

Freedom's Just Looking for room to grow in Sex Roles and Sexualities

The following two pieces are written by people who are forced to use a language that just doesn't have the words/ideas they need to describe themselves, because we live in a culture whose stereotypes ('feminine'/'masculine', 'woman'/'man', 'gay'/'straight') don't fit many of our realities. It may be that if "sexuality" were truly liberated, there would be as many sexualities as there are individuals and, maybe even more importantly, the division between "sexual" and "nonsexual" would be (is!) ridiculous and destructive of people's potential.

Also, the gradual disappearance (not from reality, but from general visibility) of "drag queens" has accompanied (who knows with what connections?) the disappearance of gay liberation, now defused into the gay rights and gay (voting) power business. The State House and places of business are respectable and stereotypically serious. Drag queens (not to speak of transgender people) just don't fit into the votes-and-bucks-acquisition process. Which may simply be to say that the now growing tendency to be "just-as-good-as-them has become a tendency to be just-like-them, which doesn't leave a lot of room for the diversity that the burst of gay liberation politics in the early seventies expressed.



The ecstasy

Writing an article is quite a venture and I'm flattered to be asked. Thank you. I'd very much like to share my self-experiences with your friends/readers. The only hesitancy I have is the fact that I'm just beginning to discover myself and I'm attempting to interpret my feminine urges and how those feelings and my transvestism relates to my future.

If I were a real woman, I would never know the ecstasy of being a man being a woman. If I were a woman, I could never experience the joy and pleasure of preparing myself to change roles.

Under the circumstances there is absolutely no way for self-expression or communication of my feelings here, so my mental growth and self-acceptance is stifled. That's why I want to communicate with other gays and TVs who've accepted their feelings as to how they want to live their lives.

So many of the uncaring and uninformed stereotype inmates treat people like me as social rejects or lepers. What is amazing to me though is that this idea/feeling is propagated by the gay community, both men and women. Gay people are aware of the condemning morality of society. Gay men and women have had to overcome so many of society's moral, ethical and religious barriers to live their lives as they please, that the last thing I would expect is for them to pass judgment on other victims of society.

Gay prisoners have an especially difficult time. So many have no real choice in choosing their 'partners'. They usually find themselves paired with someone either for protection or conve-

nience/monetary reasons. You have no idea the degree of anxiety experienced by a transvestite/gay in here! There's no way (almost, no way) to satisfy one's cravings, desires, passions, whatever. I find myself longing for the feel of silk panties, tasting lipstick on my lips, applying makeup and having the admiring glances in my favorite lesbian/gay nightclub.

Being a TV/drag queen is a

mental attitude that needs a physical release, usually through masturbation or sex. Being a "queen" is a mental state of femininity. When I'm in that state I experience a total physical/mental rejection of my masculinity in the sense of gestures and thought.

It was as if I were able to step outside of my masculine body/mind and critique what I should be doing... I don't believe I'm schizophrenic, just conscious of my own diverse desires.

I've been a transvestite since I was 12 years old. Throughout the years I've made numerous attempts to deny my feelings but after 20 years of "dressing up", it's time for me to confront the reality that I want to be a transvestite. And I enjoy gay sex. Now that I can admit my sexual preference, I can begin to deal with what I want to do about it.

My transvestism is as integral a part of my personality as is my masculinity. I know that when I'm "dressed up" I am only a make

believe woman, so I am never dissatisfied with my being male, nor do I want to change forever into a woman. When I'm dressed in female clothing and attain as close a resemblance as possible to a real woman, I certainly pretend that I am a woman, but I do not want to be a woman. If I were a real woman, I would never know the ecstasy of being a man being a woman. If I were a woman, I could never experience the joy and pleasure of preparing myself to change roles.

To me, transvestism is my alter-ego. It's the part of my personality that sublimates my anger, decision-making, and sexual expression. I would "dress up" and go to the State Bar, which is a gay and lesbian night club in Flint [Michigan] and I would just sit and drink and think through the day's activities and my future plans. It was as if I were able to step outside of my masculine body/mind and critique what I should be doing. I always gave myself an objective decision. I don't believe I'm schizophrenic, just conscious of my own diverse desires.

This is why you, GCN, and the gays and TV's I hope to correspond/meet through you are so important to me. I'm able to put

my feelings on paper and share them for a change. Sharing my thoughts/feelings here has been like a purging of my soul, releasing the demons of fear, insecurity, and self-doubt that have been a part of my life for so long. Just saying these words in my mind as I write them has had a tremendous effect on my mind. I feel relieved.

Sincerely,
Ed Cottle,
115685,
PO Box E,
Jackson, MI 49204



Transgenderal Lesbian

I am a 33 year-old transsexual. However, I am rather "unique" in that where most TSs I've known consider themselves "heterosexual" in their sexual/emotional attractions to the male gender, I am strictly a "transsexual homosexual," meaning simply that I desire to be, and am in all aspects but physical, a woman, but I am a feminist and a lesbian who is very attracted to women. I dress as a woman, of course, have always felt like a woman, though I went through some hard identity crises trying to be a "macho" man, because I could not deal with my femininity in a male body.

I have tried relationships with men. Although I can satisfy men, who generally find me quite attractive, I feel no real attraction. I am somewhat attracted to, and can be "satisfied" with another "queen", but only sexually. I am not simply a "heterosexual drag queen." However, because of my attractions to females I find that there are many bi-sexual women attracted to me as I am physically, my penis representing a rather unique "sex toy" between two women.

All of these labels really mean very little to me, and I simply see myself as "me" and have no real problem with staying just as I am as long as there are people, women people, in my life who understand

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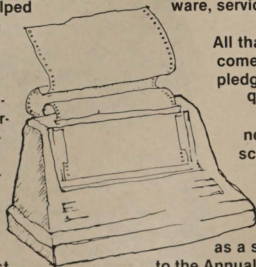
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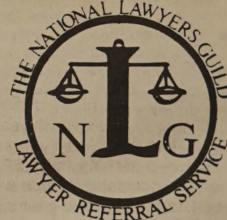
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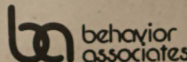
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I want to be able to put movement posters, stickers, etc. on the walls of my cell, which is my home for now, and let the world know I am a lesbian, and very proud!
With love and hope for the future,
Evie,
[Ralph E. Grewell,
128030,
PO Box 520
Walla Walla, WA 99362

[What follows is a story Evie wrote about some experiences before and during prison which should add some richness/diversity to the "normal" stereotypes of "gay," "bi," and "strait."]

and treat me as the woman I am within me.

The problem is that currently there are no women in my life. I am in prison for parole violation. I live with a man who is very understanding and because I do like him and his gentleness and because he's not *too* demanding, he occasionally gets his way with me. Though he is pleasant enough, he is still a man. The relationship exists out of friendship and confinement, nothing more than a civil arrangement of convenience so to speak.

Many feminists will not accept me because of my male body, because they can't or won't understand me. Of course I could "lie" to them in person as my appearance is quite feminine. No one would ever know. But I want and need to find an organization of lesbian feminists who do know, can understand, and who accept me as a woman.

I want to be able to put movement posters, stickers, etc. on the walls of my cell, which is my home for now, and let the world know I am a lesbian, and very proud!

I am very much interested in the special issue of *Changes*, published by Solidarity and International Socialists: A Socialist Feminist Network [special issue on socialism and feminism, including articles on gays and lesbians and reproductive rights, available from Solidarity, 725 O'Farrell No.35, SF CA 94109]. Unfortunately in prison I am broke and have no way to obtain the \$2.50. Do you know of any pamphlets or information of any sort which would help me learn more and/or find an organization which I could be a part of?

Confusing Times

This is a brief story of Eve Grewell. I am a transgendered person, anatomically male, but female in character, personality, soul and spirit.

At birth I was christened Ralph Everett Grewell. I was my mother's third son and child. She had desired a daughter. Red, naturally curly hair, fair skin and effeminate facial features, made it easier for her to treat me as though I were. Women would stop her on the street, as we walked to ask her about, or comment on "her daughter's beautiful, red curly hair": my hair...

My puberty period was a difficult time. My father, a literal tyrant and disciplinarian, led the family in total conformity to his dictates as to how daily life would be for each member. Lack of total

conformity on my part would result in severe beatings with a 2-inch leather belt, and occurred too frequently.

As a teenager the character within me was heavily repressed. All sensitivity and emotion were buried deeply. What emerged was a pseudo-character of Ralph was almost entirely mechanical.

There existed both anger and shame that I had been born male when my appearance, character, etc. was so female. There was the desire to be a girl, but there was also great fear and the ever present need to conform to fathers

"norm," a very "macho" norm that dwelt in my home. I must try to be what this man expected me to be.

At 13 years of age, and for the following 19 years of my life, I would seek the "sour grapes," the status I even then knew I could never have, the status of "manhood." To prove that I could, to prove father wrong, and to prove I was a "good person." I sought to conform to the macho world by choice of a non-conformist role; that of a "criminal" and "biker." At age 16 I began a series of petty crimes of which I myself was the only real victim.

Immediately I became involved in the Washington State "corrections system." Starting out innocently enough, the system watched as Ralph became a biker. The fictitious character I was felt wholly out of place whenever any real bikers were around. "Biker" became, of course, synonymous with "father" in the distorted images of a misguided young adult.

While my body wore the paraphernalia of the biker, Evie felt like she was being raped, and nearly was more than once in the earlier years of imprisonment. But I was able to get along with the biker element and eventually became quite powerful in the club. Cast into this responsibility, an unusual thing happened: Evie began to surface and guide in my decision making! She actually began "mothering" many of the younger bikers in an attempt to "teach," to guide away from self-deception and destructive patterns, giving to her "brothers" where she could from this "closet" position.

In the following two years I began to slowly "come out" of the closet. Little by little I decided to stop pretending to be something I wasn't and began to dissociate myself from the biker club and went into "protective custody" where I am today.

Over the next year Ralph died and Evie took physical form. Her character, mine, lives in acceptance and emotional/mental comfort, openly for all to see. This was the hardest battle of my life, simply to be "me," unafraid.

What I do face now is the bigoted treatment aimed at the stereotype "gay community."

Nevertheless the system is thorough, and without outside support from someone it is doubtful I will be able to keep this up. The system labels as it wishes. The facts are easily buried, as are the prisoners, when they have no contact with the outside.

I have completed my sentence and then some. In doing so I, alone, have managed to bring my life into direct contact with my own reality. I have finally developed the courage to stand, alone if necessary, in this place as I am and daily understand the "snickers" to be the comments of children, and to overlook their behavior toward that which is too large for them: my freedom to live as I am. Having been freed from the most devastating "inner prison-closet," I have patience that truly surprises me.

The gay community was for the most part not open to, nor geared for, such support, though I did find one or two persons who wished they could help and sincerely tried.

Those who control the prison have a heavy control over the "queen," literally, her body and even to a large degree her mind (by means of psychiatric assault and manipulation).

The system "hides" a prisoner by means of transfers. Short term transfers designed to keep the prisoner "moving" so that their head and their relationships are never stable long enough for significant court action, media contact or organizing activity to get going.

When it became apparent to the system that I was a "queen" (any transgendered person, known homosexual, or bisexual, etc. is known as a "queen" to the system), I was transferred from McNeil Island, a relatively high "visibility" prison in the Washington system, to Walla Walla, far from the support groups in Seattle and the media.

When my release date came I was transferred to a work release [minimum security] program in Tacoma, but on arrival was told that I wouldn't be allowed to leave the community prison as is usual to develop a job and housing plan, but instead would have to do so by phone. Frantically I began a phone vigil into the gay community to

find support and help. The gay community was for the most part not open to, nor geared for, such support, though I did find one or two persons who wished they could help and sincerely tried.

The gay community is aware of how the spirit of the law of the pursuit of happiness is mocked daily even by those who claim allegiance to it. The only reason I can think of as to why the gay community would not try to assist one in my position is that the community is not aware of what does go on in these places and of the presence of sincere people who live under this constant threat and who need YOUR HELP because there is no one else who can understand these factors. We do not ask for handouts, but for your friendly assistance in finding the kind of jobs and housing that we need to

support ourselves.

People interested in correspondence with me are encouraged to write. Women, individual and support groups are especially encouraged to write. Sincerely and affectionately yours, Eve Grewell [R.E. Grewell, 128030, PO Box 520, Walla Walla, WA 99362.]

[GCN Prisoner Project has a copy of Evie's employment resume which will be sent to anyone who asks for it. Generally she has substantial secretarial experience but hopes to get involved in some kind of counseling situation.]



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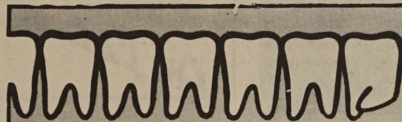
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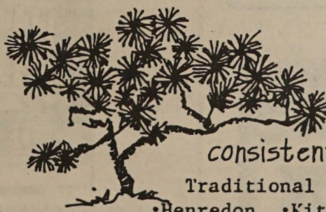
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