

Polare Edition 3

Published: March 1994 Last Update: June 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015

Editorial

by **Rachelle Alexander, Polare Editor**

Welcome to the third edition of *Polare*, a magazine on gender issues published by the Gender Centre.

This autumn edition includes a pictorial account of community events which have been organised by the Gender Centre and should bring back some humorous memories for those who attended. We also report on the history of transgender people in Polynesia and trace the history of condoms throughout the ages. The special feature "Transgender Community" raises some interesting and poignant questions about the existence of such a community and seeks to explore the many difficulties facing transgenders on the road to developing a sense of community. An article on breast care provides information on self-examination and gender friendly clinics to visit for your regular breast check. We also introduce Dame Lush who will be providing regular reports from the stars and beyond. So grab a cuppa, pull up your favourite chair, relax and enjoy this jam-packed autumn edition.

President's Report

by **Jean Noble, Management Committee President**

Welcome to the "President's Report" where I try to raise the awareness of the membership as to what's been happening here at the Gender Centre and within the organisation generally. I trust we have all begun to recover and get into the swing of things after an unimaginably great Christmas and New Year?

Well, down to the business at hand. Firstly, the wonderful staff of the Gender Centre had their first weekend workshop, out of which came some very real and positive input as to how they see the next year. The executive have received the staff submissions with great delight and have agreed to incorporate their ideas into this years strategic plans. I personally think this is a good example of staff and executive mutual and effective participation in the decision making process, which of course can only be of benefit to the organisation.

Once again, we have been notified by the AIDS Bureau that a new round of funding submissions have been successful. This will enable us to introduce some new services and continue with the "Social & Support Project" which ran as a pilot project last year. The difference being that it will now be an ongoing project and will begin in May. Regular support groups, social groups and other activities will be organised by the project. If you're not already on the mailing list call Craig at the Gender Centre to request your copy of *Polare* which will keep you informed about social and support activities and other community events.

Feature Articles



RuPaul is out there being subversive as hell by just putting on a dress and some big ol' high heels.

You Better Work Bitch!

RuPaul sashays onto the stage at London's Heaven club to riotous applause, screams and general hysteria from the crowd on the packed dance floor. She's wearing some very tight sequined hot pants, massive shoes and a hell of a smile.

Breast Care

Self-examination of your breasts should be done every two months. This article details how to detect any abnormalities or anything otherwise suspicious by looking at them, feeling them in the shower or laying down.

The History of Condoms

Condoms (and dildos) first appeared in England in 1660, supposedly brought over from Italy, and were in wide use by the eighteenth century, when sexually transmitted diseases had become rampant in Europe.

Like a Lady in Polynesia

The condoned social condition of males living as women existed right across the many islands of Polynesia, from Hawai'i to New Zealand and from Tonga to Easter Island. The history of the transgender people, often called *māhū*, *fa'a fafine* and *fakaleiti* on the islands of the South Pacific.

The Emotional Transition

There is undoubtedly a high emotional cost to be paid for having undergone or being in the process of changing one's gender. Much focus has been placed upon physical and psychological evolvment and in recent times, this focus has been shifting toward a political consciousness.

Living a Dream

Her mother said that she wouldn't live to see her 21st birthday. Well, she is now 24 and pleased to have proven her wrong. L.B. is a drag queen but no longer dresses as a woman. She decided to take on a male role when drunk and having a bad night at work.

The new funding also means that we will be able to provide a rural outreach service. This of course is a much-needed service for our sisters and brothers living in rural areas. Although it may take some time to organise, it will happen throughout this year and I'm sure it will prove to be very unifying. Part of organising this service means finding out where it is needed, so country sisters and brothers, give us a call at the Centre and let us know where you are! It would also give you the opportunity to speak to the outreach workers before they head off to your part of the world.

The increase in funding will also mean we are able to provide more printed resources and information. Plans are underway to improve *Polare* with ideas to upgrade the quality of paper and printing, a glossier cover and perhaps an increase in size. So keep the contributions rolling in! We are also in consultation with the Family Planning Association to develop some information pamphlets covering such things as hormones, breast implants and genital realignment surgery. The aim of these resources is to provide accurate information, helping people with gender issues to make informed decisions. The first pamphlet will be available by May.

The "Tribes" video project is well underway with the final draft nearing completion. From what I have seen so far, I am really inspired by the effort the tribe have put in to make this project so exciting. Auditions will be held very soon, followed by rehearsal and filming. Once the video is filmed, we are proposing a launch/benefit night as a preview. As this video is a first for people with gender issues and contains a powerful message on safe sex and injecting drug use practices, it really does need your support. So be a part of the "tribe" by getting involved in the filming or coming along to the launch. For more information about *Shattered Illusions*, contact Craig at the Gender Centre.

I wish to thank Jasper for the encouragement, support and input which he has given to the Gender Centre and we wish both Jasper and the Boys Will Be Boys group all the best for the future and look forward to their continued involvement at the Centre.

I hope you feel better informed about our future plans. I hope you all had a great Mardi Gras '94 and I am looking forward to seeing you at our Easter Barbecue on the 31st March at the Centre. Don't forget to R.S.V.P. to Craig by the 29th March.

On behalf of the executive, I wish you all the very best for Easter.

Snippets

from the pages of *Polare* Number Three

On 1st December 1993, the federal court sat in judgement over the issue of whether a woman who identified as transsexual and had not had genital sex reassignment surgery was eligible for a wives pension as the wife of an invalid pensioner under the *Social Security Act (1947)*. The court ruled that although they acknowledged that she felt herself to be female and clearly could gain some acceptance as a woman in the community, it would be necessary to draw the line on the definition of a wife somewhere.

The judges agreed that they could only, for practical reasons, include in their definition of a wife as a person who had changed gender roles, undergone hormonal therapy, and had genital sex reassignment. The Hon. Mr. Justice Lockhart said in his judgement: "I reach this conclusion with regret". "A transsexual who regards herself or himself as having achieved the new sex must find life extremely difficult." He also stated that, "the law relating to marriage may require different tests. The law on marriage may involve special considerations with many factors to be considered by the court and carefully weighed. There is, however, a need to apply law consistently."

The judgement was in some ways helpful to people with gender issues and no doubt disappointing to others. Clearly it is sad that we are a society that places so much emphasis on the physical rather than the social and emotional realities of life.

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You Better Work Bitch!

When RuPaul Says You Gotta Work She's Not Just Talking About the Catwalk!

by Christopher Mellor, DJ Magazine

Article appeared in Polare magazine: March 1994 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015



RuPaul is out there being subversive as hell by just putting on a dress and some big ol' high heels.

RuPaul sashays onto the stage at London's Heaven club to riotous applause, screams and general hysteria from the crowd on the packed dance floor. She's wearing some very tight sequined hot pants, massive shoes and a hell of a smile. She's travelled thousands of miles to give us a message, "probably the most important message you'll ever hear in your life", and that message is - "you better work, bitch".

Most take the safe route, a house, a car, mortgage, kids, and they end up with a life they hate. I am living proof that you can live out a dream and be a success."

No seriously, there's more to RuPaul than seven foot of haircut and heels, inside that glamorous exterior lies a heart of gold, filled with love, on a mission to share the fruits of her personal voyage of self-discovery with the rest of the world. She was born in Birmingham, Alabama U.S.A. (home of Martin Luther King) and arrived in New York via Atlanta where the real RuPaul, the one that's all skirts and sequins, took shape. Now she's a cover star, a recording artiste and is about to turn into a worldwide phenomenon. RuPaul is the starry-eyed, living embodiment of the American dream.

"Life is a gorgeous gift to us to enjoy. My message is love. We must learn to love ourselves, find out who we really are. Most people would like to explore themselves but are afraid of peer pressure, the biggest fear is being ostracised. But you've got to do it because the best fruit is out on the limb. Now, you might fail out there trying to get it, but you've got to try. Most take the safe route, a house, a car, mortgage, kids, and they end up with a life they hate. I am living proof that you can live out a dream and be a success."

New York, with it's towering skyscrapers and 24 hours-a-day full-speed lifestyle is the only place that RuPaul could really feel at home. "The pulse of Rock 'n' Roll runs through that city and it all comes out in the Village, it's the epicentre, it's where it's happening. New York is a big fat greasy ho and I love her. You can sum up the appeal of New York in one word - taxi! You can get anything you want any time, you're not restricted by normal rules, but the city has it's own rules and if you don't abide by them it'll break you. There's a constant sense of danger and new frontiers, it's a great place to get some soul work done." RuPaul is the "fiercest fucking drag queen" in the world, proud of her success, proud of her roots (and in this case we're not just talking hair). "Without Divine, Sylvester, even Boy George I wouldn't be here today. But drag queens have been around since the beginning of time, all cultures have shaman, male/female witch doctors. It's a way for the culture to have fun, reach something deeper, more mystical. I take chances ordinary people don't take. It is decadent, yes. It's basically a piss-take of society. That is the foundation of drag."

And that's the success of this particular act. As rock and roll's pathetic macho posturing and lame, leather jacket clad attempts at "outsider" status become more sad and old and mainstream, RuPaul is out there being subversive as hell by just putting on a dress and some big ol' high heels (from Frederick's of Hollywood, if you want to know).


RuPaul is a star like the other supermodels are stars, bringing out a bit of glamour to drab and dreary world. "A star is something shiny and bright and unattainable. Most people live mundane, boring lives so there will always be a market for people who dazzle bedazzlers. The glamour used to be supplied by Hollywood, now it comes from the super models. Of course I have universal appeal because everybody loves things that are shiny and new."

RuPaul is not only king of the queens but also master of the sound-bite. "Everybody has something that makes them unique and special. All the great prophets, Jesus, Krishna say it - being a part of god, you are a god." And when you've got a six foot six hunk of drag made up and ready to move sitting right next to you, you better believe it baby. "My ability is just to be myself on cue, to make myself open for people to see."

Like Warhol's "stars" or Take That - her life is her art, more important than the products (Album - Super Model of the World out now on Union, by the way). She may be a kind of Divine for the 90's, but that means she's a creation of the times too, more professional than profound perhaps, but a real entertainer, she knows exactly what she's doing and where she's going. As she says in the live show - "watch out because up close I'm a bit of a monster".

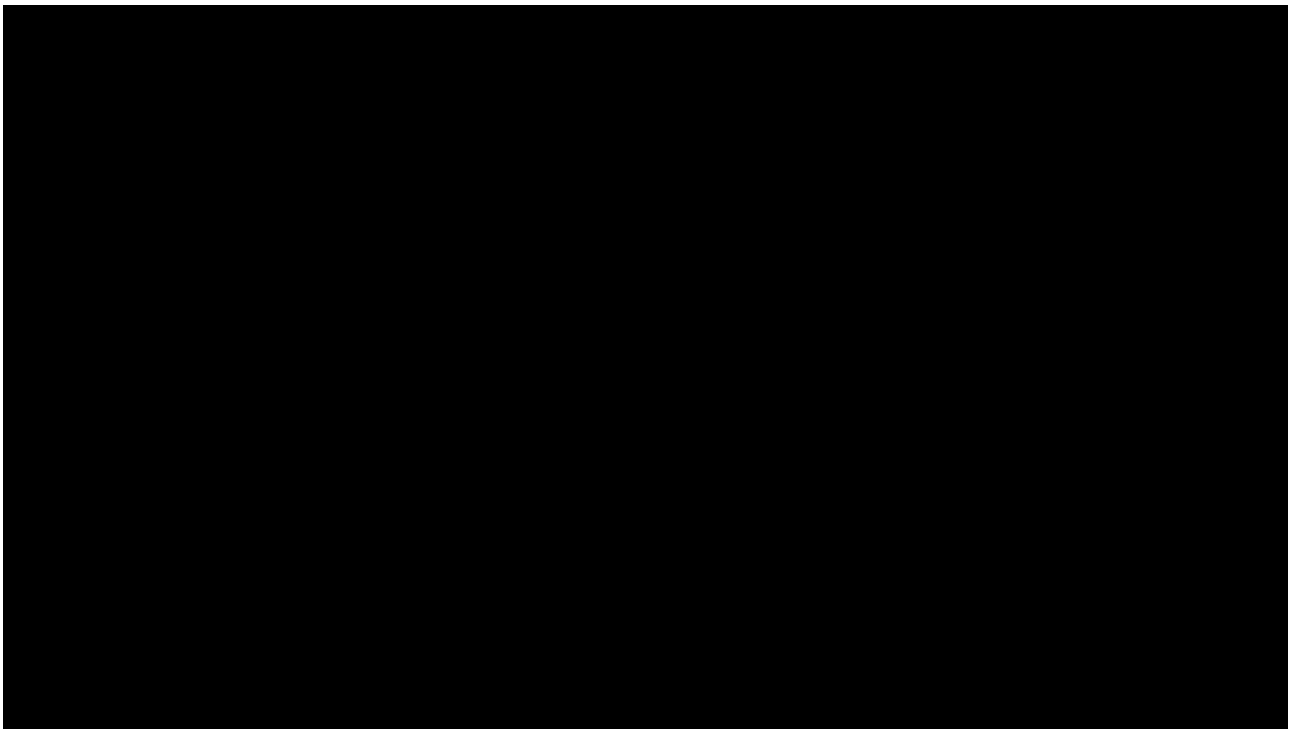
When RuPaul says you gotta work she's not just talking about on the catwalk. Being a real star is a dirty job but someone's got to do it and RuPaul has the guts and the glamour to be shining in the firmament for quite a while. This queen has got balls and brains.

RuPaul

Edited from Wikipedia:  Born in San Diego, California U.S.A. in 1960, RuPaul Andre Charles, best known as simply RuPaul, is an American actor, drag queen, model, author, and recording artist, who first became widely known in the 1990s when he appeared in a wide variety of television programs, films, and musical albums. Previously, he was a fixture on the Atlanta and New York City club scenes during the 1980s and early 90s. RuPaul has on occasion performed as a man in a number of roles, usually billed as RuPaul Charles. RuPaul is noted among famous drag queens for his indifference towards the gender-specific pronouns used to address him — both "he" and "she" have been deemed acceptable, as he has said: "You can call me he. You can call me she. You can call me Regis and Kathie Lee; I don't care! Just as long as you call me". He hosted a short-running talk show on American cable television network, VH1, and currently hosts the reality television show RuPaul's Drag Race.




Read more about RuPaul at [her website](#). 



The official video for RuPaul's Supermodel (You Better Work).




Female Force: RuPaul
Author: Michael Troy
Publisher: Bluewater Productions (2013)
I.S.B.N.-13 978-1467519311.

From Amazon Books:  Don't be a drag, just be a queen. Bluewater productions breaks new ground again with big heels in it's latest offering in the popular Female Force Series focusing on RuPaul. RuPaul is easily the most famous drag queen and self-described "Supermodel of the World". This whimsical look at the life and times of the host of the popular Logo series, *RuPaul's Drag Race* is as unique as the woman himself. A must have for any collector's closet - or shelf

rather.




Workin' It!: RuPaul's Guide to Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Style
Author: RuPaul
Publisher: It Books (2010)
I.S.B.N.-13 978-0061985836.

From Amazon Books:  More than just a style guide, this is a navigation system through the bumpy road of life. Let RuPaul teach you the tried, tested and found true techniques that will propel you from background player to shining star! No more playing small, your time is now! *Workin' It!* will provide helpful and provocative tips on fashion, beauty, style and confidence for girls and boys, straight and gay - and everyone in between! No one knows more about life, self-expression and style than RuPaul! With photos by Mathu Andersen from the new season of *RuPaul's Drag Race* and a fresh look at style and inner beauty, *Workin' It!* will pick up where the show leaves off. The book will be as colourful, fun, and intriguing as

RuPaul, with insights into makeup, clothing choices and the illusion of drag. Fans of RuPaul will get a piece of Ru's philosophy on style and attitude - and how it's more than the clothes that make the man, or woman! With four colour photos throughout and a fresh, funky design *Workin' It!* will be the perfect guide to RuPaul - part style guide, part confidence manifesto, and entirely fabulous!



Lettin It All Hang Out
Author: RuPaul
Publisher: Hyperion (1995)
I.S.B.N.-13 978-0786861569.

From Amazon Books:  "Some of the most unforgettable women in the world ... are men". In this engagingly chatty, featherweight autobiography, drag queen RuPaul traces his transformation from misfit son of a troubled mother in Georgia, to unsung "superstar-in-exile" dancing on bars in Manhattan's East Village, to international sensation with the hit single "Supermodel of the World".

Since the book's completion, he has also become the first known cross-dresser to win an advertising contract with a major cosmetics company. Ru takes ample time out along the way to expand on the New Age platitudes of such songs as "Everybody Say Love" and aim a few harsh words at naysayers and tellers of stupid anatomical jokes including comedian Milton Berle, whose infamous run-in with co-presenter Ru at the M.T.V. Video Awards is described in sordid backstage detail here. But despite the title, Ru remains emotionally corseted until the final chapter, in which he discusses the hardships involved in growing up gay and examines his difficult relationship with his father. This extraordinary extrovert remains a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma wearing a bodysuit and sky-high wig.

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Breast Care

With or Without Implants

by the Breast Centre, Rachel Foster Hospital

Article appeared in Polare: March 1994 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015



Breast self-examination helps you know what is normal for your body so you can notice any changes if they happen.

Self-examination of your breasts should be done every two months. If you detect any abnormalities or suspect something is not right contact the breast centre for an appointment. If you are over the age of forty a mammography screening is recommended every two years. The Breast Centre has implant screening available.

Have the necessary tests done so you are reassured. And, if cancer is detected, early detection can make a vital difference.

Breast Cancer

The Breast Care Centre, a service for people over the age of forty suggests the following regarding breast cancer:

- If you are over forty and concerned at the risk of cancer contact the Breast Care Centre for free screening. You will need to inform them if you have implants;
- If you have implants a screening will take about one hour, without implants it will only take about ten to fifteen minutes;
- The screening this Centre provides is only for cancer detection;
- The Breast Care Centre recommends biannual mammography when over the age of forty. If you are under the age of forty and concerned at the risk of cancer contact the Breast Centre; and
- The most important thing is to self-examine your breasts regularly so that you know what is normal for your breasts and help to detect any abnormalities if they occur.

Breast Checks

Breast self-examination helps you to know what is normal for your body so you can notice any changes if they happen. Family planning clinics and women's health centres have pamphlets on how to examine your breasts. It is also a good idea to see a health worker who will take you through the steps of a breast check.

Looking at your Breasts

Stand in front of a mirror and look at your breasts. Notice any changes in size or shape, any dimpling or puckering of the skin or anything different about the nipple. Look at your breasts with arms at your side, with arms raised above your head and with hands on your hips. (With hands on hips, tighten chest muscles and press hands down firmly on hips.)

Feeling in the shower

If you have smaller breasts, this is a good method as wet soapy skin makes it easier. Put one hand behind your head and with gentle circular motion, feel your breast with the other hand. Divide your breast mentally into four sections; keeping your fingers together and flat and using gentle circular motions, feel each section thoroughly. Then carefully feel the nipple and armpit. Now, put your other hand behind your head and check the other breast.

Feeling Lying down

If you have larger breasts, this position is easier. Put a pillow behind one shoulder and place that hand behind your head; using the other hand examine the stretched out breast. Divide your breast mentally into four sections; keeping your fingers together and flat and using gentle circular motions, start from the outside and work towards the nipple. After feeling each section of your breast thoroughly, feel the nipple area and armpit. Repeat for other breast.

If you see or feel any changes in your breasts, see a health worker right away. Remember, in nine out of ten cases a lump is not cancer. Have the necessary tests done so you are reassured. And, if cancer is detected, early detection can make a vital difference.

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The History of Condoms

First Appearing When Sexually Transmitted Diseases Were Rampant in Europe

by Unknown Author

Article appeared in Polare: March 1994 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015



Phillips, who became famous for her products.

We find many references to condoms in the literature of the day: Samuel Johnson's biographer James Boswell casually writes in his journals of sexual encounters in which he was "unclad" - i.e., not wearing a condom. The young author agonises over whether he's contracted a venereal illness and will have to undergo a protracted and painful cure for "the clap".

Early condoms were expensive if natural, products usually made of lengths of sheep intestine sewn closed at one end and colourfully secured at the base with a red ribbon tied around the balls. Often ill-fitting and strong smelling they became increasingly expensive, rare and difficult to obtain as rural areas shrank and sexual hypocrisy grew in strength during the Industrial Revolution. Late in the nineteenth century rubber replaced animal gut as the condom material of choice, but these early products broke easily unless they were made so thick that most pleasurable sensations were completely dulled. The perfection of vulcanised rubber in the beginning of our century not only made possible the durable rubber tyres that assured the ascendancy of the automobile in America, but also allowed for the cheaper, safer, thinner, and thus more pleasurable latex condom.

By the Second World War, every kit handed out to the millions of men in the United States armed forces contained its share of "rubbers" - as latex condoms had come to be known - for protection against venereal disease. At the same time, the discovery of penicillin and antibiotics seemed to promise a future free of the worries that had afflicted our ancestors' sexual lives. Up to about 1970, young men still carried fold-up wallets indelibly deformed by the impression of a rolled up Trojan, Sheik, or other brand of condom, but with a somewhat different intention: birth control. With the advent and instant popularity of the oral birth-control pill taken daily by women, condoms all but vanished from American life.

Condoms hadn't ever been in widespread use among homosexuals to begin with; when they entered gay sexual life at all, it was usually as a curiosity, a sex toy. Especially among those gay men who'd come-out since the Stonewall rebellion of 1969 or who'd never had any heterosexual experience, condoms - if they were thought of or used at all were considered kinky, sometimes a little daring.

Now however, with the spread of H.I.V., condoms have become mandatory in all of our lives - truly a matter of life or death.

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It's not known how long condoms have been in existence. Some scholars claim to have found allusions to them in the works of Virgil and the Roman satirists.

Late in the nineteenth century rubber replaced animal gut as the condom material of choice

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Condoms (and dildos) first appeared in England in 1660, supposedly brought over from Italy, and were in wide use by the eighteenth century, when sexually transmitted diseases had become rampant in Europe. By then they'd become so common that they were manufactured, openly sold, even advertised as "implements of safety which secure the health" in Paris and London. Mrs. Lewis held the London monopoly in the 1740s. By 1770 the monopoly passed to Mrs.

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Like a Lady in Polynesia

The Māhū of Tahiti, the Fa'a Fafine in Samoa, the Fakaleiti in Tonga and More

by Roberta Perkins

Article appeared in Polare magazine: March 1994 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015



The early Europeans visitors to the Society Islands were amazed to find Tahitian males who lived as women and were totally accepted in this role by the island community.

Tahiti has long had a romantic reputation for sexual permissiveness. Indeed, young people were encouraged to freely engage in sex and experiment with various sexual behaviours with

many partners as a precondition of later satisfactory marriage. And, as 18th and 19th century seafarers discovered, Europeans were considered most desirable by Tahitian girls because their white skins indicated they were gods and nothing could be better than giving birth to a demigod.

The early Europeans visitors to the Society Islands (of which the island of Tahiti is one) were also amazed to find Tahitian males who lived as women and were totally accepted in this role by the island community. They were soon to discover that the condoned social condition of males living as women existed right across the many islands of Polynesia, from Hawai'i to New Zealand and from Tonga to Easter Island.

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There is an amusing tale about a sailor aboard the British frigate Mercury in 1789 who on making a short stop at Tahiti was smitten by a beautiful dancing girl. He gave gifts of beads, combs and other knick-knacks in the hope of pleasing her and then persuading her to go with him on board the ship. She consented, but to his surprise (perhaps shock) when she removed her lap-lap the body of a young male stood before him. The Tahitians showed their obvious enjoyment of the episode by laughing aloud on the beach at the sailor's embarrassment. Such was often the way Englishmen were introduced to the māhū of Tahiti, the fa'a fafine in Samoa, the fakaleiti in Tonga, or other terms for them on the other islands, which was often followed by much mirth on the part of the islanders. Perhaps the nearest interpretation to these terms is that given by Samoans when asked about the fa'a fafine, which is like a lady, you know 50/50. So, in traditional Polynesian societies male-to-female transgenders were not seen as women, but as something in between. Nevertheless, they were widely accepted by the Polynesians. King Kamehameha I of Hawai'i even had them dwell near his house because he considered them lucky, and in Tahiti every village had one māhū because it was thought to be fortunate for the village.

The universal incidence of transgenders across Polynesia is a remarkable phenomenon, especially when in neighbouring Melanesia (New Guinea, the Solomons, New Caledonia, Fiji etc) individuals changing gender were almost unknown in pre-European days (although ceremonial transvestism, homosexuality and male pederasty was prevalent and widespread), Perhaps, the concept of gender crossing had not occurred to the older island settlers of Melanesia, whereas, the newer Polynesians, who arrived in the Pacific only about 500 years ago, may have brought the idea with them from South East Asia, where gender crossing has been an important function in traditional societies there for many millennia.

For the English, French and Dutch seafarers who visited the South Pacific Islands in the 18th century, confronting the Polynesian transgenders was a mixture of shock, fascination and repulsion. The best reports of these early contacts come from the H.M.S. Bounty expedition to Tahiti (1789 - 91) under Captain William Bligh. One of his officers, Lt. Morrison, wrote: "They have a set of men called māhū. These men are in some respects like the eunuchs of India but they are not castrated. They never cohabit with women but live as they do. They pick their beards out and dress as women, dance and sing with them and are as effeminate in their voice. They are generally excellent hands at making and painting of cloth, making mats and every other woman's employment" Being a thorough gentleman who considered it his duty to investigate everything, Captain Bligh's curiosity got the better of him "I found with her a person, who although I was certain was a man, had great marks of effeminacy about him and created in me certain notions which I wished to find out ... The effeminacy of this persons speech induced me to think he had suffered castration ... Here the young man took his mantle off which he had about him to show me the connection. He had the appearance of a woman, his yard and testicles being so drawn in under him, having the art from custom of keeping them in this position ... On examining his privacies I found them both very small and the testicles remarkable so, being not larger than a boy's five or six years-old, and very soft as if in a state of decay or a total incapacity of being larger, so that in either case he appeared to me as effectually a Eunuch as if the stones were away." One can imagine old stiff and proper Captain Bligh in full dress uniform fingering the māhū genitals with his starched white gloved hands.

An unexplained phenomenon on Tahiti was that just one, and only one māhū resided in each village at any one time. As one Tahitian

pointed out: "When one dies then another substitutes ... God arranges it like that ... It isn't allowed ... two mähū in one place. I've travelled around Huahine (the Society or Tahitian Islands) and I haven't seen two mähū in one place. I never saw it." How this phenomenon worked is still a mystery, but obviously some sociological mechanism must have been at work in each village to ensure that not more than one mähū lived there at a time. Since, as we know the desire to change gender is spontaneous and not an orderly event, how then did such precision occur on cue? Perhaps a young mähū growing up in a village which already had an established older mähū may have been forced to seek a village where none existed. Another suggestion is that a mähū was made by the community, who selected a boy to be raised as a girl to replace the established mähū when she passed on. The question remains, though, what criteria was used for this selection? However it was achieved, mähū were accorded great respect and dignity.

Bligh observed: "The women treat him (mähū) as one of their sex, and he observed every restriction that they do, and is equally respected and esteemed." Anthropologist Robert Suggs reported a similar attitude towards mähū on the Marquesas Islands, while another ethnographer, Donald Marshall, said much the same for Cook Islanders, and by all accounts it was similar on Hawai'i. On Mangaia, the mähū were not only well regarded by the rest of the population, but they excelled at women's tasks, sang in an excellent high pitch falsetto and were better dancers than all other women. Anthropologist Robert Levy claimed that the mähū on Tahiti served as an object lesson for demarcating the sexes. Since the sex roles were similar in many respects and some tasks were performed equally by men and women, the mähū was pointed to as neither wholly man nor wholly woman. However, this does not explain the presence of mähū in more warlike societies such as the Marquesans, the Hawai'ians or the Maoris, where the sexes were clearly defined by the warrior status of men.

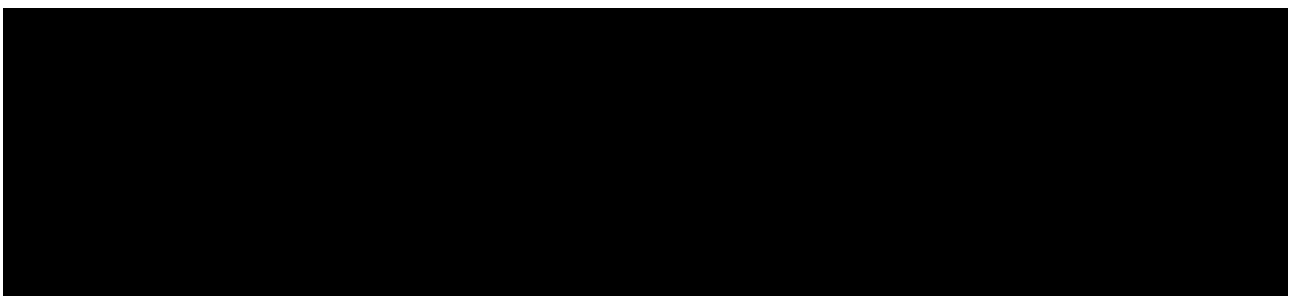
According to Captain Bligh: "These people (mähū), says Tynah, are particularly selected when boys and kept with the women solely for the caresses of the men ... Those who he connected with him have their beastly pleasures satisfied between his thighs, but they are no farther sodomites as they all positively deny the crime." Indeed, it seems that anal sex, even in heterosexual relations was not practised in Tahiti. The mähū then was a diversion for oral sex, since many Tahitian men claimed that it's just like doing it with a woman, but his (mähū) way of doing it is better than with a woman ... When you go to a woman it is not always satisfactory. When you go to the mähū it's more satisfactory. The sexual pleasure is very great." However, fellatio was not reciprocal, as one Tahitian explained: "I was "done" by a mähū ... He "ate" my penis. He asked me to suck his. I did not suck it ... He offered me money. I said I would hit him. I did not want that sort of thing, it is disgusting." Despite this, there was a Tahitian belief that semen is like a vitamin supplement. "(mähū) really believe that (semen) is first class food for them," said one Tahitian man. "Because of that mähū are strong and powerful. The seminal fluid goes throughout his body ... I've seen many mähū and I've seen that they are very strong." Sodomy was also denied by other islanders. The mangaians, for example, thought anal sex ridiculous, yet were quick to point out that it took place on the other Cook Islands. It is possible, of course, that the Polynesians were quick to realise the disgust with which white men regarded sodomy, and in their eagerness to accommodate them as trading partners flatly denied any such behaviour in their community. So, Europeans began to view mähū not as substitute women, nor as sodomites, but as an alternative sexual arrangement for the sole gratification of men.

As for the incidence of female-to-male transgenders across Polynesia, it seems to have been unknown, or, at least, rare, for anthropologist Donald Marshall was told of the existence of women who insisted on doing men's work (though not cross-dressed), on Mangaia, though he had never seen one.

The mähū tradition continues today on Tahiti, Samoa, Tonga and the other islands, but due to the intrusions of white missionaries to Polynesia in the 19th century it is much modified from its pre-European development. mähū no longer have the respect of their communities and many have migrated to such cities as Papeete, Fagatogo, Nukualofa, Auckland and Honolulu, where transgender subcultures similar to those in Australian cities have formed. But the western cultural influence in these cities has resulted in the derogatory image of "drag queen" and the kind of persecutions that we transgenders in Australia are familiar with. As a consequence, some mähū have returned to their traditional communities where, in spite of a predominance of judgmental Christian dogma, at least the extremes of western oppression do not exist.

Mähū of Tahiti


From the A.B.C. "Foreign Correspondent" website: 📧 In the South Pacific island paradise of Tahiti - traditionally a conservative place with a missionary background - reporter Trevor Bormann finds a society that's not only multi-cultural and multi-lingual - it's also multi-sexual. He meets the Mähū - Polynesia's "third sex": people of 'ambiguous gender' who physically remain men but act like women. The Mähū have been a part of Polynesian life for hundreds, possibly thousands of years. "Its always been the case in some families that the eldest boy would be raised as a girl" says Bormann. "The Mähū take on traditional female roles like cooking and helping to raise the children". Mähū are not just tolerated in Tahiti culture, they hold a very special place in it. They are thought to possess the virtues of both men and women. In modern Tahiti effeminate men are maintaining the custom and role with pride. "I am proud of being a Mähū because in Polynesia we belong and we are recognised in this society", says Coco, a mähū. "We belong in everyday life." But the mähū tradition is struggling. When thousands of French soldiers arrived for the nuclear testing program there weren't enough local women to entertain them - so many mähū turned to prostitution. As Bormann reports, it's given a traditional phenomenon a very bad name.





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Series 14: Episode 28 Tuesday 22nd March 2005
Reporter: Trevor Bormann

Fa'afafine of Samoa

From Wikipedia  Fa'a fafine are the gender liminal, or third-gendered people of Samoa. A recognized and integral part of traditional Samoan culture, fa'a fafine, born biologically male, embody both male and female gender traits. Their gendered behaviour typically ranges from extravagantly feminine to mundanely masculine. Fa'a fafine are known for their hard work and dedication to the family, in the Samoan tradition of tautua. Ideas of the family in Samoa and Polynesia are markedly different from Western constructions of family, and include all the members of a sa, or a communal family within the fa'amatai family systems. It is a mistake to attribute a Western interpretation and mislabel the fa'a fafine as "gay" or "homosexual". In Samoa, the people claim that there is no such thing as being "gay" or "homosexual". Fa'a fafine, as a third gender, have sexual relationships almost exclusively with men who do not identify as fa'a fafine, and sometimes with women. This third gender is so well accepted in Samoan culture that most Samoans state that they have friendship relationships with at least one fa'a fafine. Traditionally Fa'afafine follow the training of a women's daily work in an Aiga. Being a fa'a fafine is said to be thoroughly enjoyable by this group. Many would state that they "loved" engaging in feminine activities as children, such as playing with female peers, playing female characters during role play, dressing up in female clothes, and playing with female gender-typical toys. This is in contrast to women who stated that they merely "liked" engaging in those activities as children. Some fa'a fafine recall believing they were girls in childhood, but knew better as adults. There is little to no ridicule of or displeasure with a biologically male child who states he is a girl in Samoa. For instance, one study showed only a minority of parents (20%) tried to stop their fa'a fafine sons from engaging in feminine behaviour. Being pushed into the male gender role is upsetting to many fa'a fafine. A significant number stated that they "hated" masculine play, such as rough games and sports, even more than females did as children.

Further Information

A.B.C.: Fa'afafine - Samoan boys brought up as girls 
Redefining Fa'afafine: Western Discourses and the Construction of Transgenderism in Samoa 
Pacific Beat Street Episode 167 - What is a Fa'afafine (Video) 

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The Emotional Transition

The High Emotional Cost Paid for Having Undergone Gender Change

by Jasper

Article appeared in Polare magazine: March 1994 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015



My pride fortified this outer shell by refusing to allow even my friends the knowledge that I was perpetually overwhelmed by the vastness of my undertaking.

There is undoubtedly a high emotional cost to be paid for having undergone or in the process of undergoing a change of one's gender. Much focus has been placed upon physical and psychological involvement and in recent times, this focus has been shifting toward a political consciousness.

... What perhaps is needed within our community is a facility that encourages we trannies to express our emotions without fear of prejudice, of reinforcing a social and medical stereotype, or of being a failure.

Yet rarely is there to be found information relating to the emotional aesthetics involved in this process. There is, of course, the acknowledgement of a standard period of hormonally induced emotional imbalance. This rarefication is possible due to the very individualistic nature of emotionalism. We each carry the scars, and alternatively, bear the fruit, of our personal emotional journey through this gender voyage.

There is a handful of published memoirs and thoughts of trannies past and present, yet relatively few of the ones I have had the good fortune to discover give any real insight into the emotional nature of our transition, if at all. Perhaps editors and publishers regard a rawness of honesty as a little uncomfortable and confrontational for their mainstream readers thus rendering the book as less saleable. Or maybe the writers themselves have dared not unleash a torrential flow of emotional reality. Is there perhaps an unacknowledged conspiracy within tranny circles to hide the emotional cost (and also its beauty) from each new generation so as not to frighten others from their path? Or is the truth too close to the bone for us all with the realisation that perhaps we took upon ourselves something bigger and more problematic than we originally expected. Certainly, I have come to question my readiness to change gender. Had I initially been presented with a detailed account of the many emotional and psychological transitions that would befall me, I may well have changed my mind and never given gender reassignment a second thought.

And what of this emotional cost? Naturally, I can only speak from a personal perspective as each has their own story. And of course, for each who has fallen prey to emotional quicksand, there is a myriad of other experiences of a more uplifting nature. I am of the opinion, however, that none of the seemingly negative emotional responses are indeed negative as all serve to shape and refine our spiritual selves. Yet, I have noted a thread of insecurity and fear amongst the tranny men I have maintained contact with and these are to be found within myself also. I can only assume that my female counterparts experience something similar.

There is an external inhibition placed upon the display of emotional drowning that has affected my process and that, of course, is the influence of the medical profession. Certainly I was not about to reveal any inability to deal with my gender process to either my endocrinologist or psychiatrist. There is hanging over our heads the perpetual fear of being denied access to the physical sculpturing of our bodies. So to discuss my emotional imbalance or fear could cut off the life blood of hormone injections and sabotage any future surgical experience. I learned quickly to place a veneer of strength and balance before me. My pride fortified this outer shell by refusing to allow even my friends the knowledge that I was perpetually overwhelmed by the vastness of my undertaking. I did not, and still to a degree do not, have sufficient coping mechanisms to deal with this gender process as a whole. I can only allow myself glimpses of the complete restructuring of my life. To take in simultaneously the entire consequences of changing gender is beyond my emotional or psychological capacity.

"What perhaps is needed within our community is a facility that encourages we trannies to express our emotions without fear of prejudice, of reinforcing a social and medical stereotype, or of being a failure."

So each day, I go about my business placing to the rear of my conscious mind any fear or vulnerability, pretending everything is okay and that being a transgenderist is no more mind boggling than being born gay. But it is. Gender permeates nearly every face of our society. Several other tranny men have confirmed this self-protective process of selective thinking. Few of us want to confront ourselves with the enormity of this gender lesson. There are others who have denied any emotional difficulty, confident in the apparent ease of their transition. A very large part of me wants to believe that they still have their blinkers on as I'm not convinced there hasn't been some sort of emotional fall-out for these people.

There are also many trannies who choose to minimise any focus upon emotional sensitivity so as to counteract the already quite negative medical and social view of transgenderists that we each are confronted with in our daily lives. This is both necessary and important. Tranny consciousness is coming to the fore and it's paramount to release the stigma from our process. However, in doing so, we perhaps yet again run the risk of inhibiting our emotional responses and our own release. In order to appear as functional, coping individuals we push down further our fears and insecurities.

Of course, there is the enormous relief and elation that comes with finally becoming the gender you perceive yourself to be. There is an almost indescribable joy to be experienced when the world acknowledges you as the man or woman you are. The delight gained at each new change of your body, each time someone addresses you by your chosen name and the validation of being mirrored by the world at large. And so it is that we can focus upon the joy. Yet perhaps again, we allow this to eclipse the emotional self that is dragging its feet behind and needs a little push to catch up.

What perhaps is needed within our community is a facility that encourages we trannies to express our emotions without fear of prejudice, of reinforcing a social and medical stereotype, or of being a failure. A place to unleash the tide of pent-up grief, confusion, fear and insight. Somewhere to analyse and release, grow yet be vulnerable. An environment in which to unsheathe the daily strain of appearing "together", unafraid and invulnerable to the world. To have someone say it's okay to be a mess - anyone would be if given our life challenge. We trannies must be stronger than most other people, more defensive than most and unfortunately are made more accountable.

Ultimately, we can change our attitude toward each other. We can allow each other to be scared and disturbed. We can be able to heal each other through empathy and patience. We judge each other too harshly as indeed we judge ourselves. If we're too afraid to bare our soul to a fellow transgenderist for fear of:

- a. being seen as a failure;
- b. reinforcing a stereotype;
- c. being judged;
- d. being found as too confronting; or
- e. being gossiped about, then who can we talk to ?

Where is the real sense of "community"? We are slowly coming together in order to change law that governs our lives but what about coming together in order to heal, listen and celebrate? There are too many of us as fragments of a whole, who seek out counselling from non-trannies (not denying the usefulness of this), who each as alone cry out for help and role models. Where are our elders who can share of their experience? Do we have a responsibility to each other or do we merely "disappear" into our respective lifestyles just wanting to be seen as the boy or girl next door?

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Living a Dream

Starting to Live the Life that I'd Been Dreaming Of

by L.B.

Article appeared in Polare magazine: **March 1994** Last Update: **October 2013** Last Reviewed: **September 2015**

My mother said that I wouldn't live to see my twenty-first birthday. Well, I am now twenty-four and pleased to have proven her wrong. I am a drag queen but no longer dress as a woman. I decided to take on a male role when I was drunk and having a bad night at work.

I finally took the back door out of my life and started to live the life I had been dreaming of for a number of years. I left Sydney because I couldn't cope. The main thing I couldn't cope with was me; being a prostitute and a drug addict and then not even knowing what drug I wanted to use. I narrowed it down to heroin and speed. Heroin was okay but I didn't like the fact that I nodded off while doing a job (especially in cars), so speed it was, for work anyway. I liked speed for the first part, the rush and about five hours afterwards. I hated the rest of the comedown and I wanted to commit suicide to get it over and done with.

I left Sydney at 1:30am on the first of April 1993 and I feel like it is the best move I have ever made in my life. I detoxed at home with help from my ex and I can cope really well without using now even though I think about it a great deal. I have used three times since I moved to the mountains. I spend my money on things that I need, which is a big step for me because I never did in the past.

The hardest things to cope with are the memories. I only ever liked two people, one of which is dead and the other I still keep in touch with. I could never like anyone because I never liked myself, the only reason I liked these two people is the fact that they never pushed their views or moral values onto me. I'm starting to like myself now but I'm very scared at what I have become and what I'm capable of becoming. Not that I'm a monster but I'm scared of living a normal life. I put myself through torture some days because I wake up and look at myself and there are tits. The trouble is that I have short hair, beard and dress as a male and my tits are visible in some of the things that I wear.

So then I get depressed and think about suicide, but I get through it somehow. Perhaps that's because I still feel that I have made the right decision. I told people for years that I wanted to move to the country and have a vegetable garden. Well, my vegetable garden may not be so great at the moment but it will get there in the end. I also never realised that I could live so nicely on the pension; I've got so much money it's not funny. I eventually spend it on books or some other thing, but I never go hungry any more.

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