

TGSF Home for the Holidays!

The Channel



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TGSF TransGender San Francisco is a group for all members of the Transgender Community. Transgender is used as an umbrella term that includes female and male cross dressers, transvestites, drag queens or kings, female or male impersonators, intersexed individuals, pre-operative, post-operative and non-operative transsexuals, masculine females, feminine males, all persons whose perceived gender or anatomical sex may be incongruent with their gender expression, and all persons exhibiting gender characteristics and identities which are perceived to be androgynous.

The Channel

TGSF (TransGender San Francisco, a California non-profit corporation), is a non-sexual, membership based organization serving the educational, social, and recreational needs of gender-gifted people, their spouses, significant others, family members, friends, and professionals in the helping services. For details about TGSF programs, membership, article submission guidelines and classified ads, please write to TGSF Secretary, PO Box 426486, San Francisco, CA 94142-6486.

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(Fiscal Year: May 1 - April 30)

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 Vice President Laura Marlowe
 Secretary Siobhán Ellis
 Treasurer Pamela Gray
 Education Dawne Woodie
 Lisa Rae Dummer
 Outreach Kara Flynn
 Allison D. Laureano
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Fine Print

TGSF (TransGender San Francisco) is a CA non-profit corporation. Donations to TGSF are TAX DEDUCTIBLE on both Federal and California income tax returns. Talk to your tax advisor for details.

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Business Card (3-1/2 x 2)	\$ 25	\$125	\$ 250
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Personal ads from TGSF members: \$10 for up to 40 words per issue. We will not accept ads with a sexual objective. Ad deadlines are the 15th of every month. Send ad copy and check or money order to TGSF, Advertising Dept., PO Box 426486, San Francisco, CA 94142-6486. Please support our advertisers, and tell them you saw their ad in *The Channel*!

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FROM THE EDITOR...

Resolutions

Can you believe it's 2005? The decade's half over already geez louise. Time's a-wasting me bucko's, we gots things to do, places to go, people to see. Unless you're a recluse like me of course. Probably time to reevaluate priorities and the budget and make a few decisions. Ugh. So if I must, I therefore resolve in 2005:

...To walk unafraid (but situationally aware of where I'm placing my feet!) and try to stop worrying about being accosted every day, and continue dreaming of a day when trannies are commonplace and accepted as just another fascinating facet of a more utopian society. Despite living full-time since 1993, it's something I think about every morning, but I find that if I just be myself and act like I own the joint, people presume I know what I'm doing and leave it at that. They're more than happy to cut me some slack. No doubt they've got their own issues to worry about rather than concern themselves with me;

...To continue keeping a watchful eye on the red half the population of this country because they're stupid sheep - you have to keep 'em all bunched together where we can keep tabs on 'em and round-up the strays, so a good Border Collie doggie is a good thing to have around (reminder to self: our Lucy deserves more hugs and less finger-pointing);

...To give not only of my time towards churning out the house organ for the seventh (count 'em) consecutive year, but put my money where my mouth is and make pre-tax bi-weekly payments right out of the 'ol paycheck straight into the coffers of organizations I care about and think will make a difference, specifically the Horizons Foundation (funds earmarked for the Gwen Araujo Transgender Education Fund) and good 'ol TGSF. That money should start distribution this month, but probably won't be reflected in our donations report until next month;

Yep, you heard right. Despite my bitter-party-of-one-you're-table's-ready remarks in my last column about the organization's finances, I decided months ago (in September, actually) to pledge some money to TGSF, so I figured I had a leg to stand on when playing the devil's advocate. <<shrugs>> Since I was in a position to do so, I'm giving the group a steady financial boost during the course of the coming year - not a whole hell of a lot mind you, but it's something anyway. We all must contribute in our own way, live up to our commitments and do the best we can.

Roxy wrote me shortly after last month's publication and reminded me that under her tenure as Chief Cook and Bottle Washer around here, TGSF's finances have actually improved. In fact, we're totally clear of all the old outstanding bills created by Cotillions past and have no debt whatsoever. Brava! I admit that's a huge turnaround and I didn't give credit where credit is due. Now if I can get my bank to do that, I'll be in good shape. And yes, the social functions have been generating some cash flow, and the gas gauge has actually crept above that red E and into the black. So it's getting better all the time.

Where did my derailed train-of-thought last month come from? When I first joined the club (ETVC to you long-timers), our checkbook enjoyed about 10 times the balance we have today. Some of you may remember the attention to detailed financial information that Jano Boggs provided as Treasurer for so many years, and might reach the conclusion that he raised the bar pretty high and it has yet to be matched. Quite frankly, he spoiled us rotten. I think it must be difficult today for our membership to comprehend where we stand financially month-to-month in relation to the bigger annual plan - or where we are in relation to previous time periods. But considering we're a volunteer organization, we're fortunate to have good people take on tough jobs. Were there were more like them.

You'll forgive me then (I hope) if I saw a fluctuating bottom line in our monthly reports (one month it's plus, the next it's minus), and didn't see the big picture, and deduced that we're in trouble and it's time to start blowing whistles. Besides, we hear so little from our members as it is that I figure if I don't raise the red flags, no one else will.

Some may argue that I take liberties in my role as Editor, but I consider playing the devil's advocate an obligation, especially given my long-term association with the organization and my strong desire to see it succeed. Sometimes I say what a lot of you out there would want to say yourself, but you have more self-control than I do. Either that, or you don't get around to sending us your opinion. As a consequence, though, there have been times when crow is on my menu plan. Some might say I've acquired a taste for it.

Call me a ignorant fool, but while I may not be around much in person and haven't been attending events for a while, deep down I really do still care passionately about TGSF - even after all these years when burnout and turnover constantly threaten our existence. I do care that we, as an organization, serve a population that needs us. They really, really need us to be there - on the hotline, leading the meetings, organizing the events, minding the store, keeping the books, getting the word out...keep on keepin' on!

We are blessed to have our elected ExCom leading the way and getting the job of running TGSF accomplished. A toast to them on this brand New Year. Wish them well and give them your support. And play the game on the canine side instead of the sheep's. You know they're gonna win eventually. The pendulum always swings back the other way.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

By Roxy Carmichael-Hart

Happy New Year!

The calendar has clicked over to 2005 and within a fortnight we will know the answer to a very big question? Oklahoma or USC?

First, let me welcome our newest ExCom member, Education co-char Lisa Rae Dummer who was appointed at our December meeting. You will see her name pop up in a minute.

Actually very soon we will know the identity of our new Miss TGSF and let me tell you we have five outstanding contestants. They are Kara Flynn, Jennifer Anderson, Patricia Kevena Fili, Jennifer Kennedy and Lisa Rae Dummer. I am so proud of all of these ladies and they all have the heart and the passion and the dedication to be an effective Miss TGSF. There was one common thread to all of their bios they submitted. That is, their desire to help the community. To give back what they have been given. To serve their community. These ladies understand what being Miss TGSF means. It's not a fluff title. It's not just a pretty face or killer outfit. It's heart. It's that something special inside you. These ladies all have it and I know that whomever is selected, our community will be well represented. You can read more about them in the profiles that will be seen elsewhere in the newsletter but let me just say that I would be delighted to serve with any of the five. I know that I have been saying that I want another Anne Louise and that has not really been fair to the contestants or to Anne Louise. People need to be recognized for who they are as individuals and not be compared to someone else. But I do want in our Miss TGSF the same qualities that Anne Louise has demonstrated over the last year and I know that with these five we will get them.

You will have noticed that there has been no mention made of a Mr. TGSF 2005. That is because there will not be one this year. As hard as we tried, we just could not get anyone to summon the courage to take the plunge. In spite of Bobby's impassioned plea – and let me just say his words were beautiful in his last months' article, it just was not to be. So we will try again next year and hopefully we will be more successful.

The Cotillion is really coming along. We have had some rehearsals for the performers, some contestant training with the assistance of Denae Doyle and gotten the technical requirements pretty much squared away. Denae told me this was the most serious group of contestants she had seen. All we need is to keep selling tickets and ads. You'll recall about a year ago I wrote in my report how distraught I was that tickets hadn't sold. We are ahead of where we were last year and I will wait until next month's column to tell you if I am distraught this year. Ticket sales do seem to be picking up as the time draws near. We are going to have a great show no matter how many people show up. Remember to get your tickets at Carla's, I Love It, from Diablo Valley Girls or from the Fort Mason Box Office. We won't have any more TGSF events before the Cotillion so the RGA meeting on January 7 or the DVG social on January 3 will be your last chances to buy tickets in person.

We have some wonderful representatives of our community that have stepped forward to be judges. Our confirmed judges are Fran Bennett and Ray Tilton, both of whom served last year, Carla Blair, Empress of San Francisco China Silk, Sydnie Kohara, Channel 5 Eyewitness news anchor, and Miss GAPA 2004. They will have a very difficult choice.

Several notable members of our community will be performing including Lisah Aubergine, Sara Dreaming, Jennifer Williams, Tameva, Eddie Tavares, CJ Khing and Whitey. Some will perform live and some will lip synch but it is all going to be enjoyable. A young lady I recently met named Sherilyn Connelly is also planning on doing something special. I met her at our last mid-month at which several of us did readings. Some were touching, some were sad and some were hysterical. All were personal. As Kelly Marsh told me, we have a tremendous amount of talent in this community and that event underscored that point. I would like to thank Dawnne and Anne Louise for all their work in

putting this event together and Anne Louise especially for bringing back the mid-months. We have been holding this event in a wonderful venue – the Cathedral Hill Hotel and they have been great to work with. We are planning on holding more events there.

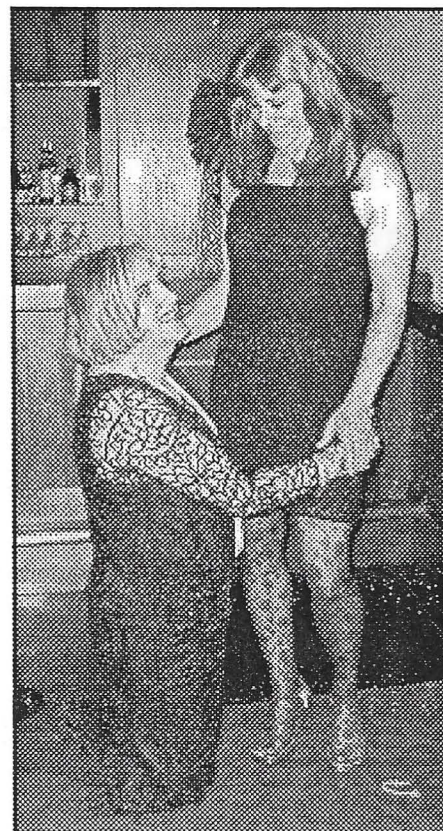
On December 12 we had our traditional TG holiday dinner at the Tarragon, Jackie as always did a wonderful job organizing this event. And thanks to Siobhan for all of her assistance. I have always loved this dinner because we are all together. It doesn't matter what group we are from or where we are on the gender spectrum. We are all together for the holiday. Remember that to many of us, this community is our family and is the only place we have to go. It would be nice if we could all get along for the holidays. I was happy to be able to give a gift to both Bobby and Anne Louise for all the work they have done this last year. I will speak more about that in another column.

By the way, Jackie noted that this was her last time planning this function and that she is looking for someone to whom to pass on this task. Since the vote of the attendees was a resounding "yes" to continue this event, it is imperative that we join together to keep it going. I would like TGSF to assume a lead role in this effort.

Everyone is a star in this community. We're all cut from the same cloth. No one is any better or any worse than anyone else. I don't care if you have been a part of this community for 10 minutes or 10 years. We are all the same. We all matter. Anyone who walks through our doors is always made to feel welcome. Within the confines of our budget and personnel, we do a damn good job of reaching out to all who want us. TGSF has been great organization for the last 22 years and it will continue to be great because there will always be a need for what we do.

It's the bottom of the 9th in the Denslow Cup and the Beers trail by 2 so I am going to get back to watching that.

Have a great Cotillion. Enjoy the ride!



Roxy and Anne Louise share a tender moment...

TGSF wishes You and Yours a
Happy New Year!

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December 4, 2004

TGSF ExCom MEETING MINUTES

Present: Dawnne Woodie Allison Laureano, Roxy Carmichael-Hart, Laura Marlowe, Pamela Gray, Anne-Louise Mortensen, Siobhán Ellis, Kara Flynn.

Not Present: Damon Helton, Tommi Watson.

Next Meeting: 2nd January 2005 at the Cathedral Hill Hotel, Van Ness, San Francisco.

The previous minutes were approved.

I. President's Report

Mr & Miss TGSF will attend the Holiday Dinner at the the Tarragon Restaurant, Sunnyvale. As part the by-laws, the Ex-Com discussed the position of Damon Hilton. Damon having not made a number of meetings and not communicating a reason. Motion to remove him from the Ex-Com was approved, with one abstention. Lisa Rae Dummer was proposed as a replacement, and unanimously approved. It was noted that Siobhan is leaving the US at the end of January 2005 and that the responsibilities of secretary must be taken over. Various options were discussed, but it was decided to hold over to the next ExCom meeting. Laura and Pam were commended for their work on the Halloween party.

II. Vice President's Report

Most of the VP's activity has been around the 2005 Cotillion. Everything is moving along nicely. However, it seems that we will not have a Mr TGSF.

III. Treasurer's Report

We have, approximately, \$4000 in the bank, although we have two expenses for the Cotillion coming that will take nearly all that money. We really need the ticket revenue so we can cover those expenses. Luana Rodgers is not getting her hardcopy channel. This needs to be updated in the database. Siobhan is to ask Martunis and the IRLM to advertise in the Cotillion program.

IV. Secretary's Report

As Siobhan is about to pack up her house, the membership database needs to be handled by someone else. Rachael-Janelle Light has volunteered. (Subsequent to the meeting, Rachael-Janelle found she was not able to do this, and the responsibility has passed to Laura Marlowe). Siobhan recommended that the job of Web Mistress be removed from the secretary and be made a separate position. ExCom agreed, and although the web mistress will not have a voting seat on the ExCom, they will be encouraged to attend ExCom meetings to gather information for the site. The Web site is now being paid for by TGSF, rather than as a private donation from Susan Laird. Siobhan reminded members of the ExCom that not all profiles are still in.

V. Education

A New Co-chair, Lisa Rae Dummer is in place, replacing Damon Helton. Kara suggested a seminar on hormones. Dawnne is to organize a TG Health Law event after the Cotillion. Although, as pointed out by Alli, this is a political issue. Dawnne needs Siobhan to introduce her to Lydia and Maycher at MAC, so the MAC events can continue after Siobhan has left. Siobhan cancelled the MAC event for the 18th December due to lack of interest from the membership. (subsequently should be noted that after it was cancelled, in the last week, enough interest was shown that it could've been run).

VI. Outreach

Kara and Bobby to be n internet radio, www.kasv.org between 8 & 9pm on Tuesday 7th December 2004. KASV will donate \$5 for every call received. The Pacific Centre called looking for referrals for a therapist. Alli & Kara were on a panel at USF. It went well, even though attendance was low. City College Student Centre was packed to celebrate TransGender day. Kara, Dawnne, Alli and Bobby to be at Gender Blast, a Youth TG & Gender Queer Organisation.

VII. Social

December 16th is the TGSF Holiday party at the End of Month. December 9th is the Spoken Word mid-month social. December 12th is the Bay Area Transgender holiday party being co-sponsored by TGSF, DVG, and RGA. Jackie, from RGA, organized this year being helped



by Siobhan. Jackie will not be organizing it next year. Discussion was had on moving the EOM to The Cathedral Hill. However, there is an issue with them expecting us to pay a collective bill. We would like separate checks, as people arrive and leave at different times. However, room permitting, The Cathedral Hill does provide a room for people to get changed [individually]. Siobhan mentioned that Elizabeth Jeffords had donated \$80 to the Holiday party. Efforts were to be taken to donate the places to those less fortunate. Anne-Louise has been trying to organize the Transcendence Gospel Choir at the Universal Unitarian Church, however it is turning into a huge event with other choirs wishing to participate. This is making setting a date very difficult. Unity planning is under way. Kelly Anne Marsh is helping to organize. Lipstick Conspiracy and Trans Central Station will be happy to join in, but need a date ASAP to help with scheduling. Anne-Louise will contact other organizations. OPTIC will be a co-beneficiary.

VIII. Old Business

No old business.

IX New Business

Roxy has a new e-mail address. Issue was raised with Ayme's column in December issue of The Channel.

DEAR MEMBERS,

What is it about the Transgender community where we can't either commit or do anything on time? There is a joke in the gay community about "Drag Time". I submit that there is Real Time, Drag Time, and Tranny Time!

I've recently been involved in organizing two events. One, the Holiday Dinner at The Tarragon in Sunnyvale, plainly stated that RSVP's had to be received by December 1st, and I sent out copious e-mails to remind people. Yet, more than 50% of the attendees registered after that date. Some, even on the day. The second event, a MAC makeover, I had to cancel. It takes extra staff for MAC to put on these events, and one week before there was just not enough interest to justify the event. Yet, after I cancelled it, once more I got much interest and we could've run it.

Please, I implore you, on behalf of the organizers, get your act together and decide early on if you are going to attend or not. Obviously we understand that plans change, and that cannot be helped, but better to register, and then change your mind than to register too late.

As many of you know, I'm leaving the USA to return to Australia. I wish you all the best, and I urge you to help your organization. Don't just sit back and expect others to do for you. Do something yourself, organize a mid-month for example. I hear to many people complain who do nothing to help.

Lastly, I also believe, quite firmly, that TGSF, and its members, need to look at where the organization is going. It needs to reach out to younger people, and be more inclusive.. Live up to its charter, or change that charter and be more focused. Ask the question, is TGSF a social organization, is it politically active, does it do Outreach and Education? I encourage you to debate these issues and let the ExCom know how you feel.

Remember, It is only through your efforts that this great organization can stay alive. I believe in it, and it's potential. I hope you do too.

Be well, be wonderful!

**Siobhan Ellis, Human Being
Secretary TGSF**

Crown Princess to the XXXIVth Reign of the IRLM

MID-MONTH SOCIAL VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

TGSF is looking for some enthusiastic and motivated people to help plan our mid-month socials.

All it takes to plan these events is for someone to call a venue that is hopefully very TG friendly and see if they would be willing to host our event. Mid-months can expect anywhere from 10-20 people. If you would like to help with these events, please contact [REDACTED] Thank you!

MECCA LADIES NIGHT - ALL ARE WELCOME

Submitted by Lauren Winter, DVG

The organizer of MECCA Ladies Night, Betty Sullivan, has asked me to present this ongoing social event to DVG, TGSF, RGA and all TG's, and I am very happy to do so. I've been attending for about 5 months now and find it a comfortable and inviting place to meet new people and visit with friends.

This started when I was talking to a friend about places to meet new female friends and she suggested that I come with her to MECCA Ladies Night. Since I'd never been to an event that I assumed was lesbian, I expressed the uneasy feelings I had and she assured me that ladies night was an all-inclusive LGBT women's event. When I asked about MECCA and what to wear, she explained that MECCA is a nice, 3 star, restaurant and bar in San Francisco and that dress was simply "anything appropriate for such a place". She said that people come in everything from work suits to nice jeans and top. There's also a wide age range, young women and those, like me, with little more life experience.

During one of my first visits, Betty introduced herself and welcomed me, making me feel even more comfortable. In a later discussion with her about how nice it was to be in an open setting for socializing, I started talking about creating one for the TG community. That led to Betty's explanation that MECCA ladies night is for all women and asked if I'd like to invite the TG community. As I felt that this was a new type of event for us TG's, I happily agreed to send out an open invitation.

Below is a description and history of the ladies night, written by Betty for us.

MECCA Ladies Night for Cocktails is held each Thursday, 5:30 PM until closing. Hosted by well-known LGBT community leader Dr. Betty L. Sullivan and MECCA owners Gene Tartaglia and Carl Christian, MECCA Ladies Night is designed as 'a special evening in a special place' where women and their friends can gather to informally socialize and network in this lovely setting.

Who Attends MECCA Ladies Night? MECCA Ladies Night is all-inclusive. "Everyone is welcome!" says Gene Tartaglia. "We want everyone to have a good time." MECCA attracts a well-dressed, well-behaved crowd of good-looking LGBT community members. Straight friends also are welcome and do come.

As with any popular on-going event, no two evenings are the same and the crowd varies somewhat from one night to the next. By 9:00 PM, however, there will be a lovely group of interesting and attractive attendees. During the first hour (5:30 PM - 6:30 PM), the crowd is smaller and tends to be a group of 'regulars' who enjoy the quieter, early scene. By 6:00 PM, arrivals continue until there is a constant flow as the group expands to its peak time between 9:00 PM and 9:30 PM. Some stay as late as 11:00 PM or even until the doors close around midnight.

Ladies Night drink specials are offered and many attending also enjoy the tasty bar menu items or stay for dinner with MECCA's award-winning Chef Stephen Barber. (For dinner, reservations are suggested but not required. Reservations are never required to participate in Ladies Night for Cocktails.)

How Did MECCA Ladies Night Begin? MECCA Ladies Night actually began in September, 2002 when Gene Tartaglia and Carl Christian, owners of MECCA, decided that they wanted to have a special evening at MECCA where women and their friends could feel most welcome and invited. (Women do come to MECCA every night, but a special evening seemed like a good idea.)

After talking with Kate Kendell of the National Center for Lesbian Rights and Deputy Chief Mindy Pengel of the SF Police Department, they contacted Betty Sullivan and began planning and promotion of the event. Initially held once per month, Ladies Night for Women at MECCA proved so popular that it was expanded during 2004 to every Thursday night.

Betty's List, operated by Betty Sullivan, is the primary communications network for MECCA Ladies Night and a special list unique to the group, created and maintained by Betty, is used to offer weekly drawings and special announcements. Anyone who has questions about MECCA Ladies Night is welcome to contact Betty: BettyS@bettyslist.com or 415-861-1637. Betty does not take reservations but does provide information. For reservations at MECCA, please call: 415-621-7000.

To join Betty's List, visit the web site <http://www.bettyslist.com> and use the subscribe function. To join the special MECCA announcement list, just send a note to Betty: [Mailto:BettyS@bettyslist.com](mailto:BettyS@bettyslist.com).

LEGAL ASSISTANCE

Interested in getting free legal assistance in seeking to change your name and/or gender?

My name is Ben Lunine and I am a transgender law student at New College of California, School of Law. I know from my own experience that the process of legally changing your name and gender can be daunting. Under the supervision of Professor and attorney Ora Prochnick, a longtime LGBT activist, I am excited to announce that I have the opportunity to provide free legal assistance to members of our communities during my last semester of law school in the area of name and gender changes (January-May 2005).

If you are interested in receiving legal assistance to seek to change your name and/or gender and you are a resident of San Francisco or Alameda County and you are either 18+ or are under 18 and able to get consent from a parent/guardian, please contact me at [REDACTED] or by phone at (415) [REDACTED]

**Best,
Ben Lunine**

Seeking [Trans] Info for Residents of Alameda, San Mateo, Contra Costa, and Marin Counties

Hi People-

The Health Care Access Project of the Transgender Law Center provides workshops for the trans community on better understanding your rights in health care settings, and works with health care institutions to help them get up to speed on trans issues. This project is funded by the California Endowment to serve the nine Bay Area counties. We are currently looking at developing our services in underserved counties, and we would like your assistance.

Do you live in, or have contacts with, transgender people and our allies, groups, or programs in Alameda, San Mateo, Contra Costa, or Marin counties? In addition to providing workshops for community members, we would like to work with health care institutions in these counties to improve their services for trans folks. Do you have information on where trans people are getting medical care in these counties? We are particularly interested in learning more about which county medical facilities trans folks are going to.

Please share your stories, contact info, or other resources. Thanks for any assistance you can provide.

**Sincerely,
Willy Wilkinson, MPH
Health Care Access Project Manager
willy@transgenderlawcenter.org
(510) 531-5710**



TGSF Revelers at the annual Holiday Party



TGSF Events in January

Sunday / January 2 / 1:00pm - 4:00pm

TGSF ExCOM MEETING

Cathedral Hill Hotel Restaurant, Van Ness and Geary. We'll be wrapping up the Cotillion preparations. Last minute assistance is always welcome and probably required - if you can help out, please come to this meeting!

Saturday / January 15 /

Doors: 5:00pm, Show: 7:00pm

TGSF ANNUAL COTILLION 2005!

The social event of the new year will be held at the Cowell Theater at Fort Mason Center. See ad elsewhere in this issue for ticket and host hotel information, and don't miss out on the coronation of the new Miss TGSF 2005!

Thursday / January 27 / 7:30pm

TGSF END OF MONTH EVENT

Blue Muse Restaurant, 409 Gough Street. Join us for dinner at 7:30pm. Come meet the new Miss TGSF 2005!

January's Birthdays

- 1/01 Bobbi Chopp
- 1/04 Michelle Nelson
- 1/05 Susan Agles
- 1/06 Micki Finn
- 1/08 Kenette Faulkner
- 1/11 Andee Werthman
- 1/12 Charlene Cuffe
- 1/13 Sara Roberts
- 1/14 Robin Ward
- 1/15 Georgia Kay Castleberry
- 1/20 Marcy Slagel

Happy Birthday To All!

TRANS

(Transgender Resource and Neighborhood Space)

TRANS is a program of UCSF, entirely dedicated to the well-being of transgender people, staffed almost entirely by members of the transgender community, providing a community gathering place for MTF, FTM, genderqueer and emerging trans-identified communities.

In our space we provide gender-appropriate and culturally-appropriate workshops, linkage to service providers, case management, support groups, events, guest speakers, substance use/abuse intervention and mental health services to the broad spectrum of transgender and gender variant people in San Francisco. Our workshops and support groups address issues of transgender health and health care policy, HIV awareness and substance use/abuse issues, transitioning and surgical procedures for both FTM and MTF transpeople, identity and self esteem, transgender law, commercial sex work, and general life skills.

Through our workshops, support groups and special events, TRANS hopes to offer the transgender community of the San Francisco Bay Area the means to address concerns both within and outside of our community. Staffed by caring and committed transgender and gender variant people, TRANS provides an informal drop-in center where MTF and FTM transgender people, gender queer and gender variant people can go to relax, socialize, take a shower, and join in the ongoing effort to foster the well-being of our community.

You may view our website at the following URL: <http://www.caps.ucsf.edu/TRANS/>. Please feel free to provide a link to our website if you wish.

Transcending Transgender

**Sponsored by
City of Refuge UCC Outreach Ministries**

A support group facilitated by Janetta Johnson and Portia Denard; Where: City of Refuge, United Church of Christ, 1025 Howard Street, San Francisco CA 94103, (415) 861-6130. When: Every Friday, 6 pm to 7:30 pm. Food and snacks will be provided.

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Calendar - January 2005

OTHER BAY AREA GROUPS

Central City Hospitality House (CCHH)
288 Turk Street, SF. 415-749-2167. Facilitated TG discussion group every Monday, 5:00pm - 6:30pm.

Diablo Valley Girls (DVG)

Meets 1st and 3rd Monday of every month. 8:00pm at Club 1220, 1220 Pine Street in Walnut Creek. Write to DVG, PO Box 272885, Concord, CA 94527-2885 or call 925-937-8432.

DVG Rap Group (RCC)

Meets 1st and 3rd Thursday of every month, 7:00pm at Rainbow Community Center, 2118 Willow Pass Road, Suite 500 in Concord. For more information call 925-937-8432.

FTM International

A support group for Female-to-Male CDs and TSs; Holds open Informational Meetings and closed Support Meetings. Write FTM International, Inc., 160 14th Street, San Francisco, CA 94103 or call 415-553-5987.

I Love It Girl Socials

Every Wednesday night at I Love It Boutique, 45979 Warm Springs Blvd., #7 in Fremont. Call Jo-An at 510- for directions and more information.

Mid-Peninsula TG Group (MPTG)

TGSF-sponsored support group for the TG community that meets at 7:00pm, First Wednesday of each month at Full Circle Books in Belmont, CA. For more details please contact Laura Patterson at

Pacific Ctr for Human Growth (PacCtr)

A counseling oriented growth center sponsors all-inclusive gender support groups on every Friday at 8:00pm, 2712 Telegraph Avenue, Berkeley. 510-548-8283.

Rainbow Gender Association (RGA)

Meets 1st and 3rd Friday of the month 8:00pm at the New Community of Faith Church, 6350 Rainbow Drive, San Jose. Mail: PO Box 700730, San Jose, CA 95170 or call 408-984-4044.

Sacramento Gender Association (SGA)

Blue Rose Chapter meets 8:00pm the 2nd and 4th Saturday of each month in Sacramento. Write PO Box 162907, Sacramento, CA 95816 or call 916-364-7212 for meeting locations. Website: www.transgender.org/sga; email: sga@transgender.org

Santa Cruz Trans (SCT)

Bi-weekly social/support group for gender-gifted persons serving Santa Cruz and Central Coast. 1st and 3rd Tuesdays every month at The Diversity Center, 177 Walnut Avenue, Santa Cruz, CA 95060; (831) 425-5422; 7:00pm

SCOUT (SCOUT)

Santa Cruz Organization for Uniting Transmen, meets on the 4th Tuesday of every month at the Diversity Center (listed above); 7:30pm

Silicon Valley Gender Association (SVGA)

A new transgender support group meets at the Billy De Frank Community Center in San Jose on the 2nd and 4th Friday of every month from 7:00pm to 9:00pm. For more information, call 408-293-2429.

TGIF

A social group for transgenders. Meets one Saturday each month at a private home in Santa Rosa for a potluck social from 4:00pm until early evening. Space is limited - Reservations Recommended! Call Diane or Anne at 707-

T.R.A.N.S

MTF support groups meet every Wednesday afternoon 2:00 - 3:30pm at 1145 Bush Street in San Francisco.

Sun Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat

						1
2 1:00 PM TGSF: ExCom Meeting	3 5:00 PM CCHH 7:00 PM PLSR General Meeting 8:00 PM DVG	4 7:00 PM SCT	5 2:00 PM T.R.A.N.S 7:00 PM I Love It Social 7:30 PM MPTG	6 7:00 PM DVG RCC	7 8:00 PM PacCtr 8:00 PM RGA	8 8:00 PM FWV 8:00 PM SGA
9	10 5:00 PM CCHH	11	12 2:00 PM T.R.A.N.S 7:00 PM I Love It Social	13	14 7:00 PM SVGA 8:00 PM PacCtr	15 5:00 PM TGSF Cotillion!
16	17 5:00 PM CCHH 8:00 PM DVG	18 7:00 PM SCT	19 2:00 PM T.R.A.N.S 7:00 PM I Love It Social	20 7:00 PM DVG RCC TG Legal Clinic	21 8:00 PM PacCtr 8:00 PM RGA	22 8:00 PM FWV 8:00 PM SGA
23	24 5:00 PM CCHH	25 7:30 PM SCOUT	26 2:00 PM T.R.A.N.S 7:00 PM I Love It Social	27 7:30 PM TGSF: EOM @ Blue Muse	28 7:00 PM SVGA 8:00 PM PacCtr	29
30	31 5:00 PM CCHH					

TGSF MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION Membership is billed annually upon enrollment: \$40 Single / \$45 Family

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Please Print / Check all that apply:

New Member | Renewal Member #: _____ | with Family Member | What Year did you first join TGSF? _____

Preferred Name: _____ Birthdate (Month/Day): ____/____/____

Mailing Name: _____

Family Member's Name: _____ Birthdate (Month/Day): ____/____/____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ Country: _____

Optional: Telephone: (____) _____ What Name should we ask for if we need to call you? _____

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Would you like a link from the TGSF Website to your URL? Yes No

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Commentary

CONFESSIONS OF A DANGEROUS MIND

(with no freakin' I key)

by Roxy Carmichael-Hart

Reflections of a Year Gone By

I am going to take a break from my usual diatribes and nagging you about the Cotillion although I really want you to come. You'll have a great time. I promise.

I said I wasn't going to nag. I want to pause for a moment and reflect upon this last year. It was a landmark. I have never seen this organization stronger or populated by a more dedicated group of people. There is plenty for me for which to be thankful.

I am thankful for what I consider to be the strongest ExCom in the history of this organization. I am thankful for Laura, my vice-president and my right hand. She is the voice of calm amidst my hyperactivity. Her work on Pride and Halloween and other events has helped to lead this organization into the light. Let us remember where we were about 2 years ago. We were \$4,000 in debt. Hopeless, many said. On the verge of closing, said others. Last year's ExCom and especially this one took those words as a challenge and now we are out of debt. The people who considered us gone are now eating, in the words of the manager of the Cleveland Indians in "Major League", a nice big shitburger. Many thought we would not make it. But we did and with the initiative of people like Laura, we are in the black. And I give much thanks to Pamela who watched our bank account like a hawk and let us know where we were and not letting us take on more than we were able. Anyway, in the next year, my first priority will be Laura's re-election. She has been a godsend.

I am thankful for two incredible people and I like to think of them as a team. Dawne and Alli. Both came to me and asked to be involved and have done far more than anyone could have expected. From her "Kiss a Tranny Booth" at Pride to her enthusiastic welcomes at all of our events to her work as technical director for our Cotillion, Alli has been a sight to behold. I would have been worried if anyone other than Alli were at the technical helm. In fact, I would have been hesitant to have this event at the Cowell if not for Alli's willingness to take on this role. And Dawne. Before you even ask, she volunteers to help. At Pride she was everywhere. She is there to speak, there to educate, there to console and there to hug. I see why she is "mom" to half of San Francisco. Everyone loves her. Why wouldn't they?

I am thankful for five of the most phenomenal Miss TGSGF contestants ever. Kara, our outreach co-chair and staffer of our booths at the various fairs. She redid and updated our brochures. She answered the hotline. She spoke when needed. All this while going through her own transition. Lisa, our newly appointed education co-chair who supports all of our events, helps keep the mid-peninsula group going and even gamely tried to be a Pride safety monitor on a bad leg. Patricia, whom I just met but whose writing about her hopes, dreams and desires for TGSGF sounds just like mine. She has taken a lead role in helping to draft a non-discrimination ordinance for transgenders in Alameda County. By the time you read this, it will probably be law. Jen (Jenni or Jennifer) who comes to most of our events all the way from St. Helena, starred in leather and lace and helped to support Beauty Magic. She is multi-talented - a winemaker, a musician and a community servant. Jennifer, all the way from Santa Cruz who has

helped with California Dreamin and helps support the ladies who come to Carla's. She too has expressed a desire to provide community service. All of these ladies - their focus is on community service. They get it. They see how important Miss TGSGF can be to our community and they want to be a part of it. I wish they could all get titles. To me, they are all winners and I adore them.

My dearest Siobhan who will be leaving us so and too soon. What words can I use to tell you how I feel about you and how appreciative I am for your work as secretary, getting our database together and getting the website usable? How can I tell you what you have meant to me as a mentor, sister and friend. You gave me my rose at my debutante walk. You helped welcome me to the world. You gave me a hug when I needed to cry. For that and for everything, I love you.

Tommi my always ready friend, thank you for always being there for us. For helping pick up the Channels and for dealing with the impossible logistics of getting this publication to me and for helping to mail it. For always raising your hand when a job needs to get done. From building a float to cleaning up after a party, you're there to lend you assistance and support.

Lastly, my two darlings - Anne Louise and Bobby. An incredible Mr. and Miss TGSGF. Wow is all I can say. I quite frankly did not know what to expect from them but I set a standard as to what I wanted from a Mr. and Miss TGSGF. They not only surpassed that standard but they reached higher than I had any right to ask or expect. What wonderful and inspirational role models they have been - examples for all of us. They are two beautiful people and I am glad that I have had this year to work with them. Their energy and dedication and passion have been inspiring. I adore them as well.

All my other friends and acquaintances I have met over this year - Veronica, Selphie, Bonnie, Joanne, Kari, et al. Thank you for being a part of my life and for helping your sisters. Rachel Hill and Tyler Fong - thanks for keeping on giving after your reigns have ended. Carla, Jo-An, MAC and others all deserve gratitude for being there and serving and caring and loving. There are dozens if not hundreds like them. DVG, RGA, Donna, Julie, Sara, Marcia, Jackie, Becky, Gelsey, Arlene, Faye, Sydney, Pussy Catwalk, Dr. Brink, Dr. Beck, Judith, Michelle and Tommy. Arlyne and Wendy. Lisah, Sara, Jennifer, Madame Steele. You deserve thanks too. I can't name them all. My list would go on forever. And my sis. I will adore you until the day I die.

Anyone who wants to look at the bad side of being TG, I challenge you to look at this list and not see the beauty, the passion, the dedication and the heart that these people have. Anyone who wants to look at the "seedy" side of being TG, I challenge you to get to know any of these people and I defy you not to see the goodness in their hearts and the beauty in their souls.

You will get to know many of these people at the Cotillion. That is why I want you to come. It's not the money (ok maybe it is just a bit). I want you to see these people. I want you to see them in action. I want you to see the beauty of being transgendered. I want you to see the best of the best of our community. As Anne Louise would say, I want you to see the joy of and the pride that we all share. We are transgender and we are proud. We are brothers and sisters. We are a community. We are a family. Don't ever forget that.

As the pages turn to 2005, please stop and think about the things we have for which to be thankful. I know it hasn't all been great but I hope that the good far outweighs the bad. I hope that makes you smile.

GenderQueer, Trans, & Gender Questioning Youth Group

Billy DeFrank LGBT Community Center
www.defrank.org

This youth program will provide space for discussion groups, workshops and activities, specifically for genderqueer youth and their allies. We are excited to be offering this new programming, for an underserved population, even in our own community. This new group is for young people 20 and under, who identify somewhere on the gender non-conforming spectrum, who are questioning their gender identity or who are considering transitioning.

This group will meet the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of each month from 5-6pm at the DeFrank Center, which is located at 938 The Alameda, in San Jose. For more information please contact T. Aaron Hans, Program Director at 408.293.3040 ext. 112 or at progdir@defrank.org.

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Transgender Youth Gaining Acceptance

MORE SCHOOLS ARE HONORING STUDENTS' GENDER IDENTITY

Rona Marech, SF Chronicle Staff Writer

A few days before classes started last fall, Caleb Ryen walked into the main office of his high school on a mission. He told a surprised administrator that though they had known him for the past three years as a girl, he identified as a boy, and he had a new name.

"I'm transgender. You probably have no idea what I'm talking about. I guess I'm going to have to explain it to everyone in the school," Caleb, 17, recounted. "I'm going to use the men's bathroom this year, so we need to figure something out."

A growing number of young people are openly questioning their gender in high school and even middle school, and as they do, educators are increasingly facing questions about rudimentary but sensitive matters such as bathroom usage and name changes. Transgender advocates say that all too often, administrators are either grudgingly making accommodations or altogether failing youth who say their internal sense of gender and their biological gender don't match.

In the universe of high school, where tolerance for being different can run thin, transgender youth are often vulnerable to harassment or physical violence. In extreme cases — such as that of Gwen Araujo, a transgender teenager from Newark who was beaten and strangled at a party in 2002 — the outcome can be fatal.

But at several schools, particularly in the Bay Area, educators are readily adapting to the presence of transgender teenagers. They're calling experts, organizing trainings, supporting student activists and enforcing guidelines that call for honoring students' chosen gender identity.

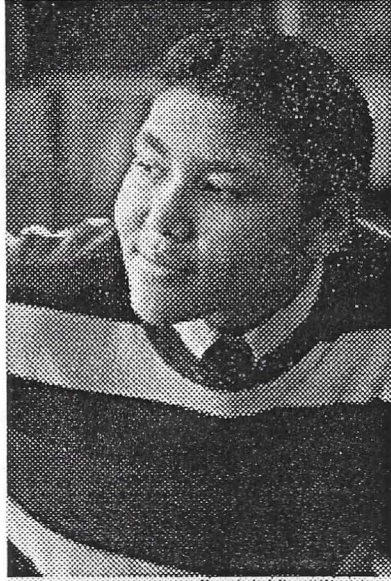
"As people become more exposed and educated about transgender issues, people are able to come out ... at a much younger age. I've been working with transgender people for 10 years, and it's not until the last two that I've started to see more adolescents," said Lori Kohler, a UCSF clinical professor and director of the family practice clinic at San Francisco General Hospital. "Fortunately for the young people I've worked with who are transgender, their schools have been incredibly cooperative."

Caleb, who graduated from American High School in Fremont in the spring, wears his hair cropped on the sides and wavy in front. He has an earnest face and an easy smile. On a recent morning, he had dressed up for a speaking engagement in a striped blue sweater and a button-down shirt and a tie.

Puzzled by his request, high school administrators initially shuttled him from one office to the next, Caleb said. But eventually, administrators agreed to let him use a men's restroom that required a key he could check out. Caleb spoke individually to his teachers about his new name and new pronoun. "Luckily for me," he said, "they were like, 'OK, whatever you say, kid.'"

Though other students were occasionally hostile, Caleb said he never felt unsafe. His friends rallied around him. They told him he had always seemed more like a boy and placed him on a list of nominees for homecoming king.

The death of Gwen helped bring transgender issues onto students' radar screens, Caleb said. Gwen had briefly attended American High, but daily harassment forced her to drop out, according to her mother. "Now when you talk about transgender issues, people go — 'Oh, Gwen,'" Caleb said. "It's unfortunate that that had to happen to her, and that's what made, at least my school, more tolerant."



Caleb Ryen says when he came out as a transgender student, his friends rallied around him. Chronicle photo by Penni Gladstone

Nov. 2 Is Not Over Yet...

By Nicole Cook

[tgsf] As all of you know the current administration in Washington is not an ally of the TLGB community. They are openly seeking to prevent same sex marriages and some of their supporters (primarily the religious right) are seeking to roll back protections we already have with civil unions and hate crime protections. There is still something you can do to help keep them from being able to do this.

There is a growing group of people who are convinced that there was fraudulent activity associated with the last election to the extent that it changed the outcome of both the Electoral College and the Popular Vote. The discrepancies found so far are Enormous. If you want to see some of this research you can go here: <http://www.electionfraud2004.org/> and view the presentation.

There are already 14 Democratic US Representatives have decided to contest this 2004 election, and they're on the hunt for a senator. All it takes is 1 Senator. You can call your Senator and ask her to be that Senator or go here: <http://www.contestthevote.org>. To get your name on a petition asking your senator to step up to the plate.

In Addition Rep. John Conyers has asked for one million emails a.s.a.p. demanding that the House Judiciary Committee hold full hearings on the 2004 Election, and that folks should email the main House Judiciary Committee. You can go here to do that: <http://judiciary.house.gov/contact.aspx>

It is time to act or just get whatever rights the Bush administration decides to let you have.

Bailey, a 16-year-old sophomore at a high school in Portland, Ore., has been less aggressive so far about seeking support at school. Bailey is biologically a girl but thinks of his gender as fluid and often wears boxer shorts and sagging pants to school "like a normal guy." He identifies as "genderqueer," an umbrella term that describes anyone who doesn't strictly conform to an either-or, male-female system.

Though he's relatively open about who he is, he's only officially come out to a couple of friends and teachers ("I don't introduce myself as 'Hi, I'm Bailey, and I'm genderqueer' ") and didn't want his last name used because of his parents' discomfort with his gender identity. A sympathetic teacher found him a gender-neutral bathroom, but that's about as far as Bailey is willing to take it.

"I would love for people to use male pronouns for me at school, but because it's high school I know that won't happen," he said. "I'd be setting myself apart from people, and I don't want to."

But increasingly, educators are stepping in to try to help transgender students without forcing unwanted attention on them. San Francisco Unified School District, which passed comprehensive regulations on transgender students a year ago, is on the cutting edge of such efforts. The district's policy carefully spells out how administrators should deal with everything from gym class to bathroom access, names and dress codes.

Several educators — including the head of the College Preparatory School in Oakland and Melissa Kindelspire, a science teacher at Castro Valley High — said they had turned to the San Francisco regulations in trying to formulate their own policies.

When a student disclosed he was transgender earlier this year, Kindelspire, an adviser for her school's Gay-Straight Alliance, placed "an almost panicked call" to the nonprofit Gay-Straight Alliance Network, which links gay student groups in the state. The group forwarded an advance copy of "Beyond the Binary," a manual for students and educators created precisely for such situations.

"At first, there was some confusion, but I have to say our school administration did a great job of saying, 'OK, give me information,'" Kindelspire said.

After some reading and discussion, administrators agreed they would respect the name and pronoun the student preferred. They told the student — who is biologically female, but now identifies as a boy — that he could choose whether to try out for the boys' baseball team or the girls' softball team and said that they would make locker room provisions that were safe and comfortable for him. They're still putting everything that's not all-gender

Continued on Page 21

Special Events in January!



Mid-Peninsula Support Group

WEDNESDAY, January 5, 2005

and continuing on the first Wednesday of each month

NEW LOCATION!

Full Circle Books

1538 El Camino Real, Belmont, CA 94002, (650) 508-9546

7:30 - 9:30 P.M.

All welcome regardless of race, age, gender, gender identification, etc.

\$1 donation will be requested but no one will be turned away.

For more details please contact Laura Patterson at [REDACTED]

Please note: This is a support group.

The views expressed in this group

are reflective of the attendees and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the ExCom and members of TGSF.

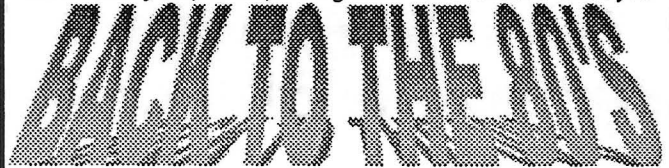
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Must be reserved by December 24, 2004 to guarantee group rate. Must mention "Transgender San Francisco" to receive group rate.

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\$86/night; free parking (one car per room)

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Details available at www.tgsf.org

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TGSF wishes You and Yours a

Happy New Year!

New Vendor in Sacramento!

ANNOUNCING ARIEL'S CLOSET

Ariel's Closet will be a discrete comfortable place in Sacramento where members of the transgender community can go to be themselves. Cross Dressers, Transsexuals, Transvestites and those who care for them can go to Ariel's, especially those who cannot dress at home or who cannot go out in public. You will be able to receive mail, keep your clothing, enjoy social activities like formal teas, get makeovers and use computers at Ariel's. Similar establishments are Carla's in San Jose and I Love It in Fremont. Now there will be one in Sacramento.

No more having to rent a hotel room just to dress for an evening to go out. No more fearing the family or kids will find your clothes, or your boss will see you when you need to be who you are.

We take confidentiality very seriously. All members will be screened. This is a SAFE PLACE. You can join an e-list at no cost and give Ariel's staff input right now on what you need and what you would like to have. Your input is invaluable as this new service is being created. Visit <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ArielsCloset/>

You can also use a website that is in the process of being created. It will be interactive for the community. There will be a calendar of events, chat rooms, galleries where you can post your pictures, and forums where you can discuss things you chose and decide are important. Free membership to the website keeps out Spam bots and porn spammers. It will be up and running as soon as the domain points to the servers in about 72 hours. Visit <http://www.ArielsCloset.com>.

Miss TGSF 2005 Candidates!

A YEAR OF LIVING GLORIOUSLY

**Anne Louise Mortenson
ExCom & Miss TGSF 2004**

I love the blues. I don't know why. Not sure of a lot of things. My problems don't need endless litanies of imagines whys but if I did have a reason for liking them it would be this: it is a music of triumph.

I've toyed with an intro to my performances with a take off of Steve Martin's "I was born a poor black child" Pretty ridiculous. But I guess I've always felt a little ridiculous, at least out of place, definitely rebellious for my lilly white middle class up bringing in the suburbs. Why for instance did I like being with girls more than the idea of going to bed with them? Pretty weird. Why didn't I hang with the boys instead of holding up in my room playing Ornette and Coltrane on my beat up record player. So how did it come to this: "I was born a poor black girl near Hackensack, New Jersey."

You could say it started with my Dad, who was a liberal Democrat in a sea of conservatives, who was more interested in making contributions to social reform organizations than having a big house. Maybe it was my love of jazz that I've had ever since my early teens or the search for myself in the endless hours of pounding on the dilapidated piano in the basement. But if I needed a how, I would say it was this: I didn't want to hide anymore. That something was let out this year even more than it had been in my struggles of the last decade of my life. I feel like the girl in Lisa Dummer's story of the orphan girl who knew she would find her new mother at Christmas. In my case it was my fantasy that I would marry a black girl. In it way it turns out that I am the black girl. Yes and I became the black girl in a way I had never imagined.

My apologies if my love of the blues and my expression of it might offend anyone. I do have a deep respect for black culture. The other night after seeing the Dance Along Nutcracker, Lisa, Veronica and I were walking through Yerba Buena Gardens with our plastic tiaras still on, they were still blinking in the night as we wandered through a forest of trees wrapped in strings of lights. When we reached the waterfall, we began reading the speeches of Martin Luther King that have been engraved on the walls. It was as if the events of that night had led me to that wall.

Transgender people have suffered a great deal in this country. Stories about Brandon Teena and Gwen Araujo seem so similar, to Emmitt Tils, the black boy who was brutally tortured and murdered in the south, that I can't help but empathize with



the struggle of the black people in this country. Those words on the wall went further then speaking of the plight of the black American, they included all people who are oppressed in this world. They said that no mater how many battles the oppressors win that love will prevail.

Which brings me back the blues. What is it about the blues that moves me? It's simple: it is its triumph over adversity. The blues are about feeling sad, they can be about being beat up bloody, about Bessie Smith bleeding to death because they wouldn't treat her at the local hospital in a southern town. What do the blues tell you to do? It's to keep your spirit up, to overcome whatever would put you down.

Here's a story I heard on the PBS special about Jazz. A man goes down to the railroad tracks and puts his head on the rail but just before the train comes he jerks it back. The blues are about telling it how it is but not giving up.

I've performed randomly throughout my life but this year it was that joyful "pulling my head off the track" release from the oppression that has seemed to dog me my whole life. I'll always remember the night at the Red and White Ball when I got up before everyone with Tom and Kelli and sang and played, "Hey Mister Cupid." It's like it all came tumbling out in that 50's novelty number, just something let go, something that was held up, something that I would only do in a basement or a closet, something I did do in a closet or a basement. It would of never happened without all those years of competing for Miss TGSF or getting more and more involved with TGSF, it wouldn't of happened without the help of people like Roxy, Rachael Janelle, Susan Laird, Tom Kennard, Kelli Anne Marsh, Terri Lee, Stephanie Ann Blythe or so many others. I was singing we are here, we are no dirty little secret, no matter how we are shunned, no matter how many murders are condoned by those who would chose to deny us the simple right to be human, we will eventually overcome, we will endure, we will triumph.

I am so thankful that I've been given the opportunity and support to put on events and perform this year. The coming together of events like Unity to bring people together has been my dream. I know words are not good enough, there's no way I can show my gratitude enough except by being there, showing up and doing the work. I get in the truck and drive the miles. Maybe that's the start. That way I can show appreciation for the compassion of my father, the unconditional love of my mother and for all of us who are standing up and not wearing black face anymore but are singing the triumph of the blues.

We no longer need to hide. We are trans people. We are not second class citizens. No matter how much we are denied or how we are portrayed, we are no longer invisible. I am so proud to be transgender. I no longer feel the need to pretend to be anything other than who I am. This is the spirit of TGSF, the Cotillion and our events. We are transgender, we are the people just as much as anyone else, we will be triumphant.



JENNIFER ANDERSON

My name is Jennifer Anderson and I hope to represent you as Miss TGSF in 2005. In January 2001 I attended my first Cotillion. Almost immediately after taking my debutante walk I began to dream of a day that I might have a chance to wear the crown.

It's been an amazing and transformative 4 years since then and I now feel that it is the perfect time for me to take that next big step (gulp) toward making that dream a reality!

The best news I can share with you is that, after having rehearsed with and getting to know the four other contestants, I am certain that no matter who wins, TGSF is going to have a fantastic spokeswoman next year!

I look forward to seeing many old friends on Cotillion night and making many new ones. And, if I am fortunate enough to be selected as Miss TGSF, it will be both an honor and a privilege to serve you!

LISA RAE DUMMER

Hi, I'm Lisa Dummer. I've thought about whether I should run for Miss TGSF for a long time, since I'm a relative newcomer to TGSF. It was a little over two years that I admitted to myself who I am and, during that time, I've received a lot of help from the members of TGSF with my own definition of myself. I felt it was time for me to give back to the Community that has given so much to me.

I'm looking forward to the camaraderie we'll develop and the fun we'll have as contestants. However, we can't forget that Miss TGSF is very important to the Transgender community. She is the visible representative of every one of us, a position that should not be taken lightly. I was recently appointed to the ExCom as Co-Chair for Education to fill out the term of a member who was no longer able to continue. Whether I am selected as Miss TGSF, I plan to continue working with the ExCom in whatever capacity is deemed necessary.



Miss TGSF 2005 Candidates!



PATRICIA KEVENA FILI

I am Patricia Kevena Fili and I live in Oakland. I am honored to be a candidate for Ms. TGSF for an organization that offers hope and support for transgender people. Words to describe me include Activist, Writer, Performance Artist, Priestess. I work at AIDS Project

East Bay as the Development Coordinator. I work with the LGBT Roundtable in Oakland and helped to encourage the Oakland City Council to broaden their non-discrimination policy to include gender identity and expression. Creator of *Gender Art*, a performance art event for Transgender artists, I am a published poet and am writing a book on my life.

If selected, I would like us to help more Transgender people throughout the Bay Area and Northern California. I would like us to make more links with other LGBT and progressive organizations, and to increase our presence and advocacy. But perhaps most importantly, I would like to facilitate an environment where we encourage and utilize the tremendous wealth of expertise and talent among us, including our youth and seniors. Let us create together the world we want.

KARA FLYNN

Hi, I'm Kara Flynn. I had such a wonderful time competing in last year's Cotillion, and saw the fun that everyone else had as well, that I wanted to do it again.

I've also enjoyed being one of the current TGSF Outreach Co-Chairs and would love to continue that effort as Ms. TGSF. I've also been active in the past as the Education Co-Chair and like giving back to a community that has given me so much, especially as I approach the end of my own transition.

I've worked with numerous transgender groups the past few years and I'd like to help build a strong connection between them. Being active on the current Cotillion Planning Committee, though, has enabled me to see how great an event we're going to have. Win or lose, we're all definitely going to have a grand time.



JENNIFER SIOBHAN KENNEDY

Hi, my name is Jennifer Siobhan Kennedy and I am excited and proud to be running for Miss TGSF. I am interested in being Miss TGSF as a small way to help return to our community the generosity of spirit and support that I have received during my transition this past

year, as well as using the title as a platform for outreach within TGSF, the TG community, the various GLBT communities, and with the public in general. I am extremely interested in raising the awareness of Transgendered persons from something to be feared and hidden in the closet to that of public acceptance of us as warm, productive, and valuable members of any community anywhere.

I also want to communicate the notion that the TG condition is a normal part of the continuum of the human condition, and that for us being out, friendly, warm of spirit, and proud of ourselves will help lead to our acceptance in all of our endeavors. In my own local community in the bucolic Napa Valley, I have had to work hard to educate and change people's minds about Transgender individuals, with success as I still have my spouse, children, and friends intact – and I would love to expand upon that effort to the world at large by being Miss TGSF 2005. Thanks, and look forward to seeing everyone at the Cotillion!



April 14 - 17, 2005

at the

Doubletree Hotel, San Jose

Scheduled Speakers include:

Dr. Douglas Ousterhout • Kim Hraca

Dr. Toby Meltzer • Judy van Maasdam

Dr. Joy Diane Shaffer

www.california-dramin.org

Events Horizon!

TRANSGENDER VETS TO MARCH AGAIN

After assessing the success of the first Transgender Veterans March to the Wall held last May, the Transgender American Veterans Association (TAVA) is moving once again to gather transgender veterans in Washington, DC.

The First Transgender March to the Wall was for history. The second March to the Wall on May 20, 2005 will be for tradition. With the addition of a tour of the newly opened WWII Memorial, the March will be expanded. As with this year's tour, the 2005 March will also visit the Vietnam Memorial and Iwo Jima Memorial and will experience the very emotional and proud moment of dedicating a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington National Cemetery.

Fifty-five Transgender Veterans and significant others from across the country attended this year's March to the Wall. The emotional event was also supported and witnessed by many others in the GLBTI community from Washington, DC and around the country.

"No one could have anticipated the tremendous success of this year's March to the Wall in bringing together so many Transgender Veterans for the first time," said Angela Brightfeather, event organizer and TAVA Special Projects Chairperson. "Added to that success is the fact that so many other GLBTI people have recognized the importance of this March, not only to the Transgender Veterans, but also to our community in general. By providing the hub for other events to gather around with pride and determination, TAVA has touched on the emotion and great sacrifices made by the GLBTI community in the defense of our nation. By honoring our past, we will be able to more effectively and emotionally gather together to create the motivation that will change our future."

TAVA expects that the success of the first March to the Wall will encourage more Transgender Veterans to attend the May 2005 event. Pictures of this year's March can be viewed at the TAVA web site <www.tavausa.org> under the "Events" link.

"The National Transgender Advocacy Coalition (NTAC) is honored to support this effort to honor transgender veterans and all veterans," said Robyn Walters, NTAC Secretary and TAVA Veterans Affairs Liaison Representative. "NTAC was happy to coordinate its May 18 - 20, 2005 Congressional Lobby Days schedule with the TAVA March dates. Both organizations look forward to the same synergy seen in last year's events."

Karen Rice, TAVA Secretary and partner of Tina Rice, veteran and TAVA Media Director, captured the solemnity of the occasion with these thoughts: "On the first March to the Wall I stood proudly with men and women who served their country in at least four conflicts - WWII, Korea, Vietnam, and Desert Storm. For the first time in their lives they mourned their fallen compatriots [while standing] proudly and openly as themselves. They paid tribute to the many who have served in silence. We know, as some may not, that there are those who serve in silence now. They love their country, and they welcome those who would like to join us and support them."

Please join TAVA and the many transgender veterans as we once again provide a chance for healing from the many wounds of war and of life. Find details and updates via event links at www.tavausa.org. To participate in the March, or for additional information, write to Angela Brightfeather at projects@tavausa.org.

The Transgender American Veterans Association (TAVA) acts proactively with other concerned GLBT organizations to ensure that transsexual and transgendered veterans will receive appropriate care for medical conditions in accordance with the Veterans Health Administration Customer Service Standards promise to "treat you with courtesy and dignity ... as the first class citizen that you are." Further, TAVA will help in educating the VA and the US military on issues regarding a fair and equal treatment of transgendered and transsexual individuals. TAVA will also educate for a change in public law and policy that will help initiate this fair and equal treatment.

NTAC Sets Lobby Days for May 2005

Transgender activists will converge on Capitol Hill on **May 18 - 20, 2005** to lobby Congress once again for passage of transgender-inclusive hate crimes and employment nondiscrimination legislation. Lobby Days 2005 is sponsored by the National Transgender Advocacy Coalition (NTAC), the country's largest and most active organization advocating for the rights of transgender Americans at federal, state, and local levels.

Participants are expected from all over the country and will likely include victims of anti-transgender hate crimes and those who have personal experience with employment and other types of transgender bias and discrimination. NTAC and the National Center for Transgender Equality will help attendees arrange meetings with their senators and representatives and staff members.

Marisa Richmond, Chair of the NTAC Lobbying Committee, noted that 30 lobbyists from around the country visited 81 Senate offices and 236 House offices in April 2004 to discuss the need for transgender inclusion in pending civil rights legislation. "This effort played an important role in identifying potential supporters of transgender inclusion in ENDA and LLEEA," she said. "This information was vital to the coordinated effort by transactivists in getting HRC to adopt a new trans-inclusive policy towards ENDA. We look forward to maintaining the momentum in 2005."

One major difference in the 2005 lobbying effort is the recent decision of the Human Rights Campaign decision to support only a transgender-inclusive Employment Nondiscrimination Act (ENDA). It is essential to have demonstrably significant numbers of concerned community activists and supporters working together to educate their elected representatives on these vital issues. The need has never been greater, and HRC support can improve our reception in Congress.

"Since 1999, NTAC has been advocating in support of equality for the transgender community," said Vanessa Edwards Foster, chair and co-founder of NTAC. "We may well be on the edge of a new era for our community, an era of unfettered accomplishment in our fight for civil rights. It's essential that NTAC and the transgender community are distinctly visible and a key part of this effort towards our equality."

NTAC will hold a plenary session for training and assignments on May 18th. The plenary will consist of a brief lobbyist training session, review of handouts to be discussed and left at each office visited, and assignments for May 19th and 20th. Participants will have the opportunity to meet and interact with many transgender and trans-supportive activists and representatives from organizations working toward fully inclusive federal hate crimes and civil rights protections and to participate in other Lobby Days events and actions to be announced.

Registration and hotel information will be linked to the NTAC website (<http://www.ntac.org>) when details become available. In the meanwhile, those with questions about joining this grassroots lobbying effort can write to lobbying@ntac.org.

As done in 2004, NTAC and the Transgender American Veterans Association (TAVA) are coordinating dates for their 2005 Washington, DC spring events. The second TAVA national gathering of transgender veterans, some of whom are also NTAC members, is scheduled to begin after NTAC lobbying ends on May 20. The TAVA event will include visits to veterans memorials on the National Mall and in Arlington, VA.

You can make a difference, for yourself, your family, and your community. Join your brother and sister transgender American activists, veterans, family, friends, and supporters in speaking truth to our leaders and working for a truly equal America for us all. Your support, your voice, and your active participation will make a difference.

Founded in 1999, NTAC - the National Transgender Advocacy Coalition - is a §501(c)(4) civil rights organization working to establish and maintain the right of all transgender, intersexed, and gender-variant people to live and work without fear of violence or discrimination.

Significant Other Support East Bay

Questions or concerns about your partner's crossdressing? Please call Julie at (925) [REDACTED], e-mail [REDACTED] or write to: Julie Freeman, PO Box 272885, Concord, CA 94527-2885.

HEY!

\$10 Bucks Per Issue Gets You An Ad Like This...!

Tall, feminine, graceful closet CD seeks Big Sister to help with shopping and makeup tips. I live alone so it's helpful if you can come here, but I can certainly travel. SF Area. Call (415) 000-0000. Up to 40 words only \$10.00. Send text of ad and Check or Money Order to TGSF's PO Box, ATTN: Editor. Reach out and come out!

Events Horizon!

April 26 - 30, 2005

IFGE CONVENTION - TRANSGENDER 2005

Austin, Texas

Transgender 2005, the 19th Annual IFGE Conference on Sex and Gender will be held in Austin, Texas at the fabulous Red Lion hotel, right in the middle of everything (well, almost). Malls and great restaurants are in walking distance; we will feature over 50 seminars and workshops on various trans subjects; have lots of free time for networking; there will be fun events and our gala (formals please) banquet on Saturday night.



This exciting event will be hosted by the Transgender Advocates of Central Texas, the Central Texas Transgender Society, and the Alpha Tau Chapter of Tri-Ess. It is being coordinated by Lisa Sheps, a member of the IFGE Board of Directors and an Austin resident and local activist.

Nobody can do anything like a Texan so we know we are going to be well fed, well entertained, and have a terrific event with great Texas barbeques, dancing and a Texas-style welcome. Registration will begin early in the week — you can check in Tuesday and enjoy all day Wednesday “on-the-town” with special sight-seeing tours, mall shopping, night-clubbing and a special welcome party.

Conference session topics will include: TG workplace issues, TG Health & Medicine, Help for Emerging CDs, Sexual Identity/Gender Identity, Trans-Youth, Parents, Religion, and Politics. There will be special programs for SOs, FtMs, and Transsexuals.

Open to all! — Transgender, Crossdresser, Transsexual, Transvestite, Female to Male, Male to Female, Significant Other, Friend, Admirer, Helping Professional, Student, or Educator.

If you have not attended a recent IFGE Conference and are not on our mailing list contact: S. Kristine James, Cioe Enterprises, P O Box 61, Easton PA, 18044-0061 or e-mail to convention@IFGE.org. Check the IFGE.org web site often to keep current on the program development, presenters and social events.

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TRANSGENDER AWARENESS WEEK

Dear TGSF:

Several San Jose State University on-campus organizations, faculty members, and students, myself included, are organizing a Transgender Awareness Week, May, 2005.

We are still at the beginning of our planning stage, but I wanted to inform the local transgender community ahead of time. One of our events will be a transgender symposium.

We have several FTM guest speakers and panelists already, but we would like MTF participants, as well. I am not in charge of this event in particular, so I do not know exactly what qualifications are necessary in order to be selected as a MTF guest speaker/panelist, but I do know that one of the selected FTMs is an author, another is with ACLU, and another produced a transgender-related documentary.

If anyone is interested in volunteering or has any comments and/or questions, please contact me as soon as possible. The best way to get a hold of me is through e-mail at glbta_sjsu@yahoo.com; specifically e-mails with catchy subject lines such as “Re: Transgender Awareness Week,” “Transgender Awareness Week Volunteers,” or something along those lines.

Thanks for your time and consideration! Your help is greatly appreciated.

Andrea Miller
SJSU GLBTA Secretary



Roxy and Anne Louise at Holiday Dinner

ONLINE SO LIST!

New online mailing list for wives and SOs of crossdressers and men who consider themselves to be transgendered; no topic off limits. Attitudes range from complete acceptance to really struggling. Open to women only - no crossdressers please! Women need a place where they can feel safe to discuss these issues. Write to Cheryl at triess_family@yahoo.com and explain a little about your situation.

ALAMEDA COUNTY TO CONSIDER GENDER IDENTITY POLICY

Supervisor wants transgender people, cross-dressers included in anti-discrimination clause

By Michelle Maitre, STAFF WRITER

An Alameda County supervisor is asking the county to expand its anti-discrimination policies to prohibit bias on the basis of gender identity.

County policies currently prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation, but Supervisor Keith Carson has authored a resolution asking the county to amend its policies to grant protected status to individuals who don't fit into traditional gender roles, such as cross-dressers and transgender individuals.

The death of Newark resident Gwen Araujo, a transgender teen who was born biologically male but lived as a woman, recently brought attention to transgender issues. Prosecutors allege Araujo was slain in 2002 after her true gender was discovered.

Carson said members of the gay community approached him about the resolution, which will apply to county employment codes. The county hasn't updated its discrimination policies since 1990, when transgender people and issues of gender identity weren't as well known.

"The gay community wanted an update in terms of a definition of gender that includes transgenders," Carson said. "Hopefully, it's just a formality."

Carson's resolution will be presented today to a two-person board subcommittee that handles personnel, administration and legislative issues. If the committee approves the resolution, it will be forwarded to the full board for final approval.

The resolution defines gender identity as "a person's sex or gender-related identity, appearance and behavior, whether or not stereotypically associated with a person's assigned sex at birth." It would apply to county employment and hiring policies.

Jamison Green, who sits on the board of the Transgender Law and Policy Institute, a nonprofit that advocates for transgenders, said a number of cities and counties have similar policies on the books. The institute's Web site says four states, including California, 10 counties and 59 cities, including Oakland, have similar policies.

"It's a great idea that really covers very basic human characteristics and some discriminatory behavior that people don't deserve to have," said Green, a county resident who worked with Carson's office on the resolution.

The proposed amendment would extend protections to people who are seen as out of character with traditional gender roles — such as a woman perceived as very masculine — as well as more obvious behaviors, such as cross-dressers and transsexuals.

"Why should somebody be targeted for adverse treatment just because they're wearing clothing somebody disapproves of?" Green said.

Discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is already prohibited by county employment policies, but the amendment would extend protections to those who don't fit traditional gender roles, such as cross-dressers or those undergoing a sex-change operation.

Protections would also be extended to those whose actions are perceived to be unusual for their gender — such as a man seen as overly effeminate.

"This will not only help transgender people, but it will help those perceived to be gender variant," said Patricia Kevena Fili, a transgender advocate who worked with officials to draft the new rules. "I'm very thankful this is being brought forward and I'm hopeful for a positive vote."

Supervisor Keith Carson proposed the amendment after his office was approached by transgender advocates. The amendment would update and augment the county's sexual orientation anti-discrimination policies, which were drafted in 1990.

NOTE: On January 11, the Alameda County Board of Supervisors will be considering landmark legislation to extend non-discrimination protections to the transgender population and is scheduled to take up an ordinance. Written letters of support should be sent to: Supervisor Gail Steele, President, Board of Supervisors, 1221 Oak Street, Suite 536, Oakland, CA 94612. The Board meeting is scheduled to be held about 10:00 in the Board of Supervisors Chambers. Please come and show your support for transgender civil rights. Thanks to Patricia Kevena Fili for her work on this ordinance and her efforts to present this to the Board of Supervisors.

IRS RULING ON SRS/GRS As DEDUCTIBLE!

GLAD Wins Tax Deduction For Genital Reconstruction Surgery (GRS)

(Boston) The Internal Revenue Service has concluded that a transsexual woman represented by Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders (GLAD) may deduct expenses for G.R.S. Genital Reconstruction Surgery as a necessary medical expense. The decision overturned a tax examiner's refusal to allow Rhiannon O'Donnabhain's claimed deduction because he viewed her sex reassignment surgery as "cosmetic".

As the Appeals Officer determined, however, Ms. O'Donnabhain's surgery was medically necessary and an integral part of a professionally prescribed course of treatment for her diagnosed condition. The decision has important implications for other government programs as well as for private contracts of insurance.

"This important decision recognizes that Genital reconstruction Surgery can be as medically necessary for some people as an appendectomy or heart bypass surgery," said GLAD attorney Karen Loewy, who represented Ms. O'Donnabhain in her appeal. "Any notion that medical treatment for a transgender person is purely cosmetic is based on misunderstanding and prejudice, not medical science."

Rhiannon O'Donnabhain underwent Genital reconstruction Surgery in 2001 after having been diagnosed with gender dysphoria. She and her health care providers determined that reconstruction Surgery was a medically necessary step to enable her to live her life as a woman.

"I am greatly relieved by the Appeals Officer's decision," said Ms. O'Donnabhain. "While the money was important to me, so too was the underlying principle. I hope this case sends a clear message that transgender people deserve dignity, respect and equal treatment for our medical care."

Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders (GLAD) is New England's leading legal rights organization dedicated to ending discrimination based on sexual orientation, HIV status and gender identity and expression.

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SEX CHANGE SURGERY BROADCAST WORLDWIDE

by 365Gay.com Newscenter Staff

(Bangkok, Thailand) A sex reassignment operation performed by the man considered the foremost surgeon in the field has been broadcast around the world.

The surgery was shown in a closed circuit telecast to doctors who specialize in transgender patients as a means of promoting Thailand's cutting edge in the field of gender reassignment. "We want to show the world that our standards of treatment are comparable to the international level. That is why we have invited world renowned surgeons from Europe," said Dr Preecha Tiewtranon, who headed the surgical team.

Sex change surgery is a multi-million dollar industry in Thailand and Preecha, considered the leading doctor in the field in Thailand, possibly the world. He began the specialty more than 25 years ago and his reputation is so good the majority of his patients are from the US.

He told reporters prior to the surgery that he performs sex reassignment operations on three to five patients a week. The patient in the televised operation was identified only as "Pae" a 27 year old Thai national. During the delicate three-hour operation, surgeons removed "Pae's" testicles and created an artificial vaginal canal lined with the outer skin of the penis.

Preecha said the procedure was safe but with unskilled surgeons there was a danger of puncturing the patient's rectum and bladder. But, sending patients to Thailand has been criticized by some American doctors. In the US patients are required to undergo a six-month psychiatric evaluation. Thai patients, however, need to see a psychiatrist once.

Preecha dismissed the concern saying that many patients do not want to see a psychiatrist because that would mean they saw themselves as mentally ill. Preecha said that in more than a quarter century of performing sex reassignment operations he has never had a patient return complaining they had made a mistake and should not have had the surgery.

First Iran...Now Saudi Arabia

SAUDI JUDGE RULES FOR TRANSSEXUAL IN FAMILY FIGHT OVER INHERITANCE

By Colin Freeman

A judge in Saudi Arabia has provoked controversy within the strictly Islamic kingdom by ruling in favor of a transsexual, whose scandalized family tried to strip him of half his inheritance after he became a woman.

In a case that has sparked frenzied interest in the kingdom, the son of an extremely wealthy Saudi was sued by his relatives after they discovered that he had secretly spent part of his father's estate on an operation to change his sex. Furious at the perceived disgrace he had brought on their family, his sisters pointed out that under the country's inheritance laws he was entitled to only half as much money as when he was a man.

Now, however, the action has been dropped after a judge in Jeddah ruled that since he was male when he received the inheritance, he was entitled to keep it in full. In future he will be treated under inheritance law as a woman.

Although the ruling does not challenge Saudi men's superior status in law, the spectacle of the conservative judiciary grappling with legal issues of transsexuality has caused a furore in a country where sex is still a taboo subject.

Ever since "Ahmad", as he is known, first confided anonymously to the popular Saudi women's magazine, Sayidaty - which translates as "My lady" - his story has dominated talk in the coffee shops of Jeddah and the capital, Riyadh.

Some of the country's most eminent religious scholars have also weighed in, some vexed merely by the concept of gender ambiguity. "There is no mention in the Koran of a 'she-male'," Sheikh Ahmad Abdul Qadir Al-Maabi, a specialist in inheritance law, told Sayidaty. "The features of both sexes cannot be in one person. How could a child's sex not be known immediately at birth when the signs are obvious?"

According to Sayidaty, which chronicled Ahmad's story in detail, he was aware from a young age that he felt more akin to his sisters than to his brother. "Even as a child, I felt that I was not a normal boy and that something was wrong with me," he said. "I preferred to be with girls and to play with them."

Bullied at secondary school and fed up with persistent parental advice to "toughen up", he persuaded his father to send him abroad for education. At university in America he developed "female bodily features" and began to dress in women's clothes.

After American doctors told him, "You're a female, not a male," he considered a sex-change operation. When he asked his father for the necessary money, however, the outraged patriarch said that he would not recognize him as his daughter - and would cut him out of his inheritance altogether.

His father died shortly afterwards and, after receiving his full inheritance, Ahmad returned to America where he pressed on with the operation. "It was much simpler than I had feared. I began to live, for the first time, what was a normal life. I felt that a huge burden had been lifted from me," he said.

As a woman, he got a job with an American computer company and was planning further studies when the September 11 attacks made him feel that he was in the wrong place. He cut his hair short, wiped off his make-up and returned to Saudi Arabia as a man.

The trauma caused by the death of his mother not long after his arrival prompted him to confess all at a specially convened family meeting. "I told them everything and the meeting degenerated into a screaming match with threats and accusations hurled at me," he said. "I told them that I had not committed a crime and so should not be treated as an outcast. I declared that I had made the right decision by correcting my sex. From that time, my family has had nothing to do with me."

His sister and her husband applied for the family estate - thought to total millions of pounds - to be redivided, with his share cut by half. "They filed a suit even though I am still considered a man and am legally a male in Saudi Arabia," said Ahmad.

Ahmad's family have refused to comment publicly. Ashraf al Saraj, however, a lawyer acting for Ahmad, said that they dropped the case at a preliminary hearing when the judge made it clear that the court was likely to rule against them.

Sheikh Abdul Aziz Al-Misnad, a leading Saudi religious commentator, said: "The inheritors have no right, either religiously or legally, to ask that the money be re-divided. It was divided when the person in question was a male and was divided correctly at that time."

Despite Saudi Arabia's socially conservative image, previous gender change operations have been permitted for patients with physical characteristics of both sexes. They are known as sex "correction" operations and require the permission of a religious scholar.

LGBT Groups Release Beyond the Binary to Support Transgender Students New Tool Kit Will Help Student Activists and Allies Increase School Safety

San Francisco, CA— Recently released data confirms that advocacy groups have been correct in asserting that transgender and gender non-conforming students are alienated from educational environments at alarming rates in California. In response to this alienation and in coordination with the Transgender Day of Remembrance, the Gay-Straight Alliance Network, Transgender Law Center and the National Center for Lesbian Rights announce the official launch of an exciting new resource for student activists and their allies, *Beyond the Binary: A Tool Kit for Gender Identity Activism in Schools*.

Beyond the Binary is designed for student leaders, teachers, activists, and allies who want to address harassment and discrimination against transgender and other gender non-conforming students.

"As a comprehensive guide to policy change, training, and student action around gender identity issues, this new tool kit is a 'must have' resource for student activists and others fighting for gender justice in schools," said Carolyn Laub, Executive Director of Gay-Straight Alliance Network, one of the organizations co-authoring the tool kit. "GSA leaders and advisors have been hungry for more information on addressing transgender issues in school, and this tool kit finally meets their needs."

The 45 page tool kit provides the necessary tools to make schools safer for all students, including concrete steps for designing and implementing a campaign, tips for working with school and district administrations, ideas for conducting trainings, and examples of campus visibility events that can be staged to raise awareness about issues related to gender identity and expression. For example, the tool kit contains a step-by-step guide for planning the Transgender Day of Remembrance on a school campus.

"All students deserve to have a safe and effective education," said Courtney Joslin, Senior Staff Attorney with the National Center for Lesbian Rights, who contributed to the project. "*Beyond the Binary* is an important resource to help ensure that this goal is achieved for all students, regardless of their gender identity or expression."

The voices of real students and activists are included in 7 personal accounts by transgender and gender non-conforming youth who have faced harassment and discrimination and/or fought for a more just school. Finally, the tool-kit includes practical information on legal protections, model anti-harassment policies, a sample letter to a school board, and a listing of additional resources for transgender and gender non-conforming youth.

Chris Daley, Director of the Transgender Law Center believes that now is the ideal time for *Beyond the Binary*. "As more and more young people come out as transgender, teachers, school administrators, and students need to be educated about creating schools where everyone can safely pursue a quality education free of gender identity-based harassment, intimidation and violence."

Beyond the Binary can be downloaded free of charge in PDF format from any of the following websites: www.gsanetwork.org, www.transgenderlawcenter.org, or www.nclrights.org

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MAN DENIED US CITIZENSHIP BECAUSE WIFE IS TRANSSEXUAL

by Gillian Flaccus, ©Associated Press 2004
365Gay.com

(Los Angeles, California) A lawsuit filed Monday against the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services alleges the agency discriminated against a Filipino couple when it denied the husband's legal residency because his wife had a sex change operation nearly 24 years ago.

Jiffy Javenella, 27, entered the country as a legal resident in 2001 as Donita Ganzon's fiancé and applied for permanent resident status after marrying Ganzon later that year. But during interviews with immigration agents earlier this year, Ganzon, 58, revealed that she had undergone a male-to-female sex change operation in 1981.

Within three weeks, the agency denied Javenella's application for permanent residency and revoked his working papers, according to the couple's lawsuit filed in U.S. District Court. The Department of Homeland Security said in a letter to Javenella explaining its decision that "currently, no federal statute or regulation addresses specifically the question whether someone born a man or a woman can surgically change his or her sex."

The letter cited an internal memorandum dated April 16, 2004, that said CIS policy "disallows recognition of change of sex in order for a marriage between two persons born of the same sex to be considered bona fide" The memo calls on the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act which defines marriage for federal purposes as between a man and a woman to support its position.

Marie Sebrechts, CIS spokeswoman, said she could not comment on pending litigation. She declined to answer questions about the agency's policy on recognizing transsexual marriages.

Philip Abramowitz, the couple's attorney, said Javenella is now living illegally in the United States and faces deportation. The decision cannot be appealed and an immigration judge has not scheduled a hearing that would allow Javenella a chance to reapply, he said. "He's in limbo, he has no alternative at all. He has no work permit and he lost his job last month because of that," Abramowitz said. "Everything else was fine she was a U.S. citizen and the marriage was validly entered into."

Alphonso David, an attorney at Lambda Legal who specializes in transsexual lawsuits, said the suit is likely the first to challenge the INS in federal court over the immigration status of married transsexuals. Lambda Legal is currently handling four lawsuits nationwide that deal with the recognition of transsexuals' status, but is not involved in the couple's case, David said. "I'm certainly not aware of any other cases where the INS is interpreting or disregarding someone's sex reassignment," he said. "It's a little problematic because they're saying that someone who has been living as a woman for 24 years is now ... will be treated as a male."

David said the decision also sets up a conflict between state and federal law, because California is one of about 25 states that reissue birth certificates to transsexuals after sex change operations and legally recognize them as their new gender.

Denied Residency, Marriage to Transgender Challenged

News Report, Yong B. Chavez, Philippine News

LOS ANGELES — What makes a woman a woman? If it's looking like one, dressing like one, and loving a man like one, then Donita Ganzon qualifies as a woman. For Jiffy Javellana, Ganzon's husband of four years, she certainly is. "She's my wife," he said. "She's a woman."

Unfortunately for them, the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service, or USCIS, disagreed. The agency denied Javellana's application for permanent residency based on its policy of prohibiting recognition of transgender marriages.

Ganzon is a transsexual. Born a male, she has undergone a sex change operation and is now a woman. In denying her husband's permanent residency application, immigration officials cited the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act, which defined marriage as between a man and a woman. "But what is the definition of a woman?" their lawyer, Philip Abramowitz, asks. Spurred on by the absence of any legal definition of a woman, the Filipino couple filed a lawsuit November 29 to dispute the agency's decision not to recognize their marriage. According to Abramowitz, the couple's lawsuit is the first of its kind to challenge the government in court over the immigration status of transsexuals.

US Govt. Says Penis & Vagina Equals Illegal, Same-Sex Marriage

Phyllis Randolph Frye
a.k.a. THE PHYLLABUSTER
<http://www.nsflaw.us/>, prfrye@aol.com

"Religiously inspired law in America is so radicalized that Federal Government now labels a penis person and a vagina person to be an illegal, same-sex marriage."

The story involves a post-surgical, MTF, US citizen who completed her surgery 27 years ago. The US government says her vagina for 27 years is NOT a female vagina.

The US government is using religiously inspired law written by people who hate lesbian and gay people so much that they consider this vaginaed woman to still be a legal male, 27 years after she became vaginaed.

If you do not think it is religiously inspired, please read the second paragraph of the Littleton decision (9 SW 3rd 225) which can be found at christielee.net. "The deeper philosophical (and now legal) question is: can a physician change the gender of a person with a scalpel, drugs and counseling, or is a person's gender immutably fixed by our Creator at birth?"

These religious haters are filled with vile and meanness that they are declaring, in federal law, that this vaginaed person and her penis person husband to be an illegal same-sex marriage.

As you read Littleton and any other BAD case on the legal status of transgenders, you will note that they ALL GO BACK TO CORBETT, the 1970 case in Britain.

Guess what! The British Parliament rendered Corbett moot when it enacted the Gender Recognition Act of 2004.

Guess what else! All of these bad cases ignore the published medical science of the past five years that clearly demonstrate gender identity to be IN THE BRAIN.

THIS IS A LEGAL FIGHT FOR EVERY LESBIAN, GAY, BI-SEXUAL AND TRANSGENDERED LEGAL ORGANIZATION. If a 27 years old, post-op vagina is not a legal female vagina for the purposes of legal marriage IN FEDERAL LAW, then no same-sex marriage will ever pass federal muster! (For more on the legal side, go to <http://www.nsflaw.us/>, click on my name and follow the links to the published legal articles that I have authored or co-authored on this issue.)

Ganzon, a registered nurse, was born in the Philippines and has lived in the United States for more than 25 years, Abramowitz said. She was granted U.S. citizenship in 1987 six years after her sex change operation and given a certificate that listed her sex as female, the lawsuit said. The couple met in the Philippines in 2000 and Javenella was granted legal residence in the United States on June 5, 2001. The couple married in Las Vegas on Nov. 21, 2001.

As Ganzon's fiancé, Javellana entered the country in 2001, and applied for permanent residency after they married in Clark County, Nevada later that year. In June of this year, Ganzon and Javellana were interviewed separately by immigration officers as part of his green card application process. Ganzon suspected that the separate interviews were done to ascertain if theirs was an arranged marriage because of their age gap (she's 58; he's 27).

While making small talk with the interviewer, Ganzon revealed that she had had a male-to-female sex change operation 24 years ago. Loquacious by nature, she didn't know that the revelation would lead to Javellana's green card application being denied. "They have my file. I assumed that they know," Ganzon said. "Besides, it's not something that I was hiding." She recalled that she was later asked to sign a form, which she thought attested only to the fact that she was formerly a man. According to her, the document turned out to be a withdrawal of petition of her sponsorship of Javellana.

Marie Sebrechts, USCIS public affairs officer, declined to comment on the case while it is in litigation, but emphasized that she believed there was no intent to mislead Ganzon into signing a petition withdrawal. "That's not how our officers operate," Sebrechts said. But according to Abramowitz, the signed petition withdrawal is "meaningless because there's no petition to withdraw. That was for the fiancé visa, but Jiffy already had that," he said.

Continued on Page 21

Takin' Care of Biz...

TGSF FINANCIAL REPORT

As of December 20, 2004

Assets

Cash	2791.99
Decorations	1000.00
Beverages	200.00
Total	3991.99

Liabilities and Equity

Accounts Payable	
Total	0.00

Statement of TGSF Income

Revenues

Memberships	70.00
Donations	277.00
Advertising	100.00
Cotillion Ticket Sales	1165.00
Total	1612.00

Expenses

Channel	343.04
Phone	51.04
Cowell Theatre Payment (2nd half)	1490.00
Cotillion Flyers	215.34
Insurance payment (1st half)	692.33
Total	2791.75

Net Income (Loss) (1179.75)

PISSR

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PISSR is committed to establishing gender-neutral bathrooms. We believe that all people, regardless of their gender identification or presentation, have the right to access safe and dignified restroom facilities without fear of harassment, judgment, or violence. General meetings are always the first Monday of the month; 7 pm at 870 Market Street (Flood Building), 4th floor in San Francisco.

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as of December 20, 2004

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Both via the United Way

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please contact the Webmistress.*

For Trannies And The Men Who Love Them, Divas Is The Place

John Koopman, SF Chronicle

It's after midnight at Divas. The lower-level bar is packed. Coco is lip-synching to Christina Aguilera. It's loud and rocking. Men sit at the bar and nuzzle women standing next to them. Two girls start dancing in the aisle, getting closer and closer until they're bumping and grinding, to the cheers of the people around them.

Pretty young women circulate through the crowd. "What are you here for?" they ask strangers. It's a good question. Because this is not just any bar in any city. This is Divas, the most famous, or possibly notorious, transgender bar in San Francisco. It is the hangout for post-op transsexuals, pre-ops, cross-dressers, gender-benders, female impersonators and the men who love them. "I don't know why people think this place is so scary," said one patron. "It's just another bar."

In some ways, Divas is just like any other bar. There are three levels open to the public. The ground-floor bar, when it's not being used for the lip-synch show, is just another bar. Men sit on stools and banter with the bartender. Televisions are on either end of the bar.

The third floor has a dance floor and a stripper pole. There are topless shows some nights, and the place is like a regular strip club. Women dance and tease. Men tuck dollar bills in G-strings. There's the requisite disco ball hanging from the ceiling.

The fourth floor is a more intimate bar setting, with the best-looking bartenders serving drinks, and a few sofas and easy chairs for socializing. But that's where normalcy, as American society would define it, ends.

This is the sexual frontier. There are no easy identifiers for the women who go there, nor for the men. It's not as simple as gay or straight, male or female. "I'd say 85 percent of the men who come here are married, and a lot of them have kids," said bartender Alexis Miranda.

The owner, Steve Berkey, said the majority of the male patrons consider themselves straight. They just like their women to have a little something extra. The men are called "trannie chasers" by some of the girls, and there is a real love-hate relationship between them.

Alana Murtaugh, a 25-year-old transsexual from South Texas, said a lot of the men at Divas tend to objectify the girls, or they simply have a fetish for T-girls, as they are sometimes called. "For a lot of them, the girls are just sexual playthings," she said. "Plus, the men have the luxury of just visiting. They can come in and have fun and they go back to their nice, easy lives. We live in this world."

The men come in all sizes, shapes and ethnicities. I went to the bar several times and saw white, Asian, Latino and African American patrons. There were men in suits, men in jeans, men in windbreakers. Men with distinguished gray hair and young hip-hop types with shaved heads and baggy pants.

The women are just as diverse. They range from extremely beautiful to, well, men in dresses. But most are divalike. They are carefully made up and dress exotically. They say a straight man can't tell the difference, most of the time, between a transsexual woman and biological woman. That's probably true. The one tip-off is that the transgender women are almost too perfect. You spot a beautiful woman out of the corner of your eye and turn to look. Even in a place like Divas where you know the women are transsexual, you can't help yourself.

The interaction between men and women at Divas is similar to that of any bar, or pickup joint, except that the women are more likely to approach the men. There are two reasons for this. For one thing, they are perhaps more interested in finding a mate. A lot of the women have spent their entire lives trying to find their feminine selves, and they want validation that they are, in fact, women.

And then there is the second reason: Some of them are working girls. Divas is in Polk Gulch, ground zero for gay, straight and trannie prostitution in the city. Some women work the street and then step into Divas for a drink, to rest their feet and maybe see if they can find a trick inside.

And because the place has a liquor license, the stakes are high. Divas has an order for a 30-day suspension and a year's probation as a result of a prostitution investigation earlier this year. The order is under appeal. "I don't want that kind of thing going on in here," Berkey said. "That kind of suspension would kill me. But I can't watch everyone all the time. The best I can do is keep it low-key."

Berkey estimates that 90 percent of the women at the club have worked in the sex industry, in some form or another, at some point in their lives. There are many reasons for that. Part of it is a combination of society and economics. The women need jobs, but a lot of companies aren't comfortable having transgender people as employees. And being a transsexual can be expensive, depending on how far the woman takes it. There are hormones to take, surgeries to be performed.

Beyond that, sex with a man validates a male-to-female transsexual's femininity. "And a lot of these girls need all the validation they can get," Berkey said. "Sex is a rite of passage for them."

In the Divas world, almost everything is about sex. Alexis the bartender said most of the men who like trannies want hard, raw sex with someone who also wants it. They are more likely, she said, to get it from a transsexual than a biological woman. "Look around at women today," she said. "They dress like men, or they're in sweats or whatever. They're not sexy. They're not feminine. A transgender

person works hard to be feminine, and they still have the male sexual hunger. So it's a perfect match."

Many of the trannie chasers might consider themselves heterosexual, but Jeff is a straight-up bisexual. Has been since he was a young boy playing games with other boys in the backyards of the East Bay. He likes women and will probably marry one someday. And he likes transsexuals because they are beautiful and sexual. "Primarily, I like women," he said. "It's a cliché, but this really is the best of both worlds."

Jeff, who asked that his last name not be used, said the men he knows at Divas are not interested in "guy sex." But they're into a kind of sex that a lot of wives and girlfriends don't like.

Although sex may be the primary concern of the patrons, Divas means something more to the women who go there. For Alana, it's almost a second home. It's the transgender equivalent of the bar in "Cheers." "This is a place where I can be myself," she said. "I don't have to worry about what anyone thinks. I can just show up and know I'll find people I know, people I can talk to and have a good time."

Alana is pretty, with soft white skin, and can easily pass for a woman in a store or on the street. She's fortunate that way. And she recognizes that she and her friends go there to meet men who want them. Everyone knows what the score is. A woman doesn't have to wonder how the man will react when he finds out she was not born a woman. It is a complementary relationship.

Even so, it's a murky world. There are various stages of transgenderdom, and everyone has his or her own particular likes, wants and needs in a partner. If you're a man and have sex with a post-op transsexual, are you straight? What if the person dresses as a woman but still has a penis?

"You know, these questions go round and round and round," Berkey said. "There are countless discussions, countless variations of gender identity and sexual identity. In the end, what I've figured out is, 'Who cares?' It's all about what you like, and what feels good. Definitions don't mean anything."

Berkey is 56, an amiable Midwesterner who looks a little like the actor Robert Conrad. He worked in the construction industry for years before he bought Divas. The career change had much to do with the fact that he is married to a post-op transsexual and he thought they could run the club together. He's owned Divas for about three years. The bar used to be known as the Motherlode, a block away at Post and Larkin.

"If I weren't married, I could have a lot of fun here," he said Saturday night as the lip-synching reached a fevered pitch. He shined a flashlight on the rump of a woman dancing in the aisle. "My wife thinks that's all I'm after, so I have to be careful not to give her anything to be jealous over."

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Marriage to Transgender Challenged...

Continued from Page 18

The Los Angeles-based couple met in December 2000 while Ganzon was vacationing in the Philippines when her nephew introduced them at a party. Ganzon remembers the flush of their first meeting with the unabashed giddiness of a girl in love for the first time. They sat together, he sang a song for her, and after a couple of days of being inseparable, they decided to be together for good.

Ganzon immediately confided to Javellana the truth about her transsexuality the first night that they were intimate. Unlike her previous boyfriend, Javellana didn't run away upon discovering her past. According to her, he didn't even flinch. "He said, 'you're more beautiful than any other woman,'" Ganzon said. With that pronouncement, she was emboldened to share with Javellana everything about her past.

Born as Celedonio Ganzon on Jul. 24, 1946, the svelte Bataan, Philippines native grew up under the watchful eyes of typically conservative Filipino parents. After entering the nursing profession, Ganzon did a tour in Vietnam in 1968 and worked for the U.S. government as a public health nurse. Six years later, America beckoned. It was then that Ganzon made a life-changing decision to have a sex reassignment surgery, after a particularly wrenching break-up with a Caucasian live-in boyfriend who left her with a debilitating bout of depression. "Back then, I thought I was gay. I thought I was a homosexual," she said. "But I wasn't. I was meant to be a woman."

After doing extensive research, Ganzon decided to have a sex change operation in 1981 under Dr. Stanley Biber at a Colorado hospital. Since then, she has lived her life as a woman. When she applied for and was granted U.S. citizenship in 1987, her newly issued passport indicated her name as Donita Ganzon, and her gender as female.

Like most women her age, she has had her share of heartaches. But none can compare to what she's facing now. "I can't even think of what will happen to me if I lose my husband," she said. Although both know there is a possibility that Javellana may be deported to the Philippines, neither has made plans about what to do if it happens.

For Javellana, being able to go back to his simple life in Negros Occidental might be an appealing alternative to the unrelenting media attention that he has been subjected to recently.

He used to work as a copier machine technician back home. When he came to America, the soft-spoken Negrense first worked as a repairman before getting a regular job as a kitchen helper in Kaiser Permanent Los Angeles, where Ganzon also works as a registered nurse. He dreamed of becoming a U.S. marine, but gave up after failing the qualifying test four times. "I told him it just wasn't meant to be," Ganzon said.

Since losing his job last October when his work permit expired, Javellana spends most of his time reading and educating himself about their case. At home, he takes care of the household chores. He also spends a lot of time praying. The many religious images in their apartment are a testament to their Catholic faith. "Donita and I pray that everything will be okay," he said.

In October, Javellana officially became an "out-of-status" immigrant. According to Abramowitz, the government has not instituted deportation procedures. "It's pretty early in the game for that procedure," said Virginia Kice, spokeswoman for the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, or ICE. "He will definitely have the opportunity to be heard during the hearing process," she said. "And since he's not a threat, he won't be detained," Kice said.

Abramowitz said that Javellana is amenable to removal proceedings, but that he would do his best to ensure a positive outcome for the couple. An immigration lawyer for more than 26 years, Abramowitz has handled about 20,000 Filipino immigrants' cases. He admitted, though, that none compares to the magnitude of the Javellana-Ganzon case.

Abramowitz, who also represented Filipino veterans in the '80s, said that he took the case because he believed that his clients have the right to live together in harmony. He says he doesn't care if he has to forgo the possible history-making circumstances of the case if it means that Javellana will get his green card in an out-of-court settlement.

"I don't need to set precedents. If the government chooses to settle this case quietly, I'd be equally happy, because then my clients will be happy," he said. Abramowitz claimed that the publicity generated from the case has emboldened people to call him to pledge their support.

But a few members of transsexual organizations have expressed their concern about the impact of the case on the future of transgender rights. Some have even Abramowitz' law offices to say so. "The problem is that transgenders want to be able to live their lives, too, and they want to be able to have jobs and be able to fall in love like any other person and unfortunately, the government doesn't always make that easy," said Mara Keisling, executive director of the National Center for Transgender Equality.

Transgender Youth Gaining Acceptance...

Continued from Page 11

inclusive under a microscope — from student handbook language to the tradition of crowning a homecoming queen and king.

"It's going to make a lot of students more comfortable whether they're transgender or not," Kindelspire said. In some cases, students are the ones who are pushing for education. At several Bay Area schools, including George Washington High School in San Francisco's Richmond District, students have organized Transgender Day of Remembrance events honoring victims of anti-transgender violence. This year, student leaders at Washington High invited Sylvia Guerrero, Gwen's mother, to talk at an optional assembly that more than 100 students attended.

Guerrero, whose appearance kicked off a speaking tour that will take her to a number of local schools, spoke standing next to a large black-and-white photograph of her daughter. "I don't want any of you who are transgender or gay or bisexual or whatever, if you're different, to be treated badly or harassed or treated like you're less than the person next to you," she said.

Administrators who have made accommodations for transgender students say they are motivated by a sense of fairness — and also by the law.

California's Student Safety and Violence Prevention Act of 2000 holds that public schools have a legal duty to protect students from discrimination based on actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. In addition, advocates contend that students are protected by Title IX of the federal Education Amendment Acts of 1972, which prohibits sex discrimination and also have a federal constitutional right to equal protection from harassment.

When schools ask whether they have to use the name and pronoun a student prefers, the answer, simply, is yes, said Courtney Joslin, an attorney at National Center for Lesbian Rights. If a teacher persistently and intentionally ignores a student's requests about a preferred name and pronoun, then "it's our position that would be a form of harassment," Joslin said. But many schools aren't aware of the law, or interpret it differently or flout it.

Devin Roark, 18, almost dropped out of Antioch High School because of the harassment he endured after he came out as transgender last spring, just weeks before the end of his senior year. "I was never beat up, but a few times it was very, very close," said Roark, who was born female but now identifies as male.

A few teachers were supportive, but most weren't and couldn't bring themselves to use Roark's new name. "A lot of people told me they didn't want to hear it, and I was being selfish for trying to tell them to do this," Roark said.

Antioch High's principal, Jeff Reich, said he wasn't aware of the controversy over a student's name. "If I had been asked about it by a teacher, I would have said as long as that's what the person wants to be addressed ..." he said. "I wouldn't have any problem with it. "If someone wanted to be called 'it' I'd call them 'it,'" he said, then added, "I guess I don't really understand it."

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With the publicity garnered by same-sex marriage issues this year, Abramowitz said that he understands why some groups are reluctant to voice their support for their case. "Some are hesitant because they are fearful of the possible negative public opinion. They don't want the attention," he said, adding that despite some groups' concerns, he has received supportive calls from gay, lesbian and transgender groups, some even offering to help in the case.

Still, he insists that this case should not be put in the same category as same-sex marriages. "I'm arguing that we're looking at apples and oranges here. The Defense of Marriage Act deals with same-sex marriages. This is not a same-sex marriage," Abramowitz said.

The Other Women

PEDRO ALMODÓVAR'S TRANSGENDER OUTLAWS

By June Thomas

Pedro Almodóvar is a director who loves to *épatar* bourgeois moviegoers. After a filmography littered with sadomasochistic lesbians, smack-shooting nuns, and comatose toreras, the most shocking element of his latest movie, *Bad Education*, is the absence of female characters. In his first 14 films, Almodóvar established himself as a "specialist in women," famously constellating his films around dominant leading ladies—Carmen Maura, Marisa Paredes, Victoria Abril, Cecilia Roth—and brilliant, oddball supporting actresses like Chus Lampreave and Rossy de Palma. In *Bad Education*, women-born-women are all but absent; when they do appear, it is fleetingly, as grieving put-upon mothers or slightly batty aunts. The "real" female roles are played by transvestites and transsexuals.

Perhaps this is a natural progression. It has always been the theater of womanhood that appeals to Almodóvar. In a 1981 interview, he said, "I write better for women than for men, who are dramatically boring for me."

In the Almodóvarian universe, the dichotomy of womanhood isn't madonna-whore, it's housewife-superstar. (Now, there's a cross-dresser made for Almodóvar.) His women are either mousey, harried types—the nuns of *Dark Habits*, the tragic housewife of *What Have I Done to Deserve This?* who dreams of owning a curling iron, the dowdy mother of *Bad Education*—or glamorous, over-the-top vamps with high heels, big hair, and Hollywood wardrobes. Clothes and cosmetics confer happiness—or, at least, confidence. In the opening scenes of *The Flower of My Secret*, Leo is forced to dress down and take to the streets asking strangers to help her remove her too-tight boots; when her friends see her, they flee the sight of a woman so lost. To be plain and unadorned is to be helpless and unattractive. Almodóvar's women appear most comfortable when they are painted and preened and, preferably, on stage.

Or maybe Almodóvar's just into dressing up. Throughout his career, he has used representatives of three groups to explore Spanish culture: priests and nuns, bullfighters, and actors. Again and again, his films depict the rituals associated with putting on the costumes that confer authority: priests donning robes for mass; nuns adjusting their habits; matadors putting on the suit of lights; and, most commonly, actors and actresses making up and dressing—or undressing—themselves for a performance.

Given this obsession with exaggerated versions of womanhood and the rituals of dressing, as well as his roots in the underground and gay culture, it shouldn't be surprising that Almodóvar has used drag queens, transvestites, and transsexuals to explore questions of authenticity, ambition, and romanticism.

Almodóvar has always had a gift for subversive casting. In his sixth film, 1987's *Law of Desire*, Tina, a male-to-female transsexual character played by a female actress, becomes a loving surrogate mother to a child abandoned by her birth mother, Ada, played by real-life male-to-female transsexual Bibi Andersen.

In this scene, Ada returns from her adventures in Milan to reclaim her daughter. The girl rejects her, preferring Tina's reliability and the purity of her love. Almodóvar almost always portrays transgender characters as loyal to a fault, which is ironic, since they have betrayed the bodies they were born with. Unlike women-born-women, they aren't slaves to their hormones—or, at least, they control the dosage.

Why the obsession with physical transformation? For Almodóvar, transsexuals represent authenticity and a rebellion against the constricting norms of social conformity. What could be more natural than rejecting a body that doesn't fit, or rules that don't make sense?



and disappointed her. Here she gives in to her fantasies, but despite the sexual imagery of the scene, it's all clean, wholesome family fun.



On a muggy night in Madrid, *Law of Desire*'s Tina begs a street cleaner to hose her down, then she orgasmically luxuriates in the stream of cold water while her brother and surrogate child look on in a mixture of shock and envy.

Although he isn't a political filmmaker, Almodóvar loves to undercut stereotypes. His transsexuals are not hypersexual creatures. Tina has had two great loves, both of whom betrayed

Almodóvar's transsexuals are romantics. In this scene from *Law of Desire*, Tina talks to her brother, Pablo, a gay man who has lost his memory after crashing his car into a tree while fleeing the authorities, who suspect him, wrongly, of killing his lover. In an attempt to break through his amnesia, she shows him a picture of the two of them as children. She tells him they began life as brothers but that she fell in love with their father and became sexually involved with him. When their mother caught father and son together, they fled to Morocco, where they decided the son would become a daughter.

Pablo is horrified—not by the incestuous or homosexual elements of the relationship, but by Tina's attitude. Years after she was abandoned for "another woman," and despite having mutilated her body for him, Tina is still madly in love with their father. "I would have given my life for him," she tells her brother. Instead she just surrendered her penis.

1991's *High Heels* centered on the ultimate Almodóvar woman: Becky, a diva di tutte dive, and the myriad ways in which a woman of her scale becomes an object of impersonation. A popular singer and neglectful mother, Becky returns home to Spain after more than a decade away and discovers that her timid daughter, Rebecca, is in many ways living out a version of her life. Rebecca dresses in a pale imitation of her mother's over-the-top style; she's married to one of Becky's ex-lovers; she's even friends with drag queen Femme Lethal, a Becky impersonator. The hall-of-mirrors effect is multiplied when they attend Lethal's show and members of the audience imitate the performance while Becky watches.

In this scene, Lethal flirts with Becky as she helps his metamorphosis from an exaggerated version of her mother into an attractive man. Lethal complains about having to suffer physical discomfort for the sake of a good figure, but in his case, the suffering is temporary. In another smart piece of casting, Lethal is played by Miguel Bosé, a teen heartthrob when the movie was released, who is the son of the great bullfighter Luis Miguel Dominguín and Lucia Bosé, an actress and former Miss Italy.

The sometimes wacky and yet profoundly affecting characters in 1999's *All About My Mother*—among them a grieving mother, a pregnant nun, and a woman whose Alzheimer's-afflicted husband behaves like her child—are two gender outlaws: hookers with breasts and penises who can pass as women but sometimes exemplify the worst aspects of "male" behavior—egotism, selfishness, and machismo.

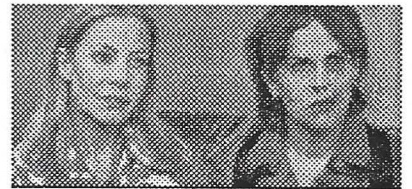
La Agrado—so named because she has "always tried to make people's lives agreeable" is loyal and kind, and she has invested money and pain in her quest to become a convincing facsimile of a woman. She detests drag queens, who lack commitment—many don't even try to look like women. Antonia San Juan, who plays Agrado, refuses to accept any gender label other than "actress"; in life, as in art, she insists on "realness."

When, because of the weakness of a natural-born woman, the night's show—a performance of *A Streetcar Named Desire*—can't go on, backstage worker Agrado entertains the audience with the story of her transformation. She describes her "made-to-measure" body and reveals how much each piece of cosmetic surgery has cost—the work on her eyes, nose, and jaw; the silicone implants in her breasts, hips, and ass; the electrolysis. By assigning each physical enhancement a price tag, her femininity has a precise value. Although she has purchased her body, Agrado is one of the most genuine characters in the movie—she speaks her mind, fights for her beliefs, and is fiercely loyal to her friends.

Her vulnerability—and her willingness to satisfy their curiosity—wins over the initially hostile crowd. "It costs a lot to be authentic," she tells the audience, but without authenticity it's impossible to achieve your dreams.

Of course, not all Almodóvar's gender outlaws are faithful, honest, and sympathetic. Sometimes, even when they look great and are dramatically fascinating, they go too far. In *All About My Mother*, no one causes more pain than Lola, who is statuesque, selfish, and apparently irresistible. Earlier in the movie, an old friend who can take no more tells her: "You're not a human being, Lola. You're an epidemic." "I always was excessive," she replies.

To a viewer who has not seen the rest of the movie, the disapproving older woman in this scene might appear to be offended by the sight of a lesbian couple cooing over a baby. In fact, she's the child's grandmother, hurt that the baby is with the person who brought about her daughter's death. More confusing still, the taller, more feminine woman on the left tells the child, "You're with Papa," while her companion refers to her as "mujer"—woman. As always with Almodóvar, appearances can be deceiving.



Remember Gwen Araujo!

Gwen Amber Rose Araujo (1985 - 2002)

...A transgender teenager from Newark, CA was murdered at a party by a group of men upon discovery of her transgender status. Twenty months after Gwen Araujo's death the jury deadlocked on whether her attackers were guilty of first or second-degree murder. According to Alameda County District Attorney's Office, none of the jurors were willing to settle for the lesser offense of manslaughter — despite efforts by defense attorneys in the case to argue that Gwen's killers were somehow justified because she did not disclose her transgender identity to them. The prosecutor already has stated that he will re-try the three defendants, Michael Magidson, Jose Merel, and Jason Cazares, for murder.



Make Your Money Count!

To contribute to Gwen's family directly: **Gwen Araujo Memorial Fund**, Bank Of America, Any BofA branch location, Acct# 10598-05854

To support transgender education work: **Gwen Araujo Transgender Education Fund** c/o Horizons Foundation, 870 Market St. Suite, 728 San Francisco, CA 94102 (415) 398 - 2333 / www.horizonsfoundation.org

Thank you!



Groundbreaking Initiative Launched Focused Specifically on Securing Civil Rights for All Transgender Californians

EQCA ANNOUNCES THE LAUNCH OF TRANSEQCA

SAN FRANCISCO – Equality California is pleased to announce the launch of a new initiative, Transgender Equality California (TransEQCA). TransEQCA will focus its efforts specifically towards advancing the civil rights of transgender Californians. The National Center for Lesbian Rights and the Transgender Law Center have joined with Equality California as lead partners on this project working in close coordination with local organizers from the transgender community.

TransEQCA is a statewide effort to strengthen and increase transgender civil rights both through education and the legislative process. This new initiative will be managed by Danny Kirchoff, who has recently joined EQCA's staff after serving as the Program Coordinator at the Horizons Foundation, the Bay Area's lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community foundation.

The launch of TransEQCA builds on the success of a loose-knit network of activists and allies that formed around the introduction of EQCA's California Gender Non-Discrimination Act of 2003 (AB 196), authored by Assemblyman Mark Leno (D-San Francisco) and signed into law by former Governor Davis.

Most recently TransEQCA participated in a groundbreaking hearing of the California Assembly Select Committee on LGBT Families chaired by Assemblymember Mark Leno (D-San Francisco) in San Francisco on transgender health care issues, attended by more than 120 community members. At this hearing, EQCA's Executive Director Geoffrey Kors announced a five-point plan to end discrimination in health care against transgender Californians. In the coming months, TransEQCA will continue its work against the discrimination faced by transgender people when attempting to access medically necessary health care, as well as other pressing legislative issues facing the transgender community.

Although Equality California has been successful in advancing civil rights for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people, transgender Californians still face multiple barriers to living lives free of discrimination and frequent threats of violence.

"This is an exciting time for California's transgender community. On the heels of our recent legislative victories, supported by the stewardship of Assemblyman Mark Leno and EQCA's Executive Director Geoffrey Kors, we are uniquely positioned to support our elected officials in limiting the pervasive institutional discrimination currently faced by transgender Californians." says Danny Kirchoff, Manager of TransEQCA, who, in addition to his work at EQCA, serves on the board of directors of the Transgender Law Center and the LGBT Advisory Committee of the San Francisco Human Rights Commission.

Founded in 1998, Equality California is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, grassroots-based, statewide advocacy organization whose mission is to ensure the dignity, safety, equality and civil rights of all lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) Californians. We can be contacted through our website at www.eqca.org.

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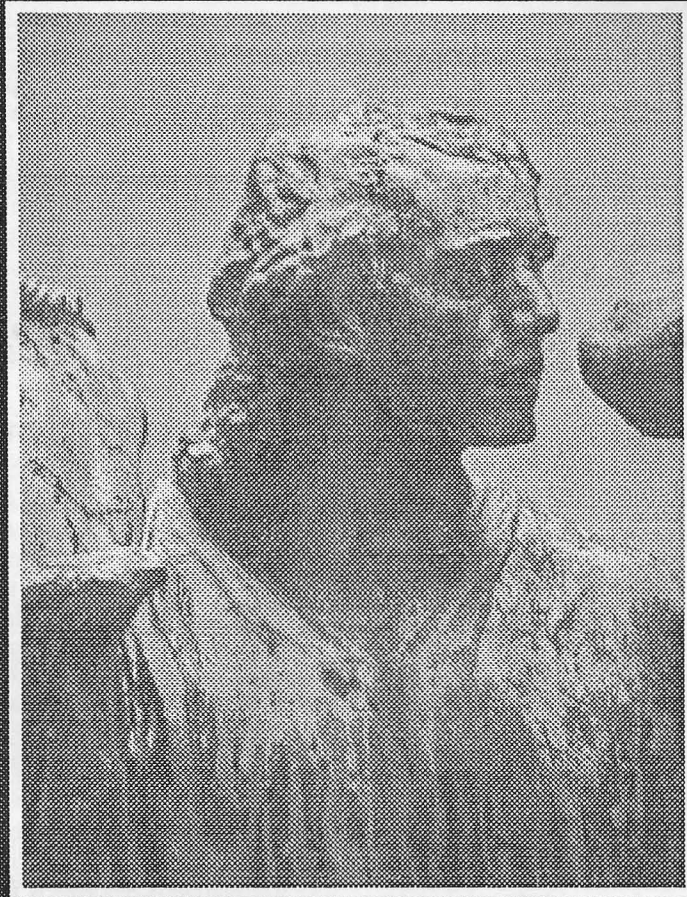
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<http://www.ren.org>

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Deadline June 1, 2005

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