

# Polare Edition 47

Published: August 2002 Last Update: June 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015

## Editorial

by Katherine Cummings, Polare Editor

**B**ack in 1987, when the world was young and I had transitioned but was still pre-op, I was invited to take part in a discussion of transsexualism at one of Peter Couchman's interview/audience sessions ... rather like Jerry Springer without the overt sleaze and brawling. One of the invited commentators was a medical ethicist (in his case as a special pleader for the views of the Catholic Church) and he came out with a number of foolish assertions, perhaps the dimmest of these being "Social problems require social solutions". He raised the hackles of almost everyone present (he is good at that) and one of the younger transgendered people said afterwards that she had been strongly impelled to throw her handbag at the back of his head. Being ahead of my time in the matter of on-screen violence, I expressed disappointment that she had failed to bean him with her clutch bag. When I engaged him in argument after the show he denied having made the statement quoted, but unfortunately for his veracity I have the passage on videotape.

On 30th June 2002 I saw the same ethicist on television, objecting to a young couple who have a family history of genetic deafness and want to have their embryonic child tested so that they could know whether their baby would be born deaf. The ethicist's aphorism this time was just as resoundingly stupid.

"Deafness is not a disability," he pontificated. "It is merely a difference."

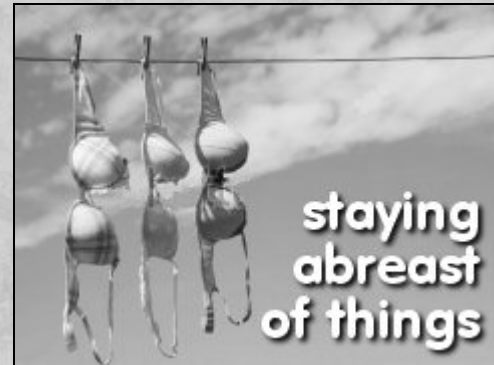
One can only assume that his basis for judging the life outcomes of children yet unborn is his belief that there is a benevolent God who makes all decisions for reasons too mysterious for us to comprehend, and that we should, therefore, accept without complaint any diseases, disabilities or debilitating differences which are bestowed on us by the almighty.

I do not believe in God and think religion is a waste of time and space. I find I can live a good and reasonable life without referring to the writings of ancient nomads terrified by thunder and lightning. I concede that I may be wrong, because there is just as little proof for the non-existence of God as there is for his existence. [Do you wonder why I capitalise Nobodaddy in the sky if I don't believe in Him? It's not respect - it's convention. I am in no great awe of Tuesday or November either.] But even if there is a God, I am sure he is either not benevolent, or else He is not omnipotent. Several thousand years of recorded warfare, bigotry, famine, suffering and pestilence support my view.

And if deafness is not a disability ... why are we wasting time developing cochlear implants and potential surgical methods of relief including the use of stem cells and cloning?

Maybe it's just for the money. Yeah, right!

## Feature Articles



Probably one-half of all women in the gym wear the incorrect bra size.

### Staying Abreast of Things

Everything one needs to know about sports bras including the basic design factors that should be considered when choosing a sports bra based on overall structure and fit and that support and sizing should be the major considerations. Appearance should be secondary.

### Letter from America

Paula is sitting in her beautiful two storey home in the leafy suburbs of Southern California. Transitioning in the mid-nineteen-nineties, moving to America in 2000, life isn't bad for this post-op transsexual girl from Sydney who once thought there was very little to be happy about!

### A Landmark Win

Transsexuals in Britain are to win legal rights after a recent European Court of Human Rights ruling that marked the end of a long battle to reverse a 1970 ruling that condemned transsexuals to always be of the sex that had been written on their birth certificates.

### Why Are We All Victims?

Meaghan, the spouse of a male-to-female transsexual responds to Kim's article "My Wife Was a Victim Too", and tells their story through her eyes, the wide ranging emotions including shock, confusion, loss and fear, and her ever so strong love for her transitioning partner.

### I Did But See Her [or Him] Passing By

Jamison Green responds to issues raised in a *Transgender Tapestry* article where Jessica Xavier and Holly Boswell express their views on the topic of "Passing" and raises some very valid points especially in relation to transmen, and their involvement in the lesbian community.

And what relevance does all this have for transgenders? Think about it.

# Manager's Report

by Elizabeth Riley, Gender Centre Manager

---

## Attorney General's Funding

The Gender Centre has received a one-off innovative grant from the N.S.W. Attorney General's Crime Prevention Division to conduct an investigation into strategies to reduce violence against marginalized minority groups.

The project, spanning twelve months, will involve research into strategies at the local, national and international level and a comprehensive report with recommendations will be published at the six month mark. Katherine Cummings will be conducting the research with guidance from a Steering Committee with enthusiastic representation from N.S.W. Police, Attorney General's, South Sydney City Council, Marrickville Council, the Department of Community Services, the Gay and Lesbian Anti-Violence Project and the Department of Housing. I will be responsible for chairing the Steering Committee meetings.

The second stage of the project will involve a six month trial of the strategy/ies that promise the greatest degree of success. The nature of the trial will not be known until the research is concluded and the report is finalised. We are hopeful that this will be a ground breaking initiative that will produce long-term results in reducing the levels of violence that our community has historically been subjected to.

Katherine will be seeking input to the project from members of the community so if you have any experiences that you feel could be useful, whether they be personal experiences of violence or personal strategies that you employ to maintain your own safety, I encourage you to contact Katherine at the centre.

What I find particularly encouraging about the project is the recognition our community is receiving at a government level that acknowledges our right to enjoy the same degree of safety and protection as is afforded the general community. This has obviously not always been our experience and it represents a significant shift towards the equitable and fair treatment of transgender people in N.S.W. I applaud the N.S.W. Government for its support and look forward to a successful and rewarding partnership.

## Blazing Saddles

On Friday, 5th July the wildest bunch of cowboys and cowgirls you could imagine took off for a frivolous day of horse riding at Darkes Forrest Horse Riding Ranch (Near Helensburgh). This was a fabulous event sponsored by South Sydney City Council particularly for residents and drop-in clients of the Gender Centre. 23 of us, mostly beginners, took to the saddle for a trail ride through the scenic bush trails at the riding school.

We were scheduled to depart the centre at 10:00am but were delayed while we waited for the two participants from South Sydney Council to arrive in their van. I had earlier picked up a 22 seat bus from the council depot in Zetland in readiness for our trip south. We eventually departed at about 10:30am, travelling in tandem, and after much chatter and lots of excellent music provided by Jade we arrived at Darkes Forrest at about 11.45. There were a few nervous faces around as we climbed off the bus and several hardy horse people took the opportunity to have a quick ciggy before we trooped across to the stables to collect our riding gear and horses.

When the formalities were finalised and we were all helmeted up we were assigned, according to our level of riding skill, to our horses. Despite the fact that I specified that I had nil experience I found myself mounted on one of the biggest horses at the ranch. (This had a lot to do with the fact that I am a rather big woman and a big horse was necessary if we were both going to survive the ride). His name was Getaway, (when they told me this I nearly fainted), but the staff assured me he was named after the television show and not after any bad habits that I needed to worry about. Once I had mounted "Getaway" I made it very clear to him who was boss by letting him do whatever he wanted while I hung on tight with my eyes shut.

Soon the ride was underway and thankfully we had experienced riders from the school to accompany our group. They were dispersed through the group and they had all the horses pretty much under control though we did have the odd testing moment. The trail itself was quite rugged. We rode down into a valley over some fairly rough terrain until we finally crossed a river bed. Then we rode back up the other side of the valley which was quite steep in places. Poor old "Getaway" wasn't getting away anywhere fast on the uphill run. I felt so sorry for him having to lug my weight around on his back that I was almost tempted to get off and carry him for awhile.

Fortunately that was not necessary and we got back to the ranch in one piece. Judging from some of the cries I was hearing I am sure everyone else was having similar adventures to mine but I was concentrating so much on hanging on that I wasn't paying a lot of attention to what anyone else was doing.

When we finally got back to the ranch we were told to stay on our horses until one of the staff helped us dismount. (Very ladylike I thought. At least for the ladies). It wasn't until we hit the ground that we realised how sore we were. My legs almost buckled underneath me and I was walking around bandy legged for the next half hour. Once we had regained our composure we hobbled back to the bus and gingerly placed our tender backsides on our seats and headed off to the Royal National Park for a barbecue. This presented us with a minor disaster since we couldn't find any barbecues anywhere and as time was marching on we decided to head back to the Gender Centre Ranch for a barbecue in the sweeping paddocks of our own back yard. We didn't get to eat until about 4 o'clock, and everyone was pretty famished by then, but all in all everyone agreed that it had been a fantastic day and we all look forward to the possibility of enjoying some future activities with South Sydney City Council.

On behalf of everyone who took part I would like to express our thanks to South Sydney City Council and in particular to Suzie, the

Gay, Lesbian, Transgender Liaison Officer and Jodie, the Sport and Recreation Officer, for making the day possible. You gals were just great!

Best wishes and a big Howdy Partner to you all!

---

**The Gender Centre advise that this edition of Polare is not current and as such certain content, including but not limited to persons, contact details and dates may not apply. Where legal authority or medical related matters are cited, responsibility lies with the reader to obtain the most current relevant legal authority and/or medical publication.**

---

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.

---

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.

(The Gender Centre advise that this article may not be current and as such certain content, including but not limited to persons, contact details and dates may not apply. Where legal authority or medical related matters are cited, responsibility lies with the reader to obtain the most current relevant legal authority and/or medical publication.)

# Staying Abreast of Things

## Investing in a Quality Sport Bra

by Unknown Author

Article appeared in Polare magazine: August 2002 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015



Some women prefer cross-strap bras, or commonly called "racerback" straps

**T**he first sports bras appeared in the late 1970's were based on the male jockstrap. Now there are many types on the market. There are, however, basic design factors that should be considered when choosing a sports bra based on overall structure and fit. Ironically, the most popular sports bras being worn in the gyms today are designed more for appearance than support. Depending on the individual's specific needs, support and sizing should be the major considerations. Appearance should be secondary. Sports bras are of two major design types: compression and encapsulation.

*... taking care of your breasts now will ensure their pleasing shape and appearance many years ahead.*

The compression-type bra is designed to restrict movement of the breasts by flattening them against the body. This design may be more effective for smaller breasted women, sizes A or B. However, larger breasted women, sizes C and above, need more support. The encapsulation design bra normally has molded cups that support and separate the individual breasts. This type may be more effective for large breasted female athletes than the compression bras.

Basically, sports bras attempt to limit breast movement by holding them to the body. The fabric used can affect the effectiveness of the support and should be closely considered

when choosing a bra. It should have enough elasticity to accommodate upper torso movement but prevent breast movement.

It should also allow the skin to "breathe" since perspiration may increase during most physical exercise. Lycra and Coolmax are two fabrics that allow sweat evaporation and are commonly included in sports bras, especially under the arms and in between the breasts.

Some bras contain vented panels, such as mesh. These may enhance perspiration evaporation.

Also, cotton is recommended as the primary fibre because it is non-allergenic to avoid rashes.

The sports bra should be sufficiently elastic in the horizontal plane to allow for chest expansion while breathing. On the other hand, elasticity in the vertical plane should be limited to minimize vertical breast movement. Straps should have limited elasticity as well for the same reason.

To prevent chafing, cups should be seamless or have covered seams. Cotton lining in cups also helps prevent discomfort during exercise. Fasteners, hooks and underwires should be covered to avoid irritations.

Some women prefer cross-strap bras, or commonly called "racerback" straps, because they do not slip off the shoulders during activity like some of the conventional style straps. Some women also find the cross-strap designs more supportive.

In either style, the front straps should be positioned so that they lie in a direct line of pull over the nipples, allowing for optimal vertical breast support. The strap fabric should also be wide to allow for greater force distribution.

Regardless of a sports bra design, if it is the wrong size it will be ineffectual. Probably one-half of all women in the gym wear the incorrect bra size. Wearing the wrong-sized sports bra reduces its ability to effectively minimize breast movement. As well, the sizing system used can be confusing. Some brands size their bras very generally, for example, as small, medium and large. For small-breasted women who wear a compression-type bra, this may be adequate. However, larger breasted women who require more support have to consider cup size (usually A-D and up) and the measurement around the bust (generally a dress size measurement).

Unfortunately, these two measurements are relative to each other. In other words, a B-cup is not the same across all dress-size measurements. As well, for a female bodybuilder whose chest/back measurement is normally larger than the average woman's, finding a cup size to fit her often presents problems.

The best approach is to talk to other female athletes who are of similar size and search for the brands that best fit and support their needs. Additionally, always try on a prospective sports bra. Consider shrinkage as well. I prefer bras made of cotton, but I found quickly

that they would shrink. I therefore choose a size accordingly. Another consideration, especially for those whose breast size may fluctuate due to changes in breast volume (influenced by hormones or dieting), is to have bras of two sizes to accommodate breast size differences.

An additional consideration is breast implants. " Take good care of them!" choose a good supportive encapsulation-type sports bra, preferably with light padding to protect the tissue from compression or direct pressure of certain movements and equipment.

Wide straps are also recommended to restrict vertical movement of the breasts and chafing of nipples. Consideration of a suitable sports bra design and fit can enhance enjoyment and reduce embarrassment when participating in physical activity. As well, taking care of your breasts now will ensure their pleasing shape and appearance many years ahead. So invest in a proper sport bra to wear when exercising.

---

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.

---

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.

(The Gender Centre advise that this article may not be current and as such certain content, including but not limited to persons, contact details and dates may not apply. Where legal authority or medical related matters are cited, responsibility lies with the reader to obtain the most current relevant legal authority and/or medical publication.)

# Letter from America

## Life Doesn't Get Much Better

by Paula Dayne

Article appeared in Polare magazine: August 2002 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015



**I have met the perfect man, I'm more in love with him every day, and I am constantly thinking how lucky I am in my life.**

**A**t this time of the year I can't imagine anywhere else I'd rather be than right here, in Southern California.

I'm sitting here in my beautiful two storey home in the leafy suburbs. Outside is a garden full of plants and trees and the warm weather is bringing out the scent of the flowers. My husband Chris has just called me to tell me he loves me and misses me and can't wait to get home from work. Life is very good and we have everything the modern American home could possible need; a large house, two new cars, two cats and a house full of laughter and love.

I could work if I want to, but Chris isn't bothered if I stay at home now. He earns more than enough for both of us and besides, I'm planning a solo trip to Australia in August and Chris found out today that a proposed trip to London is on for next month. We'll be spending two weeks there, courtesy of his company.

***Everything I have ever wanted has come to me, every wish has been granted, every door has been opened. I have to be the luckiest girl in the world.***

Is this a fantasy? No, this describes exactly this very moment. Life doesn't get much better I can tell you that. Not bad for a post-op transsexual girl from Sydney who once thought there was very little in the future to be happy about!

It wasn't always like this of course. So much happened in between that brought me to this point, so let me give you a short background.

I transitioned in June 1995 and proceeded to surgery in Montréal Canada in October 1997. I've been very lucky and life has mostly been very positive for me.

My surgery was an absolute success, and to this day I have never had a single concern or problem. post-op, I dated and enjoyed myself and life was certainly better than it had been. I was sharing a house with Caroline Layt near Camden and we were (and still are) the best of friends.

My family were "barely tolerant" of my transition, but I eventually accepted that the family dynamic had changed forever and stopped fretting over it. Work wise, I'd been employed by the same government department since 1994 and had in fact transitioned whilst on the job.

For the most part, my transition there had been uneventful. Almost everyone was just fine with me. There were of course one or two exceptions, which at the time seemed of major significance, but which in hindsight were nothing more than blips. The blips however, ultimately provided the impetus I needed to move onwards and ultimately upwards. Thinking back now, I'm glad these less than helpful people gave me the opportunity to move on and leave them far behind. Anyway, there was little possibility for promotion and the position was most certainly not one in which I wanted to spend too much of my working life. I guess I was just waiting for an excuse to leave.

So in mid-1999, I booked a holiday to the U.S.A. for two months. Maybe a change of scenery and some time off work would make things clearer. I flew to L.A. in June 1999 and met up with two transsexual friends called Fran and Jeanne, whom I'd met on the Internet ages ago. They were marvellous to me and we all had such a great time. We toured all over the West Coast, down as far as Mexico and as far north as Edmonton, Canada. It was actually at the beginning of that trip that one of the most important events occurred.

Indeed, I'd say I just stumbled across it. I was staying at Jeanne's house in L.A. and just goofing around on the Internet. I found a job search web site where you look for positions in your field of expertise. I idly typed in my job description, never expecting anything to come up as I work in a very narrow field of electronics. Imagine my surprise when I was presented on-screen with a job opening in Chicago, Illinois. No special qualifications needed, immediate opening, apply now.

To cut a long story short, I applied for the job, they flew me from the West Coast to Chicago (first class hotel and limo, thank you very much!) and they offered me the job on the spot. The rest as they say, is history. They helped me get the relevant work visa and in January 2000, I moved to Chicago and began work there. I loved it. Chicago has to be the most brilliant city in the U.S.A.. I fell in love

with the Chicago Cubs baseball team and the city itself. Caroline Layt visited me in June 2000 and we had just the best time ever travelling around northern Illinois and into Indiana and Michigan and watching the Cubbies win against the New York Mets.

During my time in Chicago, I continued to have a fairly good social life. I joined one or two social clubs in the area and went on a number of dates. Mostly they didn't work out although they were interesting in their own way. It's always nice to experience another culture.

In mid 2000, I received an email from a guy I'd actually corresponded with previously, although we lost touch well before I'd left Australia. He knew of my past, although we didn't mention it much. I like that approach. My being transsexual isn't something I talk about all that much either, unless it's relevant. He was very surprised (and pleased) to learn I was now living in the U.S.A. and our emails soon graduated to two-hour-long phone calls. We realised we had a lot in common and in March 2001, he flew from California to Chicago to meet me for the first time.

I must have made an impression upon him, because the day after he arrived, he got down on one knee and proposed. It was quite a romantic moment. Although I had actually only met him in person the previous day, we had in fact known each other for about four years, so I felt I knew him very well. I accepted his proposal. As a matter of fact, he even proposed again two weeks later when we were visiting the Queen Mary in Long Beach. He is a hopeless romantic and I love it. Our idea of a good night is watching a romantic movie at home with a glass of wine and snuggling together. I've never been one for nightclubs so that suits us both.

We were married in Las Vegas on 9th June 2001 and it was wonderful. Everything went absolutely right. I wore a beautiful long dress (I'm assured the colour is called periwinkle, a blue-mauve) and Chris looked so handsome in his new suit. The service and the minister were brilliant and my wedding was everything I had ever dreamed about. It took about an hour or so and we were whisked back to our hotel in the middle of Vegas. That night we saw Tom Jones in concert. Just excellent!

And so we are back in the present. Here it is 2002 and we have been married a year. Not only that, I now have an instant family. They have all taken me to their heart for which I'm grateful and I just naturally clicked with them all. Chris and I have never felt the need to tell them of my past.

In over two and half years in the U.S.A., my past has never come back to haunt me. That is such a wonderful feeling. The only folks I have ever told in all this time have been U.S. Immigration (that's the law folks!) and my family doctor. Oh I nearly forgot to mention; I'm also taking flying lessons here and hope to become a professional pilot in the next few years, something I could never have dreamed of in Australia. It's the most wonderful feeling piloting a light aircraft through the sky.

Life is so good for me. There is little reason for me to ever return to Australia now, unless perhaps we both decide at some point in the future we'd like to retire there. I have met the perfect man, I'm more in love with him every day, and I am constantly thinking how lucky I am in my life. Professionally and personally, it's all working out. Chris and I are living happily in our house on the coast of California, I've had my final interview with U.S. Immigration and have my Green Card at last. Everything I have ever wanted has come to me, every wish has been granted, every door has been opened. I have to be the luckiest girl in the world.

---

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.

---

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.

(The Gender Centre advise that this article may not be current and as such certain content, including but not limited to persons, contact details and dates may not apply. Where legal authority or medical related matters are cited, responsibility lies with the reader to obtain the most current relevant legal authority and/or medical publication.)

## A Landmark Win

### Why our Daughters can at Last be Our Bridesmaids

by Stephen Whittle, edited from the Online Times of London. The author is a reader in law at Manchester Metropolitan University, U.K.  
Article appeared in Polare magazine: August 2002 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015



Stephen Whittle, reader in law at Manchester Metropolitan University, U.K.

**B**ritain's 5,000 transsexuals are to win legal rights after the landmark European Court of Human Rights (E.C.H.R.) ruling. The decision two weeks ago, in a case brought by Christine Goodwin, comes not before time. It is thirty-two years since Lord Justice Ormrod in *Corbett v Corbett* in 1970 effectively dealt a blow against transsexuals, removing the mechanisms that existed for transsexual people to have their birth certificates amended to reflect their new gender, and enabled them to marry.

*Transsexual people in the U.K. have proved themselves capable of great staying power, personal bravery and organisation in this fight.*

When the judge decided that the (male-to-female) transsexual April Ashley's marriage was void, his ruling condemned transsexuals always to be of the sex that had been written on their birth certificates - sentencing them to a life of secrets, constant fear and a position in law that left them unable to safeguard their partners and families - financially and socially.

The decision in Goodwin marks the end of a long battle to reverse Ormrod's ruling. Mark Rees, a female-to-male transsexual, took the first case to Strasbourg in 1979. His was to be the first of a series of five brought by transsexual people over the past twenty-three years. At the time he said: "There are others waiting in the wings ... they will carry on the

fight", as indeed, they have done.

In parallel with the cases taken to Strasbourg, challenges have been made in Britain and the European Court of Justice. Although far more cases have been lost by transsexuals than won, the wins have been significant, ensuring job protection (*P v S* and *Cornwall County Council v. E.C.J.* 1996) and access to gender reassignment treatment on the National Health Service (*A, D & G v North West Lancashire Area Health Authority, C.A.*, 1999).

But the latest ruling (Goodwin and I) will make a vital difference to the daily lives of transsexuals. It means that they can rely on the principle that they are afforded privacy rights under the convention. Similarly, they could now get married and argue that they have not committed perjury by declaring themselves to be of their new gender. The marriages may still be open to question as to their validity, but if a couple do separate and seek a divorce or if a pension company refuses to pass on benefits on death on the basis that the marriage is void, then the transsexual person and partner can rely on the Goodwin decision.

Older transsexual women facing retirement should be able to claim their state pension. The Inland Revenue has recently used its discretionary powers to award pension rights at sixty to a transsexual woman who was born in New Zealand, as she had been able to change her birth certificate to reflect her new gender. Several transsexual women, who were forced to give up work at sixty or face disclosure of their past, yet who received only social security benefits rather than a pension, could now make a claim for the lost income and hurt they suffered.

In families such as ours where a transsexual man has been refused permission to register as the father of his partner's children by donor insemination, the couple could now marry and jointly adopt the children. Those starting families in the future should be able to register as the father of the child.

The decision in Goodwin is not however, the culmination of the campaign, though it could be said to be the beginning of the end. The bureaucratic mess will continue until the law is clarified to ensure that transsexual people in the U.K. can have their birth certificates amended to reflect a change of sex, and that the change is valid for all legal purposes.

Without that, the courts may not regard a new birth certificate as final, leaving the sex of transsexual people open to further challenge. This has happened in the U.S., where some transsexual people have found that new birth certificates were not recognised in court. The E.C.H.R.'s decision means that it is time for the Government to make a clear commitment to legislate for change. The reconstituted inter-departmental working group on transsexuals would do well to make sure it uses the transsexual community's expertise in ensuring that the sort of half-cocked legal mess that exists in the U.S. is not created here.

Transsexual people in the U.K. have proved themselves capable of great staying power, personal bravery and organisation in this fight.



In the past ten years they have created a climate in which legal change in these areas was bound to come. In the meantime, as a transsexual man in an unmarried yet successful relationship of twenty-four years, I have to debate whether to risk it all by getting married. Perhaps marriage would lead to an early divorce. Yet, it would provide pension benefits to my partner and security to our children.

Perhaps we should just sneak off to the Registry Office in order not to tempt fate. But our three daughters would kill us; they are desperate to be bridesmaids.

**Corte Europea dei Diritti Umani  
Caso Christine Goodwin versus Regno Unito  
Sentenza dell'11 luglio 2002**

366 - 11.7.2002

**Press release issued by the Registrar**

**Grand Chamber judgement in the case of  
Christine Goodwin versus The United Kingdom**

In a judgement delivered at Strasbourg on 11th July 2002 in the case of Christine Goodwin v the United Kingdom (application no. 28957/95), the European Court of Human Rights held unanimously that:

- » there had been a violation of Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life) of the European Convention on Human Rights;
- » there had been a violation of Article 12 (right to marry and to found a family);
- » no separate issue had arisen under Article 14 (prohibition of discrimination);
- » there had been no violation of Article 13 (right to an effective remedy).

The Court held, unanimously, that the finding of violation constituted in itself sufficient just satisfaction for the non-pecuniary damage sustained by the applicant and awarded the applicant €39,000 for costs and expenses.

## 1. Principal facts

The applicant, Christine Goodwin, a United Kingdom national born in 1937, is a post-operative male-to-female transsexual. The applicant claimed that she had problems and faced sexual harassment at work during and following her gender re-assignment. Most recently, she experienced difficulties concerning her national insurance (N.I.) contributions. As legally she is still a man, she has to continue to pay N.I. contributions until the age of 65. If she had been recognised as a woman, she would have ceased to be liable at the age of 60 in April 1997. She has had to make special arrangements to continue paying her N.I. contributions directly herself to avoid questions being raised by her employers about the anomaly. She also alleged that the fact that she keeps the same N.I. number has meant that her employer has been able to discover that she previously worked for them under another name and gender, with resulting embarrassment and humiliation.

## 2. Procedure and composition of the Court

The application was lodged with the European Commission of Human Rights on 5th June 1995 and declared admissible on 1st December 1997. The case was transmitted to the European Court of Human Rights on 1st November 1998. On 11th September 2001 a Chamber of the Court (Third Section) relinquished the case to the Grand Chamber and a hearing was held on 20th March 2002.

Judgement was given by a Grand Chamber of 17 judges, composed as follows: Luzius Wildhaber (Swiss), President, Jean-Paul Costa (French), Nicolas Bratza (British), Elisabeth Palm (Swedish), Lucius Caflisch (Swiss), Riza Türmen (Turkish), Françoise Tulkens (Belgian), Karel Jungwiert (Czech), Marc Fischbach (Luxemburger), Volodymyr Butkevych (Ukrainian), Nina Vajic (Croatian), John Hedigan (Irish), Hanne Sophie Greve (Norwegian), András Baka (Hungarian), Kristaq Traja (Albanian), Mindia Ugrekhelidze (Georgian), Antonella Mularoni (San Marinese), judges, and also Paul Mahoney, Registrar.

## 3. Summary of the judgement

### Complaints

The applicant complained about the lack of legal recognition of her post-operative sex and about the legal status of transsexuals in the United Kingdom. She complained, in particular, about her treatment in relation to employment, social security and pensions and her inability to marry. She relied on Articles 8, 12, 13 and 14 of the Convention.

### Decision of the Court

#### Article 8

Although the applicant had undergone gender re-assignment surgery provided by the national health service and lived in society as a female, she remained for legal purposes a male. This had effects on her life where sex was of legal relevance, such as in the area of pensions, retirement age etc. A serious interference with private life also arose from the conflict between social reality and law which placed the transsexuals in an anomalous position in which they could experience feelings of

vulnerability, humiliation and anxiety. Though there were no conclusive findings as to the cause of transsexualism, the Court considered it more significant that the condition had a wide international recognition for which treatment was provided. It was not convinced that the inability of the transsexual to acquire all the biological characteristics took on decisive importance. There was clear and uncontested evidence of a continuing international trend in favour of not only increased social acceptance of transsexuals but also of legal recognition of the new sexual identity of post-operative transsexuals. There was no material before the Court to show that third parties would suffer any material prejudice from any possible changes to the birth register system that might flow from allowing recognition of the gender re-assignment and it was noted that the Government were currently discussing proposals for reform of the registration system in order to allow ongoing amendment of civil status data.

While the difficulties and anomalies of the applicant's situation as a post-operative transsexual did not attain the level of daily interference suffered by the applicant in *B. v France* (judgement of 25th March 1992, Series A no. 232), the Court emphasised that the very essence of the Convention was respect for human dignity and human freedom. Under Article 8 of the Convention in particular, where the notion of personal autonomy was an important principle underlying the interpretation of its guarantees, protection was given to the personal sphere of each individual, including the right to establish details of their identity as individual human beings. In the twenty-first century the right of transsexuals to personal development and to physical and moral security in the full sense enjoyed by others in society could no longer be regarded as a matter of controversy requiring the lapse of time to cast clearer light on the issues involved. Domestic recognition of this evaluation could be found in the report of the Interdepartmental Working Group on Transsexual People and the Court of Appeal's judgement of *Bellinger v Bellinger* (E.W.C.A. Civ. 1140 [2001]).

Though the Court did not underestimate the important repercussions which any major change in the system would inevitably have, not only in the field of birth registration, but also for example in the areas of access to records, family law, affiliation, inheritance, social security and insurance, these problems were far from insuperable, as shown by the Working Group's proposals. No concrete or substantial hardship or detriment to the public interest had indeed been demonstrated as likely to flow from any change to the status of transsexuals and, as regards other possible consequences, the Court considered that society might reasonably be expected to tolerate a certain inconvenience to enable individuals to live in dignity and worth in accordance with the sexual identity chosen by them at great personal cost. Despite the Court's reiteration since 1986 and most recently in 1998 of the importance of keeping the need for appropriate legal measures under review having regard to scientific and societal developments, nothing had effectively been done by the respondent Government. Having regard to the above considerations, the Court found that the respondent Government could no longer claim that the matter fell within their margin of appreciation, save as regards the appropriate means of achieving recognition of the right protected under the Convention. It concluded that the fair balance that was inherent in the Convention now tilted decisively in favour of the applicant. There had, accordingly, been a failure to respect her right to private life in breach of Article 8.

## Article 12

While it was true that Article 12 referred in express terms to the right of a man and woman to marry, the Court was not persuaded that at the date of this case these terms restricted the determination of gender to purely biological criteria. There had been major social changes in the institution of marriage since the adoption of the Convention as well as dramatic changes brought about by developments in medicine and science in the field of transsexuality. The Court had found above, under Article 8 of the Convention, that a test of congruent biological factors could no longer be decisive in denying legal recognition to the change of gender of a post-operative transsexual. There were other important factors – the acceptance of the condition of gender identity disorder by the medical professions and health authorities within Contracting States, the provision of treatment including surgery to assimilate the individual as closely as possible to the gender in which they perceived that they properly belonged and the assumption by the transsexual of the social role of the assigned gender.

As the right under Article 8 to respect for private life did not however subsume all the issues under Article 12, where conditions imposed by national laws are accorded a specific mention, the Court went on to consider whether the allocation of sex in national law to that registered at birth was a limitation impairing the very essence of the right to marry in this case. In that regard, it found that it was artificial to assert that post-operative transsexuals had not been deprived of the right to marry as, according to law, they remained able to marry a person of their former opposite sex. The applicant in this case lived as a woman and would only wish to marry a man. As she had no possibility of doing so, she could therefore claim that the very essence of her right to marry had been infringed. Though fewer countries permitted the marriage of transsexuals in their assigned gender than recognised the change of gender itself, the Court did not find that this supported an argument for leaving the matter entirely within the Contracting States' margin of appreciation. This would be tantamount to finding that the range of options open to a Contracting State included an effective bar on any exercise of the right to marry. The margin of appreciation could not extend so far. While it was for the Contracting State to determine *inter alia* the conditions under which a person claiming legal recognition as a transsexual established that gender re-assignment has been properly effected and the formalities applicable to future marriages (including, for example, the information to be furnished to intended spouses), the Court found no justification for barring the transsexual from enjoying the right to marry under any circumstances. It concluded that there had been a breach of Article 12.

## Article 14


The Court considered that the lack of legal recognition of the change of gender of a post-operative transsexual lay at the heart of the applicant's complaints under Article 14 of the Convention. These issues had been examined under Article 8 and resulted in the finding of a violation of that provision. In the circumstances, the Court found that no separate issue arose under Article 14 and made no separate finding.

## Article 13

The case law of the Convention institutions indicated that Article 13 could not be interpreted as requiring a remedy against the state of domestic law, as otherwise the Court would be imposing on Contracting States a requirement to incorporate the Convention. Insofar therefore as no remedy existed in domestic law prior to 2nd October 2000 when the Human Rights Act 1998

took effect, the applicant's complaints fell foul of this principle. Following that date, it would have been possible for the applicant to raise her complaints before the domestic courts, which would have had a range of possible redress available to them. In the circumstances no breach of Article 13 arose.

## Stephen Whittle

**Edited from Wikipedia:**  Professor Stephen Whittle (O.B.E.) was born in 1955 in Manchester, United Kingdom. He was the middle child of the five children in his family and suffered from rickets in early childhood. In 1966 his mother, being concerned at how different he was from his sisters, entered him in the examination for Withington Girl's School. Being one of the highest scorers in the city in the exam that year, he received a scholarship to attend. It was during his time at Withington Girl's School that he started reading medical books. He knew that he was romantically attached to other girls at school – he never told them, and so his love was not reciprocated – but he also knew that he was sexually attracted to men. On top of that was a strong desire to be a man, to grow a beard and to have a hairy chest. He had read articles about people like Della Aleksander and April Ashley who had had a sex change. In 1972, at the age of sixteen, whilst visiting his doctor about a sore throat he read about a female to male transsexual person.



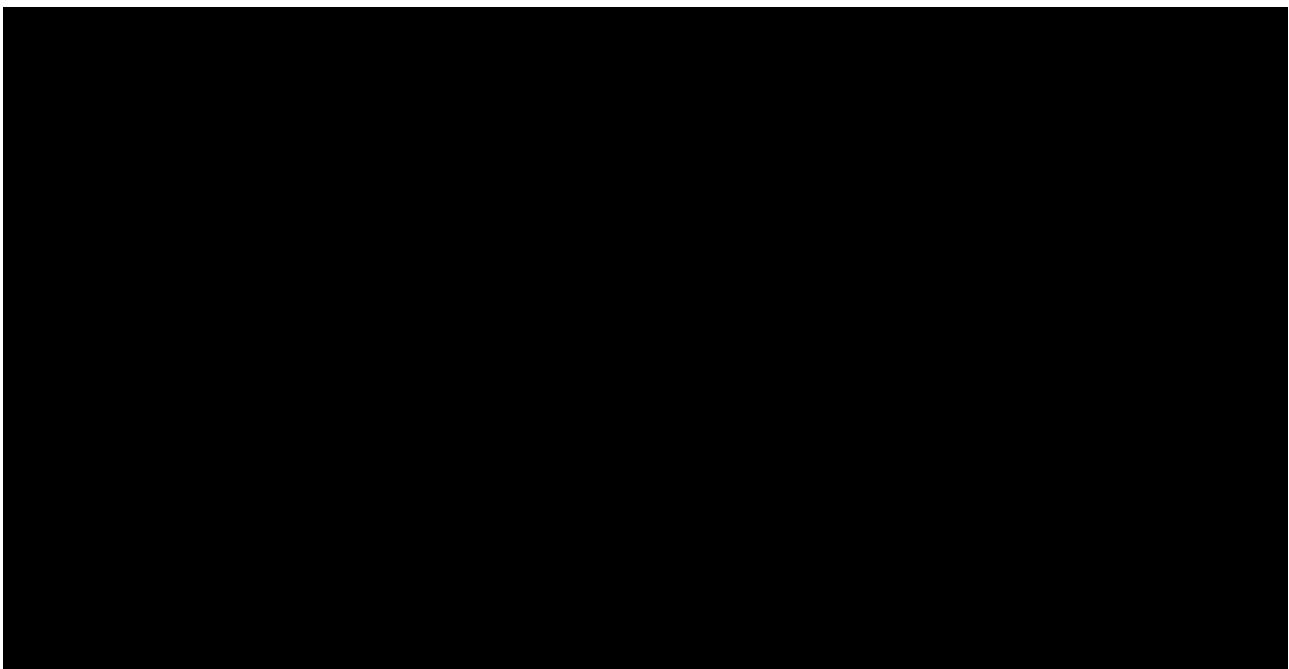
In 1974 Whittle came out as an F.T.M. transman, after returning from a Women's Liberation Conference in Edinburgh, which he attended as a member of the Manchester Lesbian Collective. He began hormone replacement therapy in 1975. He has been active in transsexual and transgender communities since the age of twenty when in 1975 he joined the Manchester TV/TS, the first support group for transsexual people in the United Kingdom. In 1979 he joined a former army officer and then royal sculptor, Judy Couzins, a transwoman in the Self Help Association for Transsexuals (SHAFT). In 1989, he founded the U.K.s F.T.M. Network which he coordinated until November 2007. In 1992, along with Mark Rees, the actress Myka Scott and an airline pilot Krystyna Sheffield, he founded and became vice-president of Press for Change, an organisation that works to change the laws and social attitudes surrounding transgender and transsexual lives. Whittle remains as one of the vice-presidents. Whittle underwent phalloplasty surgeries from 2001 to 2003. The Channel 4 documentary *Make Me a Man* followed his life during the surgeries.

Though unable to marry legally in the United Kingdom until the passing of the Gender Recognition Act 2004. He and his partner (now wife), Sarah Rutherford, have four children by artificial insemination.

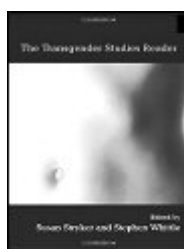
He has written and spoken extensively on his personal journey, his writings have included, among other things, an article on the ground-breaking transsexual employment discrimination case presided over by the European Court of Justice. In 2005 he was awarded The Sylvia Rivera Award for Transgender Studies by the Centre for Lesbian and Gay Studies for the monograph "Respect and Equality". In 2007, along with his co-editor, Susan Stryker, he was awarded a Lambda Literary Award for their annotated collection of fifty key historical and contemporary transgender science, political and theory texts - "The Transgender Studies Reader".

In 2002, Whittle was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis which has become an increasing problem since late 2005, yet he continues in his fulltime university post, and his fight for the human rights of trans people throughout he world. In recent years, he has collaborated with other members; Paisley Currah, Shannon Minter and Alyson Meiselmann, of the World Professional Association of Transgender Health W.P.A.T.H. on amicus briefs to courts in many jurisdictions. In 2007, he was the first non-medical professional and first trans person to become President of W.P.A.T.H.

He is the recipient of the Human Rights Award by the Civil Rights group Liberty, for his commitment and dedication to ensuring the advancement of rights for transsexual people through judicial means in the United Kingdom, Europe, and around the world; he was appointed Officer of the Order of the British Empire (O.B.E.) for services to Gender Issues; and was awarded the Virginia Prince Lifetime Achievement Award by the U.S.A.s International Federation for Gender Education.



This video is courtesy of the [Equality and Human Rights Commission U.K.](#) and YouTube



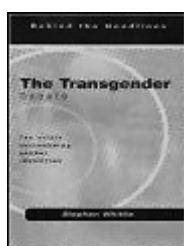
**A Transgender Studies Reader**  
Author: Stephen Whittle and Susan Stryker  
Publisher: Routledge (2006)  
I.S.B.N.-13 978-0415947091.

**From Amazon Books:** Transgender studies is the latest area of academic inquiry to grow out of the exciting nexus of queer theory, feminist studies, and the history of sexuality. Because transpeople challenge our most fundamental assumptions about the relationship between bodies, desire, and identity, the field is both fascinating and contentious. *The Transgender Studies Reader* puts between two covers, fifty influential texts with new introductions by the editors that, taken together, document the evolution of transgender studies in the English-speaking world. By bringing together the voices and experience of transgender individuals, doctors, psychologists and academically-based theorists, this volume will be a foundational text for the transgender community, transgender studies, and related queer theory.



**Respect and Equality: Transsexual and Transgender Rights**  
Author: Stephen Whittle  
Publisher: Routledge-Cavendish (2002)  
I.S.B.N.-13 978-1859417430.

**From Amazon Books:** In this fascinating work, theoretical discussions of sex, sexuality, gender and law, and an extensive range of primary and secondary research materials, are combined to provide an insightful analysis into the inadequacies of current law.



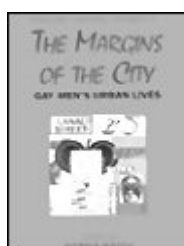
**The Transgender Debate: The Crisis Surrounding Gender Identities**  
Author: Stephen Whittle  
Publisher: South Street Press (2000)  
I.S.B.N.-13 978-1902932163.

**From goodreads:** Transgender has become a cultural obsession. From the high camp of RuPaul to the working class transsexual icon, Hayley of Coronation Street, it pervades our lives. Yet for many it remains a freakish interest on the sidelines. For transsexual and transgender people, though, it is a reality bound up in complexities, legal contradictions, family discord, and a desperate need to explain what it means to be a man or a woman, or neither, or both. Addressing the historical, social, legal and medical issues surrounding this new community, this book throws a light onto the complex issues, clarifying them in a way that all those who think they know what they mean, will be called to question the certainties that gender roles are no longer about.



**Reclaiming Genders: Transsexual Grammars at the fin de siecle**  
Author: Stephen Whittle and Kate More  
Publisher: Continuum International Publishing Group (1999)  
I.S.B.N.-13 978-0304337774.

**From Barnes & Noble:** An interdisciplinary work bringing together an international group of transgender writers, this text provides a collection of essays that are central to both academia and activism. Based on academic and "street" experiences, the book addresses the practical issues faced in changing the world view of gender while forcing theory a step forward from limitations of "queer", feminism and postmodernism. In a wide-ranging set of contributions, it addresses our engendered places now and what we can aim for in the future. It evaluates the mechanism we can use to galvanize both the micro theories of gender as a personal experience of oppression and the macro theories of gender as a site of social regulation. The collection aims to take identity politics and reclaim identity for the "self".



**The Margins of the City: Gay Men's Urban Lives**  
Author: Stephen Whittle  
Publisher: Ashgate Publishing Group (1994)  
I.S.B.N.-13 978-1857422023.

**From World of Books:** Within cities, gay life has always been marginalized in social, political and cultural terms, even although significant gay places have often been geographically centrally placed. This work looks at the physical and spatial development of gay places over the last twenty-five years in a social context.

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.

---

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.

(The Gender Centre advise that this article may not be current and as such certain content, including but not limited to persons, contact details and dates may not apply. Where legal authority or medical related matters are cited, responsibility lies with the reader to obtain the most current relevant legal authority and/or medical publication.)

## Why are we all Victims?

### Is There Any Hope for Partners who Don't Want to Storm Out of their Relationships?

by Meaghan

Article appeared in Polare magazine: February 2001 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015



At times we were there for each other,  
other times we felt like enemies

I have just read Kim's brief story regarding the issues faced by married couples or partners in relation to transgender experiences. I would also like to comment in the hope that there may be someone out there who can assist me and/or my husband/partner and family.

***Is there anyone out there who is willing to share their expertise, experiences and feelings from my perspective or our perspective? Are there any couples that have survived before, during and after?***

My husband and I have been together for twenty years, we have three teenage children and live in a relatively small rural city.

Two years ago my husband told me of his inner turmoil which he had been experiencing most of his life but had managed through various means, to "hide"

or bury deep within.

I was totally rocked by this announcement to say the least. I went through all manner of emotions from shock, total confusion, hurt, betrayal, disgust, resentment, hatred, loss, loneliness and fear. I was swinging from each emotion and all were connected by this vine of love for this person I had spent the better half of my life with. Each wave of emotion sent us both reeling to extremes from total love and support to the depths of isolated depression and fear.

What would happen to us all? How would the children ever cope? How would I survive reasonably intact? How could he live in some sort of compatible way within himself? Torn between keeping the love of his family, torn between living a truthful life where he could gain some form of happiness instead of living a "Jekyll and Hyde" existence.

At times we were there for each other, other times we felt like enemies. Initially he was so happy and excited because finally, he knew he did not have to live this double life of confusion. We spoke to one counsellor who said there was a large number of support groups for him but as far as the wife and children were concerned, there was little out there for us. I spoke to a person from the Gender Centre who told me that realistically, "the best I could hope for was friendship, that there were very few statistics which claimed that partners survive through transition."

I was devastated! I didn't want to lose my husband, I wanted everything to go back to the way it was before. Why was this happening to us, it's not fair! I was totally self-absorbed. I felt like the victim of some twisted nightmare. If I stayed with him I would have to basically change my own sexuality. I would be living a lesbian relationship and was that truly who I was? Could I handle my husband changing from the man I knew into a woman? He was happy to continue our relationship.

I do not want to abandon my partner, yet at times I feel the social and personal pressure is unbearable. I worry how our children will cope, especially as they go through their own search for identity during this awkward stage.

His family say to him that they will be there to support whatever decision he makes, yet they run to me saying, "we always knew there was something "wrong", can't you do something about it?"

I feel anger towards them, if they knew he was going through such inner-turmoil, why didn't they help him instead of ignorantly sticking their heads in the sand and hoping the "shame" would all go away. The social stigma is crippling not just for him but also for us.

I feel total and utter loss of control. We are faced with such hard decisions which are tearing us apart. Do we live in an isolated world because our so-called friends and society can't cope with him becoming a woman, and our commencing a "quasi-lesbian" relationship? Do we keep struggling amongst ourselves to try and find some compromise where we can both live relatively happy lives? Is that even possible?

I love my husband and I don't want to live the rest of my life without him, but there seem so many odds against us. At times I feel my love for him will conquer all and at other times I feel that this is not all that I want and by staying with him I am in effect maintaining his torture.

Kim's letter "My Wife Was a Victim Too" (*Polare* issue 46) was so touching and real. It is the first time I have read anything or heard anything about the effects of transgenderism on the wife.

When Kim spoke as not seeking her as a man anymore, yet not seeing her as a woman either, I understand what her wife is going through. I don't know if I will ever see my partner as a woman either.

I still call him my husband because that is how I know him and that is still physically how he is. Yet I know he yearns to change this and would do as soon as possible if it were not for the expense. Honestly, yes I am selfish. I wish I could keep things the way they were, but reality is things are not the same. I read in your articles about the victimisation of transgender minority groups but have you ever wondered how it is for the even more marginalised partners who don't want to storm out of their relationships?

It seems that we are to just fade into the background and disappear, rage out of our loved ones lives with feelings of betrayal, fear and heartache or at best "friendship". I am going through my own transition yet there is no support group for me or our children.

Is there anyone out there who is willing to share their expertise, experiences and feelings from my perspective or our perspective? Are there any couples that have survived before, during and after? Am I just dreaming and hoping for something which will only serve to destroy us all?

Both Katherine's and Elizabeth's reports call for solidarity and support from various groups and communities yet I feel totally alone.

Which category am I placed in? And who is there to support me? I can't expect my partner to be my "soul" network for, like Kim, he sees and feels the pain also. I would welcome any genuine views and conversations. Maybe someone out there knows of support groups for partners who have successfully survived this emotional upheaval. If not, we could start our own.

Just having someone to talk to would be a blessing for us, as you all know, not many people in our society are willing to be open to discussion without some form of judgement.

I don't know what will happen to us, but I don't want to give it all away.

---

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.

---

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.

(The Gender Centre advise that this article may not be current and as such certain content, including but not limited to persons, contact details and dates may not apply. Where legal authority or medical related matters are cited, responsibility lies with the reader to obtain the most current relevant legal authority and/or medical publication.)

# I Did But See Her (or Him) Passing By

## Jamison Green's Thoughts on the Much Discussed Issue of 'Passing'

From [International Foundation for Gender Education](#) by Jamison Green

Article appeared in Polare magazine: February 2001 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015



**Jamison Green: We need to be talking about passing as if it doesn't matter, as if it is not what is important.**

**T**ransgender Tapestry magazine, published quarterly by the International Foundation of Gender Education, has instituted

a new feature over the past year or so, called 'The Journal'. Editor Dallas Denny solicits topical essays and then asks other writers to respond to the ideas in a subsequent issue. The format has provoked some very thought provoking content.

In Issue #95, Fall 2001, the topic was 'Passing', and the invited contributors were Holly Boswell and Jessica Xavier, two long-time trans activists with very different personal and political styles. I admire and respect them both. They use different entry points to the concept of passing, but both acknowledge the harm that is within the seductive lure of passing, and the emptiness of the privilege with which passing tempts us. Here is my response to some of the issues

*I understand that many trans people are terrified of not passing, and that this is a horrible fear to live with*

raised.

Holly Boswell quotes Leslie Feinberg: "It is passing that is historically new. Passing means hiding. Passing means invisibility. Transgendered people should be able to live and express their gender without criticism or threats of violence ...".

I disagree with the premise that passing is historically new. This is an unprovable statement, and there is considerable anthropological and historical evidence to the contrary. Feinberg's statement is a rhetorical device intended to invoke compassion for those who cannot or do not 'pass' and to challenge those transpeople who do pass to step out of the closet; it is not a statement of absolute truth. Passing does not unequivocally mean hiding or invisibility. Everyone has some aspect of their life that is hidden, one for which they might fear vilification if it were common knowledge in certain circles. This situation is not unique to gender variant or sexual minority people.

Further, I understand that many trans people are terrified of not passing, and that this is a horrible fear to live with. What we need to be working toward, on the political as well as the social front, is freedom to realise "a greater sense of congruity between our inner and outer being" (which is what Holly advocates beyond passing) regardless of what this looks like to others!

I don't agree with either Holly's statement that "passing inevitably reinforces sex role stereotyping, sexism and gender duality," Why is this inevitable?

Women who pass as women have been quite successful at breaking down sex stereotyping, sexism and gender duality in the feminist movement.

Men who pass as men can do the same thing with respect to breaking down sex role stereotypes, and some have been working hard to do just that.

You don't have to look at gender-queer or even the gender-variant to understand and speak up for freedom of gender expression. Our ability to hide and assimilate is not new and it is not difficult to understand why, facing the reactions of those who oppose and ridicule us, so few transpeople 'out' themselves or demand dignity or equality in spite of our difference.

Jessica's piece discusses how passing privilege for gay men, lesbians and bisexual people has 'dumbed down' the identity politics of the Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual movement, reducing it to the "we're just like you, we just do something different in the privacy of our own bedrooms" argument, and perhaps passing transpeople have fallen prey to the same rhetoric, trying hard to believe that the privacy of their genital difference should be glossed over politically and they should have equal rights, too, just leave their bodies covered, thank you.

I have long agreed with Jessica that this line isn't going to work for transpeople. Our collective variance is much greater than that, and if we are truly to achieve social justice, we cannot fight only for the ones who look 'nice'.

We have to fight for everyone, because our issues are more pervasive throughout our lives than just who we have sex with in private.



Many Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual people have the same social issues as we do, even if they don't regard themselves as trans, and whether they pass or not.

I am grateful for Jessica's observation that (she estimates) "90 percent of transsexual men eventually gain passing privilege. But spending half their lives developing queer consciousness within their lesbian communities, many transsexual men are not only aware of, but also ambivalent about, their passing privilege"

Although I don't think she meant this exactly, I feel compelled to point out that there is no statistical proof that a majority of transmen have prior lesbian experience.

Jessica's text also implies that most F.T.M.s are straight (attracted to women post-transition); this is also not statistically verifiable. My exposure to transmen causes me to estimate that only 60 percent have had any lesbian experience or connection to queer culture, and that roughly 30 percent of F.T.M.s identify as gay men, whether they had exposure to queer culture prior to transition or not.

I would not generalise that exposure to queer culture prior to transition predisposes one's post-transition sexual orientation toward homosexuality. I would generalise that most of the few transmen who are politically active and most willing to be publicly 'out' have been through the political mill in queer culture, have had their consciousness raised, and bring to their transactivism considerable organising experience.

Some of us, though we may be new to the trans scene, have been politically active around sexism, racism and homophobia for decades. If we are the only transmen that are visible, it is not surprising that Jessica and others would draw conclusions like these, but I assure you that transmen are more diverse than that.

We have our sexist pigs, homophobes and transphobes, too, Jessica points out something else I've often said; "We will never be non-transsexual" (or non-transgendered), whether we pass or not. When our sense of congruity between our inner and outer being is stronger and we feel more at home in our bodies, regardless of the shape or sex of those bodies, and we no longer have to fear having our difference discovered, then we can rest.

Until then, whether we talk about passing as if it's either "important/necessary to pass" or "politically incorrect to pass because it's bad to look good" all that does is continue to make everyone feel bad.

We need to be talking about passing as if it doesn't matter, as if it is not what is important. Because what is important is that for all of us the goal is freedom to be who we are, regardless of our difference or variance, regardless of what we look like or what gender we identify with, for what part of the day, so long as we are not harming another person.

What our genitals look like, or whom we love, or how we need to change our bodies (or not change them) should not matter with respect to our ability to live safe, productive, rewarding lives as full members of society.

To that end, I think invisibility is more dangerous than passing *per se*. It is one thing to be invisible to have people react in shock, shame, intolerance and hatred when your difference is exposed, whether or not that exposure happens against your will; it's another thing to pass and have your difference understood and respected even if it is not revealed all the time.

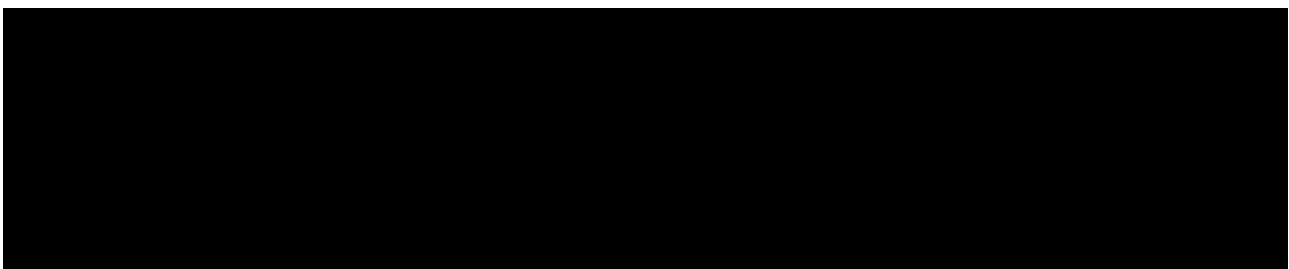
## Jamison "James" Green

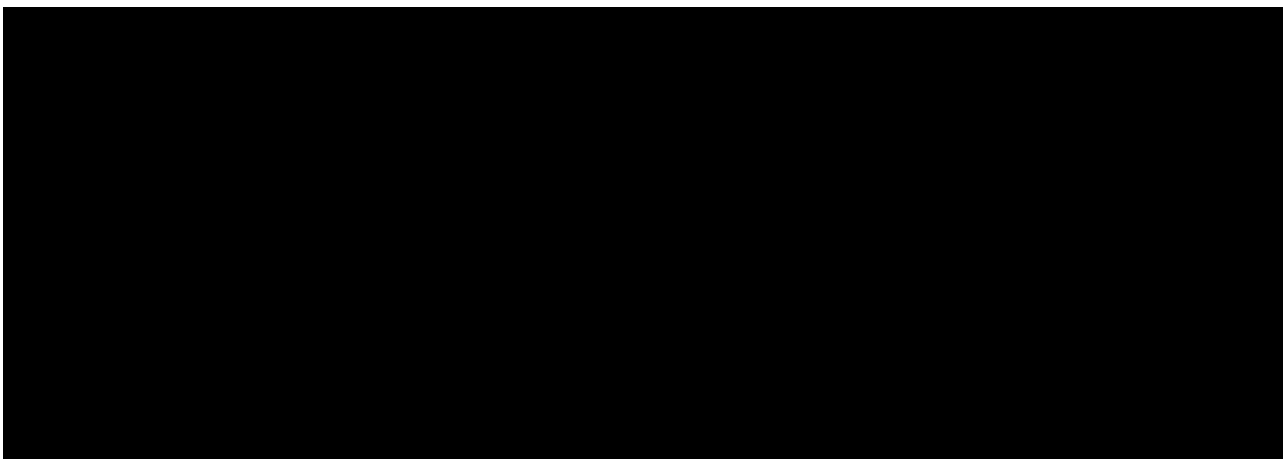
**From Wikipedia:**  Jamison "James" Green is known as an activist for the legal protection, medical access, safety, civil rights and dignity of transgender and transsexual people. He has published several essays and articles, and writes a column for PlanetOut.com. He has appeared in eight documentary films.

He chairs the board of Gender Education and Advocacy, a non-profit educational organization, and serves on the boards of the Transgender Law and Policy Institute and the World Professional Association for Transgender Health. He is also a board member of the Equality Project and an advisory board member of the National Centre for Transgender Equality. He was the leader of F.T.M. International from March 1991 to August 1999 and a member of the Human Rights Campaign Business Council until late 2007, when he resigned over the organisation's stance on transgender inclusion in the Employment Non-Discrimination Act.


He is the author of *Becoming a Visible Man*, which received the 2004 Sylvia Rivera Award for Best Book in Transgender Studies from the Centre for Lesbian and Gay Studies. The book combines two strands: autobiographical writing about Green's transition from living as a lesbian to living as a heterosexual man, as well as broader commentary about the status of transsexual men in society. It was also a finalist for a 2004 Lambda Literary Award.

The following video of James Green's speech at the 2000 San Francisco Pride event is courtesy of You Tube and You Tube Subscriber M.R. Mahoney.





**Becoming a Visible Man**  
Author: James Green  
Publisher: Vanderbilt University Press  
I.S.B.N. -13 978 0826514561

**From Google Books:**  Written by a leading activist in the transgender movement, *Becoming a Visible Man* is an artful and compelling inquiry into the politics of gender. Jamison Green combines candid autobiography with informed analysis to offer unique insight into the multiple challenges of the female-to-male transsexual experience, ranging from encounters with prejudice and strained relationships with family to the development of an F.T.M. community and the realities of surgical sex

reassignment. For more than a decade, Green has provided educational programs on gender variance issues for corporations, law enforcement agencies, social science conferences and classes, continuing legal education, religious education, and medical clubs. His comprehensive knowledge of the processes and problems encountered by transgendered and transsexual people - as well as his legal advocacy work to help ensure that gender variant people have access to the same rights and opportunities as others - enable him to explain the issues as no transsexual author has previously done. Brimming with frank and often poignant recollections of Green's own experiences - including his childhood struggles with identity and his years as a lesbian parent prior to his sex reassignment surgery - the book examines transsexualism as a human condition, and sex reassignment as one of the choices that some people feel compelled to make in order to manage their gender variance. Relating the F.T.M. psyche and experience to the social and political forces at work in American society, *Becoming a Visible Man* also speaks consciously of universal principles that concern us all, particularly the need to live one's life honestly, openly and passionately.

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.

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.