

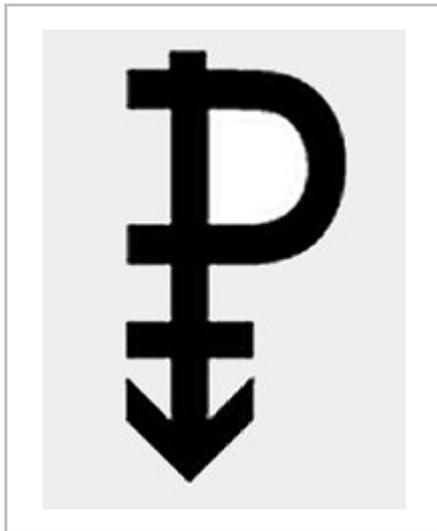
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Emerging Pangendered

A Journey Repeated Over and Over

by Jenny Lovelace

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I am pangendered. I am biologically male and happy to be and to live my male-gendered life. However, I am also, and no less, a woman by gender. I love to live for extended periods, an evening out, a weekend and (planned) for weeks on end, as a woman. I cannot live as an androgyne, that is presenting as both at the same time, with work boots and tight short shorts at one end and a pretty pink bow holding back my long hair at the other. I wonder if you can guess why.

The physical changes you can see are nothing to the inner changes we must endure before we achieve the happy, fulfilling balance that is who we truly are.

Coming-out to the wider world beyond the gender diverse community and a very few others who understand is not an option for me. I am not a football coach, but the work I do (and love) no less prohibits me from disclosing who I fully am. People just would not understand. It is a challenge!

I am no longer sixteen. In fact many people of my age are retired. It is possible that my ambition to pass as a teenage Audrey Hepburn may be a bit beyond me. I know I cannot pass well in public. I have no interest in taking hormones. I will never undergo surgery. My make up skills need a lot of practice. There is so much I need to do to improve, to become as feminine as I am able. These include such things as voice and speech work, posture and movement and the right kind of shape enhancing underwear. Fortunately I have been an actor, singer and dancer so I know I can develop heartfelt skills given time to immerse and practise.

I have courage. It takes real courage to go out in the daytime, away from the dim lights of gay friendly nightclubs and to have to talk to people whenever one needs to buy something or to ask for directions. No longer when dressed can I look for even a fraction of a second at a pretty girl and give away my admiration. And I certainly cannot look at any man that way, especially at my age! No longer when dressed can I catch anyone's eyes unless I am communicating with them. Peripheral Vision!

Dr. Anne Vitale (*Emergence*, July 2002) tells us about biological emergence, when an aquatic insect rises and journeys from relative safety at the bottom of a body of water to the surface where it must break through the surface tension to be, now transformed, a creature with wings. She compares this to people who journey from presenting as their birth genders, through a stage of presenting as both, to the time when they at last present as the gender of their choice – forever. The agony and the ecstasy of it all!

Full transition requires only one, albeit rugged, journey. For the pangendered person the journey is repeated over and over - forever. The aim is not to lose one gender and to replace it with another but to create a life that enables one to journey between the extremes so smoothly that each change of presentation flows from one to the other without any friction. We, the pangendered, emerge from being trapped in one gender role into a world within which we present now one way then the other as grasses swaying back and forth with the breeze that flows from deep within our hearts.

This will be difficult for many people to understand, both some gender diverse and, no doubt, many 'gender comfortable' people. What they may find hard to understand is that we who are pangendered are both genders and all places between. We experience ourselves as the one whole person and the outward presentations we choose and love to adopt are merely the external presentations of the one deep and self-searching inner soul. We are the true chameleons. This is the way we are. The way we have always longed to be.

The physical changes you can see are nothing to the inner changes we must endure before we achieve the happy, fulfilling balance that is who we truly are. "It takes a psychological shift far beyond just wishing it so," says Anne Vitale. She is talking about the one-way journey. The dance of the pangendered is a constant movement in all directions. It is the mindset of the truly pangendered that must be essentially found if the dance is to harmonise with the music of life-fulfilling meaning. There is no one-fits-all formula for either one way or all encompassing journeys. Uniqueness is a uniquely human characteristic!

If you are 'gender comfortable', please try to understand us, especially if you love us. Our being is no threat to you and we love you no less. We are still the same person you always knew. If you are fully transgendered please do not regard yourself as in any way superior to those of us who have no desire to change our gender presentation completely. Perhaps we are able to feel your longings no less

than you, whether you are female-to-male or male-to-female. Surely we can love each other simply for the people we are.

As a counsellor I do hope these thoughts will be of use to you, professionally or as a friend, when you are with pangendered people like me. We do not all call ourselves 'pangendered' but there are quite a few of us and at some time we all need help and understanding. As counsellors, our own sex, sexual orientation and gender self-identification is of absolutely no importance – if, and only if, we are only, totally, concerned to see and care for the emerging souls that need our help to find and to be their own true selves.

"Success" Anne Vitale so wisely says, "is a matter of accepting what you have done, demanding space to exist and then relaxing into the situation." It is absolutely vital for our wellbeing that we all, we the gender diverse, we who love and care for the gender diverse and we who presume to offer help be there for each other. The rest of the world is going take time to shed its fears and wise up so it is up to us to create the strong, protective and loving world we need if we are to survive – joyfully.

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