

(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.)

## Media, Grow Up!

### Apparently Our Mere Existence is Amusing

by Rachael Cook

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



Apparently our mere existence is amusing in its own right.

**B**arely a week goes by when I don't read in the newspaper or see on the television someone making fun of transsexuals. Apparently our mere existence is amusing in its own right.

***It is as unfortunate for journalism as it is for us that the media insist on tabloid treatment of all matters involving transgender people***

To be transgendered and teach, practise medicine or nursing, play sport, have a family, run for parliament or even exercise ones legal rights are apparently so controversial it warrants exposure of ones life history including private details such as ones former name and publication of a before photo.

We have this uncanny ability to be born a man or a woman. I don't recall having heard this expression applied to anyone who hasn't changed sex. Funny that. I can only presume it's much easier to despise someone who was born an adult than someone who was born an infant.

I may have been born with or perhaps acquired a difference from most at some stage of my life. I don't care. My self-perception was well in place whilst still believing in Santa Claus. Hardly a surprise, I'd be hard pressed to find someone who's not transgendered who wouldn't attest to the same.

That's my history, answering the big question only leads to intolerant approaches such as aborting all fetuses carrying the pansy or tomboy gene. I remember growing up modelling myself not on my mother, father or sisters but on girls I aspired to be like at school and respected role models I admired. For whatever reason those I was instinctively drawn to in this way all happened to be female and I don't consider that experience any different to that of my sisters or other female peers at school or elsewhere. Hardly the modern day caricature of a football quarterback doing ballet. Surprise, surprise, I was just another kid.

Recently the *Sydney Morning Herald* presented a picture of Channelle Bergman leaving court with a filename of none other than "000223\_trannie.jpg". I wonder if it's now *Sydney Morning Herald* policy to do this for all minorities? Quite apart from the issues surrounding the invasion of privacy on what is essentially a confidential medical matter that has unfortunately found its way into court; the labelling they've invoked is offensive and deplorable.

It's not as though there is no room for a positive approach. It just seems that when trans-anything is concerned even the most respected journalists see the need for tabloid "just another tranny story" journalism. I don't terribly like the term tranny in any case. I can take it in a transgender community publication when someone is referring to themselves, but in the mainstream media and government pamphlets (such as those issued by the A.D.B.) I find it just plain condescending.

It is as unfortunate for journalism as it is for us that the media insist on tabloid treatment of all matters involving transgender people because as they all clamour for an opportunity for a good story they miss an opportunity for some brilliant journalism by challenging the stereotypes with far more shocking yet truthful headlines such as "suicide rate approaches employment rate" to public attention.

The general public has a way of treading in the footsteps of the media before them. Perhaps then if the media grew up a little so would our community as a whole. To borrow a famous quote "I am not an animal, I am a human being."

I'm not prepared to live my life by the standards of others. I swear, as a kid I was at least as afraid to come-out to my family as not believing in God, as I was to tell them I wanted to be a girl. The only mental-illness associated with transsexualism is that of the general community.

To insist on treating someone as one sex when their self-perception is clearly otherwise I think is truly psychotic. Is it really such a threat to people that it is better to hurt someone's feelings than deal with the reality that perhaps there are others with a life experience different to our own?

I know who I am and what I am, deal with it! I came to terms with theory of mind at about age four, it never ceases to amaze me that there are adults walking around who still can't get their head around the concept that not everyone strives to be like themselves.

I'm tired of being tolerated. What is there to tolerate? Diversity? No two people on Earth are the same. Is it any wonder then that those who spend their time frothing at the mouth are so upset? There is a whole world out there to control.

I would have thought it much easier to pull ones head in a little and treat diversity as something to learn from rather than put up with. We've all done it at some stage, had a go at someone for being different in some way or put someone down in the hope of not being associated with their kind. There's no shortage of that in the trans scene either.

Bottom line is if you want the world to give you a fair go, give others the same fair go, don't go around making presumptions about others and pride yourself on it! If nothing else it will make for one less person in this world who has forgotten the basic concept of employing good manners.

It's rude to point, it's rude to stare, it's rude to isolate others and it's generally considered pretty rude to pick apart the life of someone you've never met.

Media, grow up.

---

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.