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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

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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