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# The Stigma of Being Transsexual

## We Need to Educate Society at a Grass-Roots Level

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I feel that as a community, yes, we have come a long way, but I feel that there is a way to go just yet. We have to make society aware that we are just normal people living our lives, rather than what people hear, read or see in the media. The media often portrays transsexual/transgender people in a not so nice light.

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You often hear the story in the media about how a guy comes onto a girl only to discover that she's "not a real girl". It is trash journalism at our expense. "Nudge, Nudge, Wink, Wink" type stuff, because everyone seems to think this type of journalism is funny, well when it is indirectly aimed at me, I fail to see the

humour.

To gradually stop this type of humour, I propose that we have an education program in place at the grass roots level. We have to lobby politicians to allow this sort of program to go ahead. If we get an education program into the schools, maybe this will enable us over a period of time to change society's perceptions of transgendered/transsexual people.

I am definitely not ashamed of who I am, but when people find out about me I am quite often made to feel this way. Pretty hard stuff to understand, when I have done nothing wrong. To be treated like a criminal is hard to take.

It only seems to happen to me at my place of employment and surrounding suburbs. It also mainly comes from males, probably trying to come to terms with their own insecurities.

I work at a gym in the south-west of Sydney as an aerobics instructor and also as a part-time aerobics co-ordinator. I am at present the most popular instructor by numbers and feedback. Obviously I am very proud of this fact and that people hold me in high regard. My life is going along very well at the moment, but for the small percentage of men that train at the gym, whom I perceive as always wanting to have a go at me. My transition around the area was no secret and I always feel that people are very eager to do me in, so to speak. They feel that it is their right to tell the world about me as in their eyes, "I am not normal". I imagine them telling their mates, "Did you know she used to be a boy, man, male, bloke, etc." With their uneducated humour they aim to hurt. They all stand around laughing and looking at me as if I was a cardboard cut out. My partner, Paula Dayne tells me that I am paranoid at times, and maybe she is right but sometimes I can't help but feel the butt of their innuendo and lack of education. I don't care what these people think of me, as I don't think much of them, but I don't take ridicule very well. Unfortunately all "T" girls have been subjected to this one time or another and being passable doesn't help, just the fact that they know about your past is enough for them to give you a hard time. Once again, hopefully an education program will slowly eradicate these experiences.

For most "T" girls we are righting a wrong. This is definitely how I feel and hopefully with more time, I won't care what some moron thinks of me. I already feel 99 percent there and with my upcoming surgery (19th September) I will feel physically 100 percent. I already know that I am mentally 100 percent female. I know that Paula told me that after her surgery she felt that no one could physically pick on her anymore. She no longer had a secret or anything to hide, except for a past.

I feel that both Paula's and my best years are ahead of us. From a personal point of view, I am good at my job, people like me and I have a good life. Why should I run away and hide, because a few idiots don't like me. I also feel that society doesn't have a problem collectively with us, but usually individuals cause problems for us. People are fascinated by transgendered people, but I feel in the majority of cases they couldn't care less what we do or have done with our lives. It is only the uneducated and misinformed bullies who usually have a gripe because they believe everything that they hear about us must be true. Ask them what their problem is and they will tell you that it is unnatural for what we have done. Ask them why it is unnatural what we have done and they will either not be able to answer or quote you something from the Bible. Fear of the unknown is their driving force. Once we educate these types of people, we may be able to live in more peace and not have to hide our pasts so much.

I heard a story of how a "T" girl was going to get married, no one knew of her past, not even her groom. She was "dobbled" in one

week before the wedding. Everyone rallied around the groom-to-be, but she was deserted by all her friends, simply because she was transsexual. Where is the fairness?

Maybe she should have told him. I feel that people deserted her because of the shock. They no longer knew the protocol of how to treat her, so they distanced themselves. They also obviously felt betrayed, that she had "lied" to them. It didn't matter that she was now female and looked it too. All that mattered was the stigma of her once being physically male. No one cared about her feelings, no one took time out to think about her, all they could think of was the injustices she had caused. They didn't care that she hadn't lied and the fact that her past was nobody's business. This is why we hide it, because it is often used against us. When people are educated with transgendered issues, then it may one day be socially acceptable as having asthma or even being gay. This is why being gay has less of a stigma, because gay and lesbian people have stood up, outed themselves said they are proud of it. Whereas if we outed ourselves, we risk losing everything. I am sure that many "T" girls' boyfriends know about them and accept that, but I wonder how many would accept all their friends and work colleagues knowing about their girlfriends' past? Gay people also don't have to worry about their partners' prejudices because they both feel the same way.

I went to lunch a few months ago with a group of participants from my aerobics class and we somehow got onto the subject of Carlotta. One of the girls, Sylvia was amazed that people could change their gender. Not knowing about my past she denounced "these people" as a bunch of loonies, as that is how she was brought up to think.

The moral of this story is that she had no idea of what a transsexual was. She thought that a transsexual was a man in a dress. Can you blame her for this thinking? She knows no better, she was brought up to believe this. With re-education she would be okay with this issue. She is not a bad person. I feel bad that I didn't out myself to her, but individually I was afraid that she would stop coming to my classes.

There are a lot of people like Sylvia out there who just need education on the subject to change their misguided views on transsexual/transgendered people.

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