

AEGIS NEWS

QUARTERLY 4 / 98 #13 ISSN 1077-162X

On The Future of the TG Community

We recently ran in *AEGIS News* a four-part feature entitled "Vision 2001: A Gender Odyssey," in which we took a broad look at the transgender community as if had been frozen in time in early 1996. We described and discussed the many national and regional organizations, support groups and other local organizations, helping professionals, gender conferences, publications,

and the transgender political scene. We speculated about whether the future of the community lies in embracing identity politics or in transcending them.

This gender odyssey was but a preparation for the current article, the *real* Vision 2001, which is about the future: the community's, AEGIS' — and yours.

For several years now, I have had a growing sense that the community's national organizations are on the verge of unprecedented change, of realignment. I'm not prescient; I certainly don't know just what the changes will be or what will cause them, but I expect they will be significant, and things will unfold fast once they start to happen.

No, I don't think an asteroid is going to smash into Boston or Atlanta and wipe out IFGE or AEGIS — but I do believe we are seeing changes in the way we transpeople define ourselves and in the ways we seek out information to help us deal with this voodoo that we do so well. There are also profound changes ongoing in the way the world reacts to us.

All these changes call into question the underlying philosophies and operating principles of many of the community's existing groups. This is destabilizing a number of organizations — including AEGIS. We may soon see an organizational shuffle, in which old names disappear and new organizations — hopefully more in tune with the times — emerge.

The Needs of the Community

What are the needs of the transgender community? Frankly, no one knows. To the best of my knowledge, no one has ever

taken the trouble to ask the community what it wants. Certainly many local groups and some of the nationals periodically seek feedback from their members, but to my knowledge, no one has polled the community-at-large.

In Which Our Intrepid Outgoing Executive Director and Jessica Xavier Speculate About the Future of the Transgender Community's National Organizations

Who knows what a national poll of the transgender community might tell us? Perhaps the community would say its biggest need is a source for inexpensive, realistic breast forms (MTF people) and a comfortable chest binder (FTM people). More likely, community members would say they want to feel free to walk down the street without fear; to have access to a support group and quality medical care (including hormones and surgery); security in their jobs; insurance coverage for trans-related medical expenses; freedom to love, marry, and raise children; and equal protection under the law. Perhaps they would also say they would expect any national organization with which they were affiliated

to go to bat for them when their rights were violated. If this is so — and I suspect it is — it means that in addition to the publications, conferences, and referrals already available through existing groups, legal representation and advocacy services are needed. Although the existing organizations do their best to help those in crisis, none of the nationals, so far as I know, has developed an effective mechanism for providing these services.

I can confidently predict one thing a national survey would tell us — the community is tired of interorganizational squabbling and the posturing of the community's often self-appointed leaders (and please note, those of you who resemble that remark — I don't hold myself to be an exception). I frequently hear complaints about community infighting; a number of community leaders have told me they hear the same sort of thing from their constituents. I suspect a lot of community members are hanging back, staying in the background, withholding their financial and emotional support to organizations which sometimes seem to be giving more thought and attention to internecine politics than to the needs of their members. These folks are waiting for the national organizations to get their stuff together — *then* they'll ask themselves whether they want to dance.

Although transgender activists probably won't want to hear this, it's clear that only a minority of transpeople define themselves primarily as such. Perhaps being transsexual or transgendered comprises a *part* of their self-identities, but other identifications are as or more important. They are also parents, spouses, employers or employees, entrepreneurs, hobbyists, church members, members of political parties, club members, animal rights activists, musicians, and other things besides, and these identities claim most of their time, attention, and money. Any of these identities can be the driving passion of one's life, leaving little for the transgender movement. Those who have dedicated their lives to making the world safe for genderfolk are but a minority within a

minority, and their vision for a gender-just society is not necessarily shared by the bulk of the community — well, maybe it is something we would all like to see, but most of us don't necessarily consider it important enough to spend money on it, especially now that we are: (A) finished with our transition and passing pretty well; (B) too involved with transition to be able to pay attention to or spend money on anything except survival; (C) too closeted to mail out a check; (D) much more interested in spending money on a Jim Bridges makeover (MTF) or a new tattoo (FTM) than on Tri-Ess or FTM International; or (E) having too good a time dressing up (MTFs) or weightlifting (FTMs) to be bothered by all this political stuff.

The Nationals

Working & Playing Well Together?

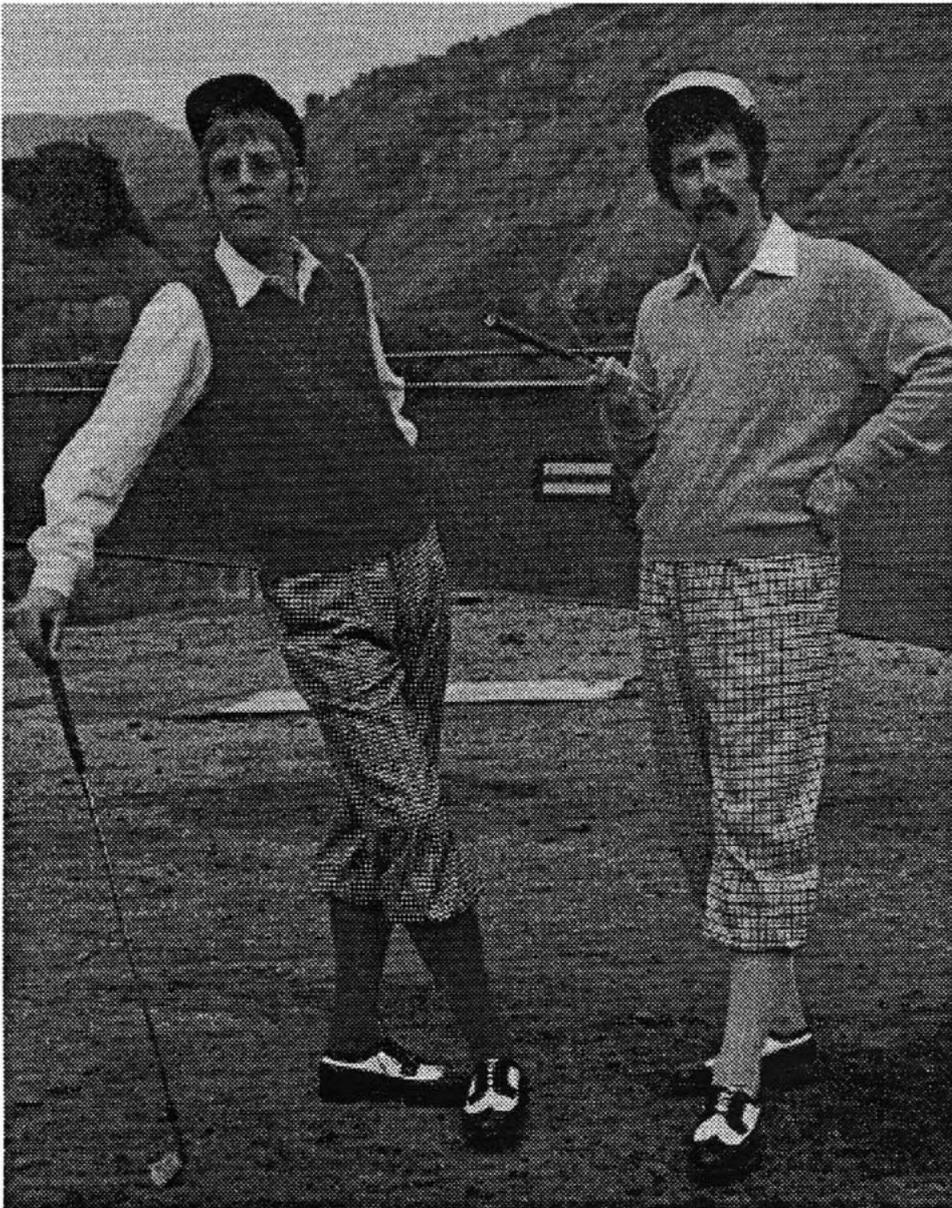
There have been some memorable attempts of the nationals to work together. The Congress of Transgender Organizations (which also included regional and local organizations) sputtered along for the better part of a decade before it ran out of gas. The Transgender Alliance for Community included most of the nationals, with member organizations staffing booths at professional conferences. The Alliance worked for several years, then it also ran out of steam.

Most recently, AEGIS, IFGE, and Renaissance agreed to form a committee to study the feasibility of cooperating and possibly even merging — but this, too, fell apart, and before the committee even met! Currently, the relationship among several of the nationals can best be described as mildly acrimonious, with leaders wavering between *Going with the Dark Side of the Force* and *Listening to Obi-Wan Kenobi*. There is, sadly, no initiative for interorganizational cooperation.

The Pros From Dover

If you've seen the Robert Altman film *M*A*S*H*, you may remember the scene in which surgeons Hawkeye and Trapper John are summoned to Tokyo to operate on the gutshot son of a senator. Knowing that almost any behavior will be tolerated because their skills are so badly needed, they show up at the hospital in golfing gear, waving drivers in the air and claiming to be the "Pros from Dover." They behave as outrageously as they know now, running roughshod over the nurses and the pip-pip proper major who is in charge of the surgical unit.

Our nationals sometimes have this Pros from Dover attitude. As an illustration, consider: several years ago, when the Transgender Alliance for Community went to its first professional conference — the National Association for Social Workers, held in Nashville, Tennessee — no one bothered to tell the excellent local organization, the Tennessee Vals, what was happening. Gender "experts" were



*It's so wonderful when we get the harmony just right, isn't it?
For a few short notes, we sound good, singing together, bass,
tenor, alto, soprano. Each of us keeps his or her separate voice,
yet we blend together, making something beautiful and unique.*

being flown in from all across the country, but the ready and willing local volunteers were frozen out. I finally could take it no longer and phoned the Board Chair of the Vals, Marisa Richmond and told her what was happening. On short notice, and to her credit, she rallied the troops as best she could to support the nationals. [1]

While there are usually no flies on the folks who staff the national organizations, the truth is there are no flies on the locals, either. The level of expertise at the local level usually equals and sometimes surpasses that at the national. After all, none of us have graduate degrees in transgender activism (well, except maybe Riki Anne Wilchins), and few of us have been at this long enough to be as savvy as the professional activists who serve the gay and lesbian community.

Transgender national organizations must stop looking down their long noses at locals as they were gender rubes from the hinterland. All of us have lifelong experience with our gender issues, and we are all qualified by virtue of our experience to do outreach work. In my book, we are *all* Pros From Dover.

Our Leaders

Good gender educators don't automatically percolate to the national level like cream; many talented persons choose to work at state or local levels. One of these days, perhaps, we will be able to hire trained professionals to run our organizations, but at this time we don't have the resources to pay them. Our national leaders are those who aspire, for whatever reason, to call the shots. Only a few are elected or hired. Unfortunately, in our roster of leaders we have not only talented and dedicated individuals, but a measure of posturers and self-promoters with whom an undiscerning transgender rank and file is usually unduly impressed.

There is no question that our leaders and the staff of the nationals work

hard. Most put in long hours, and only a few receive pay. Most national leaders, myself included, hold full-time jobs outside the community so we can pay our bills and subsidize our activism. Most activists dig deep in their own pockets to make phone calls and pay for copies and stamps and travel expenses. This puts the community at risk, subject not only to the whims and tantrums of their largely self-appointed leaders, but just a couple of heart attacks, car wrecks, or burnouts away from shutdown — not

that the community has any right to complain, for it is getting a free ride, reaping the many benefits of all this fine work without having to pay for it or do the work itself.

Clearly, it's time to move beyond organizations based on personalities and develop solid organizations which are independent of individuals, financially stable, and responsive to the community's needs. To do this, however, the community will have to ante up. It won't come free.



A Proposed Model

There is a great need for nationals and locals to work together more closely. Local organizations rarely do all the good work of which they are capable. They hold back, looking to the nationals to do the large-scale educational work. Certainly the nationals do their best, but their best is often inadequate, for there is simply no way they can handle the gender education and referral needs of this great nation with their limited budgets and staff. In regard to quantity of work, the locals do in the aggregate several orders of magnitude more outreach and goodwill spreading than all the nationals combined — and they could do even more if they disabused themselves of the notion that the Pros from Dover are taking care of everything.

The community needs a way to equitably distribute work among organizations so that everyone is working at capacity and efforts are not duplicated. Local groups cannot look to underfunded and understaffed nationals to do all the work, and nationals must let go of their Pros from Dover attitudes and work cooperatively with local groups so that the workload is optimized.

Jessica Xavier has suggested that the future of our resource-poor community will lie not in a national organization that does everything for everybody, but in a dual-level structure with strong local chapters which receive support from a national arm which will exist solely to provide supportive services. [2]

That makes sense to me. The locals are an underused resource, for they have access to volunteers to help with labor-intensive tasks, and activists who can be on the spot in hours wherever they are needed. What we really need is a cohesive national strategy for dealing with the needs of the community and a mechanism for putting people on the spot wherever they are needed without having to bring in the dreaded — let's say it all together now — Pros from Dover.

Accountability

Too often, the internal workings of both our national and local organizations are shrouded in secrecy. Usually, indiscretions and sometimes even outright thefts

do not make it into the press, and when they do, those who take the trouble to inform the community about what is happening risk being branded as whistle blowers. Let's face it — the best way to operate is to run a tight ship, with no improprieties or appearances of impropriety. The way to deal with problems is to fix them — not cover them up. Rationalizing improprieties by claiming it's "for the good of the community" is moral cowardice and insults the intelligence of the community. Organizations which try to snow their members are not really fooling anyone. The community's dirty little secrets are known to practically everyone, even if they rarely get talked about in print. [3]

While we may look to our national organizations to work for us, we have not given them carte blanche to do whatever they want. They are, after all, *our* organizations. Some are service organizations, and some are membership organizations, but whatever their form, they have an obligation to keep us, their constituents, informed about what is happening, not only externally, but in regard to internal operations, and especially in regard to financial information. Nonprofits are legally obligated to share their financial information with the general public.

Finances

If we are to have stable national organizations, they must be on sound financial footing. Yet none of the nationals are in good financial shape. Every one is hurting, each in its own way, and each responds in its typical fashion. One calls past contributors, whining for donations; another shames community members into giving; a third mails out periodic (and distressingly frequent) "crisis" letters; yet another reorganizes to face the realities of changing times. Others simply scale down their activities or shut their doors when monies don't roll in.

One thing is for sure: historically, funds for trans-related services have been difficult to obtain. City, state, and the federal government have refused funding, and gay and lesbian organizations have paid us little attention. My sense is that in this age of transinclusion, this is about to change — Seattle's Ingersoll Center, for instance, recently got two grants funded by

The Pride Foundation, a gay/lesbian/bisexual organization. But until gay and lesbian money or other outside money is readily available, our organizations' funding will have to come out of our own pockets.

Some community members have done their part and more in supporting local and national organizations with money and/or sweat equity. Others have done little or nothing. Certainly, it's distressing to sit for days at a booth at a conference, representing one of the nationals, talking to everyone but raising only about \$200 while the vendor across the way clears six or seven thousand dollars for "important" things like frilly maid costumes and makeovers. Of course, this may be the community's way of saying to the nationals "get your act together," but I rather think it's the community saying to the nationals that what they are doing isn't nearly as important as a good beard concealer or a false mustache. And here's a sad fact: if that's what the community wants, none of the present-day organizations will survive in the long term. Only if the community wants organized representation will today's organizations — or for that matter any organizations which may rise to replace them — survive.

Are the Nationals Needed?

Certainly, for all their faults, the national organizations have accomplished a tremendous amount, and in ways most members of the community will never realize. Without the work the nationals have done in the past decade or so we would all still be in that scary before-the-genderrevolution time when we were all pretty much automatically losing our reputations and our jobs if anyone "knew." There was, after all, no "transition in the workplace" ten years ago. Without the work of the nationals, we would not be out and proud, and there would not be as many of us, for most of us would still be in the closet. We would not be enjoying today's atmosphere of relative tolerance, with as many doors open to us, so many accepting employers, or as many tolerant churches. The nationals made this change possible by putting us all in touch with one another; now, having been introduced to our date, do we no longer need the matchmaker?

Knowledge and resources must be passed on in an orderly fashion, so new organizations can build from the old.

Will we be worse off if the nationals don't make it in the long term? You're darned tooting. In all likelihood, the social progress we have made in recent years will grind to a halt, and we will be in danger of returning to the gender Dark Ages. We would all be negatively impacted, from the most closeted crossdresser to post-process underground transsexuals. But will the nationals make it in the long run? Perhaps, but I don't think so, unless things change. Unless *they* change.

Ch-Ch-Changes

Will new organizations arise as old ones go the way of the dinosaurs? Probably — although if the nationals die ignoble deaths without passing on their resources to their successors, there will be much reinventing of wheels. Most likely, we'll end up with a new generation of poorly financed and haphazardly organized small “national” organizations that burn out their founders and their leaders and are financially supported by a few “angels” who also eventually burn out. Knowledge and resources must be passed on in an orderly fashion, so that new organizations can build from the old.

It's not, after all, as if the current generation of organizations is the first. Does anyone remember STAR, the Street Transvestites Action Revolutionaries; or the Queens Liberation Front, or Full Personality Expression, the Erickson Foundation, J2CP, Golden Gate Guys and Gals, the Cherrystones? They are our equivalents of the gay community's Daughters of Bilitis and Mattachine Society, which are also long gone or which have metamorphosed into something different.

And speaking of the gay and lesbian community, what better place is there from which to draw parallels? To date, the transgender community's process of self-awareness, self-help, and political action has been in parallel with and perhaps twenty years behind the gay and lesbian community. We can and should learn from those who have gone before — and we can and should understand that we can look at the present-day gay and lesbian

communities and get an idea of where we can be in another decade or so, if we play our cards right.

Technology

As profound as the forthcoming changes in our community may be, they will in all likelihood be overshadowed by general societal changes caused by computer technology. Telecommunication is a potent force which is molding the larger society and having a large and as yet largely unappreciated effect on the transgender community. Even as state and local real-world organizations are floundering, Internet organizations are thriving. The World Wide Web is extremely genderactive, and some members of the community consider the web, and not the nationals, to be the source for future community building (thanks to Judy Osborne for that insight and others which appear throughout this article). Relying on the Web can be both good and bad — good, because the Internet provides easy access to middle-class, literate persons (and from anywhere on the planet with a phone line) — and bad, because so much of the information is inaccurate or misleading; because not everyone can afford computers and telephones; and because not everyone can read well enough to use them effectively. Even when “every home” has a computer — and probably only about 40% of American homes currently do — *every* house will not have a computer, any more than *every* American now owns an automobile. The same folks who are locked out of our present community — the poor and uneducated — will not have access to the cyber community. While the Internet can provide accessibility from anywhere on the planet, it will have its divisive issues, different from, perhaps, but equally severe to those that exist in transgender organizations today.

One effect the Internet is having on nationals is in regard to information dispersal. Recently I typed in the word “transsexual” on a search engine on the World Wide Web, and got over 4000 hits. Many of them were personal pages, and some of them contained inaccurate information, but there was a great deal of surprisingly good information, right at my

fingertips. With such a wealth available in seconds, who in the future will be inclined to wait a couple of weeks for an information packet from a gender organization? And which organization will be able to afford packets sent by mail at a cost of a dollar or two apiece, when a Web site can disperse ten or a hundred or a thousand times as much information instantly and for free?

Perhaps in the future all information — or most of it, anyway — will be dispensed electronically. It's certainly the most inexpensive and labor-saving way to reach large amounts of people with small amounts of money. Both national and local transgender organizations must be prepared to take advantage of not only the Internet, but other new and emerging technologies.

Identity Politics

In the past, our organizations developed along lines of sexual orientation and gender identity. We have had organizations like Tri-Ess for heterosexual crossdressers, AEGIS for transsexuals, and the Imperial Court for gay people. In the nineties, these once-distinct identities have blurred, and foci which once seemed important are no longer relevant. There is no longer a need to separate ourselves from gay people — they are hardly a liability, in these gay-positive nineties, and many transpeople identify as queer. In this posttranssexual, postcrossdresser age, when crossdressers take hormones and live full time cross-gender lives and transsexual-identified people eschew genital surgery, the old distinction between crossdresser and transsexual hardly makes sense as a basis for structuring our organizations. I suspect the new generation of organizations will not form itself along these historic lines, but along new lines; one emerging distinction is between those who use computers for telecommunication, and those who don't. A second distinction which has emerged is that between MTF and FTMs. FTMs have made it clear that they consider existing organizations less than responsive to their

Why We Need The Nationals

by Jessica Xavier

In the age of the Internet, with its instant information, companionship, support and even sexual gratification, many transpeople sitting behind their keyboards have come to ask an obvious question: why do we need the national transgender organizations?

Perhaps the answer might be found in the third world. The poverty found in Lesser Developed Countries (LDCs) is often attributed to their lack of infrastructure — things like highways and paved streets, water and sewer services, sea-port and airport facilities, postal services, telecommunications, health and educational resources — the things we take for granted in the postindustrial world. Infrastructure facilitates economic development, which in turn allows for things like culture and education to develop. The lack of infrastructure hampers the LDCs in their attempts to raise the standards of living for their peoples.

Thus, many development models have focused on the appropriate roles of governmental and nongovernmental organizations in developing the infrastructure of LDCs. It takes not only a village, but the infrastructure behind it to raise the next generation beyond its poverty.

In a similar vein, the national transgender organizations have become the infrastructure of the national transgender "community." The support, medical, legal, and political information, and referrals they provide connect transpeople with each other and thus improve our lives. Their effectiveness has been determined by their utilization of resources, their fundraising abilities, their financial management, their leadership, and their ability to change over time to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse transgender community. Depending on your point of view, their work thus far either has started us all on the road to gender freedom, or they have failed us in varying ways and degrees.

An often-voiced criticism is that the nationals are largely ignorant or inept when it comes to meeting the needs

of our transgendered minorities: transpeople of color, trans youth, and transpeople living with AIDS and other disabilities. Despite the charges of classism, racism, homophobia and ageism, the nationals have persisted in catering mainly to the needs of their economically privileged members, who tend to be white MTF heterosexual crossdressers and transsexuals. Thus our infrastructure seems to be clustered around a privileged few, and accordingly, many if not most minority transpeople view the nationals either with contempt or at best as completely irrelevant to their lives.

Perhaps the most striking failure of the nationals is that they have not succeeded in extending the existing infrastructure through building capacity. The nationals have seemed uninterested in empowering the regional, state and local transgender support groups to take on new or augmented roles in gender education, outreach, support, and advocacy. Perhaps they fear a diminished role (and a commensurate loss of donations) for themselves if they help these local groups become more effective, but their inaction has contributed nationally to a massive failure in our gender education efforts, which has severely hampered the political component of the transgender movement. Simply put, we are losing the battle for the hearts and minds of the American public.

My own organization, It's Time, America! is the only national organization which seeks to build capacity in local transgender communities by providing technical assistance, educational materials, and advocacy training to our state chapters and affiliates. However, ITA is greatly limited by its funding in what it can do. Accordingly, I believe the most appropriate role for the national transgender organizations in the future will be to build capacity in local support groups, supplying them with the expertise, educational materials, technical assistance and advocacy training they will need to bring the transgender movement into the twenty-first century. — AN

needs, and have formed their own groups — American Boyz, FTM International, and FTMCEP being three.

Who knows the lines along which we will choose to classify and separate ourselves in the future?

Guilt and Shame

Our community has come a long way towards ridding itself of guilt and shame, but vestiges of these negative emotions linger. When confronted openly, they are manageable, but when they lead us into denial, then they can be incredibly harmful. We often use these emotions to chart our community's course. The most noticeable example of this is when groups focus on heterosexual crossdressing or transsexualism. These foci can be healthy, but often they are not. Transsexual groups sometimes impose expectations on their members: "If you're a *real* transsexual, you will..." Those who do not follow the party line are declared nontranssexual and turned away. Other groups frown on those who are surgery-bound, declaring them *non compos mentis* for wanting to "mutilate their bodies." And many heterosexual crossdressing groups, I've increasingly come to realize, are not so much about being a crossdresser or being heterosexual as about desperately clinging to male heterosexual privilege while trying to deal with deep issues of gender dysphoria and/or sexual orientation.

Id Like to Teach the World to Sing

This fragmented community, this group of like-minded people splintered into factions and each loyal to their pet organizations — is in need of a coming together. How ironic that the name of one of our conferences is Coming Together, yet we are, at the close of the millennium, so far apart. We need to sing — as Pamela Geddes told me, after a late night singalong at Fantasia Fair — in harmony. It's so wonderful when we get the harmony just right, isn't it? For a few short notes, we sound good, singing together, bass, tenor, alto, soprano (well, perhaps we're short a few sopranos in this community). Each of us keeps his or her separate voice, yet we blend together, making something beautiful and unique. Let's work on this harmony thing, can't we?

A Call For Community

It's like to end with a call to the transgender community — to every individual, and to all of the organizations, local, national, and virtual — to put aside their personal agendas, their ideologies, their grudges, and ask them to work together to change and to consolidate, to form a leaner transgender community, one with a smaller number of organizations — organizations which are not dependent upon personalities, which are financially stable, which serve the entire community, and which meet the actual and not the imagined needs of the community.

That's a tall order, and frankly, it almost certainly ain't a 'gonna happen. Like the rest of humanity, we in the transgender community can be obstinate, and we're probably fated to have our share of shootouts at the OK Corral, world wars which absolutely no one wants, false starts, stars which go nova, and flaming burnouts. But let's strive to work cooperatively, and let's try, shall we, to hit our harmony notes now and again. Let's support each other financially and with kind words, as we all go our separate ways together, doing our very important work of changing the world.

Notes

- [1] Sadly, professionals may not value the "set a booth up at a conference" format as much as some factions of the trans community think they do. Nor do non-professionals give this activity a high ranking. See the accompanying article for results of our poll of AEGIS members.
- [2] This is what the community thought it was getting with IFGE. When originally envisioned, IFGE was to have been an umbrella organization which tied the community together. As recently pointed out by Judy Osborne, IFGE's directors made a deliberate decision in the early 1990s to move it in a different direction. This is not to criticize that decision, but there is no denying that IFGE's change of direction has had a major effect on the community, and on IFGE itself.
- [3] No, this paragraph was not inspired by the recent controversy with IFGE and the Winslow Street Fund. The problem is of long standing, and applies to all of the organizations. — AN

How Soon They Forget!

It's easy for those who have gotten their grounding from the community to conveniently forget what sad puppies they once were and how important the community was at setting them off along the right path. I've seen more than one post-process transsexual belittle the community, loudly saying they don't need it, that it never helped them, forgetting that except for their support group they would still be Ralph and not Judy, or Henrietta and not Stan. They disremember the times they phoned the leaders of their support groups in tears or the letters AEGIS or FTM International supplied them with which saved their jobs, or how much the therapist to which IFGE referred them has helped them hold it together during difficult times. They make their exit, going on to live their lives "independently" of the community — and more often than not, ironically, with their primary support coming from roommates, friends, and lovers they met directly or indirectly through the support group. They haven't left the community at all, but you could never prove it by them!

Georgette

Georgette came to her first support group meeting awkwardly cross-dressed. Group members took her in hand, teaching her how to apply her makeup and where to shop for fashionable clothing. Through the therapist the group referred her to, she explored her identity, and came out as transsexual. When she transitioned on the job, she was in danger of losing her job, but a call from one of the group members, who was a major stockholder in the company for which she worked, caused a change of attitude in her supervisor. When her ex-wife's boyfriend began to stalk her, coming onto her property and screaming at her, group members began to spend the night at her house. When her car broke down on the highway one night, a call on her cell phone brought a group member, who helped her get her car to a service station.

After her surgery, Georgette became friends with Marsha, a post-operative woman with a history of substance-abuse. Marsha moved in, and before long, Georgette began to disassociate herself from the group. Unfortunately, she did this in a negative way, characterizing those who remained in the group as "pathetic" and "not true transsexuals."

Under Marsha's tutelage, Georgette began turning tricks — not because she had to — she had a job which paid well — but because Marsha convinced her that to be a "real" woman, she had to please a man, and if she could convince a

man to pay her for sex, she would have readily proved her worth as a woman.

One night, the director of the support group received a frantic phone call from Georgette, she had been put in jail for prostitution, and Marsha was nowhere to be found. Could the group members raise enough money to pay her bail in time for her to go to work the next morning?

The group members were able to help in that instance, and they helped again six months later, when Georgette again called in tears, this time to say that she was HIV positive.

Roger

When Roger came to his support group, he was known as Brenda; he had been working out at a gym, talking to the bodybuilders, trying to find someone to supply him with steroids. He happened to watch a newscip on television which featured the group, and called the number on the screen. Within six weeks, he was seeing a therapist and dating one of the group members.

Roger got his hormone letter, and experienced rapid physical change. After six months his voice had dropped to the baritone register, and he was working on growing a beard. After chest reconstruction surgery, he was proud of his new flat chest. He quit his job and went to work for a former competitor at a substantial raise in pay.

Gradually, Roger drifted away from the group. He met a woman, and they were married. Six years after his last contact with the group, Roger, who had never had a hysterectomy, began experiencing abdominal pain. Feeling a bit frightened at the thought of approaching a gynecologist, he called his old support group, which gave him several names. The first doctor sounded a bit uncomfortable with having a male gynecological patient, but the second advised him to come right in. Roger was diagnosed with Polycystic Ovary Syndrome and scheduled for surgery.

Unlike Georgette, Roger did not make a scene when he left the support group. However, he barely remembers the group which helped him change his life. It seems to him as if he did everything himself. He forgets the days when he was a butch woman hanging out at the gym, hoping to score some steroids. Certainly, he never thinks to give a donation to the organizations which helped him. — AN

Meeting the Information Needs of Transsexual People

The S in AEGIS stands for service, and that's what the organization has always been about — providing service. Since our inception in 1990, we have strived to make high quality information available for free or at low cost to transsexual men and women so they can make informed decisions about their lives. We've been remarkably successful on many fronts, but we're proudest of having played a significant role in the lives of thousands of transsexual and transgendered men and women who have contacted us. The information and referrals we have provided have helped many transsexuals learn about themselves and make wise decisions as they have embarked upon the difficult process of reassigning their sex. We have steered thousand of folks to caring and competent professionals who helped them put life-changing plans into effect. We have watched in amazement as males have become women, females have become men, and an increasing number of people have found comfortable space somewhere in between the two traditional genders.

You see, we have always known that it is not doctors who change the sex of transsexuals; transsexuals do it themselves. Transsexuals have been changing their sex for nearly fifty years, in ever increasing numbers, and they have been becoming more competent in going about it as they learn from those who have gone before. AEGIS and its predecessor organizations have touched somewhat more than twenty thousand lives, giving support and information that in many cases have given transsexuals the start they needed. We've watched in awe as those who contacted us in despair began to take control of their lives and proceed through sex reassignment and eventual surgery. It's common for someone who calls us, full of doubt and misery, having decided to come to terms with their transsexualism, to be back in touch a year later for information about name change or to get suggestions for dealing with their employer when they go full time; then call us a year after that for referral to a surgeon, to call us a year or two after that for advice with their relationships;

and to emerge, somewhere in this process, as a new community leader.

Of course, AEGIS is not the only source of support for transsexual people, but we have a barrel full of letters from people thanking us for being there and telling us that it was their contact with us which started a process of change and growth in their lives. Some have called on us only a few times. We held the hands of others all along the route. We are the only national organization with a primary focus on transsexual people (in fact, several national and local community organizations are known for being abusive to transsexuals who happen to call them). We know our work is critical, and we have done it well.

We've helped hundreds of professionals, too, by alerting them to the many problems with the medical and psychological literature, by giving them referrals to up-to-date books and papers, and by the provision of hands-on training which helps them to be compassionate and non-controlling therapists. We've watched therapists we have educated grow into empathetic, knowledgeable professionals who effect the lives of dozens of transsexual and transgendered clients.

Our work has had a considerable impact on the literature as well, both in what we have written ourselves, and in giving others the tools they need to write. *Chrysalis* has been influential, and even articles from *AEGIS News* have been quoted in the professional literature. Our director's annotated bibliography appeared in print in 1994, weighing in at more than 650 pages, and she has an edited text which was just published. Our work has helped to de-demonize transsexual and transgendered people, and has helped lead directly to a more empathetic and caring literature.

And we've done so much more — our National Transgender Library & Archive is, so far as we know, the largest publicly available collection of trans-related material in the world. We've held dozens of seminars and workshops. We've played a significant role in the starting of three conferences — Southern Comfort, the International Congress on

Sex and Gender Issues, and the FTM Conference of the Americas. We've produced medical advisory bulletins and public service advertisements, warning about medical problems which affect transpeople and about which no one else has seemed particularly concerned. We've placed articles in trans-community magazines, alerting the community to medical dangers.

We know our information is first rate. Over eight years, we've built a mighty library with a 300+ page holding list. We maintain an extensive database of over 3000 caregivers and service organizations, and a bibliography of over 10,000 books and articles about transsexualism. We've published a first-rate magazine, three newsletters, and several books, mailed out tens of thousands of information packets, produced a variety of educational material, and given away thousands of booklets and pamphlets. We've sold thousands of books through our mail-order bookstore. We've spoken to journalists, helping them shape their stories and articles (and in some cases, their books) in a respectful manner, and convinced television talk show producers to trashcan some absurd ideas for shows featuring transpeople. We've attended more than 30 national transgender conferences. We've written hundreds of letters in support of transpersons in crisis, applauded those who treated transfolk fairly in print, and criticized those who have attacked or ridiculed us.

We've been influential in other ways as well — our Executive Director was successful in gaining membership in the Harry Benjamin Association over the objection of the then HBGDA Director that she was "just" a transsexual, and so was undeserving of membership; and she was among the first transsexuals to get something other than an autobiography into print. We've been an important voice in transforming the treatment setting from one in which we were grateful for and unquestioning of whatever courtesies and services professionals chose to give us to one in which we have the same rights as other consumers — believe it, in 1990, this was not the case.

Along the way, we realized that it was not only transsexuals who needed our information, but anyone who was interested in changing their gender presentations, and in particular, anyone who was desirous of changing their body with hormones and other technologies. In 1993, we changed our mission statement so that we served transgendered people as well as those who identified as transsexuals — while continuing to focus on the needs of transsexual persons.

We did what we could on a budget which never exceeded \$30,000. If we had had more money, more volunteers, or more time, we could have done even more. Still, AEGIS has had a wonderful tenure, and we have accomplished so much.

And now things are changing. The community has grown so much that a national organization with an annual budget of \$25,000 cannot possibly keep up with the volume of requests for information. And at a time when we need to increase our income, we find it is falling off. Our old financial strategies are not working in this age of the Internet.

Quite frankly, we have been so successful that it is now time to re-invent ourselves. Consider our once-controversial mission statement:

The American Educational Gender Information Service, Inc. (AEGIS) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit clearinghouse for transsexual and transgender issues. AEGIS actively supports the professionalization and standardization of services for transsexual and transgendered persons; promotes non-judgmental, non-discriminatory treatment of persons with gender issues; advocates respect for their dignity, their right to treatment, and their right to choose their gender role; helps transsexual and transgendered persons make reasoned and informed decisions about the ways in which they will live their lives; and provides educational materials, information, and referrals.

The mission statement, so bold in 1990, seems rather ho-hum in 1997. Of course we have the right to make our own

decisions about our lives. Of course we have the right to be treated with respect. In 1990, I guarantee you, this was hardly even conceivable, even by transsexuals themselves. Our mission statement is clearly in need of an overhaul — and that's a sign of our how successful we've been. It's the best thing that could have happened.

We believe it's time for a change, for a metamorphosis, for a re-envisioning of this organization so that we can better meet the needs of transsexual and transgendered people; either that, or it's time to shake hands all around and go home. The transcommunity has grown so much, the situation has changed so much, that we must change or perish. And besides that, our Executive Director has made it clear that she is darn tired of carrying the load mostly by herself and would like some relief. After all, she has had what amounts to a second full-time job, at which she has worked without pay for nearly ten years.

So what is AEGIS to become? We're not sure. We do know we have lots of options. We could close up shop, although we don't want to do that. Or, we could shut down our other services and concentrate on information and referrals only (we don't want to do that, either). We could farm out the help line to another organization and concentrate on publishing, or on building the library. We could turn increasingly to educating professionals. We could send out a "we need your support" letter, begging money from the community because we have a fiscal emergency. Or, we can go to the drawing board and reinvent ourself in a major way — one which is to the best of what we believe in our hearts and our minds to be what the community wants and needs.

We plan to do just that. Our Director has called on the Board of Directors to take AEGIS to its next phase. And the Directors will be calling on the community, both to let us know its needs and to give its financial and emotional support of our forthcoming transition — and from the community, our next Executive Director will emerge.

It's unclear exactly what will happen. Perhaps we'll find a new focus. Perhaps we'll merge with one or more

existing organizations. Perhaps we'll downsize. Perhaps we'll close up shop. Perhaps — hopefully — we'll change and flourish. One thing we know for sure — we want to know what you want, and we want to give it to you.

Of course, I would like for AEGIS to flourish and grow — it's been my baby, after all, for these past eight years. If it grows, I plan to let go of the reins and let it soar, with a new Executive Director at the helm. I'll still be involved, of course, but I won't be calling the shots, except perhaps as a member of the Board. It's a change I initiated, and one I will ensure will happen. AEGIS is the community's organization, not mine, and for that reason it must stand on its own. This is sort of a zen thing about nonprofits; eventually, the control must go from the founder to a strong Board of Directors which will make policy, and an Executive Director who will carry out that policy.

When we move into the next phase, we will come to the community to share our new vision and ask for its support. We hope to have the support of the community. If we don't — well, then perhaps our vision doesn't match the community's needs — although our preliminary information suggests that it does (see the accompanying article, which is an analysis of our membership survey). So unless our fundraising efforts fall flat (your way of telling us adios), we're going to stick around and we're going to do our best to be what everyone wants us to be. We want AEGIS to be everyone's organization.

It's for that reason — to help us plan for the future based on feedback from the community, so that we can meet the real needs of real people — that we have enclosed a questionnaire asking what you think we should become, and what you will support. We want your feedback — and more than that — we want your time and energy, your ideas, and, when the time comes, your financial support. Please fill in the form and return it to us. We will use it for our planning, and we will send the data to any other organization which wants it so they can also use it for planning.

After all, we're in this together!

— Dallas

It's about 5:30 p.m. on Saturday, September 27, 1997 in the Great Hall at Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland. I sit down behind the piano, out of breath. The evening reception for the Maryland LGBT Community Conference, also known as Bridge Builders, has just started and I've literally run to the hall after participating in a workshop on hate crimes. I'm really not in the mood to play, but since I promised the conference organizers, I begin, playing *Watermark* by Enya, followed by *Thanksgiving* by George Winston and my own *Intermezzo*. As I ease into Richard Rodgers' *My Romance*, the Governor of Maryland walks into the room. I'm still angry with him, 18 months after he ordered his employee, a staffer with the Maryland Commission for Human Relations, not to testify at the hearings for our (It's Time, Maryland!'s) bill, the first stand-alone gender identity-specific anti-discrimination bill to be introduced at a state level in this country. As he comes to the podium right beside the piano, I stop playing and he addresses the hundred-plus people in the hall.

In his greeting, he stumbles through "Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transsexual Community" as if it were some bitter pill he was forced to swallow. Perhaps it is — he is up for re-election next year, and desperately needs the support of queer Marylanders. As he finishes, I fully expect that the conference organizers will play "Hide the Transies" and he will quickly be ushered away from the podium, the piano, and me. But to my shock, a senior member of the Free State Justice Campaign shakes his hand and turns the governor towards me to meet me. I told him we'd met before — I was his student at the University of Maryland "in another life." We met also in November 1995, when he told me he would not support inclusion of gender identity in the sexual orientation anti-discrimination bill that has been introduced in each of the past six legislative sessions. He remembers me, and in reference to his inclusive greetings, tells me how well I've educated him. I tell him "Yes, Governor, and I'll be even more pleased if you will support a fully inclusive anti-discrimination bill in the next session." As Marv Albert would say, YEISS!

The emergence of more and more transpeople has created a need for their legal protection, and toward that end a truly national transpolitical movement has evolved to grapple with those issues and concerns. Yet it may come as a surprise

Twenty-Seven Years On :
The Transpolitical Movement's
Struggle for Inclusion

by Jessica Xavier

for many readers to know that the political component of the transgender movement is now twenty-seven years old. Indeed, from reading several recently published works, one might conclude that political advocacy for transgendered people did not exist prior to 1995, with the formation of GenderPAC or the Transexual Menace. But when Sylvia Rivera and Marcia Johnson were driven from the Gay Liberation Front in New York City by the ascendent gay assimilationists, they formed STAR (Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries). Also in 1970, Lee Brewster's Queens Liberation Front was battling for inclusion. From those humble roots, the very first transpolitical organizations, we are now twenty-seven years on.

Since that time, the advocacy efforts of Angela Douglas; Sister Mary Elizabeth, Jude Patton, Joy Shaffer and Candice Brown of the Transexual Rights Subcommittee of the Southern California ACLU; Shelly Salieri; Connie Norman; Jane Fee and Susan Kimberly of It's Time, Minnesota!; Diana Slyter and Margaret O'Hartigan; Phyllis Frye; Chelsea Goodwin; Anne

Ogborn and no doubt many others have been ignored or largely forgotten by many transactivists. The current leadership of the transpolitical movement now seems more focused on fostering its own cult of personality than in securing the survival of its own organizations in the wake of our defeat in the battle to be included in ENDA. With a single-minded focus on ENDA, our leadership never articulated a Plan "B." Thus many transactivists are now in despair over a gender identity-less ENDA, while still others have sought to demonize the Human Rights Campaign, ENDA's principal lobbying group.

The need for inclusion stems from our perception that we transgendered alone cannot attain our basic civil and human rights. As Callan Williams puts it, we are comparatively rare next to our gay and lesbian cousins, lacking their numbers and resources. The DSM-IV reports an incidence of GID of 1 in 30,000 for MTFs and 1 in 100,000 for FTMs. The 1993 Janus Report on Sexual Behavior estimated that at least 6% of American men have crossdressed at least once in their lifetimes. For the sake of argument, I will use the optimistic math from my previous essay ("So You Wanna Be In Politics," *Aegis News*, April, 1996) and estimate our incidence about 1 in 1000. That means there are about 260,000 of us in the United States, scattered across geographical, class, racial, affectional, age and even gender vector (MTF/FTM) divisions. This has had dire consequences for our political organizing. Although our principal political focus has been anti-discrimination legislation in order to maintain employment, transactivist Ben Singer has pointed out that many of us can't even get a job in the first place, nor the training to get one. The cumulative effects of classism, sex, racism, homophobia, lookism, ablism and ageism have greatly hampered our efforts to politically organize.

It's even more depressing when we consider our financial resources. In 1996, the top seven national transgender organizations have a combined annual budget of under \$500,000 (with one organization getting the lion's share of that), while the Human Rights Campaign alone took in over \$10 mil-

lion that same year. A more recent survey conducted by *The Washington Blade* shows that the top eleven gay groups brought in over \$25 million in 1997. That's more than fifty times the amount we raise, and even worse, the gap seems to be increasing. Nearly all the national transgender organizations are currently experiencing moderate to severe financial difficulties, brought on by a combination of competition for funds, mismanagement, the increasing availability of information on the Internet, and a sense of hopelessness over our failure to be included in ENDA. Donor confidence in our national organizations seems to be at an all-time low.

Lacking both numbers and financial resources, those of us crazy enough to get involved in the transpolitical movement have concluded that we could not go it alone, and thus we have sought to work with our gay and lesbian cousins. But why them? At first glance, it all seemed so very logical. We all suffer similar discrimination, harassment and violence at the hands of the same homophobes who target all queer people, right? We transgendered were once at the forefront of the nascent gay liberation movement, right? We transgendered started the Stonewall rebellion, right? That should be reason enough to include us, right?

Wrong. Inclusion of transgendered people in gay and lesbian civil rights initiatives has been problematic from the start. Those transactivists who shout the loudest for inclusion have never seemed to understand how a significant number of gay and lesbian activists have perceived us as the walking, talking, living, breathing embodiments of straight stereotypes of themselves — stereotypes which they have been working very hard to eliminate for the past four decades. Gender-bashing of gay men and lesbians is a huge part of homophobia, and way too many of them have found it easier to buy into it rather than join us and fight it. Of course, our leadership never bothered to articulate a response to this important gay concern, and so it has largely gone unaddressed. Thus many gay and lesbian activists continue to perceive us and our inclusion as instant liabilities.

In my short but full five years as a transactivist, I have often had to ask that

transgendered people be included in gay and lesbian events, groups and mission statements. Advocating for our inclusion has never been easy. A lot of information of a complex nature must be explained carefully, with patience, love and understanding of the diverse points of view of my readers and my listening audiences.

Historically, the gay liberation movement has had to deal with a series of diversity issues besides transgender inclusion. First came the lesbians, then people of color, followed by the differently-abled, bisexuals, and youth. As more and more identity groups sought inclusion, the HIV/AIDS pandemic decimated the gay movement's numbers and forced a division of its strength, as some of its best activists left to work on their own survival. When transgender activists like Phyllis Frye began to seek inclusion in ongoing gay and lesbian civil rights agendas in the early eighties, they were rudely rebuffed, and tempers began to gradually climb on both sides. Omission of "Transgender" in the titles of the 1993 March on Washington and 1994's Stonewall 25 celebration led to fiery confrontations during the organizing meetings for both events. Then in June

"The center of gravity for our gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered communities is right where we are. It's in the cities and towns, the states and communities that we call home. We are impacted more by what happens in our own city council or county commission every day than we are by what happens in Washington, DC. The path to our freedom begins at our own front door and intersects with tens of thousands of others who travel the same journey for civil rights for all people."

— NGLTF Exec. Dir. Kerry Lobel

1995, the Human Rights Campaign excised language from a version of ENDA that would have included transgendered people. Many transactivists reacted with rage, while ignoring the

important lessons learned in our earlier advocacy efforts and also refusing to address the inherent complexities of our problematic relationship with the gay and lesbian movement.

There was a time, before the Stonewall Rebellion in 1969, when we were all gay. The transgendered people who frequented the mafia-run bars that Leslie Feinberg wrote about in *Stone Butch Blues* were fully accepted as members of their gay communities. Several factors contributed to the factionalization of the gay community after Stonewall. The early leaders of the modern gay and lesbian movement, like their predecessors in the Mattachine Society and the Daughters of Bilitis in the fifties and sixties, were assimilationists. They dominated early gay political thinking, and their legacy lives on at the Human Rights Campaign. The assimilationists believed that apart from their choice of sex partners, gay men and lesbians were no different from straight people. Implicit in their belief was the feeling that gay men and lesbians who could pass for straight were more entitled to their civil rights than others who lacked their passing privilege. The less entitled were gay stereotypes of the straight world: drag queens and kings, gender queers and kings we would call transgendered today, leather men and women, and also effeminate gay men and masculine lesbians.

Then came the rise of identity politics, driven by lesbian feminism in the early seventies. Lesbians sought to build pride within the women's community by separating themselves and espousing a political identity distinct from all other sexual minorities. In many parts of the women's community in the seventies and eighties, a separatist gender hierarchy emerged that drove many bisexual, transsexual and leather women from its midst. The combination of feminist identity politics and assimilationist appearance standards allowed many gay and lesbian activists to scapegoat their less privileged peers in the rush to prove their normalcy, in effect pandering to the homophobia of heterosexual legislators. This combination of forces drove some activists, like Sylvia Rivera and Marsha Johnson, right out of the movement. Their courage at Stonewall was swept under a rug of shame.

But using other oppressed sexual minorities as comparative targets is ultimately self-defeating, and erecting an ideological wall between sexual orientation and gender identity has not served to further neither the feminist cause nor the gay civil rights agenda. Surprisingly, it never dawned on the gay leadership that making a liberation movement smaller and more insular would only reduce its chances for success. Moreover, the ideological distinctions between gay and lesbian, gay/lesbian and bisexual, and gay/lesbian/bisexual and transgender identities are completely lost on our common oppressors. Whether it is same-sex love or gender variance, it's still queer to them.

The need to include transgendered people in gay and lesbian anti-discrimination initiatives like ENDA became even more clear in the eighties. A series of bad court decisions (including the infamous *Ulane vs. Eastern Airlines*) held that transgendered plaintiffs were not covered under anti-discrimination laws that should have protected them on the basis of sex (Title VII) or sexual orientation. While some recent case law has produced protection based on disability status (in Oregon, Washington and Florida) most states follow the model of the 1991 federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which specifically excludes transpeople. Thus many transactivists came to view inclusion in a broader-based civil rights movement with numbers and resources we transgendered will never have as essential for our survival.

As a veteran of most of the recent inclusion wars, one refrain I have heard over and over again is that gay and lesbian groups can't include transgendered people because "We can't deal with their issues." As if discrimination, harassment and violence are not issues common to all sexual minorities. As if self-hatred and low self-esteem don't victimize all of us. As if we all don't face dealing with coming out as a member of a sexual minority. As if custodial, visitation, and adoption rights of all sexual minority parents aren't in jeopardy. As if we all don't struggle for access to health care for our medical conditions. These aren't their issues? Please.

Fortunately, relationships between gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, and trans-

gendered people have been steadily improving. *The Advocate* ran a poll last year asking "Should gay and lesbian civil rights groups make an effort to support the cause of transgender rights?" 64% of their readership said "Yes," 23% said "No, it's not our struggle," and 13% said "I'm not sure." While these results are very encouraging, there is still much to be done. We must educate and empower gay men and lesbians to stop homophobic gender-bashing and scapegoating transgendered people. Freeing itself from the crippling effects of this horizontal hostility, the LGBT community may then proceed to the even more crucial task of detoxifying our identities to destroy the stigma which has placed us at society's fringe. When knowledge displaces fear, then we shall move from their fringe to our freedom.

Recently, there have been significant changes regarding transgender inclusion in national gay and lesbian organizations. Phyllis Frye, a leader of many of these efforts, has called this process "re-incorporation," since she believes we've always been part of the gay and lesbian movement, and "inclusion" implies joining for the first time. The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and the national Latino/Latina Lesbian and Gay Organization (LLEGO) have already changed their mission statements to include bisexuals and transgendered people. A proposal to change the mission statement has been placed on the agenda for the next Board Meeting of the national Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) due to the determined advocacy of PFLAG's Transgender Special Outreach Network (TSO) lead by Mary Boenke, Nancy Sharp and Maggie Heineman. The board of the National Black Lesbian and Gay Leadership Forum has also taken up the inclusion issue, as has GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network).

Still other gay and lesbian organizations advocate for transgendered people without changes in their mission statements. The Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) is now routinely including acts of defamation committed against trans people in its Media Alerts. The National Center for Lesbian Rights has been highly sup-

portive of the transgender advocacy work of its own Shannon Minter. Sadly, the powerful gay and lesbian legal advocacy group, Lambda Legal Defense, has not undertaken any advocacy cases for trans people, choosing to ignore the potentially powerful transgender arguments against prohibition of same-sex marriage. Other inclusion initiatives currently underway are too sensitive to mention here.

The Human Rights Campaign has repeatedly been condemned by many transactivists, not only for its failure to include us in ENDA but also for its failure to include us in its mission statement. With its many millions of dollars, its defiantly assimilationist stance, its exclusionary tactics, and its brazenly hypocritical name, HRC has been a tempting target for other less enfranchised queer people as well. While we may agree to strongly disagree politically with HRC about ENDA, condemning a gay and lesbian organization for its desire to stay gay and lesbian is somewhat presumptuous. How would the average cross-dresser feel if a small bondage and domination group tried to take over her Tri-ESS chapter? In a free society, any group should possess the unquestionable right to decide its own charter and membership. This is freedom of choice and freedom of assembly, rights we take for granted so quickly in Western countries that we forget how important they truly are.

Despite intense criticism, HRC has made a serious effort to assist GenderPAC, mainly with its hate crimes initiative. Over the past two years, HRC provided training and technical assistance for several of our national gender lobbying events. HRC also facilitated the work of the ENDA Gender Identity Working Group, which researched, developed, and distributed language and lobbying materials for a Gender Identity Amendment to ENDA. But HRC's 1995 excision of gender identity from ENDA remains an unforgivable sin for many transactivists.

GenderPAC's cooperative efforts with HRC have been privately criticized by some transactivists as accommodationalist, and as a result many of its other achievements have been under-appreciated. Through the excellent work of its Washington lobbyist, Dana Priesing,

GenderPAC has established regular contact with the Leadership Council on Civil Rights, which is the principal association of civil rights groups in Washington, and with the hate crimes coalition, which figured prominently in the recent Hate Crimes Summit and legislation. And of course, Capital Hill is now within regular reach of transgender lobbyists. GenderPAC's lobbying efforts with the National Organization for Women led to NOW's passage of their Transgender Inclusion Resolution at their 1997 Annual Conference. And GenderPAC's pioneering survey on transviolence, released in April 1997, was truly a milestone for the national transgender community.

However, barely half of the original organizations that joined GenderPAC at its organizing meetings in November 1996 remain within the coalition, their places taken by non-transgendered national groups like BiNet USA, NGLTF and the National Coalition for Sexual Freedom. The leadership style and political beliefs of GenderPAC's Executive Director, Riki Wilchins, are becoming increasingly controversial. Perhaps the most important criticism leveled at GenderPAC is that it did not follow the Articles of Association adopted at the November 1996 organizing meetings. Thus, it lacks an active board of directors to debate and set its policies, which are developed and implemented solely by its Executive Director and its Lobbying Coordinator. For all its faults, GenderPAC is still one of the few truly gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex groups.

Despite the remaining "gay and lesbian" only mission statements, event titles and organizational names, the all-inclusive "gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender" is finally becoming verbally ubiquitous, at least in Washington. To some, verbal inclusivity may seem like politically correct lip service, but it still increases awareness of our common bonds, fostering an atmosphere of understanding amongst the sexual minorities. That understanding will serve to lessen tensions where they exist and improve the chances for cooperative efforts in the future.

How all these changes play out remains to be seen, but as the national director of It's Time, America! I feel that far too

Concluded on page 14

Why We Have to Work with the Gays or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Identify as Queer

by Jessica Xavier

The vast majority of transgendered people — be they transsexual or crossdresser — identify themselves as heterosexual, and many straight people are uncomfortable being around, let alone working with, homosexuals. Our fashion sense and right to self-identification notwithstanding, most gender queers do not see ourselves as such — as Queer with a capital Q. But it's only a word, and if you say it enough, it loses its sting. Still, the homophobia of some heterosexual transpeople rivals the transphobia of gay writers like Paul Vernell and Michelangelo Signorile and our perennial whipping girls, the lesbian separatist writers Janice Raymond and Mary Daly.

Let's admit it — trans people and the gays have often proven to be an unholy mix. Yet so many committed transactivists quickly go ballistic when other transgendered people quote Yogi Berra and say "Include me out." Like, why bother, when it's such a bother? They might as well be saying, "We'll stay out of their civil rights bill if they stay out of our support group meeting and not scare our spouses." Some trans people have asked why not just work with the women's movement? (Been there, still doing that, not many votes, but we still love NOW anyway).

With all the shouting going on, the real reasons why most transactivists feel so strongly about inclusion get lost in the din. The "perceived as" argument is the most commonly cited reason that our het orientations are lost on the homophobes. Due to the massive failure of our gender educational efforts in this country, transpeople are still viewed by most straight people as simply another type of homosexual or worse — just catch the next Jerry Springer show if you disagree. And since trans folks face exactly the same forms of discrimination, harassment and violence that gays and lesbians do, committed by the same perps, then hey — can't we all just get along?

Perhaps like Americans and Britons, the gays and the transgendered are two peoples divided by a common language, albeit the dialects are wickedly different. Our Sally one-note historians love bashing the gays with Stonewall, despite the fact that the trans people of color who threw the first punches have only just recently begun using the term "transgender." (Actually, the first objects thrown that night were nickels, pennies, quarters and dimes — an historic metaphor for the millions HRC now accumulates). Whatever those heroes and heroines identified themselves as in those days, it sure as hell wasn't straight. The rise of Queer Theory in academia in the nineties has allowed many queer people who fall outside traditional identity lines to feel included. And many of our transmen, who spent years in the lesbian community, still queer-identify and possess a strong sense of belonging. Nobody's going to uninclude them and get away with it.

So similar oppression and oppressors, a series of bad court decisions, a persistent lack of resources, and simple bad luck has condemned what was a straight acting, straight appearing nice gay-boy-next-door liberation movement into this train wreck of queer diversity we have today. But it's only history that keeps repeating itself. First the lesbians. Then the bisexuals. Now us. Those gay men who can't get up the gumption to accept the new diversity world order will still persist in their efforts to rule in hell rather than serve in heaven. Perhaps it's just a vain attempt to preserve their male privilege, while their Titanic cruises on. Iceberg — what iceberg?

Queer. Say the secret word and be included. For better or for worse. — AN

Continued from page 13

much importance has been placed on what happens at the national level. As a student of politics, I know that real change occurs at the local levels first, and then trickles up, not down. That's why most of my efforts go into the work of ITA and our 25 state chapters, where today's precedent-setting victories will lead to national success tomorrow. Political change is an incremental process, and it becomes slower and more difficult to achieve at higher governmental levels.

This isn't rocket science, but political science, but then again, most transactivists are not political scientists, either. Perhaps the fixation of so many transactivists with HRC and ENDA should be expected by a movement dominated by those with male socialization experiences. The male-to-female mindset, which is obsessed with seeing the "man in charge" and voicing our complaints at the highest levels, has brought us to Washington, where ironically, nothing really happens anyway — Oh, Congress and the Federal Government put on a good show for the media, but reflecting the country's increasingly conservative, indecisive mood, most decision makers spend most of their time trying to figure out how not to make decisions that will cost them votes, money, or both. Dazzled by glitzy media campaigns and misled by the spin doctors, most Americans are simply fed up with national politics, and at least some are beginning to see the verity of Tip O'Neill's observation that "all politics are local." Hence the renewed interest in races for seats on school boards and county and city councils. At least most of our local pols can't afford spin doctors.

Since both the times and our politics have changed in this country, perhaps we transgendered should take our defeat in ENDA as a sign that it's time to change our leadership, too. Perhaps we transwomen should step aside and allow the transmen to lead the transpolitical movement into the twenty-first century. They surely cannot do any worse than we transwomen have. Ultimately, the most important inclusion issue faced by transgendered people may be our acceptance of our own diversity. That is one battle we simply cannot afford to lose.

Back at the Bridge Builder's Conference, nine o'clock has passed when Kerry Lobel, the Executive Director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, takes the podium for her after-dinner keynote. She mentions how the Task Force has changed its mission statement to include the bi's and us, and my interest perks up. After she cites the "pioneering efforts" of It's Time, Maryland! in producing the first stand alone gender identity specific anti-discrimination bill, I brush back a tear. She states she's aware of the past controversy over inclusion of transgendered people in Maryland's sexual orientation anti-discrimination bill, and cautions all of us that the way to advance our collective movement is not "by lightening our load." At that point, I begin to levitate off the floor... — AN

References

- Pat Califia. (1997). *Sex changes: The politics of transgenderism*. San Francisco: Cleis Press.
- Nangeroni, Nancy. (1996, February). Transgender '95: A new day dawns. *Sojourner*.
- Chibbaro, Lou, Jr. & Keen, Lisa. (1997, December 12). Untapped majority stirs. *The Washington Blade*.
- Xavier, Jessica. (1996, April). So you wanna be in politics? A realistic assessment of transgender political involvement. *Aegis News*.
- Denny, Dallas. (1996, January). Vision 2001: A gender odyssey. A look at the transgender/transsexual community: Part I. *Aegis News*.
- Transsexuals and fair employment cases, a compilation*. (1995, October). Washington, DC: It's Time, America!
- The Advocate poll. (1997, 4 February). *The Advocate*.
- Marcus, Eric. (1992). *Making history: The struggle for gay and lesbian equal rights, 1945-1990*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Johnson, Wendy. (1997, 12 December). More gay groups adding transgender to missions. *Washington Blade*.
- 1997 NOW Conference Resolutions. (1997, October). *National Now Times*.
- Wilchins, Riki, et al. (1997, April). The first national survey on transviolence. New York: GenderPAC.

The Price of Inclusion

With transgender acceptance by the larger gay/lesbian/bisexual community now the norm, the question must be asked: can and will existing G/L/B organizations take on the support of transsexual and transgendered folks? Can they do a better job than the existing transgender organizations to meet our needs? And more importantly, should we hitch our wagon to organizations which were not interested in meeting our needs in the past and may not be interested in the future?

As the decade winds to a close, most gay and lesbian organizations profess to be transinclusive. Many sincerely try to be, but have little or no experience with actual, live transpersons. Transfolk who come for support may engender confusion at an organizational level and hostility from individual members. Programs may not address transgender needs, and there may even be problems with bathroom facilities. On the other hand, once mobilized, gay and lesbian organizations can provide an infrastructure which serves transfolks 'way better than underfunded trans organizations. And even one transperson can educate a G/L/B organization and open doors, leading to services for transfolk.

For an example of just what a gay and lesbian can do, one need only turn to the Lesbian and Gay Community Service Center in New York City. Psychologist Barbara Warren founded the Center's Gender Identity Project in 1989. Today, Rosalyne Blumenstein is the program's Director. The Gender Identity Project provides multiple levels of support for transfolk, including peer counseling, support groups, alcohol and substance abuse counseling, a transgender health clinic, and HIV services. The Project holds an annual Transsexual and Transgender Health Conference and hosts special events such as the recent "They Lived It Out!", which memorialized our fallen. The project serves as a model for other gay and lesbian community service centers, some of which have also begun to provide comprehensive transgender services.

Certainly, the transgender national organizations have not been able to provide this level of support. While they do a great deal, considering their level of funding, they simply do not have the staff or money to

provide much-needed advocacy and support services. Certainly they try, but the resources simply aren't there.

Recently, the Atlanta Gender Explorations support group, a stable organization nearly ten years old, was interested in providing services to transgender youth. While AGE deliberated about how to do this, OutPride, the Atlanta gay and lesbian youth group, "Just did it" when a couple of AGE members approached them with the idea. Consequently, the youth group, which is exclusively for trans youth, is part of the larger gay and lesbian community, and not affiliated in any manner with Atlanta's transgender community. Where do you support the members' allegiance will lie?

Inclusion dilutes the trans community in many ways. Most of the gay and lesbian conferences have begun to seriously address transgender issues. There are plenty of reasons for transgender attorneys to attend the Lavender Law Conference, for political activists to attend the NGLTF conference, for writers to attend OutWrite, the G/L/B writer's conference. Scholars now have to debate whether to present their work to a large audience at a G/L conferences or a smaller one at a transgender conference. Which do you imagine students interested in gender issues will be more likely to attend?

There are two mind sets in the trans community: (a) our organizations should serve only those people who specifically identify as transgendered or transsexual; and (b) gender oppression is terrible, no matter what self-descriptive label someone takes, and we should fight on behalf of all gender-oppressed people. Riki Anne Wilchins espouses the latter strategy, and has steered GenderPac in that direction, but at a price: several of the member organizations dropped out of GenderPac.

So what does the future hold? Should we build new and bigger trans organizations, or should we support transinclusive G/L/B organizations? Or should we take Riki's cue and serve as broad a base of people as possible, giving us a large enough base of membership and support to be effective and working on behalf of not only those with severe gender issues, but everyone who is gender-oppressed?

Is the price of inclusion inevitably dilution? Or does inclusion break down artificial barriers, and make us one people? I think the former — but we must all draw our own conclusions. —AN

Refreshingly Ambiguous

*Straights Need a Bit of Queer in Them:
They Need Gender Blending and Flexing*

by Lillian Faderman

I was disgusted at the start of the decade when young lesbians and gays began to call themselves "queer." For homosexuals of my generation, that word signified a jagged stone that straights would hurl at us to show their contempt. With its constant use in lesbian and gay writing (as in "queer theory"), though, I've become pretty inured to the meaner connotations of queer. Maybe by claiming the word, queers really are succeeding in defusing it, just as African-Americans did with black, which had been considered a slur before the 1960s.

I've also come to see some queer ideas in a feminist light. Now I think the queer challenge to gender can hurry to fruition what many feminists have been struggling the past 150 years to achieve: an escape from the imprisoning limitations of "gender-appropriate" behavior and roles. Historically, women who fought to break free of that prison have always been called "queer." Queer meant "the refusal to accept the unimaginative and constrictive notion that your personal, social, and political behavior should be dictated by the shape of your genitals."

What was most threatening to the sexologists who morbidified homosexuals in the 19th century was not that some men had sex with men or some women had sex with women. They were more bothered by what they deemed the "inverted" gender behavior of those who didn't act like "real men" or "real women." The threats so-called sissies and tomboys posed to the stagnant status quo were tremendous — and wonderful. Susan B. Anthony, for instance (without whom American women would never have gotten the vote), was called by her detractors "a grim old gal with a manly air." She was "inverted" and "queer" because she demanded that those born with a vagina have the political rights that, according to the wisdom of her day, only those born with a penis should have.

Queers have always understood — thought perhaps it was unarticulated before feminist theorist Judith Butler put words to it — that one is born with a sex, not a gender. You learn to perform gender, and anyone (regardless of his or her genitals) can perform what society arbitrarily deems "masculine" or "feminine." You can perform a gender (or genders) permanently, sequentially, exclusively, simultaneously, or alternately.

I first learned that in the 1950s, through Conchita, who was the most beautiful and feminine woman I had ever met. But Conchita had a penis. And every once in a while s/he would get tired of performing "feminine," slick her hair back, don pachuco garb like he'd worn in the years before he became a drag queen, and lower his voice into as menacing a tone as that used by the most macho of the toughs he once ran with. The drag queens at Stonewall Inn also know they could turn from "women" into "men" when they wanted to or needed to — and they made the police run and started the gay revolution.

Rigid notions about gender have had far-reaching effects: In the past they've kept women from getting an education or a profession. They've encouraged men to brutal bellicosity. It is not surprising that nazis and Promise Keepers value manly men and womanly women. But a hopeful sign that heterosexuals are becoming bored with the straightjacket of gender info which they've sewn themselves is the popularity beyond our own community of queer films like *The Birdcage*, *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*, and *Different for Girls*. What do straights see when they watch? Don't such films invite them to share the knowledge that queers have always had about the illusion of gender's inevitability and flexibility?

Straights need a bit of "queer" in them. They need gender blending and flexing — for the sake of personal freedom as well as social and political sanity, to which rigidity is inimical. And they're getting it. "men's roles" as opposed to "women's roles" are no longer clear-cut and segregated as they were at mid-century. More women are entering "men's" professions, such as business, medicine, and law, and when I telephone the operator these days, I'm just as likely to get a male's voice as a female's. In mid-century only dykes wore pants. Now, except perhaps in churches, there's nary a dress in sight, unless it's worn by a femme or a lipstick lesbian. In mid-century no one by a lady or a drag queen would be caught dead in earrings. Now every third guy sports a gold hoop and sometimes even a rhinestone.

What worries me, though, is that when straight people get more "queer," queers won't be "queer" anymore. What then? —AN

Results of AEGIS Membership Survey

Since late 1996, AEGIS members have been mailed one of every three members a form which asked them to rank in importance the various services which we provide. The scale is as follows:

- [0] Not Important At All
- [1] Somewhat Important
- [2] Moderately important
- [3] Very Important

The nature of the various services should be obvious from the name or otherwise familiar to *AEGIS News* readers.

Scores for each service were obtained by adding the responses (i.e., if a respondent thought the service Very Important, we added three to the score; if Somewhat Important, we added one to the score. We then divided by the number of respondents to obtain the mean, or average.

We make no pretense that the sample is representative of the transgender community at large, or even of AEGIS members. The data which follow represent only that subset of AEGIS members ($n = 99$) who chose to return the form. Still, we believe the results are instructive, and so we present them here.

We looked separately at the responses of professionals (those who offer a professional service to the community, $n=18$) and nonprofessionals ($n=71$).

All Respondents (Professionals + Nonprofessionals)

<u>Rank</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Service</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Service</u>
1	2.89	Education of Professionals	12	2.42	Research & Publishing
2	2.85	Information & Referrals	13	2.38	Book Publishing
3	2.75	Medical Advisories	14	2.26	Mail Order Book Sales
4	2.69	<i>Chrysalis</i>	15	2.21	Vendor Booths at Prof. Meetings
5	2.68	Information Booklets & Pamphlets	16	2.20	Internet Services
6	2.60	<i>Transgender Treatment Bulletin</i>	17	2.16	Historical Preservation
7	2.56	Advocacy	18	2.17	Public Service Advertisements
8	2.57	<i>AEGIS News</i>	19	2.15	Position Statements
9	2.56	Public Education	20	1.73	Affiliate Organizations
10	2.44	Peer Counseling	21	1.67	Copy Service
11	2.43	Seminars & Workshops			

Rank Order, Professionals

<u>Rank</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Service</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Service</u>
1	2.93	Information and Referrals	12	2.35	Peer Counseling
2	2.92	Education of Professionals	13	2.33	Historical Preservation
3	2.88	<i>Transgender Treatment Bulletin</i>	14	2.32	Book Publishing
4	2.77	Medical Advisories	15	2.29	Advocacy
5	2.72	<i>Chrysalis</i>	16	2.28	Position Statements
6	2.67	Public Education	17	2.21	Public Service Advertisements
7	2.63	Information Booklets & Pamphlets	18	2.12	Vendor Booths at Prof. Meetings
8	2.52	<i>AEGIS News</i>	19	2.04	Mail Order Book Sales
9	2.52	Internet Services	20	1.65	Affiliate Organizations
10	2.50	Seminars & Workshops	21	1.58	Copy Service
11	2.44	Research & Publishing			

Rank Order, Nonprofessionals

Rank	Mean	Service	Rank	Mean	Service
1	2.87	Education of Professionals	12	2.40	Seminars & Workshops
2	2.82	Information & Referrals	13	2.40	Book Publishing
3	2.74	Medical Advisories	14	2.39	Mail Order Book Sales
4	2.70	Information Booklets & Pamphlets	15	2.24	Vendor Booths at Prof. Meetings
5	2.70	Advocacy	16	2.15	Public Service Advertisements
6	2.68	<i>Chrysalis</i>	17	2.10	Position Statements
7	2.58	<i>AEGIS News</i>	18	2.10	Historical Preservation
8	2.52	Public Education	19	2.09	Internet Services
9	2.50	<i>Transgender Treatment Bulletin</i>	20	1.70	Copy Service
10	2.47	Peer Counseling	21	1.75	Affiliate Organizations
11	2.42	Research & Publishing			

Rank Order

All	Prof	Nonprof	Service	All	Prof	Nonprof	Service
1	2	1	Education of Professionals	12	11	11	Research & Publishing
2	1	2	Information & Referrals	13	14	13	Book Publishing
3	4	3	Medical Advisories	14	19	14	Mail Order Book Sales
4	5	6	<i>Chrysalis</i>	15	18	15	Vendor Booths at Prof. Meetings
5	7	4	Information Booklets & Pamphlets	16	9	19	Internet Services
6	3	9	<i>Transgender Treatment Bulletin</i>	17	13	18	Historical Preservation
7	15	5	Advocacy	18	17	16	Public Service Advertisements
8	8	7	<i>AEGIS News</i>	19	16	17	Position Statements
9	6	8	Public Education	20	20	21	Affiliate Organizations
10	12	10	Peer Counseling	21	21	20	Copy Service
11	10	12	Seminars & Workshops				

Analysis

One surprise from these data is the low ranking of both professionals (18 of 21) and nonprofessionals (15 of 21) of vendor booths at professional meetings. IFGE places a priority on such meetings and spends a great deal of money every year in order to have a presence at the American Psychiatric Association national conference. As part of the Transgender Alliance for Community, AEGIS ponied up money on several occasions for booths at professional conferences. Considering that both professionals and nonprofessionals ranked the education of professionals as the number one priority, it would seem that they think attending professional conferences a singularly inefficient way to educate professionals. Perhaps the money, energy, and time would be better spent on one-on-one education or conducting training seminars for professionals.

Several other items bear discussing. First is the Internet, which had a relatively low ranking (16 of 21 overall). We believe that the relative newness of this technology (remember, many forms were returned in 1996, when the net was just becoming popular) and the fact that some members aren't on line resulted in a spuriously low ranking. Certainly the many requests for information which come in over the internet speaks to its growing importance. Also of note is the relatively low ranking of historical preservation (17 of 21 overall). History has only recently become a focus of the gay and lesbian community; perhaps our young community has not yet reached the point of valuing our history. Third is the difference in the rankings by professionals and nonprofessionals of *Transgender Treatment Bulletin*, our newsletter for professionals. Professionals are clearly saying they want information to meet their needs. We expect that if it had been better established, the *Treatment Bulletin* would have been ranked above *Chrysalis* (which was 5 of 21 overall). Note also that nonprofessionals place a *much* higher priority on advocacy services (5 of 21) than professionals (15 of 21). Clearly, our members are saying they need help in dealing with discrimination.

Our members have spoken, and we have listened to what they have to say. We are continuing to solicit feedback from the community with the questionnaire that is being mailed with this issue of *AEGIS News*. — AN

Press Releases

ICTLEP Elects New E.D.

26 January, 1998

Cooperstown, NY — The International Transgender Law and Employment Policy Conference (ICTLEP) announces that it has elected Sharon Stuart/Thomas Heitz as its new Executive Director. Stuart/Heitz, a bi-gendered activist of long standing, was an original Director of ICTLEP when it formed in 1991 and has her Juris Doctorate from the University of Kansas Law School. Her new position begins 15 March 1998.

Stuart/Heitz sees her job as providing a year-long transition from a "founder-driven" organization (which began in 1991 when its founder was the only, totally out and totally active, TG lawyer in the United States) to one with more structure and a deeper organizational base. "Today, with so many TG lawyers and TG law students being out or coming out, there is a growing pool of folks who can take on the myriad of bar-association-styled committee work that needs to be done," states Stuart/Heitz.

Outgoing ED and founder Phyllis Randolph Frye told her Board three weeks ago that she had had enough. "Being an activist for over two decades is one thing, but being on the point for all of those two plus decades is more than enough. And six years as Executive Director of this organization with six annual conferences and six annual, bound Proceedings was also enough." Frye was asked by Stuart/Heitz to remain as a Director in order to provide historical perspective and continuity, and she agreed.

ICTLEP remains ready to serve the Transgender Community and to work in harmony with the inclusive LGBT Community. Stuart/Heitz asks, "If you are a legal professional, won't you please contact me and see how you can help to take TG legal work from this plateau into the next? My Directors and Moderators need you!"

If you are a current financial contributor, please continue. If you are not yet, please consider helping out.

As we prepared to go to press, we received word that both FTMs on the ICTLEP board have resigned — Ed.

AEGIS Seeks Executive Director

29 December, 1997

Atlanta GA. — During the December meeting of the board of AEGIS, Dallas Denny announced her intent to resign as Executive Director, effective at the beginning of April. The Board reluctantly accepted Ms. Denny's resignation.

Applications for a new Executive Director are being accepted by Marisa Richmond, the Chair of the AEGIS Board (P.O. Box 92335, Nashville, TN 37209) and Gianna Israel, the Vice Chair of the AEGIS Board (P.O. Box 424447, San Francisco, CA 94142). Applicants are asked to submit a cover letter outlining professional and gender community accomplishments and interest in the position. The applicant should also submit a recent c.v. and at least one letter of recommendation. Applications need to be received by March 15, 1998.

AEGIS AND ITA Initiate Merger Negotiations

16 January, 1998

Washington, CD and Atlanta, GA — The Boards of Directors of two national transgender organizations, the American Educational Gender Information Service, Inc. (AEGIS) and It's Time, America! (ITA) are pleased to announce that they have initiated serious discussions in pursuit of a merger of the two groups, with the intention of creating a new organization designed to meet the changing educational and advocacy needs of the transsexual, transgender, and other gender-different communities.

The boards recently approved mission and values statements and are working to develop goals and projects to meet the community's needs. To better determine these needs, AEGIS and ITA have developed a survey form which solicits input from all interested persons and care providers. The respective boards hope to reach agreement on this merger in the near future, but in the interim, the independent operations of both organizations will continue.

Starting a new organization?

As the press release on page 18 indicates, the board of directors of AEGIS and It's Time America! are engaged in negotiations regarding a merger. We are looking at the needs of the community and the respective missions and future directions of both organizations, trying to determine the best course to take.

Perhaps the merger will take place. Perhaps it won't. It's a complex process and could fall apart at any time. Both boards are somewhat skeptical. Whatever the outcome, I am proud to say that both boards are proceeding in good faith and considerable progress has been made.

Whatever the outcome of the merger talks, the mission and values statements we have already developed would serve any community organization in good stead.

AEGIS was formed in a reactive manner; the community was crying for quality information, and none was to be found. Our founder rushed to fill that need. We've been scrambling ever since, trying to meet the needs of a community that has virtually exploded since our inception in 1990. AEGIS has been successful, and we could certainly continue as we have. But —

What if we could pass our considerable resources along to a new organization, one designed from the ground up, based on firm ethical and humanitarian principles, with a mission and values that reflect the diversity and needs of the community? What if we could design the organization so it would be financially sound, responsible, productive, with a vision for where we need to go and how to get there? What if the new organization addressed the needs of the segments of the community which have been underserved — youth, the elderly, people of color, FTMs, people living with HIV and AIDS, significant others — and met as well the need of people who are well-educated and financially secure? What if the organization were to be independent of personalities and would be sure of surviving even if it lost its founder or Executive Director? What if it had a budget large enough to make things happen, and got maximum efficiency from contributions? What if it

served not only transpeople in large cities, but those in small towns and on the farm? What if the organization were able to provide not only referral information, but hands-on help and advocacy? What if the organization could intervene on your behalf when you face discrimination on your job or harassment on the street? What if the organization had projects which addressed in logical and affirmative ways the problems which confront the community — projects which sought to ensure that: our medical procedures are covered by insurance; authors of textbooks and encyclopedias have accurate and current information so that new generations of helping professionals do not learn misconceptions about us in school; the many state and local laws that effect us are tracked; employers are educated about us; our youth are identified and served; and our history is identified and preserved?

I won't say we'll get there, but AEGIS is interested in putting together just such an organization. In our discussions with the ITA board, we've identified the mission of this potential new organization. Just who would we be, and what would we hope to accomplish? What of values? What do we believe, and how does that impact what we do? We've identified our values, as well. A third for discussions is core functions. What would the primary divisions be, and how would they interact? Talks on core functions are in progress.

These are the things we have been working on with the ITA board — surprisingly, through the Internet, as neither AEGIS nor ITA has funds to bring all the Directors together in one place, and the potential and as yet unnamed new organization does not yet have a budget or a bank account. It's been a magnificent accomplishment, even if we get no further.

In the ongoing negotiations, we're beginning to address the hard organizational questions: how would the original Board of Directors be constituted? What would the bylaws be? Would the organization be a 501(c)(3) nonprofit educational or 501(c)(4) political, or

both? How would AEGIS and ITA actually make this merger happen? Who would the Executive Director be? Where would the national office be located? And of course, where would the funding come from?

What would this new organization be? Well, as you can see, it's too early to tell, but Jessica Xavier (the National Director of ITA) and I envision a two-tiered organization, with a national office that develops policy and produces educational materials, and local chapters that do grassroots political and educational work. Rather than having a national office staffed with three or four people who are taking calls from all over the country, scrambling to be everything to everybody, the national office would exist to support the chapters as they do the actual work. The chapters would maintain telephone support lines, disperse information, monitor the local political situation, and act accordingly, with support from national.

We are trying to do things the right way, designing the potential organization from the ground up, covering all of the bases. For example, we've spoken to a legal consulting firm about engaging them to determine the best way to structure this two-tiered organization. Will each chapter need a 501(c)(3) or 501(c)(4), or will the national division's 501(c)(3) cover everyone?

Both ITA and AEGIS have resources to put into a new organization. AEGIS has the voluminous (and indexed!) National Transgender Library and Archive; a referral database of 3500 helping professionals, vendors, and organizations; a 12000 item bibliography which includes practically everything that has ever been written about transsexualism, transgenderism, and crossdressing; a printing press, computers, and office equipment; *Chrysalis*, our first-rate journal; the newly created *Transgender Treatment Bulletin*, and of course our sterling reputation. To a merger, ITA would bring more than 25 state chapters, a record of quiet and effective grassroots political action, and a roster of accomplished activists. —AN

Our Mission and Values

Our Mission

We are committed to the civil rights, health and well-being of all members of our diverse community. Accordingly, we dedicate ourselves to providing an array of information services, educational materials, advocacy training and technical assistance of the highest quality.

We pledge compassionate support and passionate advocacy on behalf of every member of our diverse community in their journeys toward health of body and mind and in their pursuit of equality, including their right to self-determine gender identity and gender role without discrimination.

Our Values

We believe the principle element in our success as an educational and advocacy organization is devotion to a unique set of values. This statement of values defines and communicates those guiding, motivating philosophies that guide us in our mission:

Excellence — As individuals, as an organization, and as a community.

Community — We are committed to its well-being, development and progress.

Diversity — We serve and seek the involvement and cooperation of all members of our diverse gender community regardless of gender identity or expression, race, ethnic background, religion, creed, economic status, sexual orientation, age, health, or abilities. We support and welcome families, significant others, and friends of the community.

Persistence — Since change is often incremental in nature, we seek to employ a determined patient focus in our advocacy efforts, noting that smaller victories of today lead to larger victories of tomorrow, and that local action is no less important than global action.

Service — We recognize that caring for others is the backbone of our community, and helps us in our own growth.

Respect — Our interactions with others are based on a fundamental respect for all human beings.

Teamwork — We recognize the equal value and individual contributions of each team member. We believe in mutual regard for each other and for those we serve. We encourage teamwork by working together respectfully, communicating openly, and supporting the expression of differing opinions and perspectives.

Progress and Innovation — We understand the need for these attributes in the provision of our services and organizational management. While preserving the tradition and wisdom of those who have gone before us, we seek new information and state-of-the-art technology. We welcome new insights, new techniques, new ideas... and will remain leaders in setting the direction of our community.

Communication — We affirm communication which lets us debate deeply emotional and divisive issues, while at the same time sustaining the mutual respect and self-esteem of all participants in and observers of the discussion.

These are the mission and values developed in joint discussion of the Boards of Directors of It's Time, America! and AEGIS. Although they were designed for an organization that is as yet hypothetical, we think they're magnificent, and present them to the community for the first time.