

AEGIS NEWS

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AEGIS Now Offers Membership

At the direction of the Board of Directors, AEGIS became a membership organization on the first day of January, 1995.

"Membership is open to everyone," said Board Chair JoAnn Roberts. "Basic membership is \$36 a year, and includes two issues of *Chrysalis*, our magazine; 4 issues of *AEGIS News*; a membership card; and discounts on all of the items we sell. There are membership categories for helping professionals and organizations, and special rates are available for those under 18, students, and persons who are incarcerated."

"For more than four years we were a service agency," said Executive Director Dallas Denny. "We're very proud of our many accomplishments: *Chrysalis*; the *AEGIS New*; our Transition Series of booklets; our database of service providers; the National Transgender Library & Archive; innumerable presentations at scientific conferences and gender community events; workshops to train helping professionals; our telephone helpline, which has reached thousands of persons; and, perhaps most of all, our very extensive bibliography, which was recently

published in book form by Garland Publishers. "AEGIS has earned a reputation for balance and common sense, and what we have strived hardest for—professionalism.

The world will not take transgendered persons seriously until we take ourselves seriously. The world is not impressed by recaptioned cartoons, stylized drawings of women who are supposed to be transgendered, and magazines containing contact ads and advertisements for phone sex lines. Any gain in ad revenues or readership by including such things is more than offset by a corresponding loss of respect.

"We have a very ambitious agenda. We are working to create a world in which transgendered persons are treated with respect and in which it is illegal to discriminate against transgendered persons, and in which transgendered persons can get competent and courteous treatment from physicians, attorneys, and government officials throughout the land. And we realize that we won't get through to serious people without serious tools for outreach.

"Can you for one moment imagine a world in which all books on Black history were written by whites,

or in which there were no books on homosexuality written by gay men or lesbians? Yet where are the textbooks by transgendered persons? Where are the reference works? Who is the transsexual Simon LaVey? The transgendered Martin Luther King? We—all of us—are the experts, and we are entering a time in which we will be acknowledged as such. Some of our goals are to publish books, do research and produce articles for scientific journals, and present papers at professional conferences. We will train the professionals, not by saying 'Here we are; please take our magazine so you can see that we're really very nice people.' but by making it clear that they are not competent to work with us unless they hear what we are saying."

Yes, the AEGIS agenda is ambitious. It's important for there to be an organization in which transgendered persons and helping professionals can negotiate their differences and work together to make sure the necessary changes occur. It's important that there be an organization which works equally hard for the rights of cross-dressers and transsexual people. We will be striving very hard to be that organization. —*AEGIS News*

Why Membership?

What are the advantages of your membership for AEGIS?

- **We get a stronger voice.**
Because we have a membership base, our voices are raised in unison with yours and will be more easily heard when we protest against discrimination, when we fight against unjust laws, and when we claim our rights.
- **We get feedback from you.**
Via voting and membership meetings, we learn more about your concerns and interests, both in regard to the operation of AEGIS and in regard to your personal needs.
- **We can work together toward effective solutions.**
Many heads are better than one. You may have the perfect solution to a problem which has been plaguing us, and if you do, we want to hear it.
- **We get your help.**
With membership comes pride. With pride, comes willingness to work within the framework of an organization to help others, and to financially support the organization.
- **We get "consumers" and "caregivers" talking to one another.**
Excuse the medical model terms, but we needed them to make our point that AEGIS is the perfect forum for helping professionals and transgendered persons to meet on equal footing and discuss complicated issues regarding access to medical treatments.

What do you get from Membership?

- **You get our publications.**
You get two copies of our outstanding journal, *Chrysalis*, and 4 copies of our newsletter, *AEGIS News*. You also get medical advisories and special bulletins throughout the year.
- **You get an ID card.**
In mid-year, AEGIS will issue identification cards to all members. The card will carry a strong statement about your rights, and may come in handy sometimes when you need the authority of a membership organization behind you.
- **You get discounts on our products.**
We sell lots of interesting things. You'll find out about our new products before anyone else, and you'll get them for less than others will pay. You'll also get a discount on membership in the Transgender Historical Society.
- **You get a vote.**
You have a say-so in the way AEGIS is run.
- **You get the satisfaction of helping others.**
We mail dozens of information packets each week. Those packets change lives, and money from your subscription will be paying the duplication costs and mailing fees.
- **You get to change the world.**
Ideas about transgendered and transsexual people are changing. AEGIS has played a considerable part in making that change happen. And things are going to change even more. We're going to make the world a better place. Together.

A note to helping professionals:

AEGIS has a professional division which is concerned with issues of treatment and with education of caregivers. Our professional division will take a leading role in redefining the relationship between transgendered persons and the professional community (and consider, these are not mutually exclusive categories; there are hundreds of transsexual and transgendered physicians, psychologists, researchers, ministers, electrologists, counselors, therapists, and social workers). Please join so we can work together in an atmosphere of mutual respect to solve our considerable problems.

Chrysalis subscribers: You're already members. We'll send you details.

AEGIS Membership Categories & Benefits

General (\$36/year) includes

Subscription to *Chrysalis* (2 issues)
Subscription to *AEGIS News* (4 issues)
Membership/Identity Card
Free access to Library & Archive
10% discount on all merchandise

Professional (\$60/year)
includes benefits above plus
Transgender Treatment Bulletin and
*Shbb! The Bulletin of the National
Transgender Library & Archive*
15% discount on all merchandise

Supporting (\$100/year)
includes benefits above plus
20% discount on all merchandise
\$40 tax deduction

Sponsoring (\$250/year)
includes benefits above plus
Listing in *AEGIS News*
1st class mailing of materials
25% discount on all merchandise
\$190 tax deduction

Benefactor (\$500/year)
include benefits above plus
Note of appreciation in *Chrysalis*
\$440 tax deduction
30% discount on all merchandise

Student (\$24/year)
includes General Membership benefits
(Subject to verification)

Minor (\$24/year)
includes General Membership benefits
Must be under 18
Subject to verification

Incarcerated & Transgendered?

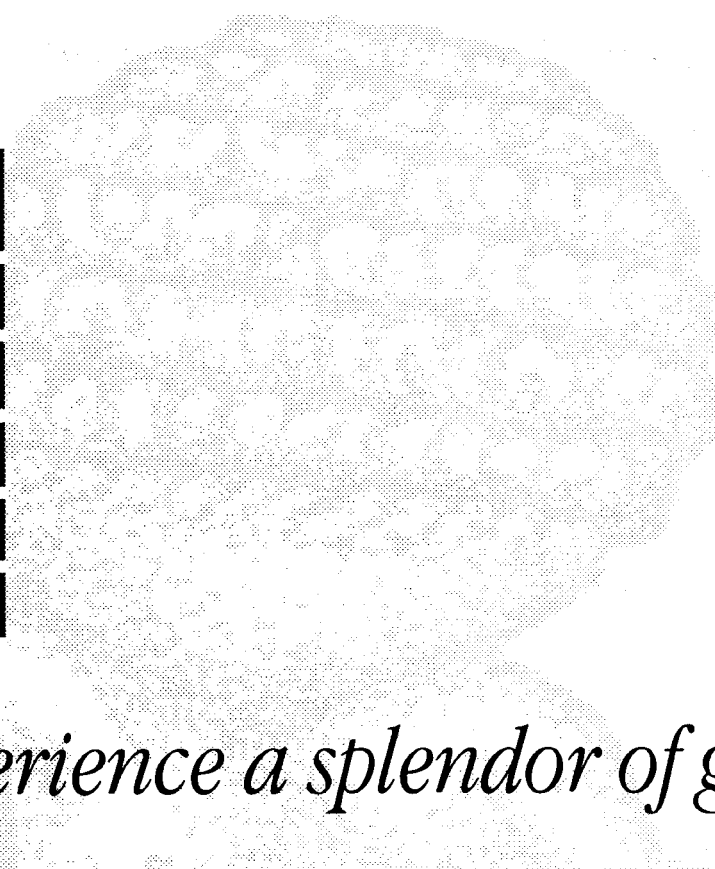
You can receive *AEGIS News* free

Memberships are for the calendar year
Chrysalis subscribers will automatically
become Basic Members

**Please add \$10 if you are
outside the U.S. & Canada**

Join us...

AEGIS
American
Educational
Gender
Information
Service



... and experience a splendor of gender!

AEGIS is a 501(c)(3) membership organization which provides a variety of services to helping professionals and to individuals with gender issues. We provide free information & referrals, publish the journal *Chrysalis* and a variety of other materials, maintain the National Transgender Library & Archive, assist in the establishment of support groups, conduct workshops and seminars, publish advisory and position statements, and maintain an extensive bibliography of materials related to crossdressing and transsexualism (published in 1994 by Garland Press).

AEGIS provides a forum in which mental health and medical professionals can work together with transgendered and transsexual persons to discuss issues of mutual interest and importance. We have a variety of membership categories, one of which is right for you. Why not join today? You'll receive two issues of *Chrysalis* (our great magazine), four issues of *AEGIS News* (our newsletter), a membership card, discounts on all of our products, and most importantly, a vote in the future— *your* future.

Please send the form below to AEGIS, P.O. Box 33724, Decatur, GA 30033-0724 [or call 404-939-2128]

Yes! I'm ready to join AEGIS & experience a Splendor of Gender!
I'm sending a check for a one-year membership which will include two issues of *Chrysalis* and other great stuff!

© 1995 by AEGIS
The American Educational Gender
Information Service, Inc.
A 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation.

Name _____
Address _____
City _____
State _____ Zip _____
Office () _____ Home () _____
(We will send you a longer membership data form)

- General Membership (\$36/year)*
 - Professional Membership (\$60/year)*
 - Supporting Membership (\$100/year)
 - Sponsoring Membership (\$250/year)
 - Benefactor (\$500/year)
 - Student/Minor (requires documentation) (\$24/yr)
- *[Please add \$10 outside North America]

The Transgender Alliance for Community

In October, five national transgender organizations— AEGIS, IFGE, the Outreach Institute of Gender Studies, Renaissance Education Association, and Tri-Ess— worked together to sponsor a booth at the annual meeting of the National Association of Social Workers in Nashville. It was the first time a cooperative endeavor of such magnitude had been attempted, and it was a rousing success.

Cut to: The little resort town of Provincetown, on Cape Cod. It is mid-October. Alison Laing and I, in town for the 20th anniversary of Fantasia Fair, begin to talk as we often have before about how wonderful it would be if the various organizations would pledge to cooperate with each other on an ongoing basis. During our week in P-Town, we discuss it with each other on several occasions, and mention it to JoAnn Roberts, who in turn discusses it with Jane Ellen Fairfax. On our return to our various homes, we begin faxing drafts of a statement to each other. Before long we have agreed on terminology, and during November and the first part of December, the respective Boards of Directors of AEGIS, Renaissance, and Outreach approve a statement which says that the organizations will work cooperatively with each other, and inviting other organizations to pledge likewise. Jane Ellen sends the Tri-Ess Board the statement for approval at their next meeting. The alliance is formed (see sidebar).

In the December issue of *Renaissance News*, the alliance was the cover story. Coincidentally, on the back page, there was an editorial by JoAnn Roberts which addressed the predatory behavior of certain unspecified "leaders" of the transgender community, who exploit the community in the name of helping it.

It was an inviting pair of shoes, and a surprising number of people have tried them on. By that, I mean that more than a few organizations and individuals figured that they were the unnamed parties that JoAnn was talking about, and became incensed— while it apparently

went completely over the heads of the people at whom it was directed.

The individual prominent in the community (whom I will not name; let's see who tries on this pair of shoes) reportedly hit the ceiling. Completely overlooking the stated purpose of the alliance, she assumed that a new organization had been born, and began questioning why her organization was "left out."

It was to avoid such competitive modes of thinking that the alliance was formed. How unfortunate that its purpose has already been misconstrued!

The alliance is not an organization, but simply a pledge that organizations can take, if they so choose, stating that they will respect and work together with other organizations. It has no leaders, no treasury, no newsletter, nor even a formal name. It is a threat to no one except those who are unable to conceive that others can operate by consensus building, constructing win-win situations, and mutual respect.

It was time for the alliance. I sincerely hope that those who cannot understand it will not oppose it.

The Pledge

Any organization which wishes to participate in the alliance should make the following pledge:

"We, the (name of organization), in the spirit of cooperation, caring, and community, pledge to participate in the sharing of services, information, and resources, where possible, with other transgender organizations in order to develop a true sense of community among all transgendered people of the world."

The 1994 annual meeting of the National Association of Social Workers marked a milestone in the history of the Transgender Community. Five national transgender organizations set aside philosophical differences in order to work together on a common projects— outreach and education to social workers about the transgender community. The Transgender Alliance for Community (hereafter the alliance) is meant to build upon that small beginning and continue the cooperative effort begun in October, 1994 at the NASW conference.

Purpose

The Alliance forms the framework for the interactive participation of transgender organizations in community programs and projects. This interactive participation will take the form of sharing and exchanging services, information, and resources available to the partners in the alliance.

Scope

The Alliance is inclusive. All non-profit and not-for-profit transgender organizations are invited to participate as a member of the Alliance. The Alliance is committed to diversity. The Alliance will develop educational and promotional programs and projects that benefit the community as a whole, but also develop programs and projects for minority interests that are not served by other organizations. The Alliance will be pro-active on inclusion and diversity.

To join the Alliance, an organization need only take the Pledge.

Lettercol

Dear Editor:

In issue #2 of *AEGIS News* there is an advertisement for a publication published by Riki Anne Wilchins called *In Your Face!* which falsely accuses me of "banning" it in Kansas City. I consider your acceptance of advertising for this publication to be highly irresponsible not only because it contains deliberate misrepresentation of the facts, but also because it is clearly intended to malign me and the magazine which I publish and edit, *TransSisters: The Journal of Transsexual Feminism*.

The word "ban" means to prevent from being distributed. Clearly, I am in no position to "ban" this publication or any other; I have no way to prevent anyone from publishing or distributing whatever material they wish to publish or distribute. This is not merely a matter of interpretation; this is an instance of deliberate misstatement of the facts. To refuse to accept advertisement for something is not the same as "banning" it. This is a distinction that I would expect you as a fellow publisher and editor to understand. I have noticed that the writers' guidelines for *Chrysalis Quarterly* state that "the editors reserve the right to refuse submissions which do not meet our editorial or aesthetic standards." I don't think you would appreciate it very much if someone were to take out an ad in another publication claiming that you had "banned" her because you decided not to publish something by her that did not meet those standards.

By making the claim that *In Your Face!* is now so politically incorrect we're banned in Kansas City," its publisher, Riki Anne Wilchins, is trying to portray this situation as an attempt on my part to suppress opinions which I do not agree with. An objective examination of the facts proves that is not the case at all. My publication,

TransSisters, has published a very great number of opinions that I am in absolute disagreement with, including many expressed by Ms. Wilchins herself.

TransSisters states very clearly in every issue that it reserve the right to refuse advertisement which is deceptive, is in poor taste, or which is contrary to its goals and purposes. I decided to exercise my prerogative as editor and publisher of *TransSisters* to refuse to accept advertisement for *In Your Face!* because Ms. Wilchins has shown a demonstrated track record of engaging in distortion of the facts as well as of falsely impugning the motives and character of other individuals, both within and outside of our community. Ms. Wilchins' claim that I have somehow "banned" her is but another example of the kind of factual distortion and impugning of the character and motives of others that she has demonstrated a propensity for engaging in.

My decision to refuse to allow *TransSisters* to be used as a platform to promote publications which engage in this kind of activity was a RESPONSIBLE decision. Unfortunately, *AEGIS News* has decided not to exercise the same degree of responsibility. Your decision to accept advertising for this publication is especially irresponsible considering that it was pointed out to you before it was published that it contains deliberately misleading information as well as expresses malicious intent toward me.

The fact that this accusation was included in an advertisement in no way absolves you of responsibility. The publication of information which is presented as a factual statement, rather than as an opinion, and which is known to be false or even misleading and which clearly expresses malicious intent not only constitutes libel, but is also a violation of existing truth in advertising laws. Since it was pointed out to you that this information is false and that it clearly does express malicious intent, I can see no way that the publication of this advertisement can be

considered responsible in any way. I am sorely disappointed in *AEGIS* for accepting this ad; I had come to expect greater integrity from *AEGIS* than this.

Sincerely,

Davina Anne Gabriel, Publisher/Editor
TransSisters: The Journal of Transsexual Feminism

We've reprinted the advertisement in question on the outside back cover of this issue.

The opinions and political views of Riki Anne Wilchins are highly controversial, and that is well and good. What concerns us is that many people in the community, Davina included, are attacking her personally for her views. The fact is, Davina did ban In Your Face!, not because she has any official authority to do so, but because she refused to run the ad and attempted to influence others—AEGIS included—to not run it either.

Davina has accused AEGIS of being irresponsible for running Riki Anne's ad. In fact, it was because we were responsible that we ran it. We were concerned that because of Davina's actions the ad wouldn't appear elsewhere (so far, to our knowledge, it hasn't). After considerable soul-searching, we decided to run the ad in the interest of free speech.

We'd like to point out that to this date there have been no issues of In Your Face! Davina's actions against this magazine, sight unseen, are clear indication of her antagonism towards Riki Anne.

There have been other instances of anti-Riki sentiment, as well. Riki's presence at the Southern Comfort conference last fall was highly controversial—not because she had made threats to disrupt the conference, but because she is Riki Anne Wilchins.

To those who position themselves as opponents of Riki Anne, we would like to say that if you oppose her because she has done something outrageous, then we will stand with you. But we will support her right to be outrageous. —AEGIS News

ANTIDEFAMATION RAG

The following appeared in the Erie Times-News, 2 October, 1994

Commentary

Fired Worker Should be Back on the Job

by John Bartlett

I can't help but think the Northwest Jobs Training Partnership Consortium needs to come to some accommodation with Kristine Holt.

This is, of course, if Holt would be willing to deal with the consortium outside the confines of a courtroom. Holt recently filed a suit in Venango County Court seeking damages in excess of \$12 million.

Among those named as defendants are the consortium and the county commissioner from each of the five counties who serve as the counties' representatives on the consortium governing board. The consortium administers federal job training programs for Venango, Crawford, Clarion, Forest, and Warren counties.

Holt, a transsexual, was fired from her job as an employment assessment specialist with the consortium in December, 1992, as she was undergoing the transformation from Richard to Kristine.

I admit I find that strange. Some may even find it frightening or repugnant. But the only issue should be if Holt could do her job, and by all that I have heard, she did do her job.

The bottom line is that if Holt is successful in court, whatever she is awarded could fall back at least in part on local taxpayers. From my perspective Holt should have a good case.

If not legally—and that I cannot really judge since I am not a lawyer or particularly skilled in the law—at least in the greater sense of what is right.

As part of the change process from Richard to Kristine, Holt began to cross-dress on the job in a fashion she believed was within the framework of restrictions set by her employer. The consortium claimed, however, that her cross-dressing was an act of willful misconduct and was grounds for her termination.

After being fired, Holt, 38, applied for unemployment compensation, and appealed to the state Department of Labor and Industry, which oversees the consortium, for reinstatement to her job. She was granted unemployment, but the consortium appealed the award to the Unemployment Compensation Board of Review, which upheld Holt's claim. The consortium then appealed the board's ruling to Commonwealth Court.

On March 29 Commonwealth Court ruled in Holt's favor, affirming the right of a transsexual to cross-dress on the job.

Commonwealth Court Judge Dan Pellegrini wrote: "When, as here, an employee's actions directly conflict with the employer's work rule, the employee has to show either that the rule was unreasonable or there was good cause for his or her conduct. We have consistently recognized that a medical problem or illness may establish a good cause of an employee's failure to comply with a work rule..."

"Transsexualism is a recognized medical condition for which there are established guidelines for treatment... Claimant's treatment fell within the established guidelines which required that Claimant participate in a "trial period" of cross-gendered living—working and living in the desired gender role... While both the disease and treatment are unusual, transsexualism is recognized as a medical condition. Under these circumstances...

the Claimant's actions were medically necessitated and, as such, did not constitute willful misconduct."

Just days before the Commonwealth Court ruling, the Secretary of the Department of Labor and Industry ordered Holt reinstated to her job with the consortium.

The ruling found that the consortium violated the federal statutes under which it operated and disregarded its own merit-based personnel policies.

"Holt's treatment was different from that of all other employees and difference had nothing to do with her performance, attitude, or abilities," a hearing examiner wrote.

The consortium is appealing the Labor and Industry ruling and has refused to reinstate Holt, despite threats of sanctions by Labor and Industry.

Finally, Holt filed suit. I understand from sources close to the case that at least twice Holt offered a settlement to the consortium that essentially she was to be provided wages and benefits for a set period until she could re-establish herself.

So far following required channels and the legal process, Holt has won every round, but the consortium has remained intransigent.

I hope that intransigence does not prove costly to all of us. It has already been costly to Holt, and I don't think that is right.

Officials of the consortium have been silent on the matter, but if they can justify their position, they should do so. Otherwise, Holt deserves to be working.

John Bartlett is a Times-News staff writer based at the Tri-City Bureau, 513 13th St., Franklin, PA 16323. You can write him at that address or phone him at (814) 437-6397 to congratulate him on his sense of fair play.

ANTIDEFAMATION RAG

ANTIDEFAMATION RAG

Dear editor:

If you think your readership would be interested in the David and Goliath story of a capriciously fired transsexual woman waging an ongoing two-year legal battle with a non-profit training agency, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, five counties and a county prison warden to get her job back, read on.

The woman is 38-year-old Kristine W. Holt, a Venango County, Pennsylvania native who was known as Richard Holt until October 13, 1992. Her decision to make a change of gender was made only after an exhaustive evaluation process of Holt's medical, psychiatric, and psychological condition by a battery of competent specialists in the area of gender problems. Holt was diagnosed as transsexual. As required under the Standards of Care of the Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association, she began crossliving in the target gender prior to final approval for sexual reassignment surgery, on November 5, 1992.

The agency is the Northwest Pennsylvania Training Partnership Consortium, Inc. (NPTPC), serving five counties in northwestern Pennsylvania as the recipient of Job Training Partnership Act funds as passed through the office of the Governor of Pennsylvania. NPTPC provides training and supportive services for disadvantaged, handicapped, and dislocated workers to enable them to more readily compete in the job market. Ironically, the agency would assist someone like Holt had she applied as a client (and sarcastically offered to after firing her).

Holt worked satisfactorily as an employment counselor with NPTPC for three and one-half years before she and the Consortium collided as an irresistible object and an immovable force. Holt announced her intention of assuming the external appearance of her chosen gender in July of 1992. The agency, once the initial shock wore off, agreed to accommodate the change. All went smoothly until Holt was forcibly ejected from her job site at the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry

Venango Area Job Center in Oil City, Pennsylvania on November 23, 1994. The ejection occurred because the spouse of an agency employee objected to Holt's presence in the office. Within a month, Holt was fired from her position, supposedly for "violating community standards."

Holt immediately filed for Unemployment Compensation, which was granted. NPTPC appealed the award all the way to Commonwealth Court, which upheld the award on March 29, 1994. The Commonwealth Court also upheld the right of a transsexual to cross-dress on the job.

Holt also filed a series of administrative complaints, beginning with an internal procedures complaint with NPTPC, with no response until June, 1993 (complaint denied). She filed a complaint with the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry, which, after a series of hearings and appeals, resulted in a Governor's Order to reinstate HER immediately with all back pay and benefits. NPTPC has been intransigent in its refusal to negotiate any settlement with Holt, or to comply with any order for reinstatement. As a result of the agency's refusal to comply, the Department of Labor and Industry has declared its intention to impose sanctions on NPTPC.

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry is in the logically inconsistent position of on the one hand forcing the agency to rehire Holt, while on the other hand it is one of the named plaintiffs in Holt's lawsuit for its ejection of her, under threat of police arrest, from her job site at the Department's local office. The Department's actions, Holt maintains, are a direct violation of Executive Order 1988-1, which establishes the Commonwealth policy of non-discrimination in employment by state agencies or by agencies which contract with the state, on the basis of sexual orientation, non-job-related handicap, or other protected categories.

On September 14, 1994, Holt filed a \$12.2 million civil action against ten defendants: NPTPC's Executive Director and the five commissioners representing the

member counties of the Consortium, the warden of the Venango County prison who had denied Holt access to her job site in the prison, and three officials of the state Department of Labor and Industry.

Holt's civil suit is not a traditional discrimination action; rather, it sounds primarily in tort for the losses and suffering Holt has experienced since the defendants' actions. Holt lost her home and other possessions and has lived as a homeless person existing on \$195 a month from the Department of Public Welfare. She has had more than one hundred in-person job interviews, with no job offers, even though she has an otherwise spotless work record. She obtained her bachelor's degree magna cum laude from Clarion University of Pennsylvania in 1984, and had worked without problem until the incidents surrounding her change of gender.

The ramifications of this lawsuit are broader than just transsexualism and public employment policy. Holt's plight touches a nerve in virtually everyone who has felt abused by a government agency. The arrogance of public officials who do what they wish with tax dollars, even in defiance of law, has roused the ire of many "little people." This sorry debacle has already become a consideration in current and forthcoming election campaigns in the five counties involved.

The real story here is of one person fighting and prevailing against the power and indifference of a governmental monolith, armed only with her wits and her faith, aided by one lone small-town attorney, and backed by innumerable friends and well-wishers.

Very truly yours,

*Elizabeth C.M. Carmichael, Esquire
212 Liberty Building, 1243 Liberty
Street, Franklin, PA 16323
(814) 437-2039*

Ms. Carmichael writes, "Kris and I would like to share this story with your readers, to "get the word out" to people who do not believe they have the power to change injustice in their lives."

ANTIDEFAMATION RAG

Vaginal Politics

In Defense of Freedom of Choice

by Dallas Denny

My man-made vagina is warm and wet and wonderful. Sometimes, when I am walking in a skirt, wearing only panties underneath, I can feel the labia pushing together as I walk, giving just a little bit of stimulation to my clitoris, making me feel feminine and sexy. Sometimes I sit in my office with the door closed, my index finger moving rapidly inside me, my cheeks flushed, my clit hard again the ball of my finger. Sometimes I lie in bed and make love with a vibrator, or with a partner, arching my back and moaning and panting as orgasm approaches.

Sometimes, at a business meeting or in a movie theater, I get the slightest whiff of my vagina. It is an earthy, musky scent, a woman-odor, not unpleasant to me, although I confess that a lifetime of exposure to feminine hygiene product advertisements makes me

The literature of the transgender community is full of articles about those who wish to have surgery, defining them as impulsive, out of touch with reality, unstable, unable to distinguish between sex and gender, and otherwise diminished in intelligence and common sense.

apprehensive that others might smell it and leads me to douche more frequently than I might otherwise.

I'm very proud of my vagina, the more so because I wasn't born with it. It is a human-made vagina, a neovagina, a product of cooperation between my flesh and the scalpel of a Belgian surgeon named Michel Seghers. I bought it with money and sweat, and it is part and parcel of who and what I am. But it took entirely too much mountain-moving to get it.

There were other things which were more important to me than having a vagina—namely, getting rid of the facial hair which I did not feel belonged on my face, and the testosterone which I did not feel belonged in my body— but getting it was important enough for me to play surgical roulette, exchanging a bird-in-the-hand penis, testicles, and scrotum and my reproductive potential for a bird-in-the-bush bush.

As much as I appreciate my vagina, I do not imbue it or the three-hour surgical pro-

cedure which created it with any mystical significance. I realize its limitations, and its differences from non-surgical vaginas. I don't mind that it is made from penile and scrotal tissue, and that it doesn't have infinite depth. I'm proud to have a transsexual vagina. But mostly, I'm just glad it's there.

Getting my vagina was a major event in the course of my life, just as were being born, graduating from college, and getting married. Acquiring it was certainly a milestone, but it was not the end of a journey for me, or the beginning of a "new life"; it was just a stop along the stagecoach route to change the horses. Having it has made me happy in little and important, but not earth-shaking ways. Having it has not magically changed my life, or even opened any doors that were closed (except in the sack, and, oh yes, the New Woman Conference, which is closed to those without vaginas or neovaginas). And yet, if my old equipment were to grow back, I would be back in Brussels as quick as you can say "four thousand dollars."

What I am saying here is that having a vagina was and is of personal importance to

me. To me. It might not be to other gender-transgressing people, and I can appreciate that. And I know that to some people born vaginally handicapped, having a vagina is a matter of life-and-death, and I can appreciate that, too.

Does having a vagina make me any more a woman than if I had a penis? No. Women are not judged by their vaginas, nor men by their penises, except when in bed with their lovers, and most people are not their lovers. Being a woman has to do with self-identification as a woman, and with living as a woman. And the same goes for being a man. After all, in social situations, people interact with people, and not vaginas and penises.

Genitals are a personal matter, and there is no legitimate reason for differentiating people into categories because they lack or possess a vagina or penis. After all, the same person can have one set of genitals during one part of life, and not at another, a fact to which I can attest. Having a vagina can be good, if you want one, or bad, if you don't.

Having a penis can be a blessing or a curse. It's a relative thing. Those who want a penis or vagina should be allowed to have one, and no one who wants one should be forced to have one. It's as simple as that.

It's when penises and vaginas (or lack of them) are used as political tools to oppress people and as weapons to attack them that I begin to have a problem. And that is being done in the transgender community. It happens when pre-operative or non-operative transsexual people and transgenderists and crossdressers and non-gender-transgressing men are excluded from forums like the New Woman's Conference because they have penises. It happens at the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, which excludes people born with penises, people who used to have a penis, people who used to not have a penis but now do, people who do not have penises but look as if they might, and people who have something that might be a penis, but nobody is sure. It happens any time those who have acquired vaginas use them to exclude those who do not have them, and when certain (i.e. surgically created) classes of vaginas or penises are defined as undesirable. It happens also when people are attacked for making the decision to acquire a vagina or a penis.

Mary Daly has called transsexuals "Frankensteinian", and her disciple Janice Raymond considers transsexual women to be giant walking penises who violate women's bodies and spaces (*Gyn-Ecology* and *The Transsexual Empire*, respectively). Lesbian separatists have attempted to steal away our powers of self-definition by attacking transsexual people in a variety of forums and excluding transsexual women from woman-only events. Psychoanalysts have called sex reassignment surgery "psychosurgery," "collusion with delusion," and "collaboration with psychosis." They believe that transgender identification is a mental illness, and should be "cured," not by changing the body but by eliminating the wish. Behavior therapists and psychiatrists attempt to give them tools with which to do that: aversion therapy and psychoactive medications, respectively.

It's bad enough that genital surgery has so enemies from without the transgender community— but it also has enemies from within. Surgically altered genitals have also come attack from those in the transgender community who have made the decision to live without them. This usually manifests

itself as concern about "self-identified transsexuals" who "don't know what they're getting into," but the transphobia which underlies it is not difficult to detect, whether it comes from the mouth or pen of Virginia-don't-cut-off-your-options-Prince or from Olga Gordene, who has written that "'Happy' endings rarely occur in transsexuals who undergo surgery." (*Transgender Nation*, p. 19).

The literature of the transgender community is full of articles about those who wish to have surgery, defining them as impulsive, out of touch with reality, unstable, unable to distinguish between sex and gender, and otherwise diminished in intelligence and common sense. Invariably, those arguments are written by people who do not have and have never had vaginas, or who do have a vagina and are married or otherwise in a relationship with someone who does not have one, but wants one.

Excuse me. If it is politically incorrect for white people to write about the Black experience, and for straight people to write about being gay, what makes it appropriate for the neovaginally and neopenilely deficient to write about the surgical experience, thank you very much?

It is certainly true that many transsexual people are ill-prepared for and perhaps even unsatisfactory candidates for surgery— but that is an area for discussion between transsexual people and those who provide medical and psychological services. Others have no place in the dialogue.

Transsexual people as a class are perfectly capable of making choices about their lives and their bodies. We really don't need nontranssexual persons attempting to limit those options by attributing negative characteristics to us. I'm very happy that this is a world in which women can have penises and men can have vaginas, and I am very happy for those who value and cherish their genitals, and hope they never malfunction and that the possessors have a good time with them. But I am entirely supportive of those who wish to change their genitals, and of those who have actually done so, and I am fed up with those who attack others for what they do or do not do with their genitals.

There is room enough in the world for all of us to be what we desire and need to be. None of us should be excluded or feel superior to other persons because we have or have not modified our genitals with surgery.

Some Representative Transsexual-Bashing

In the December issue of a nationally circulated support group newsletter, we found these gems:

... As the euphoria of the (SRS) experience wears off and the reality and enormity of it all sinks in, depression often becomes overwhelming.

We know and have known dozens of post-op transsexuals... we have NEVER known a consistently happy post-op! Most of the post-ops we know have no relationships, no career, and not much of a life. All this is not to mention the physical problems which come with SRS!

An interesting fact about most TS's is they refuse to live "full time" for any length of time... I will guarantee if you actually live... as a woman for at least the amount of time the Standards of Care suggest... you will think twice about SRS! You see, if SRS did what it promised to do, hell, I'd get it!

Had this been written by someone outside the transgender community, we would consider it the worst sort of transphobia. Well, it is the worst sort of transphobia! It shows absolute disrespect for the ability of transsexual persons to decide upon surgery, and in fact seriously questions their wholeness as reasoning beings. It is a tragedy that such stuff is being written, and from now on, authors of such rubbish can expect to see themselves in the Antidefamation Rag!

Did you Know?

- Contributions to AEGIS are tax deductible under section 501(c)(3) of the IRS code
- AEGIS maintains a telephone help line and provides free referrals and information to transgendered persons, their families, and helping professionals
- AEGIS is publisher of *Chrysalis Quarterly*, a provocative magazine about transgender issues, and a variety of other materials
- AEGIS has an ongoing commitment to inclusiveness in the transgender community
- AEGIS has a special interest in developing services for female-to-male persons and family members of transgendered persons
- AEGIS maintains a national minorities facilitator so that all portions of the transgender community can have access to our Board of Directors
- AEGIS is actively involved in the training of caregivers
- AEGIS maintains a speaker's bureau
- AEGIS is the successor to the Erickson Foundation, the Janus Information Service, and J2CP Information Services
- AEGIS provides direct services to transgendered persons. For example, we started and work closely with the Atlanta Gender Explorations support group, an open social and support group
- AEGIS maintains the National Transgender Library and Archive
- AEGIS has a Board of Advisors which it consults on a regular basis.
- AEGIS regularly releases advisory bulletins and position statements
- AEGIS has special seminars and functions (examples are lectures by helping professionals like Dr. Eugene Schrang and our Tula Day Celebrations)
- AEGIS maintains a comprehensive database of service providers and support groups
- AEGIS is working for you!

The Transsexual Voice Cancelled, Back

In April, Editor and publisher Phoebe Smith announced that the Atlanta-based magazine *Transsexual Voice* would no longer be produced, but after a six month hiatus, the *TSV* is back!

Ms. Smith has published *TS Voice* for more than ten years, making it, we believe, the oldest and longest running periodical designed specifically for and about transsexual persons. She didn't completely write off the magazine— she said that if demand was great enough, she would bring it back—and she did!

Ms. Smith has chronicled her tough times in transition in Atlanta during the 1970s. Her autobiography, *Phoebe*, and subscriptions and back issues of *The Transsexual Voice* are available from Phoebe Smith, P.O. Box 16314, Atlanta, GA 30321.

Ellen Summers 1925-1994

Long-time transgender community member and *Chrysalis* subscriber Ellen Summers passed away on 16 December after a long bout with cancer. She is survived by her spouse, Pat, daughter Susie, and sons David and Phillip.

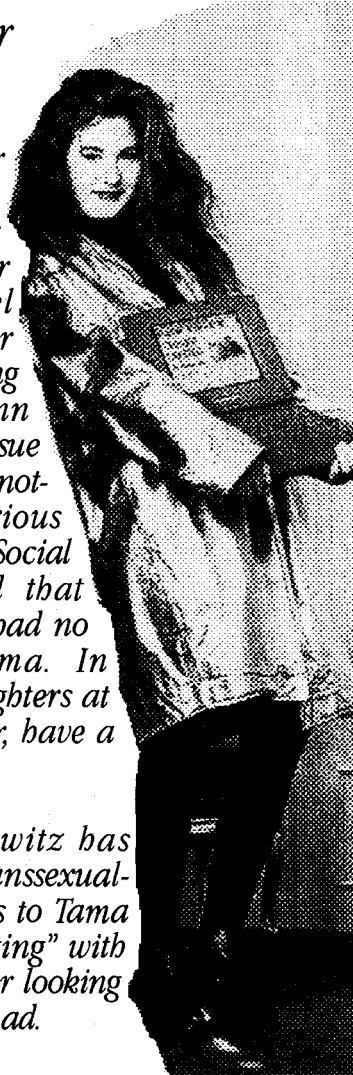
Summers was a founder of the Northwest Gender Alliance.

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D. Denny, Editor.
Write for ad & subscription rates.

Tama Loves her PowerBook

An advertisement for the Apple Macintosh PowerBook features Tama Janowitz, author of the popular novel *The Male Crossdresser Support Group*, looking very feminine. JoAnn Roberts, in a recent issue of *Renaissance News*, noted that some industrious soul, in checking the *Social Register*, discovered that *Mama Janowitz had had no daughters named Tama. In fact, she had no daughters at all. She did, however, have a son named Tom.*

To her credit, Janowitz has acknowledged her transsexualism. Congratulations to Tama for handling her "outing" with style and grace and for looking great in the Macintosh ad.



What's on Tama's Macintosh?

Historical research files
Husband's golf game
Formula for picking winning lottery numbers
Dogs' medical records
Draft of screenplay
Microsoft Word
Travel itinerary for Adelaide Arts Festival
Photos of Beep-Beep, Lily, & Nike
Adobe Photoshop
Possible character names for future novels
First draft of novel (700 pages)
Second draft of novel (500) pages
Third draft of novel (300 pages)
Exercise routine from High Voltage
Notes on Salvation Army stores all over the country
Research on camels
Articles about hairless dogs
Letters to Jeffrey Leeds, my financial advisor

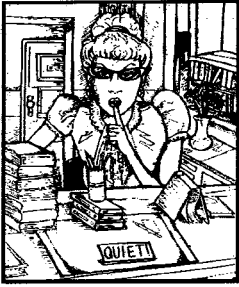
AEGIS & FTM Sponsor First National FTM Conference, 18-20 August, 1995

AEGIS and San Francisco's FTM International are pleased to announce the United States' first ever national conference for female-to-male transsexual people and cross-dressers, to be held 18-20 August, 1995 in San Francisco.

FTM responded to AEGIS' announcement of a \$500 award to any organization which would provide a matching amount by taking the matter to its members. When President James Green announced AEGIS' offer at a support group meeting, members raised more than \$300 on the spot. To date, FTM has raised \$700.

AEGIS has notified FTM that it won the \$500 award.

For information about this exciting conference, write FTM, 5337 College Avenue, #142, San Francisco, CA 94618 [Voice Mail (510) 287-2646]



Shhhhh! The Newsletter

Vol. 2 No. 0
March, 1995

of the National Transgender Library & Archive

A Publication of the Transgender Historical Society (a division of AEGIS)

AEGIS
American
Educational
Gender
Information
Service

Transgender Materials in Transgender Hands!

Announcing the Formation of the Transgender Historical Society

The Transgender Historical Society is now forming. Dedicated to the rediscovery, documentation, and preservation of the history of those with transgender issues (transsexual people, transgenderists, cross-dressers), and **above all, to keeping our history in our own hands**, the society will publish *Shhhhh!*, a bi-annual newsletter, hold an annual business meeting during the Southern Comfort Conference (in Atlanta, GA, 27 September - 1 October, 1995), and maintain a fund for purchase of materials for the National Transgender Library & Archive, which is currently maintained at AEGIS headquarters in Atlanta.

Membership in the Transgender Historical Society is \$20/year for AEGIS members, and \$30/year for non-members. Proceeds will be used solely to maintain and preserve the National Transgender Library & Archive and purchase new materials. We estimate that we will be able to average at least one book purchased per member per year.

Please help us to preserve our history!

The Library Lady



The Library Lady

Yes! I want to keep our history out of the hands of the Library Lady! I'm enclosing check or money order in the amount:

\$20 (AEGIS Member) \$30 (Non-Member)

for charter membership in the Transgender Historical Society

Name _____
Address _____
City _____
State _____ Zip _____
Phone _____ (days) _____ (evening)

Please send to AEGIS, P.O. Box 33724, Decatur, GA 30033-0724

*The National Transgender Library & Archive is open by appointment.
We are actively soliciting donations of material.
Please contact us at AEGIS, P.O. Box 33724, Decatur, GA 30033
404-939-2128 Voice 404-939-1770 FAX*

IN YOUR FACE!

The Journal of Record of Transexual & Transgender Activism

A complete listing of all subversive trans actions around the country, with instructions to roll your own.

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3-4 times a year or whenever we damn well feel like it so just don't give us any shit, okay?

Subscriptions

Free: Just submit a couple of blurbs each year about what's happening in your 'burg. \$5 to all others but we want your news and your ass, not your cash.

Mission

To cover all actions by transpeople and friends related to overthrowing the nonocracy, the nonarchy, post-op elitism or any other political structure which oppresses us or just really pisses us off: How to, how not to, how it felt, and how to do it again even deeper.

Contact

IN YOUR FACE!, Lynn Walker & Riki Anne Wilchins, 274 W. 11 St. #4R, NYC 10014 (212) 645-1753

IN YOUR FACE!

The choice of subversive gendertrash perverts everywhere.

Now so politically incorrect we're banned in Kansas City!*

*"As it is apparent to me from reading your ad that you intend to use *IN YOUR FACE!* as a forum for... malicious demagoguery... as well as because I consider the language contained in your ad to be in poor taste, I am exercising my prerogative as publisher of *TransSisters*... to refuse to accept advertisement for this publication." —Davina Anne Gabriel, Publisher, *TransSisters*

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TransSisters gets more interesting, more literate and more articulate with every issue. I can see it maturing before my eyes, and it's a wonderful feeling to know that such a publication is possible."

-- Sandy Stone, author of "The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto"

TransSisters

The Journal of Transsexual Feminism



Fool's Paradox:
An Interview with Kate Bornstein

Reviews of Her Book, *Gender Outlaw: On Men, Women and the*

Best of Her and Her New Play, Virtually Hours

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