

FIRST ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

\$4.50

TransSisters

The Journal of Transsexual Feminism

Issue # 6

Autumn 1994



Should Preoperative Transsexual Women Be Allowed to Attend the New Woman Conference?: Conflicting Views

Plus: Transsexuals at Stonewall 25 • She's Baaa-aack!:
Janice Raymond's *The Transsexual Empire* reissued •
Transsexuals Allowed to Enter MWMF • and more

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COMING IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF
TransSisters: the Journal of
Transsexual Feminism:
TRANSSEXUAL WOMEN AT
THE 1994 MICHIGAN
WOMYN'S MUSIC FESTIVAL

Introducing Dallas Denny

Beginning with this issue, *TransSisters* is pleased to add Ms. Dallas Denny as its newest staff writer. Dallas has dual credentials as a woman of transsexual experience and a mental health professional. She is a Licensed Psychological Examiner and a member of the Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association, Inc. and of the Society for the Scientific Study of Sex. She is founder and executive director of the American Educational Gender Information Service, Inc., a national clearinghouse for information about gender dysphoria, publisher of *Chrysalis Quarterly*, and founder of Atlanta Gender Explorations, a support group for



Dallas Denny

persons who are exploring nontraditional gender roles. She also works as a Behavior Specialist with persons with mental retardation. She has more than twenty years of experience working with persons with mental and physical disabilities.

Dallas has a Master of Arts degree in psychology, and is completing a doctorate in special education at Peabody College of Vanderbilt University. She has been previously published in many magazines and a number of peer-reviewed professional journals. She has written four novels, and is a songwriter as well. Her books *Gender Dysphoria: A Guide to Research and Identity Management in Transsexualism* were published in early 1994.

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such an attitude. Kate's attitude is inspiring, and her book a joy. It is the first book I feel that speaks in my idiom, that isn't basically a lamentation. We all have enough of that in our lives, and when I present such volumes to others they're taken aback by the depth of the pain. By showing the humor, Kate will make our people much more accessible to the general public, much less intimidating and frightening. I've already cleaned out my local bookstore!

Looking forward,
Laura Beyer,
Bethesda, Maryland

Dear Davina,

Thank you for another brilliant issue of *TransSisters*. Each issue keeps getting even more incisive, thought-provoking and revolutionary than the last one. (And I know I'd feel that way even if I weren't a staff writer!) This latest issue with the Kate Bornstein interview has increased my already considerable respect for you, both as an editor/publisher and as an open-minded person. While I could probably reply to every article in the magazine, I think the one that most deserves a response is "The Grande Alliance" in which the author makes a case for the transgender community ceasing its efforts to be accepted into the gay rights movement.

While it is certainly true that many of us have been maintaining for years that our issue isn't a matter of sexual orientation, the reality is that mainstream society does not know the difference. (In a way, as Ms. Bornstein first pointed out in the infamous *Bay Times* article, the people of the gay community break gender rules by loving the same sex, so maybe they should join *our* movement!) We transgendered people have been oppressed and attacked as though we are all homosexual. I can't count the number of times I've been called "faggot."

Since we are included in the persecution/exclusion of the gay community anyway, I believe that we do have a place in that movement *as well as* in the women's movement. We can continue to use our position in both circles to educate people about gender (and continue to point out that a sizeable number of transgenderfolk also identify as homosexual) and contribute to the gay community's and feminist's efforts. As gays and feminists make strides, we will reap the benefits too *as long as we are around to do some eye-opening*.

All people oppressed by the patriarchy have a common problem. As we work together we will learn more about each other, and we will be more successful than if we only work alone. A group as small as the transgender community needs all of the allies we can get.

Thanks again, Davina. Great job!

Sincerely,
Christine Beatty,
San Francisco, California

Dear Editor,

While I have been very impressed with *TransSisters* throughout its brief life, I was disgusted with two articles in issue #5. Not disgusted with *TransSisters* or the editorial inclusion of the articles, but with the narrow-minded stupidity expressed by the writers. One of the articles, "The Grande Alliance" by Kristine Wyonna Holt, demonstrates the near total ignorance of MTF transsexual- or transsexual wannabe-types with FTM perspectives as well as wallowing in the pig pen of homophobia. Self absorption of this type, while common, inevitably leads to perpetuation of myopic prejudice and ignorance. "The Grande Alliance" more than ably reflects the pathetic denial endemic to our US Kulture. This is to say the article barfed me out.

The second piece of trash, "Revise ICTLEP, Not the HBIGDA Standards of Care" by Brenda Thomas sucked. If I had the time, I'd write a counter-article titled, "Revise Brenda Thomas, Not the ICTLEP." But it would just be a waste of time to try and clue the clueless. The Tri-Ess stereotypes Brenda effortlessly flings around continue to foul the air, and Brenda's inability to read either "Appendix 5" or the "Report From the Health Law Project" in the *Proceedings* of the 2nd Conference with comprehension is amply displayed.

Additionally, the bigoted format and terms Brenda uses throughout are repulsive--take your moral code and shove it. Normal? Brenda, luv, the majority of post-operative transsexual type people simply have not followed "Gender Identity Programs," the HBIGDA Standards, or your stupid assumptions. That's the norm, to do otherwise would be "abnormal." Almost an abomination in your simplistic binary system. Let those who have ears, hear.

Maybe someone can explain it to you.

Maybe not.

I don't want to be interpreted as personally attacking either Kristine or Brenda--they both may be personally charming and interesting, possibly future friends or friendly acquaintances. I'm just personally offended that such incredibly narrow-minded, morality-based, binary-assumptive, half-baked ideas and out-of-context indignations are passed off as worthy of intellectual discourse on an adult level.

Luv,
Billie Jean Jones,
publisher/editor, *Genderflex*
Sacramento, California

Dear Editor:

In her well-written article, Ms. Holt makes the point that transgendered persons should not ally themselves with the gay, lesbian, and bisexual (lesbigay) community because our issues are not sexual issues, but gender issues. She goes on to say that we should seek alliances with the feminist women's movement.

I wholeheartedly agree that we should work with the women's movement, and more than that, with the feminist men's movement. But I could not disagree more that it is to our

advantage to separate ourselves from the lesbian community.

I don't want this letter to turn into an essay, so I will briefly list a number of reasons why such an alliance is critical:

1. Turning our back on the lesbian community is a slap in the face to a significant minority, and perhaps even a majority, of the transgender community. Many of us *do* have sexual issues. In fact, sexual confusion at some point in our process is almost a hallmark of being transgendered. Many avowed heterosexual crossdressers feel like women when dressed and act upon those feelings at some point. Many post-operative transsexual persons (I've heard as many as one-third) identify as lesbians or as gay men. Others are bisexual. Furthermore, many people who identify as lesbian are significantly transgendered.

2. The lesbian community is engaged in a commendable and courageous struggle for human rights. For the first time in Western history, sexual minorities are asserting their right to live their lives as they choose without governmental or religious persecution. What they are demanding is freedom, and it is one of the principles upon which this country is founded. It is only moral and right to support them in their quest.

3. Lesbian people are asking for the same sorts of things that we are. We benefit from their hard-won gains: domestic partnership agreements, insurance coverage, durable power of attorney bills, hate crime laws. Their cause is our cause; their struggle is our struggle. To pretend otherwise is purest folly.

4. We are all queer to Joe Lunchbox and his female counterpart, and we are actually more "queer" than the majority of lesbian people, who keep their sexual preference private. Bashers do not politely inquire, "Pardon me, are you a heterosexual gentleman who likes to crossdress, or are you a gay man in drag?" before bringing their Louisville Sluggers into play on us, ignoring the straight-acting gay men standing beside us. Those of us who are cross-living, and even those who are postoperative are seen by the general public as gay or lesbian regardless of whether our sexual partners are male *or* female. We will not make the general public aware of our differences until we are standing beside gay men and lesbians so the ways in which we differ will be apparent.

To borrow Marjorie Garber's term, we have a vested interest in the struggle of lesbian, gay, and bisexual people, and much, much to gain by working together with them on the issues of human rights which concern us all. And we cannot support them at our convenience, as Ms. Holt suggests. We must support them all the way.

Sincerely,

Dallas Denny

Executive Director

American Educational Gender Information Service, Inc. (AEGIS)

Decatur, Georgia

Dear Davina,

Running around like a crazy woman trying to get everything done, but I did want to include a couple quick thoughts on issue #

5.

Brenda Thomas' piece says more about her than it does about us. Her language is formal, caustic and clipped. She's obviously hell-bent on labeling people--did anyone else shudder at the coldness of the phrase "secondary transsexual suicides?" How can it be important to quantify such tragedy? Her main point regarding ICTLEP is not valid. As I understand it, that organization is made up primarily of transsexuals (if I'm wrong about this, please correct me, but I'm told that that's the case). Not lawyers, doctors, mystic pundits, or whatever profession they may be, but transsexuals first and foremost. So what Ms. Thomas is protesting as an attempt by the transgender community to have a larger voice in its own treatment. The reasoning behind this seems to be "but they've always done it that way!" So here's a late breaking bulletin for Brenda Thomas: people make mistakes. Some of them, such as someone having genital surgery that may not be right for them, can be tragic. But that does not make it the job of the medical/psychiatric community to make decisions for people. And it's certainly not the role of someone who's "not inclined to be transsexual." I laughed out loud when I read that phrase. It's like being "inclined" to have blue eyes. By the way, using the archaic and limiting system on which Ms. Thomas bases her piece, I'm somewhere between "primary" and "secondary," based on my personal history. Guess I should have a #1.5 tattooed on my forehead to appease her.

And her comment about how some of us supposedly think life will be carefree and fun after surgery typifies the ignorant and condescending tone of the whole mess.

I realize that Ms. Thomas requested that replies be mailed to her. But believe me, this is far more polite than anything I would have said to her about this diatribe of hers in direct correspondence.

Kristine Wyonna Holt aroused my thoughts but not my ire. I don't agree with her perception of sexual orientation in transgenders, but if she's happy believing that, I don't see that it does anyone any real harm. After all, sex is supposed to be defined by the participants, anyway. Her basic point about our relation to the women's movement is good, but I don't think that that involvement precludes strong and successful interaction with the gay rights movement. We're all in this together. Frankly, I never saw the advantage of dividing the community into the smallest possible groups--seems to me we get less done that way, not more. Besides, this may be a result of my sixties myopia, but I recall the gay rights movement as an evolution of the women's movement, at least in public consciousness if not in fact. And we are striving to free EVERYONE, right?

Loved Cailin Thompson's work. If she's interested in collaborating on something, please put her in touch with me.

Christine Beatty's "What Sex Are You?" didn't rile me, but it did confuse me--an accomplishment akin to bobbing for apples with Stevie Wonder. Yeah, I realize that, technically, that moist pit in my crotch is not a vagina. So? After all, a chrysanthemum by any other name would be easier to pronounce. For immediate purposes, my sex organ functions as a vagina, so if I take the small conceit of calling it that, what's the harm? I do