

# Polare Edition 62

Published: March 2005 Last Update: June 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015

## Editorial

by Katherine Cummings, Polare Editor

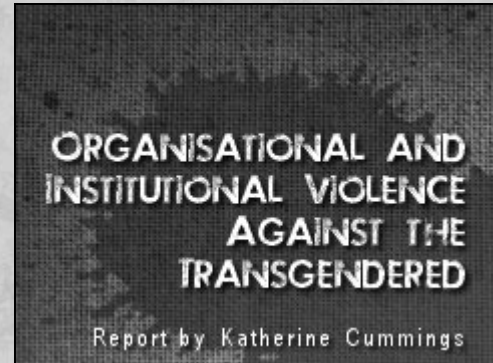
I shall lead off with the good news. Not only has the Gender Recognition Bill been passed by the British Government but the Gender Recognition Panel is already accepting applications from British-born transgenders for change of documentation. Until April they are accepting only "fast track" applications from those who are post-operative and have been living in their affirmed gender roles for at least six years. The details can be found on the web page of Press for Change. My application is on its way and soon I can start looking for an incredibly wealthy but terribly feeble (or possibly asexual) man to marry. Any volunteers? Even more pleasing, in some ways, is the news that Stephen Whittle and Christine Burns, who have worked tirelessly for the legal and human rights of transgenders in Britain, have been recognised in the New Year Honours List, Stephen with an O.B.E., Christine with an M.B.E., for services to the gender community. The fact that the government has not only reformed its hard-line against legal recognition of transgenders but has also recognised the worth of those who have striven for so many years, not with Molotov cocktails or mindless chanting in the streets, but with reasoned argument and co-operation with parliamentary working parties and elected representatives of a liberal (very definitely a small "I" there, thank you) bent, is gratifying indeed.

Closer to home, let me draw your attention to the cover image of Caroline Layt, who plays Rugby with a women's team, and would like eventually to represent her nation. If determination and the will to excel mean anything, Caroline will achieve her ambition. We remember with pride the tally of gold, silver and bronze medals won by Caroline at the last Gay Games.

Recently I came across an article on non-gender specific pronouns and have reprinted it with the kind permission of the author, Cezary Podkul, who writes a weekly column for the independent student newspaper at the University of Pennsylvania. It has always seemed odd to me to wilfully remove information from a statement by ignoring gender. To call someone an actress does not demean them, it simply tells you she is more likely to be playing Cleopatra than King Lear (although Sarah Bernhardt probably played both). If there is an implied superiority in the male-associated word then it is that hierarchy which should be attacked, rather than being swept under the carpet by avoiding the gender-related word.

Another matter I find odd is the passion with which some of our community lobby to have transsexualism removed from the D.S.M. IV. "How dare people say that gender dysphoria is a disease," they cry. Homosexuality was formerly in the D.S.M. IV and has recently been removed, but homosexuality does not depend on specialist treatment from psychiatrists, endocrinologists and surgeons, among others. I would happily dispense with the contribution made by psychiatrists but I have no desire to self-medicate my hormones and even less to carry out my own bi-lateral orchidectomy and create my own neo-vagina and clitoris. To suffer from gender dysphoria may or may not be a disease. It is certainly a medical condition. And if it were a disease, wouldn't we be silly not to seek a cure? If the problem is a lack of congruence between mind and body, is it not reasonable to alter the body to match the mind? My mind is far more "me" than my body is. And again, if it is a disease, why is this seen as an insult? We are, or should be, long past the primitive attitude of

## Feature Articles



Whenever transgenders find themselves involved with gatekeepers, carers or authority figures they are likely to find that their wishes and wills are overborne, simply to make society's definitions simpler.

### Organisational and Institutional Violence Against the Transgendered

Violence against the transgendered is found in almost every milieu where transgenders interact with authority. This report looks at institutional violence in schools, prisons, and hospitals, with organisations like the police, community and health services, and lawmakers.

### The Simpsons Coming-Out Episode

There's something about the American gay marriage industry and it isn't something favourable for transgendered people according to Katrina who is disturbed at the willingness of the gay establishment to overlook the problematic trans-inferences in this Simpsons episode.

### How to Change Your Sex

*How to Change Your Sex: A light-hearted look at the hardest thing you'll ever do* by Lannie Rose is not a comedic look at the transsexual world, but a very well-written, entertaining and informative look at all the steps along the way in transition.

### Through the Jungle

Samantha Adams lets you ramble freely through her diary of transition. The candour and honesty with which her diary is written opens our minds to transition through her eyes. Her diary is straightforward and gives freely her experiences along the way to her new life.

seeing something shameful in disease. On the contrary, diseases should prompt compassion and support and a determination to throw our mental and financial resources into the struggle to eliminate diseases of all kinds. The D.S.M. IV is only a fallible guide to diagnosis and our energies are better spent improving quality of life and providing legal and human rights for our community rather than arguing among ourselves about the rights and wrongs of a pseudo-science like psychiatry. than fighting against the silly definitions of a pseudo-profession like psychiatry.

# Manager's Report

by Elizabeth Riley, Gender Centre Manager

I have frequently reported optimistically over the years on the steady progress we have made as a community in respect of the way we are treated by the community at large, and for the most part I still believe that we do have sound cause to be optimistic. So please forgive me for again feeling the need to make reference to the Mission Australia Exemption granted by the N.S.W. Attorney General on recommendation from the N.S.W. Anti-Discrimination Board. I don't propose to again go into the details of this whole affair other than to say that I believed at the time and I continue to believe that the granting of this exemption was an assault on that section of our community most in need of compassion and least able to defend their rights and its continuing existence constitutes an unforgivable abuse of the most marginalised in the transgender population.

If anything could be more unforgivable it is the expression of support offered to Mission Australia by a handful of post-operative transsexual women who do not appear to comprehend the despair and desperation associated with homelessness.

So it was with some level of compensatory pleasure that we were able to publish in the last edition of *Polare* a letter from the N.S.W. Attorney General addressed to Clover Moore M.L.A. detailing a range of measures to be considered before future exemptions can be granted. These measures were put into place by the Governor of N.S.W., Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir, in changes she initiated and titled Anti-Discrimination Amendment (Exemptions) Regulation 2004.

For the sake of easy reference let me repeat the key measures here. They are worth savouring.

Matters that are to be considered include:

- » whether the proposed exemption is appropriate or reasonable;
- » whether the proposed exemption is necessary;
- » whether there are any non-discriminatory ways of achieving the objects or purposes for which the proposed exemption is sought;
- » whether the proponent of the proposed exemption has taken reasonable steps, or is able to take reasonable steps, to avoid or reduce the adverse effect of a particular act or action before seeking the exemption;
- » the public, business, social or other community impact of the granting of the proposed exemption; and
- » any conditions or limitations to be contained in the proposed exemption.

In light of the above there may well be a few people wandering around with egg on their faces. Laws and regulations are seldom enforced retrospectively but I would venture to say that Mission Australia would have struggled to satisfy any of these considerations and would have had no capacity whatsoever to satisfy the most pertinent one which is (b).

That Her Excellency, The Governor, saw fit to intervene in this area is testament to her commitment to human rights, to her recognition of the flaws in the previously existing process and to the efforts of those people, both within and outside our community, who expressed their concern and outrage over the original granting of the exemption to Mission Australia. Her Excellency deserves the highest commendation from our community and I would like to express the deepest gratitude on behalf of us all. In an ironic twist, which I certainly do not wish to dwell on, it is worth noting that Her Excellency is the Patron of Mission Australia. While this role is unlikely to be one that affords the holder any role in organisational decision making one would hope that the significance of Her Excellency's intervention is not lost on Mission's original architects of the exemption application.

Now to the present. Another organisation, Edward Eagar Lodge, is seeking the renewal of a similar exemption that was granted to them five years ago and is due to expire. Edward Eagar Lodge adopts a rather strange concept of what constitutes discrimination. They have suggested to me on more than one occasion that they don't discriminate. Transgender women are welcome in their service. The only minor stipulation is that they are not welcome in the women's section, only in the men's. How intolerably disrespectful of gender-identity is that? I would liken this practice as being the equivalent of accepting Muslim women, but only if they remove their hijab and behave like Christians; or aboriginal women, but only if they behave like white folk. Can you imagine the outrage? and absolutely rightly so.

It will be interesting, therefore, to see how effective the new regulations prove to be. Like Mission Australia, Edward Eagar Lodge will not readily satisfy the matters included for consideration and I am optimistic that we will win this one. In the meantime I await with anticipation the inevitable engagement with the A.D.B. in the raft of consultations that precede their recommendation as the new regulation demands.

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Polare Magazine is published quarterly in Australia by The Gender Centre Inc., which is funded by the Department of Family & Community Services under the S.A.A.P. program and supported by the N.S.W. Health Department through the AIDS and Infectious Diseases Branch. Polare provides a forum for discussion and debate on gender issues. Unsolicited contributions are welcome, the editor reserves the right to edit such contributions without notification. Any submission which appears in Polare may be published on our internet site. Opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of the Editor, The Gender Centre Inc., the Department of Family & Community Services or the N.S.W. Department of Health.

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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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# Organisational And Institutional Violence against the Transgendered

## Sins of Omission and Sins of Commission

by Katherine Cummings

Article appeared in Polare magazine: March 2005 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015



**Gatekeepers: transgender people are condemned to go through puberty before their needs can be addressed and puberty is, for most transgender people, a time of agony and deep depression.**

**I**n 2002-03 I researched and wrote a report on violence against transgender people, commissioned by the Crime Prevention Section of the New South Wales

Attorney-General's Department, a report which ran to more than a hundred pages and will, if all goes well, be published this year.

***It is clear that violence against the transgendered is to be found in almost every milieu where transgender people interact with authority organisations.***

For the purposes of this piece I have chosen not to deal with some aspects of violence, such as domestic violence and random acts of prejudiced violence since these are common to the community at large, including gays and lesbians.

There are, however, some forms of violence which are not shared by our gay, lesbian and bisexual sisters and brothers, or only marginally, and some which are probably more common to the transgendered and intersexed than to gays, lesbians or bisexuals.

I will deal primarily with institutional violence which is as frequently based in sins of omission as in sins of commission. I will deal with institutions such as schools, prisons, and hospitals, with organisations such as the police, community and health services, and with our lawmakers.

Before I start giving examples I should repeat that there is a lot in common between transgender people and intersex people which is not shared by lesbians, gays and bisexuals. Transgender people and the intersexed are usually subject to pharmacological and/or surgical treatment and often their self-affirmation must be endorsed by various gatekeepers in the medical and legal professions. I will deal with these gatekeepers at a later stage and, for the sake of brevity, will confine my remarks to transgender people, although many, even most, of the problems exist for the intersexed, to a greater or lesser degree.

In the case of schools, prisons and hospitals violence occurs at three levels. There is the violence inherent in policies which are outmoded or inappropriate. This may be thought of as official violence. There is the violence perpetrated by officials based in their own prejudice and inherent cruelty even when these acts contravene official policy, and there is peer group violence which can result from a number of motives, including pecking order, peer group pressure, the desire to expropriate property from the victim, and so on.

## Prisons

To take prisons as a paradigm; until quite recently there was no official policy in New South Wales prisons on appropriate treatment for incarcerated transgender people. For a long time pre-operative transgender people were placed in the prisons appropriate to their birth gender. As a result transgender people, particularly male-to-female transgender people, suffered physical and verbal violence from corrections staff and from other inmates.

It took the rape and consequent suicide of a transgendered inmate in 1997 to create the necessary pressure to install a policy dealing with appropriate treatment for incarcerated transgender people in New South Wales prisons. The policy now exists yet we are still made aware at the Gender Centre of repeated abuses of transgender people, and various forms of victimisation from correctional staff and from other inmates. The situation will not be remedied until correctional staff are trained more thoroughly in the necessity to know and observe the rules, training which will need to be enforced at all levels, with persistent transgressors being disciplined and/or dismissed.

## Schools

A similar pattern exists in many schools. The Education Department does not have a policy on the treatment of transgendered children and as a result teachers and peer groups have relative freedom to abuse and mock "sissies" and "tomboys" and verbal abuse can

easily lead to physical abuse.

Most transgender people have stories to tell of either having to put up with vilification and physical abuse at school, or having to develop camouflage to conceal their needs and feelings. The educational authorities should look specifically at the transgendered and not suppose that their policies on the gay and lesbian in their community, or their policies against bullying will provide a one-size-fits-all solution to the problem.

Not only should there be a policy of equal rights and protection for all in the educational system, there should be pro-active teaching at the earliest levels and beyond, informing children that transgender exists, that there is nothing wrong with it and that some children feel from the earliest age that they are in the wrong gender group. Just as elementary schools can now use teaching texts to show that there is nothing wrong in a child having same-sex parents, or a single parent, or being an AIDS sufferer, so there could be lessons in the fact that some boys feel they are really girls and some girls feel they are really boys. Not only would this result (eventually) in a more accepting climate for transgender children, it might also encourage such children to admit that they have transgender feelings rather than bottling up their desires and hiding their true nature. Given admissions of this kind at an early age children could be watched over and, if they seem to be genuinely transgendered, guided compassionately to an earlier realisation of their needs. Note that if this policy were adopted another group would need to be educated - the parents. Often prejudices exhibited by children are the prejudices they see in their parents and older siblings, and a policy of meeting with parents to inform them of the phenomenon of transgender might eventually result in better attitudes being taught to the peer group both at home and in the school milieu.

## Hospitals and Retirement Homes

In hospitals and retirement homes it is necessary to have official policies which cater to the gender needs of patients and clients, and these policies should again result in education of those administering directly to the patients and clients, so that nurses and carers are prepared for transgendered patients and for clients whose bodies may not be formed as expected, particularly in the case of female-to-male transgender people. Such clients may also have special requirements in the area of medication.

Nurses and carers should not violate the privacy of their patients and clients by discussing them among themselves or with other patients, clients or the friends outside the system. Violence against privacy and self-respect is still violence.

## Police

The New South Wales Police Service has not yet put in place a policy specific to transgender people and as a result there is a constant stream of complaints from the transgendered about their treatment at the hands of the police. If a transgender is assaulted, even by a gang, it is as likely as not to be the transgender who is accused of starting the fracas and is therefore the one to be charged. Despite the existence of Gay & Lesbian Liaison Officers (G.L.L.O.s) in the Police Service Officers), this is often an add-on duty handed to a junior member of the police at a given station, and little training is provided to make the classification meaningful. In the State of New South Wales there is only one full-time G.L.L.O. (and he seems to be committed and good at his work). To date there are no G.L.L.O.s.

Nor is there adequate protection for the transgendered in public. Consider the matter of street assault. This can occur in any locality and to any sub-group within the community, but there are some localities where it is predictable and therefore preventable. Transgendered sex-workers are assaulted ten times more frequently than non-transgendered sex-workers. Sometimes these assaults are the result of a customer realising during the transaction that he is dealing with a transgender, and assaulting his victim from a misguided sense of macho outrage (vide *The Crying Game*) but in many cases the customer asks for a transgendered sex-worker, or goes to a house which specialises in transgendered workers.

There are frequent impersonal long-distance assaults of transgendered sex-workers on the streets. These assaults usually take the form of abuse, or thrown objects (coins, eggs for example) from passing cars. Sex-workers sometimes supply the registration numbers of these cars and/or descriptions of their attackers, but the police seldom take any action and frequently the only use made of the information is in the compilation of a newsletter called *Ugly Mugs*, distributed by the Sex Workers Outreach Project to sex workers on the streets and in brothels and safe houses used by sex-workers.

If the police wished to be more pro-active in this area it would surely be simple enough to station a few police in the area where transgendered sex-workers are known to work, in order to apprehend the villains where possible, or take car numbers and follow up with warnings to the owners.

## The Medical Profession

Unlike gays, lesbians and bisexuals, transgendered and intersex people are almost always involved in some kind of treatment by medical professionals. This treatment may be cosmetic, surgical, endocrinological or psychiatric. It is theoretically possible for a transgendered or intersex person to go his or her own way without the benefit of medical intervention but this would be very rare, and sometimes this mode of behaviour would stray across the borders of gender-fuck, which is diametrically opposed to the needs of most transgender people, who wish to be seamlessly translated into their affirmed gender, and to live their lives, maybe not unnoticed, but at least unnoticed for vagaries of gender.

The medical profession has adopted a strangely interventionist and paternalistic attitude to the intersexed and to transgender people. Not only do they insist on a person having reached the age of majority before his/her needs are acted upon, but even after they are adults they have to satisfy a series of gatekeepers that they really want what they say they want and can handle the life they wish to lead. Those who are intersexed at birth, or simply have non-standard genitalia, often suffer intervention even more intrusive and violent than that suffered by transgender people. Arbitrary decisions are made on their behalf about which gender role they should adopt, and these decisions are made by doctors and by parents who are usually trying to force a non-standard person into a standard role, a role

which may or may not work for the individual and will, in any event, mean commitment to a series of surgical procedures and lifelong medication.

There is a growing belief that intersexed babies and those with indeterminate or non-standard genitalia should be left alone until they are of an age to make an informed and mature decision. The corollary to this is that those around them (relatives, peer group, medical professionals) need to be educated in these areas so that they understand that difference need not be inimical and that all people are deserving of compassion and respect.

With regard to transgender people the medical profession takes a controlling position over the administration of medical procedures necessary for the transitioning transgender to achieve the physical changes consonant with their gender role requirements. Violence can consist of acts of omission or prevention just as much as it can consist of acts of commission. Perhaps the greatest violence committed against transgender people is the general refusal to allow medical intervention before a person attains legal majority.

This means that transgender people are condemned to go through puberty before their needs can be addressed and puberty is, for most transgender people, a time of agony and deep depression. No wonder the suicide rate of teenagers is seen to be high. Before puberty male and female bodies are similar in somatic appearance and in characteristics of voice, hair distribution etc. With puberty the male-to-female has to contend with a breaking voice, new distribution of body hair, the growth of facial hair and a redistribution of muscle and subcutaneous fat which creates a male appearance. The female-to-male transgender begins to menstruate, grows breast and subcutaneous fat is redistributed to create the "hour-glass" shape seen as stereotypically female.

Even if a transgender manages to struggle through puberty and can convince the gatekeepers of her/his need to transition, many of these physiological changes resultant from puberty must be undone, surgically and through the administration of hormones, resulting in tediously long, often embarrassing, always expensive, and sometimes painful procedures. How much better if the growing trend to accept the evidence of minors were followed in cases where children self-define as transgendered, rather than forcing unnecessary and counter-productive delays simply to satisfy an arbitrary age barrier delimiting those legally responsible from those who are not. It should be noted that this legal age is different in different countries and tends to move downwards as society matures.

In some countries (the United Kingdom, the United States, Holland, some Scandinavian countries) it is possible to have hormonal treatment to delay the onset of puberty until the subject is of an age to make a legal decision on his/her own behalf.

If a transgender has been treated in this way and makes the decision to go ahead with full transition there are overwhelming advantages for the subject compared with the problems involved in having to backtrack through the negative effects of puberty, correcting hair growth, removing body parts, changing voice patterns, treating the body soma hormonally and so on. If, on the other hand, the subject decides not to go forward with transition then hormonal treatment can be withdrawn and the subject goes through a delayed puberty with no harm done.

The case of Alex who, at the age of thirteen, was given permission by the Family Court in 2004 to commence treatment intended to delay his puberty, was a first, and highly significant step towards a necessary reform, but although it is a precedent it does not guarantee that future cases will be treated with the same compassion.

## Summation

It is clear that violence against the transgendered is to be found in almost every milieu where transgender people interact with authority organisations. From the moment they are born until their days end they are forced to contend with gender classifications and unwelcome forms of documentation which can only be amended after difficult, expensive and often painful reassignments and modifications and must fight to be allowed to adopt lifestyles which other humans take for granted for themselves yet strive to disallow for others.

Whenever transgender people find themselves involved with gatekeepers, carers or authority figures they are likely to find that their wishes and wills are overborne, simply to make society's definitions simpler. Schools, religions, hospitals, police services, the medical profession, medical insurers, retirement homes and correctional institutions find themselves in conflict with the needs and desires of the transgendered clientele whom they should be guiding, helping, treating and protecting.

## Possible Strategies

The first element in solving a problem is recognition of the problem, which involves education, commencing with education of the educators. Those who teach at the most elementary level must be educated to provide information on the existence and right to exist of transgendered and intersex children, and these teachers should be trained to deal with such children when they appear. Much could be done to ease the way of transgendered and intersexed children if teachers were prepared to make the way easier, by advice and by compassionate nurture. Most transgendered children know their situation very early and most learn to hide their innermost needs almost as soon as they know them.

Education should continue throughout a person's school career, with subjects on sexuality and gender difference the norm in schools, and specialised courses provided at both undergraduate and post-graduate levels. Nor should schools be allowed to evade this responsibility on the grounds that such teaching and learning in some way conflicts with their spiritual or religious convictions. Ideology is no excuse for inhumanity and inhumanity should not be subsidised by public monies.

Vocational education for those proceeding to employment in prisons, police services, retirement homes and hospitals should also include instruction in respect for, and appropriate treatment of, the transgendered. Those who assume the responsibility for transgendered clients should also be tested from time to time to ensure that their skills are maintained at an appropriate level, and sanctions against those who abuse their position should be mandatory.

Legislators must be prepared to revise the legal code to bring legal rights and the provision of appropriate documentation up to date, so that the law remains in step with medical advances.

Society as a whole must also be educated, to eliminate the bigotry and prejudice which still exists. This can be achieved not only through formal education but through entertainment media and through a pro-active attitude from the transgendered community itself. It is not until transgender is seen as simply another human characteristic, like eye-colour or intelligence level, and it therefore becomes virtually invisible to the broader community, that we will have come close to achieving the human and legal rights which are being grudgingly yielded by a society which still feels the need to establish pecking orders and to assert rights over those who are perceived as being in any way different from the norm, whatever that is, or who contravene primitive taboos which should have no place in a modern world.

## Katherine Cummings

Katherine Cummings is a writer and transgender activist, currently working at the N.S.W. Gender Centre as Librarian and Information Worker. Her autobiography, *Katherine's Diary*, based on a two-year series of radio talks she gave on Radio National's "Health Report", won the Australian Human Rights Award for Non-Fiction in 1992. It has since been expanded and updated and was re-issued at the end of 2007.



Katherine edits *Polare*, the quarterly magazine of the Gender Centre and writes for it. She is currently putting together a collection of her essays, short stories, poems and book reviews to be published in mid-2013 under the title *The Life and Loves of a Transgender Woman*.

Katherine transitioned in 1986 at the age of fifty-one.



**The Life and Loves of a Transgendered Lesbian Librarian**  
Author: Katherine Cummings  
Publisher: Beaujon Press (2014)  
I.S.B.N.-13: 978-098036535X

**From Polare Magazine Review:** The publication of this collection is a timely reminder that there is still a lot to learn about gender identity, its causes, aetiology and expression. To redress common misconceptions, prejudices, and targeted violence, ethically focussed education is critical. Of overriding importance is the acknowledgment of the truth of all 'real-life' experiences and within this framework Katherine's lifetime experience, retold through cleverly assembled vignettes (essays,

book reviews, verses and poems), is central. The book's content is varied and provides the reader with decisive personal viewpoints centred on the paramount issue of gender identity.



**Katherine's Diary: Revamped, Updated, Uncut Edition**  
Author: Katherine Cummings  
Publisher: BookSurge Publishing (2008)  
I.S.B.N.-13: 978-1439215456

**From Bookpod Book Store website:** "I think that I was irrational, even insane, at the time. My transsexualism had taken hold of me with such obsessive force that I could not concentrate on anything else. There I was, a fifty-year-old professional academic librarian who had desperately wanted to be female ever since memories began ..." In 1986 John Cummings became Katherine Cummings and a whole life changed. In this painfully honest account of John's transformation into

a woman, Katherine tells of years of fantasising behind locked doors, of the betrayal felt by her family and the final relief of surgery. Katherine's Diary covers a lifetime of self-discovery and self-destruction told with acerbic wit and crisp observation.

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## The Simpsons Coming-Out Episode

There's something about the American gay marriage industry and it isn't favourable for transgendered people

by Katrina C. Rose

Article appeared in Polare magazine: March 2005 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015



Something that might look as though it is merely another trendy slice o' pro-gay-marriage-ness might also be topped with rancid, poisonous, radioactive transphobic icing.

I have no idea whether Mianne Bagger was offended by the recent gay marriage episode of *The Simpsons*. After all, I don't know her personally. And, odds aren't the best I'll cross paths with her. Why? I'm not a golf gal.

*I'd thought the skag-drag stereotype had died long ago, only living on in the black hearts of anti-L.G.B.T. hate-mongers ...*

But, I am a woman who happens to be transsexual - one who also happens to be extremely disturbed by "There's Something About Marrying." And, I'm even more disturbed (though, sadly, not all that surprised) at the willingness of the official American gay establishment to overlook the highly problematic trans-inferences in the episode - a willingness to overlook in order to lavishly praise.

Why might there be such a willingness to overlook?

Well, in current American gay rights orthodoxy, if something is pro-gay marriage, it cannot be criticised even if it is harmful to other sexual minorities -

even sexual minorities for which those organisations comprising the official gay rights industry claim to speak right along with gays and lesbians of the non-visibly queer variety.

Looking for any real analysis of how transsexuals have paid the price for the continuing push for same-sex marriage? Don't look to the organisations that are pushing same-sex marriage.

Looking for any real analysis of "There's Something About Marrying"? Ditto.

For that reason, I now offer my analysis of it (which, admittedly, begins with some of the plainly obvious - and non-controversial.)

As the episode began, it wouldn't have seemed that there would be anything for a transsexual woman to criticise. Through a chain reaction series of events, set in motion by Bart in classic Simpsons fashion of course (replete with the type of overt visualization that shouldn't work but always does; here, a stranger literally falling off of a turnip truck, though I'd be remiss if I didn't mention the subsequent quasi-cameo by the Creature from the Black Lagoon), Springfield's tourism trade dies.

And, summoning up that true American spirit of over-opportunism, in order to rekindle Springfield tourism a gimmick is turned to: same-sex marriage. Of course, it had been suggested with the best of intentions by one of the few people in the town with measurable brain activity, namely Lisa.

Once gay marriage is legalized by Mayor Gavin Newsom, ... er ... Mayor Quimby (sorry - easy mistake to make at least here), who ends up actually doing the marrying? One of the zillions of people in the town without measurable brain activity, namely Homer.

During the ensuing gay marriage frenzy, one can see a veritable parade of couples - and here is where the problems begin. One bridal-gowned couple is shown to be a pair of bearded men.

I'd thought the skag-drag stereotype had died long ago, only living on in the black hearts of anti-L.G.B.T. hate-mongers (and perhaps the occasional Log Cabin Republican mouthpiece.) However, it appears to be perfectly acceptable not only with the producers of *the Simpsons* but also with those who have declared themselves to be the arbiters of all that is decent and right for L.G.B.T. people.

Even at that, the perverse, superliminal invocation of transgender imagery did not stop with "Bearded Brides in Stereo".

Marge's sister Patty approaches Homer about officiating at her wedding - to a woman.

Now, like most who follow *the Simpsons*, I've been awaiting who would be revealed as the character on the show who would be "coming-out" during the February sweeps period. To some degree, one of Marge's sisters was too obvious of a choice - yet, after the



quasi-frustrating "Maggie did it" revelation following the "Who shot Mr. Burns?" cliff-hanger of a decade ago, I'm not going to complain about that. (Having said that, I must confess that I am still a bit perplexed that the even more obvious candidate, Waylon Smithers, was not in the episode at all; and I'm also wondering where a semi-throwaway line from Marge about the ubiquitous Lenny and Carl is ultimately going to lead.)

So the transgender concern with this?

Patty's honey is Veronica, a pro golfer - not a problem per se, except that Veronica is not all that she appears to be. Marge stumbles on to the fact that Veronica is a man - no, not a M.T.F. transsexual (either pre-op. or post-op.), but a man - and after some soul-searching as to whether or not to tell Patty, exposes Veronica (replete with the ever-popular focus on the Adam's apple) at the wedding ceremony, but before the "I do's".

In the *New York Times*, Alessandra Stanley, while deeming the episode to be "not the funniest in Simpsons history," nevertheless lionized it as "tonic at a moment when television seems increasingly humourless and tame - fearful of advertiser boycotts by the religious right and fines from the Federal Communications Commission." [1] The genuflecting over, fawning at and praising of "There's Something About Marrying" by the gay marriage industry - media and pure advocacy branches - also instantaneously reached ridiculous heights. Or depths. Take your pick.

Brian Moylan, writing in the *Southern Voice* (one of the Queer Channel Media chain of allegedly-local publications), wrote: "Though it may have been a ratings stunt, *The Simpsons* used nuance, humour and a dash of stereotyping to deliver one of the most insightful looks at same-sex marriage to air on prime-time television." [2] This comment appeared immediately after addressing the issue of "Patty's beau" by briefly noting that Veronica was "a man pretending to be a woman so that he could play professional women's golf."

Joan Garry, the head of the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (G.L.A.A.D.), declared: "In the middle of an intense national conversation about our families and our freedom to marry, we're in the business of creating more dialogue, more visibility, more understanding - and *The Simpsons* has done just that." [3]

Dialogue? Perhaps.

Visibility? Likely.

But understanding? Understanding of gay marriage, but of what else?

"Understanding" that men fraudulently represent themselves as women to play on the women's golf tour - and perhaps who knows what else?

"Understanding" that the spectre of bearded men in dresses is indeed on the horizon for enforced public consumption?

No one should read any of what I'm writing as a demand on my part for ultra-anal, political correctness. I'm not so bold as to believe that L.G.B.T. issues cannot form the core of bits o' humour (ever heard Margaret Cho's bit about whale-watching?), perhaps even quasi-politically incorrect ones - even ones about transsexuals. For instance, one of the best jokes I've ever heard that is even remotely related to transsexuality emanated from Bill Maher in 2000, and was a jab, likely a not-so-friendly one, at Minnesota transgender Democratic National Convention delegate Jane Fee. I won't repeat it except to note that the money line was the phrase "fake bush," and was far more of a jab at someone other than Fee (use your imagination as to who it might have been.)

All of that having been reminisced about, I do expect gay media to know the difference between a "dash of stereotyping" and an egregiously dangerous misrepresentation. And, I do expect organisations that accept donations, at least some of which can be legitimately presumed to be premised on the representations of the organisations that transgender concerns are encompassed in their mission statements, to respect the faith, hopes and beliefs that implicitly act as the collective aura of every penny they collect. And, the only way that the faith, hopes and beliefs can be fully and completely honoured is for these organisations - particularly those "dedicated to promoting and ensuring fair, accurate and inclusive representation of people and events in the media as a means of eliminating homophobia and discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation," such as G.L.A.A.D. - to actually pay attention to whether something that might look as though it is merely another trendy slice o' pro-gay-marriage-ness might also be topped with rancid, poisonous, radioactive transphobic icing and, if necessary, to refrain from praising the pro-gay-marriage item if doing so constitutes de facto, albeit unspoken praise of transphobic imagery.

I suspect that the attitudes of Queer Channel Media, G.L.A.A.D. and others (probably even the *New York Times*) would not be so cavalier if an older gay man had been shown marrying a young boy, whilst each wore N.A.M.B.L.A. t-shirts - an image which would immediately become mega-grist for the anti-gay-rights mills.

Make no mistake, I'm not focusing my attention on gay reaction to the episode to the exclusion of fanatical right-wing reaction. All should read between the lines of the comment of Leo Brent Bozell, III, head of the so-called Parents Television Council. He criticised the episode (without having seen it of course, something disturbing in its own right) by saying, "At a time when the public mood is overwhelmingly against gay marriage, any show that promotes gay marriage is deliberately bucking the public mood," [4] leading one to wonder whether, should Bozell (or a like-minded pseudo-thinker) ever be in charge of America, any speech criticizing what the Bozellians are in the "mood" to hear would be tolerated.

Were the producers of *The Simpsons* taking a shot at Mianne Bagger, currently the most prominent M.T.F. having success with being recognised as the woman she is for purposes of a women's pro sport?

I don't know.

"Veronica" certainly was not drawn to resemble Bagger. Irrespective of intent, however, I do expect all who praised the episode for its gay marriage content to focus on what could be the anti-transsexual effect. And, to illustrate this I find myself turning to a publication not exactly known for its trans-inclusivity (the masthead, after all, still only says "gay & lesbian news magazine") or even trans-knowledge: *The Advocate*, whose 15th March issue features a perspective piece by Andy Marra, who identifies as a "transgender Korean-American adoptee who was raised in a white, upper-class Republican suburb in upstate New York." [5]

She writes about her reaction to the infamous *Details* magazine "Gay or Asian" piece as well as, years earlier, to one of all-too-many "He or She?" episodes of the "Maury Povich Show". "If the media really tried to be fair, accurate, and inclusive in its coverage, it would empower the next generation of young transgender women of colour to be proud of who they are." She goes on to ponder: "Did Maury's producer's realise that their show would be a backhanded slap to a struggling ten-year-old on a journey of self-identification?"

I wonder if the producers of *the Simpsons* realised what kind of backhanded message they were sending about real transgendered people via their use of "Veronica" and the skag-drag hags.

I also wonder whether [G.L.A.A.D.](#) cared about the fact that the message was being sent.

I would hope it does.

According to the bio-blurb of Marra's piece, she's the Asian-Pacific Islander media fellow at [G.L.A.A.D.](#)

## Notes:

[1] Alessandra Stanley, "At Least One Television Show Runs Toward Controversy" *New York Times*, 21st February 2005, at B2.


[2] Brian Moylan, "A Very Gay Night - From *The Simpsons* Satirical Look at Gay Marriage to a 'Desperate Housewives' Gay Kiss, Last Sunday Was Must See Television", *Southern Voice*, 25th February 2005.

[3] "G.L.A.A.D. Applauds Truth at the Heart of *The Simpsons*", [G.L.A.A.D.](#) press release, 21st February 2005.

[4] "Gay Marriage, 'Simpsons' Style", *Star-Tribune* (Minneapolis, MN, U.S.A.), 21st February 2005.

[5] Andy Marra, "Already Sensational", *The Advocate*, 15th March 2005, at 10.

## Katrina C. Rose

**From Transgender Legal History:**  Katrina C. Rose is an attorney and America's leading expert in the field of transgender legal history. She is currently working toward a PhD. in History at the University of Iowa and is the author of "The Proof is in the History: The Louisiana Constitution Recognises Transsexual Marriages" and "Louisiana Sex Discrimination Law Covers Transsexuals - So Why isn't Everybody Celebrating?", which appeared in Volume 9 of the *Deakin Law Review*.

Katrina's website is titled [Transgender Legal History](#) 



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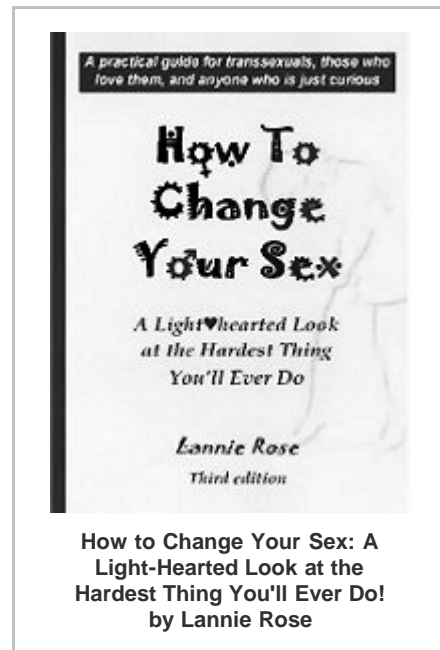
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# Book Review: How to Change your Sex

## A Light-hearted Look at the Hardest Thing You'll Ever Do!

reviewed by Willow Arune

Article appeared in Polare magazine: March 2005 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015



### How to Change Your Sex

A Light-hearted Look at the Hardest Thing You'll Ever Do!

by Lannie Rose

Published by Lulu Press 2004

I.S.B.N.-13 978 1435753600

*... not a clinician or therapist, no pretence, no degree of relevance, just a friend telling you the steps involved.*

Perhaps the closest comparison of this book is Mildred Brown's *True Selves*, long a favourite in transsexual circles. But this book is distinctive, as noted in the use of 'light-hearted' in the title. It is not a comedic look at the transsexual world, but a very well written, entertaining and informative look at all the steps along the way in transition. If I were to select a book to give to a family member of a transsexual person, *True Selves* would win; for a person trying to figure out to do or not to do, Lannie's book is far preferable.

'Light-hearted' is the key. There is no demand, just a cheery guide to starting out and where all this can head. A 'no pressure' book to read, enjoy, and perhaps follow written by one of us and not a clinician or therapist. No pretence, no degree of relevance. Just a friend telling you the steps involved.

We have needed such a book for a long time. There are candid discussion of the practical aspects, telling friends and family, dating, and even sex! What I enjoyed so much about this

book was that it was more like the conversations I enjoy with my trans women friends when nobody else is listening. Not that it gets deep into any subject, but enough is there to start your mind thinking.

Now, no book by a trans person is going to please all other trans people. There is always something for critics to seize upon and differ from. So? This book contains statements that I do not agree with, but those are matters of deep transsexual theory and their inclusion and viewpoint is a matter of opinion. I might have preferred some mention of diverse opinions, but given the broad statement the writer makes at the outset, that is really not necessary. Any reader will find out how diverse we are rather quickly if they have access to the Internet (and this book is intertwined with the Internet to some degree for full benefit, including reference to the major Internet sites).

Perhaps what this book does better than many is to point out that "you are not alone", that feeling that seems to plague so many of us starting off. Nor are we freaks by being different. The breezy and chatty style of the writer flows over some rough rocks, pointing them out to those that follow, but not scaring them off in so doing. In general, the advice is go as far as you are comfortable and go further only if that makes you more comfortable, coupled with a soft encouragement to go a little further than you might at times. A person reading this book who is contemplating any form of transgender living will find support, encouragement, and good company without academic or clinical colouring.

I think this book would be especially good for a younger person starting transition. Not to limit the age group of readers, this is most certainly a book I would refer to a late-teen or twenties type for a start. A primer if you will. Up here in the frozen North, some 'newbies' are 500 miles into the bush and this book (also available as an e-book) is strongly recommended for them. For older groups this book represents a good start perhaps supplemented by a recommendation to other books that would go further into concepts and theories selected on a personal basis. With that in mind, the bibliography is very limited. We transsexuals excel at the autobiography, and a carefully chosen one can greatly assist a person starting out. Reference to a few more would add to the value of this book for those reading it far from support groups and kindred spirits.

Lannie sets, and maintains, a very good balance between wants and reality. One example, on the results of S.R.S. she clearly points out that "some can, some can't" as to 'the big O' and that theme is consistent through other parts of transition, not 'selling' all the good without mentioning the bad. Discussing the things that can happen to a married transsexual woman, she points out to be sure of what is wanted at the end, a very wise caution.

All in all, this is a delightful quick read for anyone starting off, a way of getting your bearings in a new and strange world. Not aimed at those who have already done the deed, it is a book to keep on the shelf in case anyone asks "Do you think I am?". Let them read Lannie and come back! Many of their questions will already be pleasantly answered.

Is this a good book? Yes indeed, for the target market perhaps the best one out there. Consider this book as a very effective alternative to *True Selves*. For a support group, almost a necessity.

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# Book Review: Through the Jungle

## A Traveller's Guide

Reviewed by Willow Arune

Article appeared in Polare magazine: March 2005 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015



Through The Jungle: A Traveller's Guide, by Samantha W. Adams

### Through The Jungle: A Traveller's Guide

by Samantha W. Adams  
Published by iUniverse Inc. Lincoln NE, U.S.A. (2004)  
I.S.B.N.-13 978 0595310028

*A book with few pretensions and complete honesty; one that so well mirrors most of our gains and losses through the time of transition.*

**L**et's pretend you are staying with a friend. Your friend is out, no doubt to pick up something nice for supper - and you notice your friend's diary sitting on the coffee table. Now you really want to read it - but you don't!

Samantha Adams lets you ramble freely through her diary of transition. In doing so with candour and honesty, she opens up transition through her eyes to the world. Unflinching, the diary is straightforward and gives freely of her experiences along the way to her new life. This will speak directly to those contemplating transition - perhaps as a caution, and for those of us through the "jungle" it will bring back memories, good and bad, of the path taken.

Others have used the diary format, but few with as much emotional success. While the writing style may leave something to be desired, its principle merit is found in the open disclosure of the emotional changes and upheavals we all experience with H.R.T. and all of

our changes. Samantha adds the later reflections in sequence, and ties all together with an allegorical story which gives unity to the whole - the "jungle". Nice too is that Samantha is "just plain folks". Unlike April Ashley, Nancy Hunt, Kate Bornstein, Deidre McCloskey, or Jenny Boylan, she is not an entertainer, a performer or public figure. Perhaps had she not written this book she would remain unknown even in the transsexual community. As it is, she has done her community considerable good by so capturing the spirit and angst of transition.

Most clear are the various stages of personal growth that we all experience the "plateaus" of transition with emotional responses, friendships, and self-discovery. In a short space of time, as Samantha sets out so convincingly, we go through "puberty" once again, but at an age where each new plateau can be seen, felt and remembered. The joys of some, the tears of others all here and presented in a manner that tell you of your friend's life through her own eyes.

There is perhaps no better way than to let herself Samantha speak, to give you the flavour of this unique book.

"17th February 2001 I am sorry for what I am about to do. I can't go on living this life of lies and deceit any longer, for if I do I will not have a personal future. So, if I must find myself, let this journey leave me no regrets, a better sense of who I truly am, and where I come from. Today I begin my greatest adventure, one I was destined to make on the day I was born. "Starting off, we wonder, we doubt, we realise this is something we have to do.

"18th July 2001 I am the butt of many jokes now, and thanks to my so-called friends, no one seems to care how bad I am being torn apart.

I am tired of being disappointed by those I once trusted. Maybe I am doing something they disapprove of, but do they have to make me feel so bad about making this choice? I am tired of talking to everyone about my feelings. I just wish everyone had been up front with me instead of stringing me along."

Or a few days later. "A few of my friends, who once saw me as a buddy, have now begun treating me like a woman. I at first enjoyed this new treatment and welcomed it a lot, but I am becoming aware that a few of these friends now see me as an object. That startles me, as I have never been treated like this before, and never thought about it much. I mean they talk to my chest instead of me!

"7th August 2001. I have seen a lot of problems today. The biggest one is that the transgender community, as a whole, has so much in-fighting going on that it can never agree on anything."

"28th August 2001 I am finding out that I have been stereotyping females. My oldest niece pointed this out to me today. I have claimed I do not wish to be categorized and lumped into a group, yet I am doing that very thing to women. The truth is, I have become aware that a true woman grows up with many different things happening to her, she lives different lives and has many different experiences. I once believed a girl grew up with all kinds of things happening to her, like dances and parties and make-up, but the truth is, a lot of girls never do any of that stuff - some actually shun it and hate it."

Growth is a constant pattern, as is self-doubt.

"10th November 2001 Today has been very, very bad. I've spiralled deeper into my feelings, and I am becoming aware that maybe I need help. Maybe the hormones are getting to me; maybe I feel the weight of my life collapsing down around me. Perhaps I am making a mistake and I don't want to admit it. I go to work and fear losing my new job. I see my few remaining friends and fear losing them, and then I have to face my family and realise that at a blink they may leave me too. I have to keep all this fear inside".

This is truly a homespun book, one that fits well with the Ohio background of the writer. Like a sweater knit from homespun yarn, this fits well around transsexual shoulders, giving the comfortable fit that comes of knowing that someone has worn it - and travelled our path-before. Not someone famous or known, just one of us, confronting those issues as we did, with fear, apprehension and some confusion - and what I call courage. A book with few pretensions and complete honesty; one that so well mirrors most of our gains and losses through the time of transition. A quiet book, one that does not "create waves" but from its very format enables all to see and feel.

I intend to give a copy of this book to those starting out in transition; those that have not started off but who are thinking about doing so. It is not a lecture, but a truthful account of the many ups and downs, that transition holds for all.

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