

# Polare Edition 37

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## Manager's Report

by Elizabeth Riley, Gender Centre Manager

### A Year of Significant Developments

This year has seen a number of significant developments for the transgender community in N.S.W. Some of those developments have had, or promise to have, a positive impact for transgender people while others continue to present us with major challenges.

### Law Reform Commission's Review of the Anti-Discrimination Act 1977

Perhaps the most disappointing result came with the publishing of the Law Reform Commission's review of the Anti-Discrimination Act. Eight years in the making this review offered little joy for the transgender community.

Virtually no changes were recommended to the legislation covering transgender people despite the clear anomalies that currently exist.

In particular the concerns over the dividing of transgender people into "recognised" and "other" transgenders were not addressed.

As a result the anti-discrimination legislation that is designed to protect the rights of transgender people is itself discriminatory on the basis of surgical status.

We are deeply disappointed that the Law Reform Commission chose not to remove this anomaly despite the many submissions it received requesting it do so. The review is now in the hands of the Attorney General's Department and the Gender Centre, the Anti-Discrimination Board, the Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby and N.S.W. have once again forwarded submissions requesting the removal of the term "recognised" to ensure the provision of uniform protection for our community.

It was also a recommendation of the review that the exemption for sport be retained. Despite this some sporting organisations have independently chosen to allow transgender people to compete as a member of their chosen sex. We commend those organisations for their common sense approach to this issue.

### Trans Success

There appear to be an increasing number of successes for members of the transgender community worldwide that we can all take heart in. Perhaps the greatest accolades should go to Georgina Beyer of New Zealand who is the first transsexual in the world to be elected as a member of parliament. That constitutes a fantastic achievement and we wish her continuing success. Accolades also to the recently elected transgender mayor of Kalgoorlie in Western Australia.

We should also acknowledge the three transsexuals who stood for various House of Representatives seats for the Australian Democrats at the last Federal Election. While they were unsuccessful they all polled well and achieved the equivalent percentage of votes as did other Democrat candidates. Well done all of you and "Go Girls".

The British transsexuals who successfully fought for the right to have sex reassignment surgery covered under the National Health

## Feature Articles



When I was about 6-7 years of age I went to a school sports-carnival and got lost coming home. That night I had a peculiar dream.

### Laura's Day of Blood

In late October 2000, Laura, a believer in Paganism, will have her reassignment surgery. She's taken time getting to this point and before she goes she hopes to have a ritual or two with some pagan friends. The need for her is important, to mark a rite-of-passage.

### The Top Gun Who Became Flight Officer Caz

Flight Lieutenant Caroline Paige, a 39 year-old R.A.F. Officer who has flown missions over some of the world's most dangerous war zones including the Gulf War and the Bosnian conflict is waiting to return to flying duties having undergone a sex-change operation.

### My Life as a Man

All my life I felt like a stranger, not understanding what I was feeling, an empty feeling inside, searching for who I truly am. I tried to be as masculine as I could. I was the first girl in my school to take auto mechanics, the first to be expelled for wearing slacks.

### Accepting the Balance of Things

Sarah attempts to help others to deflect some of the intolerant attitudes sometimes thrust upon us by helping to remind us of some of the things that have made us strong, and to also help up to remember and cope with the fact that we don't live in an ideal world.

Scheme of that country are also to be congratulated. This could set a strong precedent for the same access in this country.

The recently released film *The Brandon Teena Story* has also done much to increase awareness of the plight of transgender people. While Brandon's story can only be described as horrific, the film was extraordinarily powerful and carried enormous potential to challenge community attitudes. The winning of Best Actress Oscar by Hilary Swank, who played Brandon, reflects the sea change of growing acknowledgement of transgender identity.

And, finally, all the quiet achievers in the community who stoically maintain their own identity against all outside resistance - keep up the good work.

### **The Fifth International Conference on Sex and Gender**

Last year we reported on The Third International Conference on Sex and Gender which was held at Oxford University in England. We are pleased to report that The Fifth International Conference will be held in 2002 in Perth, Western Australia.

The Conference is being organised by the International Foundation for Androgynous Studies and will draw many speakers and attendees from around the world. This is a great coup for Australia and I expect it will be a fantastic conference and a must for all in the transgender community.

Stay tuned for details on the conference in the coming months.

### **The Transgender Working Party**

The Transgender Working Party under the auspice of The Department for Women is continuing its work to facilitate social justice and equity for the transgender community.

As reported last year the working party comprises permanent representatives from the Anti-Discrimination Board (A.D.B.), the Office of the Director of Equal Opportunity in Public Employment (O.D.E.O.P.E.), the Health Care Complaints Commission (H.C.C.C.), N.S.W. Department of Education and Training (D.E.T.), the Department for Women (D.F.W.), the Gender Centre, N.S.W. Health, Department of Corrective Services, N.S.W. Police Service, Department of Community Services and the Public Sector Management Office.

The working party has focused its attention on the issue of employment for transgender people, particularly in the N.S.W. Public Sector. To this end representatives from the Gender Centre, P.S.M.O., A.D.B. and O.D.E.O.P.E. have met on several occasions to review the P.S.M.O.s publication of the Employers Handbook.

The handbook is now inclusive of transgender people and this will help to facilitate equitable access to employment in the public sector for members of the transgender community. Other strategies to assist this process are also being explored.

### **Employment Equity Specialists Association (E.E.S.A)**

The Gender Centre is maintaining an active involvement with E.E.S.A. to keep transgender employment on the agenda for E.E.O. practitioners. A two day conference was held in November 1999 with transgender issues featuring prominently on the program. One hundred people attended the conference including four members from the transgender community.

This transgender presence had an enormous impact on other participants who responded positively to the issues. Special thanks to the transgenders who attended for their efforts in raising awareness of others and for presenting the human face of the community.

Through our work with E.E.S.A. we hope to achieve strong support from the E.E.O. practitioners in the public sector in advancing work opportunities for transgenders.

### **N.S.W. D.E.T.**

Sustained training has been continued through the N.S.W. Department of Education and Training. The Gender Centre has provided training to teachers, student counsellors and students within the system on transgender issues and gender in general. The video *Valuing Diversity* is slowly spreading information into the N.S.W. public school system.

### **N.S.W. Police Service**

The N.S.W. Police Service are still developing their policy in relation to transgender people. Due to complexities within the service this process has been quite a daunting task but progress has been made and the policy should soon be available for publication in *Polare*. We expect the final draft of this policy and its implementation will go a long way to improving the relationship between the transgender community and the police in N.S.W..

### **Summary**

The long-term significance of the above, and other ongoing initiatives, will be to change cultural attitudes towards transgender people and create an environment where we can expect the same levels of respect and dignity that the majority of people take for granted. This paragraph appeared in the last two annual reports and I repeat it here because I believe it has continued relevance.

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# Laura's Day of Blood

## A Reassignment Surgery of Her Own

by Laura Seabrook

Article appeared in Polare magazine: October 2000 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015



Laura Seabrook is a Neo-Pagan, a modern Gallae.

**W**hen I was about 6 or 7 years of age I went to a school sports carnival and got lost coming home. I waited at the wrong exit, and the public transport staff, taking pity on me, gave me a lift home. As it happened I got home at least an hour earlier than the rest of the school children. That night I had a peculiar dream:

*I started my transition in 1994, and it has been a long path leading to it, full of twists and turns and full of surprises.*

I dreamt that I was wandering lost in the night down a dirt road. I'm dressed as a schoolboy and carrying a bag full of textbooks. Then, a vanguard (my father owned one of those) drives by and stops. The door opens and a young woman wearing a pillbox hat offers me a lift. I get in, not knowing what else to do.

On the back seat are two enormous cats, one black and one spotted, which look at me with inquisitive eyes (and one licks me on the face). The woman tells me not to be afraid and comforts me, saying that everything will be okay. After a while we arrive at my parents' house. I thank her and leave the car, dressed as a schoolgirl.

It wasn't until a few years later that I started developing gender dysphoria, but the dream seemed to be a precursor of it. It wasn't until after I started my gender transition, and became pagan, that in the dream I'd met Cybele, Goddess of transgender persons.

Conventional wisdom would have it that transgendered and transsexual people are a recent phenomenon, particular to the twentieth century. Nothing could be further from the truth. There have been transgendered people in different cultures and in different times.

And some of us have been priests and priestesses. The Gallae, who followed Cybele and Attis, were such as this.

Cybele originated as an earth goddess worshipped in Asia Minor. Her cult spread originally to only Asia Minor and parts of Greece. During the Punic wars, Rome imported her cult in order to satisfy a prediction of victory that "if the Mother of Mount Ida is transferred from Pessinus to Rome, the foreign enemy that has invaded Italy, will be driven away and vanquished." That "Mother" was Cybele, and after the statue and the black meteorite that personified Cybele was transported to Rome, the war was won.

As an official Roman God, Cybele was synchronised with Rhea, "Mother of the Gods". She became primarily associated with the concerns of women, protection against one's enemies, the healing of grave illnesses (epilepsy was considered one of her "gifts"), guardianship of the dead, a granter of boons, retributions and a giver of the gift of prophecy.

Her cult had many followers, but of most interest to us are the Gallae, her transgendered followers. In ancient times a male initiate to the cult of Cybele would castrate themselves on the "day of Blood" and thereafter live as a Galla, dressing and behaving as a woman. Nor were the Gallae the only transgendered followers of Goddesses in those times. Hecate and others also had their transgendered priestesses. The nearest modern equivalent is the Hijra of India.

When referring to Gallae (I prefer to use the singular of Galla for masculine/feminine folk and Gallus for feminine/masculine folk. To understand just why the ancient Gallae persisted and sometimes prospered, you need to know about the Myth of Cybele and Attis.

The following is a modern re-telling of this by contemporary Gallae:

### The Myth of Cybele and Attis

Zeus desired Cybele and made advances to her, which were rejected. One night Zeus approached her while she slept and masturbated at her feet. Later, because of this, Cybele gave birth to Agdistis, who was androgynous and immensely strong.

Because Agdistis was uncontrollable, Dionysus managed to trick him into emasculating himself. A great river of blood pours forth from Agdistis's wound and is absorbed by the earth from which spring forth all manner of flowers.

Nana sees the fruit and finding it beautiful, places it on her bosom. Cybele changes the fruit to a seed from which Nana becomes

pregnant. Nana's father, believing her to have been licentious, locks her away without food or water, attempting to starve her to death but Cybele supplies her with food and drink.

Upon the birth of the child her father orders it taken to the river and left among the reeds to die but shepherds find the child and take him home. The child is named Attis.

Attis grows into a remarkably beautiful young man, and Cybele, observing that the young lad is more beautiful than any of the gods, loves Attis above all others and showers him with gifts and favours. Attis, of course, returns her love. Agdistis also loved Attis and seduced the vulnerable young man.

Midas, king of Phrygia, arranges Attis to marry his own daughter. Cybele and Agdistis however disrupt the ceremony. Cybele informs him of the agony he caused her when he left with Agdistis. When Attis learns of Cybele's suffering, in a fit of passion he grabs a knife and under a pine tree emasculates himself.

As he lay dying he called out, "Oh Great Mother, forgive me. I never sought to cause you grief and I never will again". Violets spring up from drops of his blood, entwining into the boughs of the tree, and therein entered the spirit of Attis.

Upon seeing that her son was repentant, emasculated, and dead, Cybele carries the pine tree, with all its decorations, to her cave. For the three days Attis is dead and he visits the underworld. Then, on the third day, Cybele brings Attis back to life. Providing Attis with her most glorious raiment she proclaims the nascent one her daughter and her lover, conferring upon Attis gifts of mystery equal to her own. In her own words Cybele declares the transformation:

"Rejoice, my son is gone and in his place a daughter has arisen. Let all of beauty, strength, power, compassion, honour, mirth, and reverence be at her service. Let all who would do her harm, pay grievous penalty, and to all who do her tribute accrue fitting reward."

Now this may just seem like religious nonsense, but if we look at the elements in the myth, we can see attempts of androgyny, repression, denial and finally acceptance of transgendered identity.

It provided a framework in classical times under which the Gallae could exist as gender variant males. The Cult of Cybele was a mystery cult, so details were not all known to the general public.

Back in Greek and Roman times, the reception was just as mixed as it is now for transgendered people. The Gallae were loathed, shunned, and accepted at different periods. The last of the ancient order were massacred by Christian mobs in the last days of the empire.

I am a modern Gallae, an "adopted daughter" of Cybele, and I'm not the only one. There are other Gallae in America, the United Kingdom and elsewhere. We are few and far between, but here none the less.

So what does it mean to be a modern Gallae? With traditional sources wiped out, how is this relevant today, and how can one call oneself a Gallae?

To answer that I need to explain what being a neo-pagan means. There are many different types of neo-pagans. The broad category that I fall into is in following the duality of the Goddess and the God.

The Goddess represents supreme feminine principle of the universe. Reflecting the nature of human female bodies, she is shown in the cycles of growth and change in nature. The Great Goddess is the summation of all ways to be feminine, and is represented in individual goddesses as aspects - single or multiple parts of the whole.

Like the Goddess, The God represents a supreme principle, but a masculine one rather than a feminine one. Reflecting the history of societies and the nature of the male body, he is shown as a maker and breaker of rules, of authority and limits and a transcender of these. The God is both the son and the lover of the Goddess.

Now the Goddess represents the infinite, nature and cycles; the God represents the finite, humanity and our mortality - both are plural, collective, and not singular. A common version of the Goddess is of Maiden-Mother-Crone, reflecting different stages of traditional gender roles attributed to women.

Many Gods die and resurrect (Jesus is one) and this reflects also the notion of change and ego death, leading on to rebirth.

In ancient times it also reflected the cycle of the seasons and the sun, and in neo-paganism this is mirrored in the "sabbats" or festivals that take place eight times each year. I participate in these and other rituals with other pagans. As a neo-pagan I believe that the Goddess and the God don't just exist as separate abstract entities. Rather they exist in each of us, regardless of whether we are male or female.

Being transgendered under such a framework then is no great thing - how can it be if one has both masculinity and femininity within one? Cybele, being an aspect of the Goddess is a mother figure ever accepting of her transgendered child; Attis is an aspect of the God, resurrecting from ego death transformed as the person she needed to be.

I was born in the Year of the Rooster with the Sun in Leo (an ancient "indicator" of being gender variant). I had epilepsy as a child (a gift of Cybele?) and my name means "of the laurel", which some Gallae wore around their heads. When I went to University as a mature-age student, I read books that showed photos of statues of Cybele and recognised Her as the lady in my childhood dream.

I was experiencing a pagan appreciation and development of life at the time and it all fell together for me. It would probably be hard for me not to be a Galla!

This isn't an exercise in the obscure for me - I find that it gives me spiritual help in times of stress and confusion. And for me of course, it feels right. As the opening quote shows, religious transgendered persons are not an aberration - we've been around for a long time.

Apart from being pagan and finding strength in this following, I believe there are lessons that can be learnt from the ancient Gallae.

## Lessons

First and foremost is a degree of honesty. While the ancient Gallae dressed as women, they did not hide their status as being transgendered. I try to be honest (but not obvious) about this. Being a transgendered woman for me is like being a middle-aged woman, or citizen of Australia - just a facet of who I am - not the whole.

Second is a degree of community. The ancient Gallae lived in communities. This is often impractical today and share housing can sometimes be a quick path to a nervous breakdown. Just because one is transgendered in some way, there is no guarantee that you have anything else in common, or will like someone else who is transgendered.

But community is not just about whom one likes or dislikes, it's about helping others, sharing information and encouraging people to develop themselves as you have done.

Third is recognising the importance of periods of transition and rites of passage. When Gallae were initiated, they would dance themselves into a frenzy and then castrate themselves on the Dies Sanguinis or "Day of Blood". This was not an isolated or private event though (which is why we have eyewitness reports about it). It was part of a greater framework and had context within that framework.

In modern times those frameworks are hard to see - what we have instead is (if we're lucky) a medical or social framework by which we take hormones, transition, and maybe have surgery.

While surgery (the modern counterpart to the ritual castration) is hardly the be-all or end-all of the matter, it is still a major physical event. After the day of blood came the Hilaria (Rejoicing) followed by the Requietio or Rest. How many of us have rejoiced at what might be an end-point to our transition, but also needed to rest and recover?

With a sense of community, we can help celebrate our successes on the path that we follow. It is not so much the destination that counts - after all sooner or later we all end up dead - it's what we do along the way. Celebrating the phases and points in our path helps us process the lessons that we learn, and move on to the next stage.

Lastly, but hardly least importantly, is the spiritual sense. Being a Gallae doesn't make one any "better" than anyone who isn't (just as being Catholic doesn't give one the high moral ground over someone who isn't) but hopefully it will help enrich your life in a spiritual way.

Spirituality is how we embrace and cope with the world on everyday terms. It's not about abstracts or metaphysics (that's religion) but about the core of one's being, and of honouring that core while being in the world.

This is why honesty is important. It became clear to me that the transgendered path by which I became Laura (which comes from my own core identity), by which I abandoned any pretence of being a man, and started interacting and living as a woman, had to be a spiritual one. The twists and turns of that path are different for everyone, though there is a common core that we can all appreciate.

If you deny the reality of this, if you are not honest to yourself about who you are, then how can you grow and learn in a fully positive way? Why trade one set of pretence for another? Being honest in this way is not always an easy path but then the quickest or shortest route to a destination is not always the most productive either. Some people might say that they just want to be "normal" and have everyday lives, in the gender that is right for them.

There's nothing wrong in this - we all have our dreams of happiness and ways of achieving it. However, what have you gained if you get the dream and deny the reality?

## Dies Sanguinis

In late October of 2000 I should have my reassignment surgery, my own "Day of Blood". I'll be flying overseas for it (as a result of another dream featuring Cybele, where she told me to trust my intuition) and a friend will go with me. I will have "eaten of the drum" and "drunk of the cymbal" as they said back in Roman times.

Before I go I hope to have a ritual or two with some pagan friends. The need for me is important, to mark a rite-of-passage. I took my own time getting to this point, in order to be sure that it was right for me, and that I'd be in a stable environment before doing it.

I started my transition in 1994, and it has been a long path leading to it, full of twists and turns and full of surprises. But I wouldn't have missed it for the world, and after surgery life will go on. Being Gallae helps me to cope and to understand this.

And I hope that wherever your path takes you, may it be as interesting and rewarding as mine.

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[Cult of Cybele: The Lady of Didymous](#) 

[Gallae WebRing](#) 

**Gallae is derivative of Latin for Cock or Rooster. Historically the Gallae were referred to as Galloi or Galli (plural), or Gallus (singular). This reflects I think how those archivists whose works have survived saw them - as deviant males and yes, the Romans also had the same slang meaning back then! However, this little red hen uses the feminine version of the title, reflecting current use for transgendered males.**

**I am much obliged to Annie Ogborn, an American born Hijra, in raising these issues. This article is the result of that inquiry.**

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# Top Gun Who Become R.A.F. Flight Officer Caz

## Veteran of Some of the World's Most Dangerous War Zones

by Rebecca English in London, Reprinted from The Daily Telegraph, World News 16th August 2000  
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Caroline Paige

**A**n R.A.F. Officer who has flown missions over some of the world's most dangerous war zones has had a sex-change operation. Flight Lieutenant Eric Cookson is now Caroline Paige, the service's first transsexual.

The operation, for which the thirty-nine-year-old paid \$46,979 was agreed by the R.A.F. and she is now waiting to return to flying duties. It was two years ago that Flight Lieutenant Cookson told senior officers that he was living a secret double life - swapping his uniform for skirts and pearls in his off-duty time.

"I have always been Caroline in my own mind", said the new Flt. Lt. Paige. "I was aware of gender problems from a very early age - five was my earliest recollection. I kept it to myself, mainly because I was worried about other people's reaction and my family and the world in general."

"You try to live up to everyone's expectations and just get on with life and hope that these feelings will go away, but they never do. When I was Eric Cookson, I would dress as a woman in my own time behind closed curtains and locked doors."

*I asked for a posting to somewhere where people didn't know me ... but word has now got round and I have had nothing but support from the vast majority of my friends.*

When the strain of the double life became too much, Flt. Lt. Cookson went to see R.A.F. doctors, who agreed he should have a sex-change. But before having the operation, a patient must prove he can live as a woman for several months.

Flt. Lt. Cookson was given permission to dress in women's clothes and was transferred to a ground posting. She served as a female officer at several bases including R.A.F. Chivenor in Devon, Benson in Oxfordshire and Coningsby, Lincolnshire.

Three months ago, he had the operation.

"I vividly remember the exact date I came out of hospital as a woman: 10th May," said Caroline, or Caz, Paige. "From that day, my body matched my feelings."

She had joined the R.A.F. in 1980 and was trained to fly in Top Gun combat planes. As Eric Cookson, she flew regular sorties in Phantom F4 fighters and Bae Hawkes.

While serving at R.A.F. Leuchars in Fife during the Cold War, she was involved in intercepting a total of 33 Soviet patrol planes. In 1992, she switched to helicopters and worked their weapons detection systems. She was involved in front line operations in the build-up to the Gulf War and the Bosnia conflict and has campaign medals from both.

After convalescing following the operation, Flt. Lt. Paige, who earns \$103,000 a year, will return to duty as one of only 116 female fliers alongside the R.A.F.'s 4246 male pilots and navigators.

She admits hoping at one time to keep her sex swap a secret.

"I asked for a posting to somewhere where people didn't know me," she said. "But word has now got round and I have had nothing but support from the vast majority of my friends."

Flt. Lt. Paige has nothing but praise for the R.A.F. Her family, however, have found the change hard to accept.

Her father, Gordon, who lives with his wife Marie in Moreton, Merseyside, said yesterday: "Do I approve? Would you? It's his life, or her life now."

A Ministry of Defence spokesman said: "If someone is still up to the job, be it after a back operation or a gender realignment operation, they are perfectly entitled to carry on as they were before."

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# My Life as a Man

## Newfound Strength and Inner Peace

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... I have resolved to be myself  
and I am letting go of my  
misery.

I have spent the better part of my life searching for who I am. This has been a long and often rocky path but I am finally comforted in the knowledge that I am no longer walking this path alone. Perhaps if I share this journey, others may have a bit of a map to assist them in their search.

***Resolve to be thyself; and know that he who finds himself, loses his misery! - Matthew Arnold, Self-Dependence***

All my life I felt like a stranger. Though I was well liked and had friends, there was a deep well of emptiness inside me. Waking each morning and having to look in a mirror that reflected an image that was not mine led me to the edge of insanity.

I did not understand what I was feeling, only that I was never comfortable with myself. Bouts of depression, drug and alcohol abuse, promiscuity and a whole host of other self-destructive behaviours marked my life when I was young.

I tried to be as masculine as I could, forging new paths in the world around me. I was the first girl in my high school to take auto mechanics and the first to be kicked out of school for disobeying the dress code by wearing slacks. These things were done under the guise of "women's liberation", for I had no other outlet for expressing my masculinity.

I hung out with the guys and saw each of my early sexual experiences as conquests just as the guys felt about each of the girls they made-out with. But, of course, I was labelled "easy", while they were proving their masculinity. We were really doing the same thing.

After high school, I went into the Army. What better way to prove my machismo. This too was a disappointment for, once again, I did not prove my strength and ability, but faced whispers of "dyke" and "slut". Funny how the very qualities in men are despised and belittled in women.

Reading everything I could get my hands on, I really thought that if I could change my sex everything would be fine. But sex changes were only for the rich and famous, Christine Jorgensen and Renee Richards. And typically there were no models of female-to-male transsexuals that I could find. So I lived as a bisexual woman.

It took finally meeting a woman in the transgender community to open my eyes to the reality that "real people" can and do change their sex.

Meeting Jessica was the answer to my years of questioning. When we became comfortable talking to each other, I inundated her with questions. I poured out my soul to her and she in turn gave me the sources of information that she had.

Here I am now, seven months into transition. Living my life as a man. Being myself for the first time in my life. Waking each morning, looking into the mirror and smiling. Admiring the guy who looks back at me. revelling at the growth of hair on my face. Singing along with the music on the radio but now as a tenor and not an alto. Touching the hardening muscles and joyously working out so that my body will continue to metamorphose into the man who was always there, waiting.

And I keep smiling, mentally recording the "firsts" in my new life. The first time I walked into a public restroom, the first time I was called "Sir" by a store clerk, the first time someone didn't recognise my voice on the phone, and my first kiss, as a man.

This can't be bad! It feels too good. But with the good comes the ugly. A few friends who no longer call, and worse, a family who made a small attempt to try to understand but now seem to be working hard to ruin everything I have accomplished.

But they forget. I am a man now. And I won't be intimidated. My newfound sense of strength and inner peace will not be dimmed or extinguished. I will stand tall, square my shoulders and remind them, "this is the person you have raised me to be."

And if they cannot accept me as their son, at least I will know that I have resolved to be myself and I am letting go of my misery.

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The Gender Centre is committed to developing and providing services and activities, which enhance the ability of people with gender issues to make informed choices. We offer a wide range of services to people with gender issues, their partners, family members and friends in New South Wales. We are an accommodation service and also act as an education, support, training and referral resource centre to other organisations and service providers. The Gender Centre is committed to educating the public and service providers about the needs of people with gender issues. We specifically aim to provide a high quality service, which acknowledges human rights and ensures respect and confidentiality.

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# Accepting the Balance of Things

## Understanding that Every Negative has a Positive

by Sarah J. Rutherford

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**We must understand both negative and positive aspects of life, and keep going, determined and resolute in our often difficult pursuit of both self and happiness.**

**U**nless we can accept, we cannot appreciate or understand. We cannot learn or become better. Unless we accept, we will never come to terms with the disagreeable, nor be able to contemplate change or affect such change to the disagreeable, or more importantly, change to ourselves.

***... we cannot afford to be discriminating, if we want, in the longer term, to defeat the attitudes of people who discriminate against us ...***

Isaac Newton made it clear in his famous theorem, that "for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction". In short, every negative has a positive and vice versa. Human complexity and multi-layered diversity is in the reality of things, no different to nature, it has its positive and negative aspects, which is, if you will, natural balance; even if the balancing negative may be often far less than desirable or palatable.

Human idiosyncrasies are such that people's reactions all vary, and while some are for the most part tolerable, many are hard to accept. The emphasis for most transsexuals however, must stand firmly on that word, *accept*, and also, *acceptance*.

Whether we like it or otherwise, life is diverse and sometimes there are clashes of diversities, as presumed 'norms', isolate or elevate themselves over others for whatever reason; an idiotic notion of superiority of the species being only one.

Given such circumstances and being confronted by such people, one could hardly blame transsexuals for being just as discriminating in retaliation of the treatment meted out to them. However, such responses are, in themselves, merely feeding the negative aspect, and we cannot afford to be discriminating, if we want, in the longer term, to defeat the attitudes of people who discriminate against us, and as is often the case, anyone else different from them.

Life for many is far from kind, or cosy, yet despite this there has to be a determined attempt for the people in the abused situation, to adapt and modify their thinking, to accommodate for, and allow for, those in society who cannot find the concept or notion of thinking before acting, or consideration of others, too hard to penetrate the brain cell.

For transsexuals, in many cases, personal peace comes from the inside, and by developing a huge ability to ignore or dismiss certain abuses, without resorting to retaliatory action or response. In many ways some abuse is unavoidable, but our responses are not, we can control most situations of a negative nature, merely by not giving them the opportunity to go beyond an initial contact.

Society builds walls and fences, some good, others bad, and the difficulty for transsexuals is that they have to learn to live with both. We must understand that living with the negative is part and parcel of the cost of our personal freedom, in a society which in many ways is either fearful or ignorant of our circumstances and feelings.

In an ideal world, we would be truly free, but our world will never be ideal while some people cannot think first and respond appropriately.

Such change as we can affect is for example, by just being ourselves, setting good behavioural standards, and not demeaning ourselves by negative responses or inappropriate retaliation, which in many people's eyes, would automatically make us the protagonist, not the victims of the abuse.

Life is diverse, a flower can be both beautiful and yet still poisonous, and likewise humans can be kind and cruel. Irrespective of how we feel towards any forms of discrimination or abuse, from whatever level of society it comes; if we are truly honest with ourselves we have to accept that it does and will happen, and move on.

By accepting, in many ways we take away the power of the perpetrator, give no credence or benefit to the attack, thus rendering it pointless and without further stimulation to the person being negative. If we take no notice, we give no satisfaction, remember, children often settle for negative responses, when they are deprived of the positive, so think of the abuse in that ilk, and also notice that much abuse is almost child like anyway.

The price of freedom of self is understanding and accepting all facets of both nature and humanity, and if we want to affect serious community attitude changes in the future, we have to set a good example now.

We must understand both negative and positive aspects of life, and keep going, determined and resolute in our often difficult pursuit of both self and happiness.

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