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An Open Letter to the Community

From a Very Busy, but Grateful Pansexual

by Jenny Lovelace

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We are all delightfully different whatever our similarities.

Many of you have been good to me this year and I am not sure how I can adequately say thanks to any of you - but I am saying thanks to all. I am so very grateful.

Some transgender people seem to be threatened by other transgender people' ways of understanding their own gender diversity and their own unique and different ways of being.

Being so busy with post-graduate studies has made being fully myself difficult and this will continue well into 2006. When my studies are complete I will start creating the life I have planned. This includes my transgender research which continues quietly, almost passively. Contacts in Australia and overseas continue to expand. I am collecting a broad range of transgender data that is clinical, biological, anthropological, sociological, historical, legal and so on. This is often quite easy because there is much in writing and many people, both academics

and lay people, are more than happy to assist or to exchange information if they too are researching.

I have started from the basic notion shared by many transgender people and researchers, that the extreme advocacies of either end of the nature/nurture debate are based on low quality research, which I and others must competently critique if any views we put forward are to have any meaning or usefulness. Too often, conclusions seem to be dogmatically drawn to fit an ideology rather than from an adequacy of data and a competency of analysis. Reality is whatever it truly, and only is!

As a clinician I am primarily interested in helping people like us, and those who are close to us, to come to know who and what our unique, true and unimpeded feelings about who and what we are - really are. Then, and only then, can the influences of what [we think] we know about biology and environment be brought to bear to help all of us to deepen our own understanding of, and our responses to, who and what we are, so that we can make our own decisions with the best possible chance of having no regrets - ever.

It is incumbent upon all of us to be totally honest with ourselves first, and then with our helpers if we are to be capable of truly knowing who and what we are and what our best options are - irrespective of the opinions and wishes of anyone else. It is also incumbent upon us as supporters and professional practitioners, especially those of us who are counsellors, to be able to read and cross-check the outward signs of 'inner truth', verbal, vocal, dermatological, behavioural and so on, so that we may at least increase our ability to assess with accuracy the degree of self-knowing and honesty within the people we support. It does not matter how much people who lie are responsible for the consequences of their own dishonesty. It *does* matter that we hone our own skills of observation through every sense to ensure that we reduce, as far as possible, the kind of tragedies that, around the world, all too often happen when unprepared transgender people are confronted with realities that they could have been helped to pre-evaluate.

Hasn't anyone heard of Harry Benjamin?

Some transgender people seem to be threatened by other transgender people' ways of understanding their own gender diversity and their own unique and different ways of being. We are all delightfully different whatever our similarities. So long as we truly know who and what we are, we can act to create our own unique lifestyles as best our circumstances and our personal choices allow us. Then all others can think what they like!

Needless to say I am not supportive of any form of discrimination among any groups of transgender people or S.O.s from any other transgender people or S.O.s. I must say how pleased I was to experience, during 2005, the all-embracing inclusiveness that is expressed by the Carrousel Club in Adelaide.

This year I have been touched by many other people's beauty and courage. Their journeys, both full and part-time, are as M.T.F.s, F.T.M.s, Androgynes, Pangenders (no, I am not alone!) or as S.O.s, children, family, friends - whatever. We live with so much challenge and so much pain, so much joy and so much deep, deep beauty. It is such an honour and such a pleasure to know these, the most real of people. I wish you all the very best - always.

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.