmed attackers. Krav Maga addresses a wide variety of aggressive acts which include punches, kicks, chokes, bearhugs, headlocks, grabs, as well as defenses against multiple attackers and assailants armed with a firearm, edged weapon, or blunt object.

## TS ELECTED TO DEM CENTRAL COMMITTEE!

### Dear TGSF!

I won a seat on the Committee!

For those of you who are interested, I won one of the 5 seats in my district on the Sonoma County Democratic Central Committee. See link to picture of results. Top 5 get the seats and I was 2nd. (Right behind the former Mayor of Sebastopol).

<http://www.nicoleanddebbie.com/who/nicole/scdcc/graphics/election-results.jpg>

**Nicole Cook**

Congratulations Nicole!

## MULTI CULTURAL TRANSWOMEN SUPPORT GROUP

Looking for a Multi Cultural Transgender Support Group? Join us at TRANSUNIDAS.

Our group caters to the Latina, Asian, Afro American, Pacific Islanders & 2 Spirit Native American Transgender Women. We are with TransPowerment of San Jose.

We Meet every Third Friday of Each Month from 6-8pm at 614 Tully Road, San Jose, CA 95111. Together We're Making a Difference! For More Info Call 408-648-7906 ask for Danielle Castro ext.218

## LGBT Community Cookbook

Got an original recipe or family favorite?  
Never been published?

Here's your chance to get your original recipe published! You can also include a short 200-word bio about yourself. And you can even help name the book!

Submit your recipes and title suggestions to:

**[TGCommCB@hotmail.com](mailto:TGCommCB@hotmail.com)**

**Deadline for this edition is August 30<sup>th</sup>!**

Krav Maga training stresses the ability to react when surprised. Techniques and training methods emphasize the ability to function from a poor state of readiness, and to move from a passive to aggressive state immediately in order to fight back and survive. Training methods teach students to react effectively under stress and to move efficiently from a position of disadvantage to a position of advantage.

For questions, call Dawnne Woodie, Education Co-Chair at 415-748-2396, or email her at [sf\\_dawnne@yahoo.com](mailto:sf_dawnne@yahoo.com).

## OUT OF ONE CLOSET AND INTO ANOTHER

**Many transgender people choose to live “stealth”—never admitting to being transgender—because of safety concerns, societal stigma, and prejudice.**

**The Advocate  
By Joanne Herman**



During Bree and Toby's road trip in the movie *Transamerica*, Bree arranges for both of them to stay at a friend's home in Dallas on the evening they pass through. Upon arrival, Bree is positively shocked to find her friend's living room filled with her transgender friends gathered for a social evening. Bree looks to her hostess in panic and whispers, "My friend told me you were stealth!"

"Stealth": It essentially means living fully and completely in your true gender but never, ever admitting to being transgender. Think of it as the transgender version of "covering,"

which is the subject and title of Kenji Yoshino's thought-provoking recent book. In our case, it usually requires leaving your past behind. Your previous distinguished service as an F-4 Phantom pilot in Vietnam might be a tad difficult to explain as a woman, as was undoubtedly the case for American Airlines pilot Sara Weston. Similarly, talk of your experience as a mother seems puzzling coming from you if you are a man. Living stealth can also require leaving behind family, friends, colleagues, and anyone else who might out you.

So, why come out of one closet only to step into another?

The dangers facing "out" trans people were once so severe that stealth used to be part of the standard treatment protocol prescribed by professionals for those needing to transition genders. In fact, I have a friend who was forced 12 years ago to divorce from her spouse to accomplish her transition, in spite of having a healthy relationship and two children. Fortunately, stealth is optional these days. Yet many still actively choose stealth to avoid the societal stigma, prejudice, and safety concerns that come with being an out transgender person.

Stealth is essentially a second closet, with all of the issues associated with being in a closet. Stealth is much harder to maintain when you are with other transgender people, because very slight gender incongruities in a single person can be overlooked, but in two or more gender-variant people in the same space, such details easily arouse suspicion. Bree had assumed that her friend had broken all ties with her trans friends in order to remain stealth, and when that was clearly not the case, she panicked, thinking Toby would quickly figure her out. He did.

Most people who are stealth are just so happy to be finally living in their true gender that all of the hassle is tolerated. But for a few, the difficulty and loneliness of essentially starting over, without a personal history and connections with the trans community, leaves them depressed and despondent. Outsiders may interpret this heartache as meaning that transitioning genders had been a mistake for the person, when actually stealth was the mistake, albeit forced by the former treatment standards, stigma avoidance, and/or very real safety concerns.

It's also much harder to succeed at being stealth if you lack "privilege," which comes in many forms. It includes having the economic means to afford the surgeries that make your body and face appear more tradi-

tionally feminine or masculine. Or having bodily size and features that are not out of normal range for the new gender. In this aspect I am privileged. For example, at 5 foot 9, I am right at the level of tall non-transgender women. But many of my transwomen friends are considerably taller!

Privilege also includes being heterosexual in the new gender, as you can imagine. Here I am not privileged, although I did have mitigating circumstances. I transitioned from straight male to transgender lesbian female. However, my late wife Barbara willingly and lovingly stayed with me through my transition until her death, essentially delaying my assimilation of my lesbian status until now.

And, of course, privilege includes being a white person in a racist society. People of color face discrimination whether transgender or not, and that makes going stealth—finding a new job, securing housing, and accessing services—all the more difficult. Trans people unable to get medical care might buy hormones on the street, increasing the likelihood of sharing needles and greatly increasing the risk of contracting hepatitis C or HIV.

People of color also unfairly face greater police scrutiny whether transgender or not, which increases the likelihood of being incarcerated. Many prisons provide neither hormones nor any other aspects of transgender health care, and that can trigger severe depression in trans prisoners. When transgender health care is provided in prison, the media like to report it as a frivolous waste of taxpayer dollars.

Furthermore, because the laws remain hung up on whether one has had surgery, a transgender prisoner is far more likely to be put into a cell based upon anatomical sex without regard to gender identity or presentation. For those who are pre-op and don't desire or can't afford surgery, this housing policy is extremely dangerous. There have been many, many stories of trans prisoners who have been beaten and raped by other inmates or, incredibly, by prison guards themselves.

Because of all of these institutionalized oppressions, and because of the media's fondness for stories of the downtrodden, your image of the transgender population may be rather skewed. Varying degrees of stealth have allowed a lot of trans people to be successful in spite of these challenges, while being fairly invisible to you. A few of us have even been successful while being out as trans. I'll introduce you to some of the success stories in a future column. It will expand your image of us!

*Herman is the first transgender member of the boards of the Point Foundation, a scholarship lifeline for LGBT college students, and of Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders, the New England LGBT rights and legal organization that helped bring same-sex marriage to Massachusetts. She is also a member of the advisory board of the National Center for Transgender Equality. Find more information about these organizations at [www.thepointfoundation.org](http://www.thepointfoundation.org), [www.glad.org](http://www.glad.org), and [www.nctequality.org](http://www.nctequality.org).*

### 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](mailto:julie39@comcast.net), or write to: Julie Freeman, PO Box 272885, Concord, CA 94527-2885.

## THE TRANS CATCH-22

***In order to get “treated” for being transsexual—meaning hormones and, perhaps, surgery—you first have to be diagnosed. But calling trans people sick creates the same stigma gay people faced for decades.***

**By Joanne Herman  
The Advocate**

As a transsexual woman, I have a mental disorder. Or so says the current Diagnostic and Statistics Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition (DSM IV) of the American Psychiatric Association. My diagnosis code is 302.85—Gender Identity Disorder of Adolescence or Adulthood (GID).

Gay men and lesbians used to have a mental disorder too. That was true until homosexuality was removed from the DSM in 1973. Why am I still in the big book of mental disorders 33 years after you were removed?

It's a very complicated matter, due in part to the existence of “The Standards of Care for Gender Identity Disorders” (SOC) of the Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association ([www.hbidga.org](http://www.hbidga.org)). HBIAGDA, a group of medical doctors, psychologists, and other professionals, developed the SOC as a set of guidelines for diagnosing and treating people like me. The complication arises because the standards of care require that a person have a diagnosis of gender identity disorder as defined in the DSM IV in order to access treatment. Most ethical professionals in this and other countries use the SOC as a guide, so the DSM IV diagnosis is a necessary step on the road to transition.

Specifically, the SOC recommend a minimum of three months of psychotherapy before the therapist will write a letter permitting access to hormones. During that time the therapist confirms that the patient has GID and not something else. Once passing that hurdle, the SOC recommend that the patient live in the perceived gender for at least a year before the therapist writes a letter granting access to sex reassignment surgery, and that letter must be countersigned by a psychiatrist or Ph.D. psychologist.

Think of the SOC as a box that pops up on the computer screen of life, saying, “Are you really, really sure you want to change your gender?” This irks a lot of transsexual people, many of whom have (or had) felt at odds with our sex from a young age. We point out that what little research has been done suggests the incongruity originated while we were being carried in our mothers' wombs. Why is some costly “expert” required to confirm an uncomfortable reality that is not of our doing and that we've been living for all of these years? In the current social context, where gender difference is still seen as negative, a diagnosis of “mental illness” further stigmatizes transsexual people as sick and in need of a “cure” rather than equal civil rights.

### **EAST BAY TRANSGENDER AA**

Genderqueer, Transgendered, Transsexual, Twin-Spirited, LGBT. Speaker/Discussion/Meditation/Readings of AA approved literature. **Weekly – THURSDAYS – 8-9 PM.** 3989 Howe Street (Mandana House one block from Kaiser off Broadway), in Oakland, CA 94611.

Gender identity disorder is in the DSM IV in a way that includes those “who may or may not be transsexual and who may or may not be distressed or impaired,” according to GID Reform Advocates on their informative resource [www.gidreform.org](http://www.gidreform.org). And the DSM IV also includes another diagnosis—302.3, called Transvestic Fetishism—that labels cross-dressing by heterosexual males as sexual fetish and “paraphilia.” Through these two diagnoses, GID Reform Advocates write, a wide “segment of gender nonconforming youth and adults are potentially subject to diagnosis of psychosexual disorder, stigma and loss of civil liberty.”

So the DSM IV succeeds in stigmatizing the entire gender-nonconforming population, not just transsexual or transgender people. This stigma leads to a big catch-22. The SOC represent essentially a medicalized approach, involving hormone therapy or surgery. And yet, because of the stigma from the DSM IV, most health insurance plan will not pay for any treatment for a GID diagnosis code. This means that a patient who is diagnosed with GID may end up without access to treatment solely because he or she cannot afford to pay the costs out of pocket.

The exclusion in health insurance policies of all treatments related to sex reassignment is terribly unfair and unjustifiable. Insurers will cover a hysterectomy for a female who has uterine cancer, but they won't cover the same surgery for a female-bodied person who is transitioning to fit a deeply held male gender identity—even when it is recommended by a doctor for the psychological well-being of the transgender patient. Costs are usually cited as the reason.

When a San Francisco ordinance expanded health care coverage for transgender employees in 2001, premiums for all city employees were raised to cover the feared spike in costs. Mark Leno, an ordinance sponsor who is now a California assemblyman, said after three years of the new coverage was instituted, “the revenues to pay for care exceeded costs by a factor of 25, demonstrating that concerns about spiraling costs were misplaced.” Two corporations providing transgender health coverage during the same period, Avaya and Lucent, similarly experienced much lower than expected costs.

There's another, more fundamental problem with the GID diagnosis: It has the gender binary as a foundation. What if you define or express your gender in a way that doesn't quite fit the binary? Or what if you don't happen to desire hormone therapy or surgery to feel comfortable expressing your gender identity? You likely will not be diagnosed as having GID, meaning you too will be denied treatment.

So why not remove GID from the DSM IV? Aside from its existence as the linchpin of the SOC, some believe that its presence gives doctors a basis for providing hormones and surgery for us when they might fear being accused of malpractice otherwise. For those of us who truly need(ed) and want(ed) hormones and surgery, the prospect of having no doctors available to carry out the treatments is downright scary. So we remain in the DSM, many years after you left.

But really, isn't it the very presence of GID in the DSM IV in the first place that creates the stigma that leads to the fear of malpractice? If so, the issue is how to manage the transition out of the DSM IV in a way that allows trans people to access some level of treatment while the stigma slowly crumbles. It may be a while longer before this debate is settled.

# Santa Cruz Pride Pics!



# San Jose Pride Pics!



## DOES TRANSAMERICA TRANSCEND ITS PROBLEMS?

*A trans woman finds much that's wrong with the Felicity Huffman film that's now available on DVD: Its science is inaccurate, its wardrobe outdated, and its stereotyping frequent. But for all that, there's still something about the movie that touches the heart.*

By Rachel C. Thompson  
The Advocate

Almost everything seen in the movies, print media, or on TV regarding transsexual people is in some way derogatory, sensationalistic, or negatively stereotyped. The movie *Transamerica* is no exception.

Yet transsexual people generally like this movie. Transsexuals are so accustomed to the media's negative and misinformed treatment of the community that whenever anything appears in the media that is remotely positive, transsexuals embrace it with open arms as if it were a major victory for truth. But in every presentation of transsexuals, the media can't help but tantalize the public with sensationalism.

No entertainment program hits the mark of truth on this complex subject. Newspaper articles often have a derogatory slant or use the wrong pronouns and terminology. TV shows from Oprah and Montel Williams to documentaries and news programs focus more on the shock value of transsexualism than on the human commonalities.

*Transamerica* also enlists stereotypes meant to shock and awe the viewer.

Transsexual people talking about the movie will overwhelmingly say they liked *Transamerica* and that it's good for the trans community. If you press them, however, they will also note parts they didn't like. Three main critical themes arise—the film's inaccuracies about the process of transition, its unrealistic stereotyping, and the fact that a transsexual woman did not play the lead role.

Almost all trans people are actors by necessity: Before transition, the majority has a need to pretend to be someone other than who they really are. Some go back to acting and live "stealth" once they can "pass," as the movie depicts. But living stealth is old-school thinking, a stereotype that is behind the curve. More and more, trans people are living a blended life—known as trans people to many non-trans people. Far fewer go through transition and then run away to start a new life in total secret. "Super stealth" is becoming rare in this information age and less necessary for survival as antidiscrimination laws that are transgender-inclusive slowly spread across the country.

Trans people already work in the entertainment field as actors, singers, entertainers, models, and musicians. Finding a real transsexual actress would not be that hard to do. Did Hollywood ask Kate Bornstein or Namoli Brennet to audition? Not likely. If there had been an open call for a transsexual actor, a mob of contenders would have answered it. Instead, Felicity Huffman, a genetic female, played the preoperative transsexual character, Bree. She did a fantastic job of acting the part of a transsexual—of the 1970s. But the movie is set in the present.



Understandably, some stereotypes are necessary for this story line, but there is far too much misinformation about transsexuals in this movie. Some elements of the therapeutic relationship depicted in the movie are also well outside the "Harry Benjamin Standards of Care," or normal therapeutic procedures and ethics. For example, the gender therapist, Margaret (played by Elizabeth Peña) would not hold a patient hostage over unresolved issues regarding Bree's newly discovered son, especially only weeks before her sex-reassignment surgery. Surgeons in the United States and Canada require that the mandatory support letters be delivered well in advance, long before surgery can be scheduled. Even surgeons in Thailand, who do not require letters, need advance notice to schedule the operation. Realistically, a therapist could not and would not stop Bree from getting her surgery.

In addition, the male doctor character portrayed in the film was way out of the psychological mainstream, misrepresenting current standards of diagnosis and treatment. Today, transsexualism is not medically regarded as a psychological pathology or mental disorder, and psychology professionals by and large accept and understand much more about the scientific, medical, and psychological realities of transsexualism than the movie portrays. That scene was as socially damaging to the trans community as *The Jerry Springer Show*—and just as unrealistic.

Bree demonstrates various stereotyped modalities that are far from the everyday realities of the contemporary trans community. Her manner of dress is not usual for a transsexual who's been living "full-time" as a woman for more than a year, has had at least 300 hours of electrolysis (which, typically, takes years), and has been in therapy for so long. Bree may be typical of a person transitioning 30 or more years ago—but not today.

Bree was dressed and made up like a stereotypical aging cross-dresser who favors clothing popular in her youth, not a person ready for sex-reassignment surgery in the modern world. Today's trans women generally look and dress just like any other women. How many women on the street are dressed like the "church lady" from *Saturday Night Live*? To blend or be stealth requires that one fits in. Bree stands out like a neon light in her 1950s attire. She is too young to dress so old.

Another major problem is in the plotline. Bree's son, Toby (Kevin Zegers), because he's a street hustler, would be able to read Bree as a transsexual a mile away, since he would travel the same grounds that transsexual and transvestite prostitutes frequent. For that matter, a person in Toby's position would especially not be so easily fooled during the potluck scene, which was unrealistic and uncharacteristic of a gathering of trans women. The group's dialogue itself was typical Hollywood sensationalism—humorous, but misleading.

Yet in spite of enforcing stereotypes and utilizing disinformation, *Transamerica* is a movie that does more good than harm, because it is well-written, well-acted, and humanizes the rarefied main characters. Good fiction is driven by believable characters who experience real-life conflicts, things that everyone can identify with.

Ultimately, *Transamerica* is a movie about relationships, revelations, loss, and healing. The lives of the characters are unusual, but their humanity is universal. *Transamerica*'s most important message to the larger world about the trans community is that trans folks are human too. *Transamerica* transcends superficial gender lines and reaches deep into the human heart. An audience expecting an educational piece of filmmaking will find itself misinformed. But as a movie with gut-wrenching lessons on the diversity of humanity, this movie succeeds with flying rainbow colors.



## YOU CAN'T IMAGINE THE JOY OF BECOMING A GIRL

**April Ashley, Britain's first transsexual, went from a life of hell to dating film-stars, she tells John Follain**

**The Sunday Times (www.timesonline.co.uk)**

Gliding gracefully by the pool at her home near the French Riviera, with her cat Lily on a leash, April Ashley looks like an eccentric scion of the English aristocracy. Her lavender-streaked hairdo is immaculate, her cream-coloured pashmina spotless, her accent and manners irreproachable. To the village folk she is simply la grande anglaise, the tall Englishwoman.

Only one local, a graphic artist whose villa near Nice houses her small apartment, knows of her tumultuous past: born George Jamieson in Liverpool, the newly named April Ashley became in 1960 the first Briton to have a sex-change operation. She modelled for Vogue, had relationships with the likes of Omar Sharif and Peter O'Toole, and married and divorced the son of an English lord.

Ashley has just published *The First Lady*, her new autobiography (her first was in 1982). The life she chronicles in more intimate detail than before — "I'm 71, time to throw in the whole caboodle," she says — mirrors the revolution over the past half-century in society's attitudes towards gender issues. Taboo during her childhood, sex changes are now available on the NHS and laws governing transsexuals are now debated and voted on by the likes of Tony Blair, George Bush and the Pope.

Seated demurely in a poolside chair, Ashley chats with only slight reticence about the abuse she went through as a child. She breaks off a few times to look after her cat, who turns out to be male and have the full name Lily Ashley Buttofuoco-John-Wayne-Bobbitt-Harding-Gululi.

"Nobody knows, nobody can understand the isolation that you feel when you're born wrong, when you're meant to be one sex and your mind is another," she says.

In the Liverpool slum where the young George was raised, his mother hated him and beat him, his father was a cook in the navy and rarely home. At his Catholic school he was called "sissy boy, pansy" and was beaten virtually every day. George went to mass every morning, praying that he would wake up a woman the next day.

"I felt so confused," Ashley recalls. "It's not even as if I felt I was homosexual. No one talked about such things at the time. I was treated like a freak but I didn't feel like one. The nuns beat me; the headmaster once hit me so hard in the chest I just fell over."

"I didn't put anything about this in my first book, but I was raped when I was 11 by a friend of my family. You never get over something like that. Whenever I read a story about a young woman who has been raped I feel for her because you can never get over the pain, the suffering and the guilt."

He lost his faith at the age of 15, and his parents sent him to Ormskirk mental institution — "the most horrendous lunatic asylum in the British Isles": "I was tied to a bed and forced to have six weeks of electric shock treatment."

After a year at the asylum, the doctors told the young George they could do nothing for him. "Just go off and be a homosexual," they said. Ashley is still shocked: "What gall! I told them no, that was not what I wanted."

She throws her frail hands up in delight when asked what things are like today for teenagers like the young George. "Now there are so many groups ready to help you, it is wonderful. I get lots of e-mails from children of 14, for example. I don't dare give them advice in case I say something wrong and they get into serious trouble. But I tell them

I wish them much love, and I tell them to get in touch with groups like Mermaids, which helps children with gender problems."

She is enthusiastic about the scientific advances that have transformed the medical treatment available. "I'm astonished by the facial surgeries you can have. If you look very masculine the doctors can feminize your face. That certainly wasn't around in my time."

A smile lights up her face as she recalls what she calls "the change", the seven-hour sex-change operation she had in Casablanca when she was 25. "You can't imagine the joy, the absolute joy, of coming out of that operation. You are whole; your brain is in tune with your body. The first time I went out for a walk from the clinic, I was with a nurse because I was so frail. I fell into the gutter and I just screamed with laughter I was so happy. People must have thought I was as drunk as a skunk. I never lost that feeling of luck, of magic."

She became a star model in the London of the 1960s, photographed by David Bailey and Lord Snowdon. Men flocked to her, her long list of would-be suitors including, she says, Albert Einstein, Elvis Presley and Paul McCartney. She says dismissively and without false modesty: "I honestly don't know what men saw in me. I think it was a purely physical thing, because when I was younger I was extraordinarily beautiful."

She married Arthur Corbett, the son of Lord Rowallan. Her spouse, who liked to dress up as a woman, knew all about her past, but she trusted him to be discreet. But when the couple broke up in 1970, he sought to have the marriage annulled and dragged scientists and doctors into the courtroom to portray her as a deviant. "The court case was horrendous. I knew from the outset I'd lost the case because the judge wouldn't look at me, even when he was putting a question to me."

Since then she has moved many times, living for almost two decades in New York and San Diego, then Wales and, for the past year, in a villa above Nice. "I get complaints from transsexuals who say I haven't done enough for the cause. But what I decided to do was to show that you can go out in the world and get jobs. I worked for Greenpeace and for an art gallery among others, though often someone would find out about me on the internet and then it was time to look for another job."

Last September the postman brought her cause for a belated celebration. Addressed to "Ms Ashley" was a new birth certificate saying that she was born female. "I had to wait 45 years for it, and now it's not as if I want to get married. But it's a small triumph, and small triumphs are terribly important to all of us," she says.

She's grateful to John Prescott, whom she first met in the 1950s when he was a "skinny" trainee chef in a hotel where she was working. She had written to Blair six years ago asking for his help in getting a passport and new birth certificate, and somehow Prescott found out. "John sent me some papers. They were the wrong ones because they were all about same-sex couples and I live with my cat and I'm certainly not a lesbian. But he pointed me in the right direction."

Ashley suddenly bursts into a crystal-clear peal of laughter, startling the cat at her side. "Oh, the most extraordinary thing happened just a couple of months ago. A friend e-mailed me from Hay-on-Wye, where I lived for 10 years. A woman was buying a house, and the estate agent told her, 'When the weather's clear you can see April Ashley's house!' That was part of the sales pitch, isn't it hysterical? And now they want to put a plaque up on my old house. So things are getting better . . ."

*The First Lady, by April Ashley with Douglas Thompson, is published by John Blake, £17.99*

## RIVETING LOOK AT A MURDERED TRANS TEEN

*'A Girl like Me: The Gwen Araujo Story'*  
premieres on Lifetime



Photo: JD Pardo as Gwen Araujo in *A Girl like Me: The Gwen Araujo Story*. Photo: Courtesy Lifetime Television

by David Alexander  
Nahmod  
Bay Area Reporter

East Bay native Eddie Araujo was a boy who knew he was a girl. All Gwen, the girl Eddie became, ever wanted was to fall in love and have a family. Gwen Araujo believed in what the Religious Right calls "family values," and lived her life accordingly. She was a sweet girl, filled with love. She never expected to become the face of a movement.

A few years ago, Araujo was brutally murdered for being who she was. Her death and the subsequent trials of her killers made national headlines, and hurled the transgender movement into the spotlight. Araujo,

who wanted nothing more than a white picket fence, has become an icon.

Now Lifetime Television dramatizes Araujo's life. *A Girl like Me: The Gwen Araujo Story*, is an intensely moving, four-hankie movie, yet it's so much more than just a tearjerker.

The film puts the life of a transgender under a microscope, and explains the trans phenomenon to those who may not fully understand it. It illustrates the struggles trans people have to deal with, the obstacles they face, and the courage they must surely have to become who they really are. It shows how the changes they make affect their loved ones.

Most importantly, the film shines a light on the hatred of the ignorant. In doing so, it calls for tolerance eloquently, but without preaching.

Acclaimed actress Mercedes Ruehl is top-billed as Sylvia Guerrero, Gwen's mother. Guerrero is now one of our community's most high-profile and staunchest allies, but this wasn't always the

case. When she first notices female tendencies in seven-year-old Eddie, Guerrero tries to help him become what society would view as normal. When teenage Gwen begins dating handsome Joey Marino (Corey Stoll), Mom outs her. Guerrero also threatens Gwen's transgender therapist with legal action.

Through all this, it is made clear that Guerrero loves her child unconditionally, and does not want Gwen to be hurt. When the tragic end does come, Mom proudly honors Gwen as her daughter.

Of course, Rome wasn't built in a day. Ruehl plays the changes in Guerrero's attitude gradually, covering a period of years. The Oscar/Tony-winning actress hits all the right notes throughout, and should win another statue for her performance.

As Araujo, newcomer JD Pardo is a revelation. Pardo dives into the role with gusto, bringing the murdered teen back to life.

Araujo had guts. She went to her East Bay high school still dressed as a boy, wearing lipstick and earrings. She did not, could not, would not, pretend to be anyone other than who she was. She touched people's lives. A momentary act of kindness to a Hell's Angels biker results in the man's entire fraternity showing up at her funeral to escort her casket, keeping the Fred Phelps crowd at arm's length.

Joey Marino, who left Gwen when he learned the truth, wept openly at her funeral.

*A Girl like Me: The Gwen Araujo Story* is a deeply moving, haunting story, all the more powerful because it's true. It puts a very human face and heart on the transgender phenomenon. Bravo to Lifetime Television for telling this tale. No doubt, many minds in Lifetime's Middle American audience will be opened by the film.

### ARAUJO MOVIE: ACTOR IS TOUCHED BY ROLE

*Transgender teen's family is supportive*

By Eleni Economides  
Tri-Valley Herald

NEWARK — When J.D. Pardo auditioned for the role of slain transgender teen Gwen Araujo, he first embarked on a physical transformation. Pardo went to Victoria's Secret and bought a bra, went to Lane Bryant and bought clothing, and had his sister do his makeup. "I wanted to dress up and walk around to see people's reactions," Pardo said.

When he found out that he had gotten the part, Pardo began to research the life of Gwen Araujo and the lives of transgender people.

It suddenly became more than a physical transformation for Pardo — it was a moving experience.

"It was very emotional to know I had the part," he said. "As an actor, I can take it off. Transgenders deal with this every day." Shot over a month in Vancouver, B.C., "*A Girl Like Me: The Gwen Araujo Story*" chronicles the life of the Newark transgender teen who was killed in the early hours of Oct. 4, 2002, when it was learned she was biologically male.

Mercedes Ruehl plays Sylvia Guerrero, Araujo's mother.

Not much focus is placed on the men convicted in Araujo's slaying; instead, the film tells the story of Gwen's decision to live as a female and the struggles that led to her family's acceptance of her.

Weeks before its premiere, anxious viewers have peppered the Lifetime Web site message boards with more than 500 messages, and Lifetime.com Webmaster Rachel Cohen isn't surprised.

"We've gotten a few hundred posts, which is high given the movie hasn't aired yet, but not very surprising given the emotional subject matter and the high-profile nature of the case," she said.

**Continued on Page 19**

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## Actor Is Touched By Role

Continued from Page 18

Pardo met with Araujo's mother during production, after most of the film had been shot.

"So many things were going through my mind when I met her. ... I can't imagine what this must have been like for Sylvia, for Gwen, the kids. I almost felt like I was insulting her in a way," he said.

"But Sylvia kept telling me, 'You're doing great' and 'Just hang in there.'"

Heavily engrossed with his role as Araujo, Pardo felt that he had a message to convey through his acting. In the final scene, as he re-enacted the moments leading up to Araujo's homicide, it all came together.

"I really realized the significance of this movie as we were doing the final scene (in the bathroom, when Araujo's male genitalia are discovered). When we rehearsed it, I realized how significant it was," he said.

"I'm an actor, but the story touched me, and I wanted to portray Gwen accurately. Transgenderism is a hard subject for people to digest. You can't make people believe what you believe, and whether they believe the whole theory behind transgenderism or not, it's important for them to understand that what happened that night was wrong."

"When I came to the movie set and I was in (Pardo's) trailer, I gave him a Gwen Stefani CD to (play)," Guerrero said.

"I told him not to worry — this is what God wants and this story will touch hearts," she said.

The film begins with a young Eddie Araujo as he struggles with his gender identity as a child, and follows him to his decision to live as a girl.

The tone of the movie is exemplified by a poignant scene in which Eddie wears makeup and earrings to high school for the first time.

Walking through the hallway to the tune of Stefani's "Hey Baby," Eddie is harassed and heckled by other students. When Guerrero comes to pick Eddie up and discovers he is wearing makeup, she scolds him firmly to "Go wash that makeup off your face!"

Eddie shouts back: "I hate my life! There's something wrong with me!"

Guerrero replies: "God made you this way."

With mascara-streaked tears streaming down his face, Eddie wails, "If God made me this way, then he's a sadist!"

The real-life Guerrero said the period between Eddie's transformation to Gwen and the killing wasn't easy. Guerrero had trouble accepting that Gwen was living as a girl, and when she did accept it, she faced criticism from her family and community members.

"We didn't go to the mall the next day and buy girl clothes," she said. "It was a slow transition, and that was because I feared society. What I understood later was that Gwen was born this way — her brain was the opposite of her anatomy."

It took courage for Gwen to be herself, and that's part of the reason why she resorted to drugs and alcohol toward the end of her life. She was depressed, but I loved her as Eddie and I loved her as Gwen."

The film also reveals a little-known truth about Gwen — she had been dating a man in the years leading up to her death.

Gloria Allred, executive co-producer of the movie, has screened most of the film and is content with the message the movie conveys.

"The film is authentic in terms of a mother dealing with this course of events and a transgender child's acceptance of her own identity," she said. "I always tell people, it's not about what (Gwen) did about who she was, but how others dealt with it. She didn't want to live a lie."

"I'm excited that so many will be able to watch this movie and see what a mother's unconditional love for her child is all about. Gwen was

a beloved member of her family. Her last words were, 'Don't do this, I have a family.'"

Shelley Evans, who has written many other screenplays for Lifetime, said she felt a special attachment while working on "A Girl Like Me."

"I felt a greater responsibility to this film that anything else I've even worked on," said

Evans, who spent more than a year researching and writing the screenplay, and four days with Sylvia Guerrero talking about Gwen.

But this wasn't about writing a courtroom drama screenplay for Evans.

"After reading pages and pages of court transcripts, it blew my mind. It's easy to be drawn into the ludicrous arguments (in court), but the reality is that there is no excuse. There was no debate in my mind whether or not these men had a right to kill her," she said.

"This story is about greater understanding, not revenge. It's a chance to improve ourselves."

The theme of angels comes up frequently throughout the film.

"Well, I've always loved angels because my life was never easy," explains Guerrero. "Angels always watch over you, they keep you safe. At her funeral, I compared her to an angel. ... Now Gwen is my angel."



### Transcending Transgender

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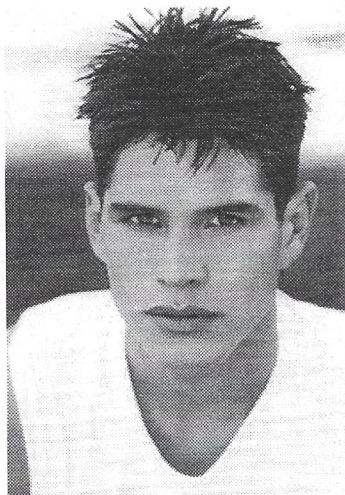
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## INTERVIEW WITH JD PARDO AND MERCEDES RUEHL

*Lifetime brings A Girl Like Me: The Gwen Araujo Story to television*

GayWired.com  
By Ross von Metzke and Gina DiNunno



JD Pardo

When Gwen Araujo was killed in 2002, it thrust the very real confusion, rejection and, ultimately, violence transgender people face every day into the light. Gwen, born Edward, was just 17 years old and had only begun to live his life as a woman.

To add insult to injury, though two of the young men who killed Gwen were convicted of second-degree murder, the jury deemed that no hate crime had taken place. When Gwen's body was discovered in 2002 in a shallow grave at the foothills of the Sierra Nevadas, she had been dead for two weeks, her head bashed in with a frying pan and a free weight, strangled to death with a rope.

Since Gwen's death, her mother Sylvia Guerrero has fought tirelessly for increased rights for the transgender community and harsher punishments for hate crimes. Her tireless efforts and Gwen's uplifting spirit in life provides the foundation for Lifetime TV's television movie *A Girl Like Me: The Gwen Araujo Story*, featuring a stunning, star making turn by JD Pardo in the title role.

Pardo, who's racked up quite an impressive body of work as a "heartthrob" on television, completely transforms himself into Gwen, with able support from Academy Award Winner Mercedes Ruehl as Sylvia.

The two sat down to discuss what it was like making such an important film, and how Gwen's story helped to change their own perceptions of the trans community.

Gay Wired: What sparked your interest in playing a transgender character?

JD Pardo: Coming off of shows like *American Dreams* and *Clubhouse*, everything seemed very vanilla to me. But I was unfamiliar with the topic of transgender teens, so this role gave me the ability and freedom to immerse myself into something foreign to me. GW: Do you think society has a hard time accepting transgender people?

JP: Absolutely. It's hard for the majority of people to accept what they don't understand. When something comes up that attacks people's beliefs, their first reaction tends to be fear.

GW: How was it working with Mercedes Ruehl?

JP: Mercedes was such a professional and so comforting. Because of the enormous responsibility I was putting on myself to do the role justice, every time I finished a take, she'd tell me, "You did great" or "You're so powerful." She was a great support.

GW: How did you prepare for this role?

JP: I watched a lot of documentaries about transgenders. To make myself believable, I lost about 18 pounds to fit into a dress, took voice training to find my own girl voice and waxed my eyebrows - I'm still waiting for them to grow back! I also went out and bought a wig, put on some makeup and capri pants and just walked around. That was hard.

GW: How was it meeting the real mom of the character you portrayed?

### Make Your Money Count!

To support transgender education work: **Gwen Araujo Transgender Education Fund** c/o Horizons Foundation, 870 Market St. Suite, 728, San Francisco, CA 94102 • (415) 398 - 2333 / [www.horizonsfoundation.org](http://www.horizonsfoundation.org)



JP: She was just so encouraging, and very open about what happened to her daughter. It's a lot for a mom to handle. I really have a deep admiration for her.

GW: What was the hardest scene to shoot?

JP: Every day was hard. But I'd have to say the hardest were scenes where I had to wear a corset. I don't know how women breathe in those things! But it was all fun and really worth it.

### Mercedes Ruehl

GW: How did you prepare for playing the role of Sylvia Guerrero, Gwen Araujo's mother?

Mercedes Ruehl: The time of preparation was pretty short. I saw whatever footage there was on the real Sylvia, and the powerful memoir *She's Not There: A Life in Two Genders* by Jennifer Finney Boylan (about the author's transformation from a man to a woman) taught me a lot about the experience. It told me almost everything I needed to know in a courageous, humorous and deeply factual way.

GW: What appealed to you about taking this role in the first place?

MR: (Photo: below left, with Pardo as Gwen) I watched interviews with Sylvia on *The Today Show* and *Dateline* and her story sounded very interesting. I also have an 8-year-old son who is a very tenderhearted guy, so this role appealed to the mother in me as well. GW: How do you think you would react if one of your children told you they were born the wrong gender?

MR: I would feel distressed for my child because of what he would have to go through. Once it had been communicated to me about what the condition is really about, I would like to think that I would be open to every avenue to helping my child.

GW: Why do you think society has such a hard time accepting transgender people?

MR: Society historically has a difficult time with the concept of something new and foreign that shakes up our comfortable views, especially if it involves the very volatile question of sexual identity. We have the tendency to condemn what we don't understand.

GW: How was it meeting the real Sylvia while you were filming?

MR: We connected over a dream I'd had the week prior to filming; it was about finding a little boy who was lost. It was a very real dream, and when I told her about it she was very moved, because we both had an instinctual feeling that it had something to do with Gwen and the film.

GW: What did you learn from making this movie?

MR: I learned a lot more about transgender people. It's not a choice, but a physiological condition that has to do with the size of the hypothalamus part of the brain. In this case, it was the brain of a girl in the body of a boy. Nature chooses who will be transgender; individuals don't choose this. Also, there is always more to be learned about tolerance, so doing this movie was kind of an eye-opener for me.