

TRANS SPIRITUALITY

A TRANS-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

\$6.00, or FREE if you don't mind waiting

Issue 04, Autumn 2006

My Truth, Religious Truth, and
the Da Vinci Code

Transsexualism
in Iran

Prison, Religion, and
Matters of the Heart

T* spirituality online:
Geocities websites

The Invitation

Plus much
more...

TRANS SPIRITUALITY is a new zine published by Jen Durr Press. It was born from the *Trans-Religious Dialogue*, a process begun among incarcerated T* whose spirituality is often sharpened by enduring repeated violence to their gifted souls.

Valjean Royal vs State of Indiana

INNOCENT

Death Row Lies & Deceit

State of Indiana

CHILDREN OF THE CORN

TRANS SPIRITUALITY
A TRANS-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

“Ideologies separate us. Dreams and anguish bring us together.”

~ Eugene Ionesco (1912-1994)
 Romanian-French dramatist

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Letters...

to the Editor

Dear Editor,

Congratulations to you and Amanda for putting out a splendid Issue 03, and more timely than any of the other GLBT zines/newsletters I receive. And my, my each issue just has more and more of a quality and unique look about it.

I note that submissions have grown, in both volume and content, and I want to personally thank all of the contributors of the previous issue for providing such a broad and informative spectrum on spirituality and other issues.

And Steph, I hope somebody put your "drag show" debut on video-cam and saver, so we can see it on the Net for a long time to come.

And did anybody know that a couple weeks ago (back in June '06) the Defense Department decided to drop "homosexuality" from a 1996 list of "mental disorders"? Actually the American Psychiatric Association (APA) declassified homosexuality as a mental disorder back in 1973.

Interesting to note, both the Defense Department and APA still consider TG/TS a "disorder" of the mind called "gender dysphoria." Now that is funny. All my life I thought my "body" was in "disorder." I don't recall having any problems with my mind. Hmm, maybe I should change back.... Now that would be an "order of mentals." I think not. Live true!

Tsunami Caryl-Averlyn

P.S. - I am enclosing an article titled "Time Out From the River of Life." The original author is unknown, but it was provided to me by my dear sista Valjean, in one of our many correspondence, and she suggested our readers might enjoy it as well. Big shout outs to Val. Picture me getting closer to the door, my sistas, which means a lower custody, and an imminent transfer. I'll let you all know when I move and where I land. Keep me in your thoughts and prayers. In solidarity.

Tsunami Caryl-Averlyn

Yo Steph. Thanx much for TS3. I find the development and input of the mag fascinating. Enclosed is more \$. (*Ed.- mucho gracious; kchi miigwech; dunka chein, thanx much!*)

I wanted to reply before your Aug 1 deadline on the state of things at the Maetrem of Cybele, but I'm still not sure how to address that at this time. I think you did a fine job characterizing the exchange about Cybelene history. I'm not really sure why Cathryn Platine refused to have her response to Amanda published or to follow up on the matter. Cathryn's a brilliant historian and theologian.

Best,
Susan Poe



To Trans Spirituality editor:

Hello once again, ladies. I received your letters and survey. I also noticed that my address has not been corrected. That's okay. Sooner or later we'll get it taken care of. I'll also try to meet your deadlines, however until we get the address changed you'll kindly excuse me for being tardy. ☺

I truly like the work you've all put in. The articles on modern day Galla (Cybele), what's the chances of getting Ms Cathryn Platine's address there in the Catskills of New York?

I also would like to make a few other comments, if I may. From page 19 of issue 03, I enjoyed what Valjean Royal said! (I was prepared to "knock him the hell out") hee hee. I tell others myself, "Look, my life doesn't revolve around a man or his penis!"

Anyway, I thought she handled that very well. Okay, the next thought that comes to me is thank you for including me in Letters to the Editor. I noticed that there are articles about Christianity, and Paganism. Would you accept a couple of comments, or information from a Satanic Stance? (*Ed.- Hell yeah!*) No, I'm not here to create moral dogma, it's strictly for those whom would be interested in the left-hand Path.

A couple of quick quotes:

Blessed are the mighty minded,
for they shall ride the whirlwinds.
Cursed are those who teach lies
for truth and truth for lies, for
they are in an Abomination!

Blessed is the man/woman
whose foot is swift to serve a
friend; for she/he is a friend
indeed.

Such Idealisms are the basis of contemporary Satanism. No longer can we survive on the magickal successes of sorcerers long past. We must now create new works (sorceries) that shall take us into the future.

Well, there you go. I'm guessing Steph Turner or Amanda Armstrong is reading this or Steph (editor). Please feel free to use what you may! I also was able to send you money this month. I look forward to the August issue, and as always thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Respectfully,
Satannia

Greetings Steph:

I sure like the new zine. Very high quality. Although, I do regret your low opinion of me, as depicted on page 4 Issue 03, 2006. (*Ed.- huh?*) Maybe it's good that our state declined to deliver to me the beginning of that in Issue 2. I am sorry to have offended you, so please accept my most humble apology. (*Ed.- my apologies for failing to clear this up*)

Issue two of TRD was rejected by the state of Washington. Evidently they felt it was not fit for a prisoner's eyes. (*Ed.- apparently the Inquisition artwork on the cover was a little too much like B&D!*) I've enclosed the mail rejection so you know what I say is so.

Issue three of TRD had its original envelope rejected due to stickers being on the envelope. I pointed out that stamps (postage) are stickers. Anyway, address labels are now rejected. But, I do get the contents.

Give 'em hell, Steph!
Peace,
Ms. Sarah j. Babcock, aka the "Pen"

Dear Steph,

I am now at my new yard and so far everything seems to be okay! Though I wish that I could have stayed at C.D.U. a little longer.

I really enjoyed having Morgan for a celly, she was great! She was always making me laugh and we had a great time, until they put another celly in with us.

Yes, I was a *bad boy*. We made that poor youngster want to curl up into a ball. We had him blushing so bad it was funny!

I just finished writing a letter to Morgan. She said that she will stay in touch with me. But you know how that goes. But I think she will stay in touch, we hit it off really great.

I remember one day going to the shower and the C.O. asked me, "How can you live with that?" I looked him straight in the eyes and told him, "That, as you refer to her, is a *human being* who has just as much right to be here as you do." When I said that his jaw went slack and he was at a loss for words. I guess I really surprised him with that.

Then another C.O. made her strip out before he cuffed her up to go to the

shower. Being the courteous person I am, I faced the wall of my bunk to give her her privacy. When the C.O. came back for me he just cuffed me up, so I asked him, "What, you don't want me to strip out?"

When he said no, he only stripped Morgan out to "fuck with him," I got really pissed off and told him he was an asshole. I also told him if he wanted to see a pair of breasts to go to a strip club! I think that's why they moved me out of there so soon. They didn't like the idea of me "protecting" Morgan.

Well, my dear friend, I'm going to wrap this up for now. You take good care of yourself, and please write back soon.

Your friend always,
John

Dear Editor,

Again I am writing to inform you of the fabulous job that everyone has done to make the material in Summer Issue 03 of our beloved zine TRANS SPIRITUALITY a natural! Thank you, and you Amanda, for the hard work, financial support, and of course the sacrifices made by both of you so that our dream is now a reality.

I am pleased, as stated numerous times in the past, to be a part of this upsurging enterprise. This 2000 Summer issue I am certain will become a very memorial issue in years to come due to the struggles and never ending determination placed on continuing it's production.

Lovingly yours,
Valjean Royal

Some quotes Sarah shared:

"Why berate, or belittle those who attempt to do the best?"

- Edgar Cayce -

"All truth passes through three stages. First, it is ridiculed. Second, it is violently opposed. Third, it is accepted as being self-evident."

- author unknown

"We have to hold on to the belief that every person is prison is a valued member of the community, and deserves to have their humanity respected. Miserable prisons where abuse is tolerated or encouraged do more harm to public safety than good."

- Justice Matters – WPP – Spring 2006, Vol. 6 -

TRANS SPIRITUALITY is open to submissions. Material can be submitted to: Steph Turner, *TRANS SPIRITUALITY* Editor, N9494 Haltur Ln., Eagle, WI 53119. **NOTE: Once the editor contacts you, please use her residential address to expedite your exchange.**

We prefer to receive submissions online, at jendurrpress@gmail.com. Material may be edited for space and continuity. Unsolicited material by snail mail cannot be returned without a SASE. Please request our *writer's guidelines*. Payment to writers is a copy of the issue in which the material appears. All rights reserved.

TRANS SPIRITUALITY is currently available for free to anyone who asks and if we have enough funds and copies to distribute. Donations always welcomed.

TRANS SPIRITUALITY A TRANS-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

Publisher
Jen Durr Press

Editor, layout
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TRANS SPIRITUALITY is a quarterly zine for demonstrating how the transgender experience includes a rich spiritual dimension. Our initial focus is how T* inmates are finding incredible ways to apply their spirituality to the challenges of living in a gender-oppressed environment. If their spirituality proves effective for dealing with the challenges they face each day, what does that say about how *we* are integrating our spirituality into *our* daily transgender experience?

TRANS SPIRITUALITY is a public forum for expressing diverse views. Such views are the responsibility of those who express them. These published views are not necessarily those of Jen Durr Press, its staff, or the Founding Corps of the TRD. *Or represent the current views of those who wrote them, since every woman is free to change her mind!*

~~Feature - book review~~

My Truth, Religious Truth, and the Da Vinci Code

By Tsunami Caryl-Averlyn

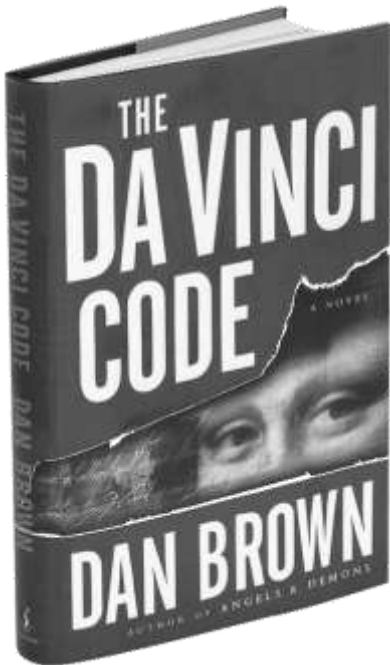
Yes, friends, I finally got to read “The Da Vinci Code” by Dan Brown. After nearly a year of buzz and hoopla about it, due to the recent making of a movie based on the novel.

No matter what side of the fence your on, it seems a big deal to everyone some of the “creative liberties” Brown took in crafting his novel, and plain old “untruths” at least according to what is commonly accepted as “truth” by Catholics and

Christians in terms of the story of Jesus, and particularly his relationship with Mary Magdalene.

By now, you’ve all heard the basis of Brown’s novel is that Jesus and Mary Mag were deeply intimate, and even had a child that the early Christian church conspired to cover-up to include modern day descendents still walking the earth...etc., etc., to make it work required those creative liberties and untruths aforementioned. Brown has always made it clear his book is a work of “fiction” (the newest versions have a huge disclaimer printed inside).

But when you deal with “religion” people are less open to fictionalizing if it strays too far from their traditional teachings/beliefs. But I have a



question to just throw out there. Does it matter whether something is true or not when it comes to theology or religion?

That's what Brown is dealing with when he introduces so much of the argument about matriarchal prehistory, the external *feminine*, and the rest. Does it matter if scholars say that, carried as far as the thesis often is, the evidence isn't there to support it? It may not be true in an empirical or historical sense. How much does that matter?

As modern "thinkers" among our goals "is the responsible search for truth" I am of that mind set. And yet I have always loved the basic doctrine of "Bokononism," the religion invented by Kurt Vonnegut (as a side note, the religious beliefs and name of the X-man character "Nightcrawler" are based on Vonnegut), in his novel "Cat's Cradle" which is "Live by 'foma' that make you brave and kind and healthy and happy."

**Live by the harmless
uncertainties that
make you brave and
kind and healthy
and happy.**

Foma are harmless "untruths" may be a little too strong, so I like to modify and redefine it as harmless "uncertainties." So it becomes: Live by the harmless uncertainties that

make you brave and kind and healthy and happy.

This is also a part of our modern heritage; a

slight distance from what was "practical religion" in the nineteenth century. Believe what you want if it makes you a better, happier person, and does not impose on your neighbor.

And if the thought of an early, happier, matriarchal world sounds good and makes you feel better and more helpful, well, no one can disprove it. No more than anyone can dis-a-prove of you living in the gender of your choice, or cross variation of it...or a combo of genders.

It's no more unlikely than the various stories accepted by billions of Christians, Wiccans, Muslims, Jews, Odinists, etc.

I am of that mind set too...live true!

Reading Octavia Butler's *Bloodchild* in Pine Ridge

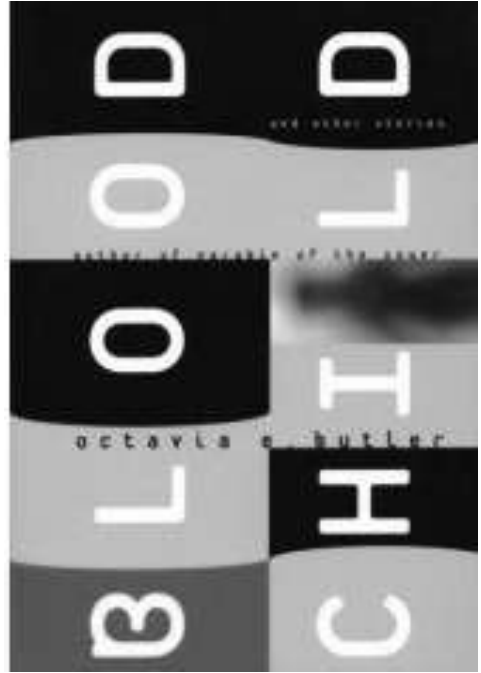
By Amanda Armstrong

I'm writing this on my way home from the Pine Ridge Reservation, pausing periodically to take in the South Dakota landscape. For the past week, my partner Alana, one of my best friends from high school Ben and I have been traveling throughout the reservation while Alana has been interviewing people here about Native women's health issues for a story that she plans to send to *Mother Jones*. She hopes that her story will provide some context for the controversy over abortion that recently flared up on Pine Ridge—a controversy that was sparked when Cecelia Fire Thunder, the first female president of the Oglala Sioux Tribe, proposed the construction of a women's health clinic on the reservation. From Wamblee to Wounded Knee, we have crisscrossed the narrow winding roads of Pine Ridge in recent days, visiting people with a wide range of opinions on the issue; from a prominent evangelical pastor who runs a coffee shop in Pine Ridge, to a group of women who founded the first domestic violence shelter on the reservation. Not surprisingly, people here disagree sharply about abortion. However, disagreements over abortion at Pine Ridge tend not to fit into the familiar "pro-choice" versus "pro-life" divide.

Instead of insisting on a "woman's right to choose," people in Pine Ridge who want to make abortion more accessible talk about the relationship between colonization and the regulation of Native women's bodies (particularly the history of US-sponsored forced sterilizations of Native women), about Native women's traditional methods of terminating pregnancies, about the importance of non-interventionist ethics in Lakota tradition, about the prevalence of rape and incest—perpetrated by both Native and White men—in Pine Ridge, and about the myriad difficulties that Native women face in securing quality, affordable, and culturally sensitive healthcare. This group of women and men decry the severe ban on abortion recently passed by the (mostly male) Tribal council (a ban that was passed immediately before the council voted to suspend Cecelia Fire Thunder), declaring that the men on the council are "acting like white men" in restricting Native women's sovereignty over their own bodies. On the other hand, Lakota people who support the restriction of women's access to abortion—while sometimes invoking Christian moral teachings and patriarchal logic—tend to argue that biological

reproduction constitutes an important aspect of anti-colonial struggle and that those who are alive bear a moral responsibility to the not-yet born. In this way, disagreements about reproductive politics in Pine Ridge turn less on questions of women's privacy rights, "family values," and moral law; and more on questions of Lakota tradition and the history of US colonialism.

For many whose families have lived on the Pine Ridge reservation since its inception in 1889, the legacy and impact of US colonialism is remembered intimately and acutely. This fact was made clear to me during a lunchtime conversation that Alana, Ben and I had with Norma and Karen, two women who run a DV shelter on the reservation. After we had ordered our grilled cheese sandwiches, Norma began talking about a photograph that she owns. The photograph depicts two of her ancestors wearing their Pine Ridge agency school uniforms. In the winter of 1890, these two young men skipped out of school to witness the confrontation that was taking place between US soldiers and Lakota community members at Wounded Knee. Soon after these two young men met up with their family members at Wounded Knee, the US military started firing indiscriminately on the largely unarmed Lakota community in what has subsequently come to be known as the Wounded Knee Massacre.



Both of Norma's school-age ancestors were killed by US soldiers that day. Norma also told us of her family's involvement in another, more recent, confrontation that took place at Wounded Knee. In the winter of 1973, in response to a series of abuses by Federal and tribal authorities, community members from the rural "districts" in Pine Ridge made common cause with members of the American Indian Movement (AIM) and organized a campaign of direct action at Wounded Knee. This direct action was met with repression from Federal troops and tribal paramilitary forces loyal to then-president Dick Wilson, including a campaign of organized terror carried out in the districts.

Norma was seventeen when paramilitary troops broke into her family's house and put the barrel of a gun into her grandfather's mouth, threatening to kill him and his family if he did not reveal the whereabouts of AIM activists. He refused to tell these men what he knew, pretending not to know that AIM members were hiding out in his yard. Luckily, the armed men believed Norma's grandfather and decided to leave the house without further harming any of her family members.

After Norma told us this story about her grandfather, the conversation gradually shifted its focus, transitioning from a discussion of past conflicts towards a discussion of present, ongoing conflicts on the reservation. I was very surprised when, in the midst of this conversation about contemporary realities in Pine Ridge, Karen began talking about issues of sexuality and gender identity. Because I had decided to spend the entire trip in drag (so as not to generate undue attention, which would have made Alana's efforts at reporting more difficult), I was not imagining that I would find myself in the midst of a conversation about gender and sexual variance while on the reservation. But maybe Norma and Karen could sense something about Alana and me despite our best efforts to appear as conventionally-

gendered straight folks. They seemed to know that we would be interested in having a conversation about issues of gender and sexuality. And they were right—we were very interested. We listened as Norma and Karen talked about the need to speak up on behalf of members of their community who cross-dressed or who desired people of the same gender—people who, in Karen and Norma's opinion, are not currently receiving communal validation. They shared their understanding of gender and sexual variance with us, telling us that—according to Lakota tradition—each of us are spirits who are given bodies at the time of our birth. Sometimes, they concluded, our spirit-led selves are erotically drawn towards people of the same gender; just as sometimes our spirits inspire us to inhabit and shape our bodies in ways that move us into new gender-circles. As we learned over the course of the conversation, the meaning of sexual and gender variance in Lakota tradition is an issue of personal significance to Karen, whose daughter has been open for some time about the fact that she is erotically attracted to other women. Karen shared with us a story that revealed her daughter's courage and self-respect, and concluded the conversation by expressing her hope that the Pine Ridge community—as well as the

mainstream American community—will accept and embrace gender and sexual diversity in the near future.

I've been thinking quite a bit about the future in recent weeks, as I have been immersing myself in Octavia Butler's science fiction stories. Octavia Butler recently passed away, and I thought that I should honor her passing by reading her works and writing a review of one of her stories for this magazine. I brought two of her books with me to Pine Ridge in order to finish my review before the August 1st submission deadline for issue #4. While traveling through Pine Ridge, I was struck by the extent to which Octavia Butler's short story *Bloodchild* resonated with the history and contemporary conditions of the Pine Ridge reservation. Over the past week, I realized that even though Butler writes about the distant future, her prose nevertheless speaks forcefully to the issues of our day.

In *Bloodchild*, a young human boy narrates for us the story of his life on a distant

planet. His family, along with all of the other human families living on this planet, is confined to a reservation that is overseen by the more liberal members of the Tlic—the dominant life-form on the planet. According to T'Gatoi—a Tlic who is lounging in the narrator's family home in the opening scene of the story—humans are confined to the reservation in order to protect them from being captured and enslaved wholesale by the less compassionate members of her species. The Tlic want to enslave the human population because human muscle tissue serves as a good incubator for their larvae. Without human hosts, Tlic would

have a very difficult time reproducing. While humans living on the reservation are fortunately not enslaved by the Tlic, they are nevertheless confined to a severely dependent relationship vis-à-vis the more liberal members of the Tlic who oversee the reservation. Human families are allowed to reproduce amongst themselves and



retain some collective and individual agency over their lives. However, a certain percentage of humans are required to serve as reproductive receptacles—as hosts—for the Tlic.

The narrator of *Bloodchild* has been selected by T'Gatoi to be her host. In a particularly memorable scene of the story, this young boy witnesses a Tlic birth, and thereby learns of the suffering entailed in carrying Tlic larvae. Such larvae grow inside of humans by consuming muscle tissue. When their development has reached a particular stage, they begin to cause their human host a great deal of pain. At this stage, the larvae must be surgically removed from the human host by the Tlic parent, lest the human be eaten alive by larvae. Having witnessed the invasive surgery required for a Tlic "birth," the narrator is quite frightened and decides that he will shoot and kill T'Gatoi in order to avoid his imminent impregnation. In the final scene of the story, he comes face to face with T'Gatoi, and must choose to either kill her, allow his sister to serve as T'Gatoi's host in his stead, or commit to giving birth to her offspring. I won't ruin the ending for you by revealing whether or not this young boy chooses to become pregnant.

In Butler's *Bloodchild*, the narrator—like all humans in his community—is forced to choose a life-path from a number of

unsatisfactory options. Self-determination in the context of reservation life is essentially an impossible dream. There are no ideal choices, no pure solutions for our young narrator. By presenting us with the moral dilemmas that define this young boy's life, Octavia Butler's *Bloodchild* encourages us to appreciate the difficulty of making politically responsible choices and taking pleasure in the company of others in the midst of conditions that encourage nihilism, alienation, and desperation. While there are clearly many differences between the situation faced by humans in Octavia Butler's *Bloodchild* and the situation faced by Native people over the course of the past 150 years in America, there are—I believe—certain significant resonances between these distinct situations. In both cases, life on a reservation placed human communities in a relationship of dependence vis-à-vis their powerful neighbors. In both cases, their neighbors justified their repressive and violent actions as a "humane" alternative to genocide and/or slavery. And in both cases, those living outside of the reservation asserted their power in part by controlling the reproductive lives of those on the reservation. By presenting us with a strange—yet uncannily familiar—future world, Butler's *Bloodchild* enables us to think anew about our past and present.



"Time Out from the River Of Life"

Author Unknown (submitted by Tsunami)



Life is like a powerful river where everything happens. It flows along and we are born into it, and we have to learn to swim in it and make the best of being apart of the flow. Now for whatever reason maybe due to circumstances you were born into, maybe due to things you did, it may be due to things that were done to you, may be due to a combination of reasons-for whatever reason, it's being judged that you are a lizard to other people in the flow of life. Actually maybe you have nearly drowned yourself.

So you've been taken out of the flow, just sort of lifted out of the river where everything is happening and where most that matters to you are, and you are stuck with a bunch of other people who have also been removed from the flowing river. Of course, it's a lousy' situation because this little 'isolated spot is crowed and uncomfortable, and you are surrounded by a lot of people' complaining about the river and the authorities who try to manage the river and so on.

And the good things are flowing by and they are all out of reach until you are allowed back in the flow, and you are not getting any younger. So when you do get back in it, you may feel a little strange and other people who have been flowing along may look at you kind of strange. And so on and so on.

Now if you look at the river you can see all kinds of things that aren't fair. And you could use this time out of the river to complain about things that happened to you that weren't fair. That's the main thing people who are forcibly removed from the flow of life usually do. But what good does that do? Is that what you should do? It's a terrible thing to be removed from the flow of life. You are paying a very heavy price for what ever happened. But actually, you also have a very unusual opportunity to do something most people can never do. Most people are so caught up in the flow of life they can't get out of it. They can't redirect themselves, or learn a new way to swim, or just look carefully at how the



river flows so they can figure out where the main problems are.

Most people think they will do these things at some time and really want to do these things, but they never can find a way to get out of the flow long enough to do them. It takes too much time, and too much effort. And anyway they are flowing along just well enough so they don't really need to. They may not be doing great, but they're moving along.

You can do these things! In fact, you must! Because your situations, for whatever reasons, were so terrible that you had to get out or be taken out of the

river for a while. And if you ever get back in, here is one thing you can bet your life on: the river will still be flowing just as hard and it will not flow any differently for your sake.

If you don't redirect yourself, start swimming a little differently, and learn to avoid the problem areas in the currents, you will get taken out again or you will go down.

You've been given time out; time to observe, to learn, to change. Life may not be fair, but you can learn the rules. That's your opportunity, your only opportunity-but it's a real one. Don't let it go by!

Is there any room within Islam for a transsexual?

TEHRAN, IRAN:

The mother of Iranian transsexual Setareh, 19, holds his (*sic*) hand after his (*sic*) sex-change operation at a hospital in Tehran, 17 August 2004. The idea of a man wanting to become a woman, or vice-versa, is something of a taboo the world over. And

Islamic Iran -- with its conservative values and male-dominated make-up -- is no exception. Transsexuals face rejection and mockery in whatever state of gender they are in, and more often than not are simply branded homosexual -- a criminal offence in Iran where the law allows for persistent offenders to be punished with death.



But perhaps surprisingly in Iran, there now exists an accepted and religiously approved procedure for those wanting to change their sex. The Ayatollah Khomeini issued the fatwa himself in 1983, to "alleviate" homosexuality, but social acceptance lags.

AFP PHOTO/Behrouz MEHRI --
IRAN OUT / INTERNET OUT



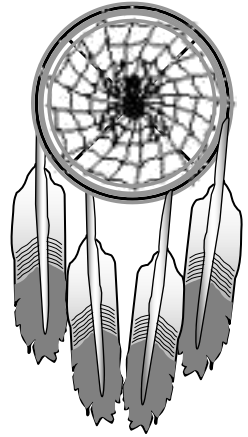
Behrouz Mehri

The Invitation

By Oriah Mountain Dreamer, Indian Elder

Contributed by Valjean

It doesn't interest me what you do for a living.
I want to know what you ache for, and if you dare to dream
of meeting your heart's longing.
It doesn't interest me how old you are.
I want to know if you'll risk looking like a fool for love,
for your dreams, for the adventure of being alive.
It doesn't interest me what planets are squaring your moon.
I want to know if you have touched the center of your own sorrow,
if you have been opened by life's betrayals
or have become shriveled and closed from fear of further pain!



I want to know if you can sit with pain, mine or your own, without
moving to hide it or fade it or fix it. I want to know if you can be with joy, mine or your
own, if you can dance with wildness and let ecstasy fill you to the tips of your fingers
and toes without cautioning us to be careful, be realistic, or to remember the
limitations of being a human.

It doesn't interest me if the story you're jelling me is true. I want to know if you can
disappoint another to be true to yourself, if you can bear the
accusation of betrayal and not betray your own soul...

I want to know if you can be faithful and I therefore be trustworthy. I want to know if you
can see beauty even if it's not pretty every day and if you can source your life from
the divine God's presence. I want to know if you can live with failure, yours and mine,
and still stand on the edge of a lake and shout to the sliver of the full moon, "Yes!"

It doesn't interest me to know where you live or how much money
you have.

I want to know if you can get up after the night of grief and despair,
weary and bruised to the bone, and do I what needs to be done for the
children.

It doesn't interest me who you are, how you came to be here. I want to
know if you will stand in the center or the fire with me and not
shrink back.

It doesn't interest me where or what or with whom you have studied.
I want to know what sustains you from the inside when all else
falls away.

I want to know if you can be alone with yourself, and if you truly like the
company you keep in the empty moments.

Gay Pride March Takes To The Streets Of Rome

Photos by Franco Origlia/Getty Images

ROME, ITALY - JULY 3: A transsexual rides on a float in front of the Colosseum during the 10th Gay Pride Parade, July 3, 2004, in Rome, Italy. The parade is part of a World Pride Week and attracted thousands of marchers fighting for gay rights.



A gay man marches in front of the Colosseum during the 10th Gay Pride Parade, July 3, 2004, in Rome, Italy. The parade is part of a World Pride Week and attracted thousands of marchers fighting for gay rights.

A transsexual rides on a float in front of the Colosseum during the 10th Gay Pride Parade, July 3, 2004, in Rome, Italy. The parade is part of a World Pride Week and attracted thousands of marchers fighting for gay rights.



Contributed by Amanda

Franco Origlia

*Feedback***Comments for Issue 03**

Valjean Royal

For Fun, Zoe's Humor by "Zoe Kala" added just enough laughter for the heart.♥ It was good to read "A Transgender Driven Life" book review by Tsunami. I will be reading "*The Purpose Driven Life*" in the very near future. *Am I Normal? What is Normal?* by Electra Carew is a piece I am certain will be a topic on **Sounding Off** in a future issue! Most transwomen that I know are confident that they are only capable of living a normal life style when they "themselves" are able to accept their uniqueness. Also that being normal means nothing more than just being ordinary people. I am oh so sure that being compared to Dr. Jekyll is sure to ruffle a few feathers and those feathers will be flying in a future issue of our **Sounding Off** column. (Ms. *Electra girlfriend, they coming for you!*) Smile..... *TransAmerica*, Movie review by our editor gives me a movie to fully look forward to enjoying. Not to mention; "Zoe" @ Hir First Drag Show. (As Tsunami might say, "Lean wit if, rock wit it, and do the rock-a-way!") The honeychild .represented!!! Good job Ms. Zoe girl.....(SMILE)

I am hopeful that my proposal

which also appears in issue 03 @ FRESH IDEAS: *On financing this project* receives positive feedback from our readers, Contributors, & Editorial Advisory Board members. Thanks a million, Steph, for your very encouraging and positive response that you took time out of your very busy and hectic schedule to prepare and forward to me. I remain prayerful that we are able to pursue this concept in gaining support for our publication while at the same time educate & advocate for support towards awareness of the social injustice that has fed on the lives of true real life Trans-Americans like a deadly cancer. For far longer than we should have to endure without attempting to develop a cure for any social killer or deliverer of oppression inflicted upon the lives of those who choose to simply Live True! I received much inspiration from "Staying Connected" by Cellá who appears in this summer issue in print almost like a banner in a *Civil Rights March* for all God's Children. Blessed Be! Indeed.....

Aaron-or-Erin Lee: "*Christians, Crossdressers, and Child Abusers, Oh My!*" (I felt it was more of a **Sounding Off** feature

for some reason?) This piece captured my interest and held my attention; I have been currently working on a section of my book detailing personal experiences in child abuse & molestation as a transgender child growing up here in Indiana. ("TRANS-CHILDREN OF THE CORN" excerpt recently forwarded to our Ed). Cover art included for consideration for publication as Trans-PrisonArt in our next issue. I have also experience first hand the abuse inflicted by the church and public school system as a child when myself and other trans children did not conform to behavior that our sexual identity assigned at birth dictated. Depriving a transgender child a life free of the male or female expectations would indeed allow that particular child to live a normal life according to what is perfectly natural for that particular child as for nature and natural instincts, I agree. However, my mother presently is my best friend. Growing up as a Trans-child, my mother was certainly a willing participant in the infrastructure that created an oppressive environment that seemed designed to extinguish my growth in any area outside the



realms of the appointed rote my sexual organ indicated that I be assigned at birth. I was denied a normal childhood because of these facts. I agree that this was indeed a form of child abuse. I however, do not see my mother's (ignorance) lack of education

concerning gender disorderance as molestation. I know that she just wanted me to be what the doctor said I was when she first looked into the eyes of the newborn baby placed into her arms; "It's a boy!" That was the only norm she, an African American single southerner (Mississippi native) knew. Despite the mistakes made in her past due to her lack of information and education, today she knows that God blessed her with a very special child, a gift that would elevate above the signs of the times and develop into an educational tool for her and maybe thousands of other parents and children about my life and most important, the wonders and Glory of God our Savior and Lord Jesus. I definitely agree, "God don't make no junk." and that "every soul has some intrinsic value...and nothing can ever take that value away from the spirit within." Thanks again TRANS SPIRITUALITY for a piece well written and well received...

THE HEALING TOUCH OF WORKING HANDS,
THE LISTENER WHO UNDERSTANDS,
THE GIVER OF WHAT LOVE DEMANDS...

I Am.

A SOLDIER, ARMED
FOR FREEDOM'S FIGHT,
DEFENDER
OF WHAT'S GOOD AND RIGHT,
THE TRUTH, THE LOVE,
THE GUIDING LIGHT...

I Am.

NEW VISION
FOR THE LOST AND BLIND,
THE SISTER WHO UPLIFTS HER KIND,
THE KNOWLEDGE-SEEKING
HEART AND MIND...

FROM HERE ON...

I Am.

Valjean Royal



Hail & Greetings.

To all my sisters and TRD! I've been slumbering in my concrete crypt far too long. I've risen again to face the ugly coils of our adversary (actually I was provoked) and in doing so I've recognized my selfish inwardness has left some of my sisters out in the cold.

I have no excuse and I ask for forgiveness to those who know who you are. Some of you wrote with anticipation of a response and received none. Others I had a problem with prison administration taking the letters and I don't know who you are but still feel responsible for not sending words to you by way of TRD.

And when I see my name still being printed in this publication, I'm filled with much undeserved joy. I've only made one submission until now and to see my name over and over, I know I need to show my appreciation and do my part. To earn my print, to show I'm still here and, yes, support my sisters in arms.

You've all kept me company on my worrisome path and I thank you. So to Miss Satannia, thanks for the wake up call, and "hail" to all of my satanic sisters. "Baphomet be with you."

I've been through a great deal as of late. I've spent '03-'04 and



part of '05 in the hole (administrative segregation / disciplinary) for an altercation with an officer. In early '05 I went to general population and met a great man. I got married and am a firm believer in that thing called "love." But, to my own stupidity... he's a two-time lifer, without the possibility of parole. I myself get out in 18 months. We spent 10 months together and I never had a

more wonderful time in my entire life. Spoiled rotten, great sex and the protection through the roof. I was treated like a princess and respected to the point others felt the need to follow suit.

But then the gates of jealousy and hate opened up by inmates, guards, and administration. Gang wars and territorial attrition was rampant. And "I" was the target. Now, I am in maximum custody and single celled. I'm accused of being a gang member and a high risk inmate. That's the reason for maximum. The single cell...well, while I was with my hubbie I had been able to get my grubby claws on "Premarin" (hormones) in large amounts...so I have breasts...very nice at that. Yep, perky too.

But what a bitter sweet reap. I no longer have access to them. I lost a civil suit to get them, so over the past 6 months...I'm watching them go. My face losing roundness, my ass...well, you get what I'm saying; so I'm now forced to see the psych department so I don't kill myself...(yeah, well). And on top of it all, I lost my husband. We're still in love, but I may never see him again. That hurts more than I can share at this time.

We can't even write "piggy-backs" as the NDOC is on our mail. I have 18 months left with

nowhere to go as I lost contact with what we had planned. No money, TV or any of all that was mine...they took. I was beat up, I was stolen from and even...raped! Not an easy thing to admit. He, my husband, is slammed in a world of hate and adversaries as well. And my heart is heavy for him.

Lesson learned? Yeah, don't get comfy no matter how safe you think it is.

My apologies, I hadn't meant to bring you down with such mournful news. I only meant to say I'm sorry. I'm still alive and wish all of you to stay alert, wise and proud and reach for eternal happiness.

When I get out, when I find somewhere, I will write again. I wish to become active in some way. I can't ignore my sisters as if this isn't a reality for many of us.

I'll watch for words from you in the coming issues. I may write again, I'm sure. I'd like to hear from my "Satanic, Goth and Vampire" sisters out there; please speak up. (Ed: Yes, please do!)

Well, sun's coming. I must be going & crawl back into my coffin until "necks" time... Sanguine!

**Natasha
T'Chort**

*Sounding Off!***PRISON, RELIGION, & MATTERS OF THE HEART**

Valjean Royal

Prison Life

Transgender women in prison are placed into a different world than any biologically born woman will ever have to experience. A world of captivity where the captive is dominated by the male masses. And then, man made women! From a slice in a mattress where a plastic bag, raw ground beef, and warm lotion is preferred. This creation is commonly known as Fe'fe. The weakness spotted in a young man arriving to pay a debt to

society with his flesh that he does not really owe. This creation is commonly known as (well let's just say) Alice to Wonderland. I could go on, but I bet my readers get the picture.



Then, there she appears! Already created, carved into a woman that needs no altering spiritually or mentally to fit into the

TRANSSEXUALS IN PRISON*Valjean Royal*

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil" Psalm 23

feminine role that has been her life long before the prison experience. She loves like a woman, because she has already had a man. Feels and thinks like a woman, and has the trade down on how to be a sexual prize for any man that dares to test her skills there. She is a transwoman, and her reality is compared to fantasy by her captors as well as her fellow most common prisoner. This is the woman that will become the target

of the most notorious sexual predators pursuing human flesh. Forgetting about FeFe, dismissing the Wonder for the Land Alice lays out for a shot of caffeine or some other material thing. The Transwoman becomes the prey. The fantasy of having a real woman is no longer a fantasy. Through the dungeon bars the privilege that is forbidden becomes a mental reality. The hounds are such to come....

Religion

“The Company You Keep”

-Anonymous

It Is Better To Be Alone. Than In The Wrong Company.

Tell me who your best friends are, and I will tell you who you are. It you run with wolves, you will learn how to howl. But if you associate with eagles, you will learn how to soar to great heights. “A mirror reflects an individuals face, but what that person is really like is shown by the kind of friends he or she chooses.” The simple but true fact of life is that you become like those with whom you closely associate – for the good and the bad.

The less you associate with some people, the more your life will improve. Any time you tolerate mediocrity in others, it increases your

mediocrity. An important attribute in successful people is their impatience with negative thinking and negative acting people. As you grow, your association will change. Some of your friends will not want you to go on. They will want you to stay where they are. Friends that don't help you climb will want you to crawl. Your friends will stretch your visions or choke your dreams. Those that don't increase you will eventually decrease you. Consider this:



Never receive counsel from unproductive people.



Never discuss your problems with someone incapable of contributing to the solution, because those who never succeed themselves are always first to tell you how. Not everyone has a right to speak into your life. You are certain to get the worst of the bargain

when you exchange ideas with the wrong person.

☷ Don't follow anyone who's not going anywhere. With some people you spend an evening; with others you invest it.

☷ Be careful where you stop to inquire for directions along the road of life.

☷ Wise is the person who fortifies his life with the right friendships.

Happy Moments?

PRAISE GOD

Difficult Moments?

SEEK GOD

Quiet Moment?

WORSHIP GOD

Painful. Moments?

TRUST GOD

Every Moment!

THANK GOD

Matters Of The Heart

(Before You Undressed Me)

It I were to speak at a prison orientation for new arrival Transgender prisoners; the first thing that I would tell them is about the deception and illusions of romance and love on what is actually a battlefield. Con artists and criminal minded sexual predators will be plotting to conquer the prize that the Transgender prisoner will appear to be.

I would educate them to the fact that they may feel an attraction towards one or more of their most attractive and seemingly charming pursuers. As a Trans-woman (if you are) it is only natural to be attracted to a man. I would advise to believe in none of the words that are spoken, or the deeds that are done, they are often one in the same in prison.

A person can seem to be giving you the world behind the walls, as they

dazzle you with sweets and contrabands, some costing twenty or thirty dollars in society but hundreds in the prison as contraband. It is easy to develop illusions of owning worldly possessions when you really possess nothing!

It is easy to develop the illusion of having a life-mate in a cell-mate, or having a lover in a luster. A pit of snakes reside behind smiles that you will have illusions of being admires and potential future friendships. Some Trans men and women will never get out of this world, and have chosen to live in the fantasy rather than the reality since life without the illusions are not going to aid in their mental, physical, and emotional survival. But those who will have a second chance at life outside the walls, never give in to the illusions that awaits to embrace your minds eye and then envelop your personality, ending everything that you were inside before. *continued...*

The best policy is very simple old school codes of minding your own business, and silence whenever possible. It is best to say as less as possible in prison – around people that you do not know. Signs and Symbols are for those of us with conscious minds. So that we remain conscious,

we must not talk as much as we listen, and learn from the symbols that will appear, manifesting from the actions and reactions of those in captivity surrounding us. Also, always remain mindful: ***“In a game with no rules, Anything Is Possible, and Everything Is Uncertain.”***

YuYu & MeMe

By VaJjean Royal
07/04/06

When we met you were a wonder to me,
What magic lives behind your eyes
that holds your smile in a sparkling glance
delivering into my mind's eye an imaginary romance

We're caught up in a slow dance
of minds, bodies, and distant plans
I wonder what your entry into my body would portray
would it be phenomenal or just a place to lay

So I move to the rhythm of the vibe as your
manhood begins to Rize-Up against my thighs
As you undressed me I gave in
to pleasures of our flesh in wonder,

Would you be able to feel
the warmth that I possess through the
armor I wear underneath my garments?
The protective shields that I can't take off
while a real war is still a raving
reality in both our lives

Would you feel my softness, my heart beat,
through the toughness that our years of being P.O.W.'s
has grown over me like a second skin
like God gives His Lions, Tigers, and Bears

When we met you were a wonder to me,
What was behind those eyes that looked into me
making me want to be free totally
when we danced <-> before you undressed me.



A few words about my exchange with Ms. Platine

By Amanda Armstrong

I wanted to say a few words about my exchange with Ms. Platine that was reported on in issue 03.

Looking back over this exchange, I am filled with a sense of regret. It is clear to me that, in responding to her comments immediately after reading them, I was caught up in the heat of the moment, was feeling quite defensive, and ultimately responded in a way that I wish I hadn't. If Ms. Platine is reading this, I am sorry for how strident and sharp my language was. If I had it to do again, I would not have written the piece that I did, in fact, write.

This whole episode—and the fallout that has resulted from it—has given me an opportunity to think some about what this magazine is truly about, and about what the Trans Religious Dialogue was really all about in the first place. I believe that this magazine is ideally meant to be a forum that enables us to rise above our differences of opinion; that encourages us to value, respect and understand other people's commitments; and that helps us to build community with each other.

When I responded to Ms. Platine's letter, I was prioritizing being right rather than doing right. And in that way, I was not living up to the highest ideals of this magazine, or of the dialogue that gave rise to the magazine. And more importantly, I was not treating Ms. Platine with the respect and dignity that she—like all of us—deserves. It is hard enough for us trans folks to find supportive and respectful community—we don't need to make it even harder by trying to bring each other down.

Body Language



All dressed up
and nowhere to 'go.'

Zoe's humor

Transspirituality: Misfit to temporal conflicts for a sacred reason

Steph

Toleration?

For me with my *transspiritual* transgendered experience, it was never really about being “tolerated.” If anything, I have a long history of “tolerating” the painful ignorance of “dominant culture adherents (DCA) in regards to my sacred giftedness. In this *toleration* I have also learned to patiently endure the myth of needing their approval for my natural existence, as if their hold on social influence should determine my *being*. I do more than *tolerate* how DC (dominate culture) influences affect me, I appreciate how those glued to social norms are not flexible enough in their outlook to allow for humanity’s collective evolution. But my patience with them in no way reflects any identification I have with their way of being, regardless of any appearances to the contrary.

I can respect how a great majority of the population tend to find solace in being posited in one social category against another – including other transfolk who challenge the gender binarism while still valuing other socially constructed barriers that divide people into “us” and “them.” I can respect how their very real felt needs for security lead them to rely on socially constructed categories to distance themselves from those presenting a



threat to their well-being. I’ve done so myself, but each time I become rigidly reliant upon such modes of thinking my transspirituality pulls against it. This transspiritual force emerging within me doesn’t permit me to posit myself long in any social category opposed to another social category. The compulsion to conciliate the two becomes overwhelming.

I can see how it is natural for non-transspirits, in their collective experiences, to identify parochially in these social categories provided by the culture in which they were born and socialized. I can see how this provides a sense of meaning in a dysfunctional world. And I appreciate how they experience this as an unquestioned norm of human existence, and do not have the bird’s eye perspective of the

transspirit to be aware of any other way of being. But when I am suffering the DC pressures that I am learning to tolerate, this perspective can sometime be of little comfort.

Divisions

Ironically, I have learned to “tolerate” the misunderstandings of “liberals” whom one might expect to be more understanding of this need to be *different*. But I understand how many liberals have a vested interest in seeing themselves rigidly opposed to “conservatives” and their definitions for being. I can be “different” as long it conforms to their understanding of group cohesion against the perceived threat of conservatives. The transspiritual quality in me to transcend any conflict – to innately yearn for a conciliatory bridge that reunites all dimensions of humanity – is frequently lost on them.

It cuts to the quick when even other transgenders denigrate my *transcultural* way of being. It sadly echoes that pattern in human history where those once oppressed begin their journey of newfound freedom by (consciously or unconsciously) oppressing others. It’s as if they are still in that mode of thinking where they must compete for limited resources from those perceived to be in power. I see this mindset often occurring in minorities who struggle with a majority they view as having a hold on the “power” to affect their

needs. If this majority were really in “power” then why don’t they have the “power” to respond or at least respect all the needs of all? Now that is “power”!

A dozen years in a system based on a cultural norm of assumed conflict didn’t shake my transspiritual resolve; in fact, it strengthened it! Through my transspiritual existence I have been blessed with a resolve to endure immense amounts of strain, of pain, of the kind of agony that pulls others into insidious thoughts of suicide, or of becoming intractably attached to dehumanizing those ascribed with causing one’s own pain. At some point my spirit broke free from being solely reliant on such temporal referents for meaning. Especially those based largely on cultural norms, like the gender binarism or religious and ethnic divisions.

Transspiritual energy came in and gifted me with a sense of *independence*; of finding most of what I need deep within. Down deep, where my spirit transcends the gender divide, where there are no cultural divisions to create lasting tensions in my life, where my soul transcends all religious differences and appreciates the deep soulfulness of all spiritual paths that humanity has found. It is here where my soul finds solace, promptly transcends any agony of pain, and finds tranquility amidst the multiple problems of this temporal existence. It is here where my

spirit finds sanctuary in a mystic depth of spiritual connectivity, and allows my soul to soar above the issues others take for granted as their lot in life. It is here when I am in tune to Mother Earth (the downward direction) and Father Sky (the upward direction), in my peaceful existence within the Great Mystery at the Center of all (seventh direction).

Contention

I recall a Native brother who complained about other “inmates” who were only “complaining about the DOC” while doing little *action* about it. I empathized with his perspective but wondered if he could appreciate mine. It’s as if his mode of contending with the DOC through litigation was the only legitimate way of interpreting and then dealing with our common frustrating experiences. His view of narrowly seeing the DOC as the “enemy” that every “convict” should stand up against was for me one more frustrating experience for my transspirituality to transcend. From my bird’s eye view I saw a fault with an entire social system that could create such a dysfunctional institution creating problems for all within it – inmate and staff alike. From my bird’s eye view, relying on litigation as a chief mode for redressing issues would in some way reinforce the very adversarial justice system that was central to this entire mess.



On the other hand, of course, what if that system is the only one in which he could avail himself for resolving the injustices we all endure? I respected his decision to posit himself in that contentious role, for it must have provided him some satisfying meaning for his otherwise unacceptable situation. Could he respect the meanings and relief I found in transcending the social framework of this whole DC society?

I *tolerated* his perspective of categorizing us as either “convicts” with the nerve to stand up and fight for our rights and “inmates” who placate their keepers to avoid any further anguish. There’s merit, I’m sure, in this way of looking at our circumstances, but such broad generalizations tends to lump those who are truly passive with those who are assertive in an entirely different realm. I *tolerated* how he couldn’t see the inner strength in which I had been endowed. Through patient endurance and proactive strategies, it is a tranquil strength that transforms worlds instead of altering systems. It gave me the strength to *tolerate* his misunderstanding of my position and spirituality since I exist where his eyes were never trained to look.

Reification

By the way, I don’t contend with any “DOC.” No impersonal entity can

be my personal foe. Such *reification* – attributing personal qualities to an impersonal entity – makes it easier for those within the DOC to give an expected impersonal response to any challenges. Being against the “system” is convenient for those who work within that system and cannot be faulted for performing their individual role as expected by such a system. This can be especially true for the policymakers at all levels of the body politic, since no individual is called to accountability. This cultural climate of limited accountability is also frustrating for many in the lower echelons of the DOC, many who are more empathetic to the needs of the involuntary DOC “clients.” They can see more clearly

than the distant policymakers how this cultural climate of neglecting needs assures many of these “clients” will be repeat customers in this burgeoning “corrections” enterprise within our materialistic economy.

Furthermore, entering into the cultural assumptions of the adversarial justice system can mean at some level one becomes another part of this system. Not to mention how one can blind oneself from realizing there are many employees working for the DOC who are just as dissatisfied about this “system” and feel relatively powerless to do much about it.

Through this transspirituality that courses through my veins, my life challenges the very cultural assumptions that create the social climate in which DOC personnel are forced to act. My life naturally challenges the effectiveness of putting individuals on the defense for matters created sociologically, perpetuating the myth that one’s own faults are merely psychological and therefore solely one’s sole responsibility. Likewise, my life innately contends with the very cultural assumptions that create the social climate that help to create survival crimes, or that cultural paradigm that imposes materialistic values with little appreciation for how to attain such material gains.

Please don’t misunderstand me, I respect those who are trying to “fix” the system. By contrast to my broader



“The soul of man exists in the Contemplation of the nature of women behind bars.”
Henry David Thoreau

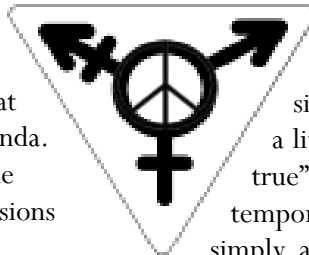
perspective, I wanted to see the system become so labored with problems that the status quo would inevitably collapse. (Albeit, I apparently have a higher threshold of endurance.) I was suspicious of “little fixes” that policymakers and politicians could use to perpetuate this image that the American gulag is not all that bad. Then I could hear these policymakers echoing something like this: “Because of these minor changes we are now better at serving the needs of transgender inmates. So now we are ready to receive even more of these *deviants*, regardless of the questionable means we use to pull them into this system.”

Conciliation

The immediate reaction by the inevitable dissatisfied “clients” of “corrections” is visited upon the “buffer zone” of those DOC employees trying to do the most for them. When repeatedly caught between a rock and a hard place, between the disgruntled inmate and the apathetic policymakers, it makes sense to me how many become jaded in their roles. Transspirituality can inspire both the “corrections client” and the “corrections staff” to transcend these culturally defined barriers that mainly serve the policymakers' agenda. Transspirituality can also inspire the policymakers to rise above the divisions that keep them from meeting their needs and goals, affecting us all.

Despite any reaction to this transspiritual energy, I simply cannot become entrenched in the many rigid categories that presumes an us-against-them attitude, which do little to meet long term needs. Much of this transspiritual energy propels me at a visceral level to remain spiritually connected, and above any reproach that could impinge on that integrity. It unfolds gracefully, as I allow this same energy to pull me away from the gender divide to reconcile all dimensions of my evolving humanity. And my physical life as being an entity divided from others is merely one more temporal division that will ultimately be transcended, so I have no *fear* of death.

I will never die because I was never *born*; my spirit has always existed as a spark of the original Source. Only my temporal existence will come to a patterned close, awaiting the next chapter of my eternal existence. Why others don't see this truism occurs to me as a matter of perspective; they apparently have become so accustomed to the view from the ground that they have never enjoyed the vision of the eagle. It is a sacred perspective, this transspiritual sight. It is imbued with a living purpose, to “live true” in ways that defy temporal divisions. It is simply another way of living and being *whole*.





TRANS SPIRITUALITY zine's own website

Steph

At last, our web presence is stretching beyond a mere dormant Yahoo group. The Yahoo listserv hasn't proved practical since most of the readers do not yet have access to the Net. And this new website is only a humble start, not yet fully operational. In fact, I consider it largely a learning experience since "Geocities" is considered for newbies. Okay, so I'm a newbie on a learning curve.

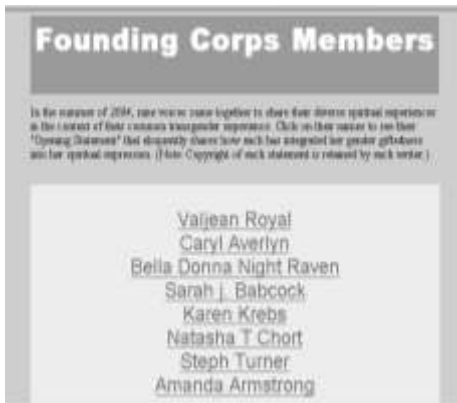
My inexperience showed when I failed to name the homepage "index." Consequently, no link to

the site worked for the longest time. Only recently was I able to rectify this. Now I can click on www.geocities.com/jendurrserv/Trans_Spirituality and it gets me right to the homepage. I've yet to test this on other machines around campus. But now other issues are cropping up, so it is still a work in progress.

The homepage includes a link to introduce the readers to the Founding Corps. The list of names is linked to our Opening Statements we drafted a couple years ago. "In the summer of 2004, nine voices

came together to share their diverse spiritual experiences in the context of their common transgender experience. Click on their names to see their 'Opening Statement' that eloquently shares how each has integrated her gender giftedness into her spiritual expression. (Note: Copyright of each statement is retained by each writer.)"

This paragraph opens the Founding Corps page. A list of the nine names follows, corresponding to each one's self identified religious path, each serving as a link to these Opening Statements. Recently, I've had reservations about posting them. I need to get with each of the writers and get their gracious input about the



draft I posted, to be sure I transcribed their words correctly and if any of my editing has inadvertently changed their meaning. Okay, so I can get a little wet and wild with my pen. Seeking balance with your input.

Following this list of names is this introductory statement:

With a rich diversity like this, enjoying a peaceful encounter of one another's religious perspectives, we are far from being any kind of scourge to society. Rather, we just might be what society needs!

Most of these sacred souls above, like most treasures, are being kept under lock and key. Like most hoarded treasures, they are kept from bringing to the whole of society their blessed individualities. What are they guilty of doing? Mostly, they are guilty of being transgendered and poor.

As they transcend rigid gender barriers, they also transcend the rigid divide between guilt and innocence. As gender is largely a social construct built around two natural modalities, these blessed souls recognize that "prison" is also based on a social construct. They intimately see how it ignores the many gradient shades of justice in between the modalities of guilt and innocence. They have moved beyond the popular belief that "convicts will do or say anything to avoid paying the penalty for their errors." Through their spiritual growth they have come to know a "justice" within that transcends the shortcomings in society.

Is it because we grossly ignore the natural gifts of humanity, often poorly understood, that we create a culture with few opportunities for nurturing such blessed souls? When we protect ourselves from those we don't understand, do we guard ourselves from those with the gift to bring us back into harmony? When these gifted souls are marginalized to the outer fringes of society, who suffers the greater harm? Why do we rely on old institutions like the gender binarism and prison warehouses when so many social problems are rooted in the tensions of polarization?

Indeed, many of these souls are freer than those who cast blatant aspersions against those things they scarcely comprehend. We welcome you to discover how they are transcending their circumstances to find a life that deep within lives true!

Trans Religious Dialogue (TRD)

As these gender-gifted souls exchanged their insights into how their unique gender experiences are integral to their spirituality, and not in spite of it, this exchange became known as the Trans Religious Dialogue, or TRD for short.

A remarkable dimension to this TRD is the diversity of religious/spiritual expressions among their members:

Valjean
Tsunami
Bella Donna
Sarah
Karen
Natasha
Steph
Amanda

Christian
Universalist Unitarian
Wiccan
Wiccan
Zen Buddhism
Satanism
Transspirituality
Christa



Next issue I will share more, like the links for ad rates and subscription orders. Now I want to share a project launched by Valjean. For more than three decades she has suffered an injustice of vast proportions, and has been sharing her story with me to post on a “personal profile.” There isn’t enough memory in one of these free web services, so I started one for this ongoing project. This new website is called Trans Injustice:

<http://www.geocities.com/transinjustice/index.html>. (Notice this time I remembered to name the homepage “index.”) So far there is only the opening homepage. The idea is to

have a list of names of T* who have suffered a miscarriage of justice primarily because of their transgender status. Valjean would be featured, but others would soon follow. For now I share the introductory statement on the homepage and some of Valjean’s contributions to it, and bid you adieu to live true the best you can do.





Trans Injustice

This website draws attention to the tragic travesties of injustice visited upon transgenders primarily because of their transgender status. Here you will find horror stories that can make the Spanish Inquisition seem tame by comparison. Here you will also read of amazing courage and spiritual maturity in the lives of transgender women surrounded by predatory males. Here you will encounter the integral stamina of these remarkable women despite being subjected almost daily to sexual violence. Yes, some have even been raped with

"corrections" complicity, but not even this has shaken their spiritual core. In their stories you may find some inspiration for the amazing potential of the human spirit to endure great depths of pain and misunderstanding. And these stories are really only the tip of the iceberg of sad state of our adversarial justice system that does little to honor life.



The first story featured here is about a transwoman who has been incarcerated since the early 1970s for a murder she did not commit. At a low point in her life, during a time where there was little support for an emerging transgender with her needs to stretch beyond cultural gender boundaries, she was coerced into confessing a crime for which she

had no knowledge. She was already entertaining thoughts of suicide, so she gave her words little thought. She has since regretted that moment not merely for her own sake, but also for the victim's family who was denied justice when the actual killer was left at large. Despite the regret and the violent climate of prison, or perhaps because of all this, she emerged as a strong Christian woman. In her

story you may find the kind of "witness" often romanticized in the first century Christians amidst the Imperial Roman oppression. You will find many stories

here that challenges the status quo belief that America is the land of the free. Those who have cast off the shackles of gender conformity oppression and truly "free" in their spirit have an amazing story to share with you. Join us in discovering this wonderful adventure of living true to one's spirit, despite every reaction that attempts to detract from their transcendent

journey. You just might find some encouragement in how you negotiate the many challenges in your own life, as we all are struggling in some way to live true.



For Fun, *Zoe's humor*

By the time you read this I will have been out a year. I recall going through my late transsexual sister's things for the first time and came across this joke she left behind:

In the beginning God created Eve, and declared she was good. But Eve soon became lonely and asked God for a companion. God granted her wish by creating Adam, but warned

her, "He will often be thoughtless of your needs, insist on having his own way, frequently be rude and crude, and insist that he gets the first portion of everything."

"Well," Eve thought out loud, "I can learn to live with that if only to alleviate my loneliness."

"One more thing," God added.

"Yes, LORD, what is it?"

"You have to let him think that he came first."

Body Language

insightful humor by Zoe Kala



NOTE: Deadline for submissions to next issue is November 1st, 2006. Sorry for the time crunch.

My apologies for my tardiness. Technical difficulties with my computer created unforeseen delays. Thanks for your understanding.

I also thank you for enduring my many mistakes. I mislabeled Mistey Stover's butterfly ("Constant Forward Growth") and took some heat for an article title I changed. A friend spotted some errors in my Drag Show article, which I would normally catch. (Must be getting' old!) I tried to rectify some of these errors this time, like the names I got wrong, but I fear in my rush to get caught up with this issue there will inevitably be more errors. Sorry. And I apologies for not giving you as much time before the next deadline.

Thanks to all who have sent stamps and cash. The other day I finally received the DBA I filed for Jen Durr Press, so I can start a bank account solely for the zine. And this is a prerequisite to selling ads.

Thanks for keeping us updated on address changes. There have many recently, and to ensure your new address is properly processed you should send them directly to Amanda. She takes care of the distribution. Of course, it helps me too if you need to hear back from me about material you have submitted.

To ensure the next issue is distributed by Christmas I have an idea. Issue 05 will be in the "raw." That is, I will do little editing and merely transcribe whatever cannot be scanned or photocopied. Material will be published "as is," unless you request that I look it over. Otherwise, it will appear as you submitted, perhaps with typos included. It will be something the way the TRD looked originally.

Thanks for your gracious feedback to the previous issues. Thanks for just being you, for living true!

Steph

TRANS SPIRITUALITY
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