

# TRANS SPIRITUALITY

## A TRANS-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

Issue 07

Summer 2007

TransInjustice Update

TransAction plans

More feedback to TransAction

Transgender + poverty

Jen Durr Services changing

Plus much more...



**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 Sisters,

Hi, my name is Joni, and I am writing to you in response to receiving information about your zine "Trans Spirituality" from a transsexual sister of mine.

I am a transgendered prisoner from Ohio and from the description of your zine, it sounds really interesting.

I receive very little information regarding the trans-community/culture and I would appreciate receiving your zine very much. ^\_^

I too plan on becoming an ardent activist for transfolk who are prisoners.

I've been down since 1984 and should be getting released in 2009 when I see the parole board again.

Do you know of any sisters from close to this area whom I can start to network and become friends with?

Well, I guess I'll close for now in hopes that I hear from you soon.

Until then, take care and Goddess Bless!

Love & Sisterhood,  
Joni

Dear Editor,

Congratulations on yet another fabulous issue and the grand opening of the TransInjustice website.

From the Features to the For Fun & Inspiration section, I must honestly say that Trans Spirituality was more than entertaining. You and Watson make a good team. I'm impressed.

As a drag queen, I experience everything a TS would, in and out of prison. So I feel proud for you and am appreciative of everything you're doing. Keep up the good work.

I know all the sisters behind bars play a huge part in making this 'zine what it is and I think it'd be cool, as a tribute, if you put all of our pictures on the next cover. (*Editor: still only have pix of a few of you.*) Just a suggestion. I love the photo on your back page, by the way.

You go, girl! ☺  
Delicious

My Dear Steph

I received your newsletter the other day and I was very impressed. Thank you, you have a very nice newsletter. ...

I wanted to share with you the fact that I am writing a book on prison and the justice system. I have been diligently working on this book for the past four years now. I have devoted countless hours towards achieving a well-written, factual book about life in the prisons of today.

I expose the harsh, brutal and violent side of prison life as well as the love and peace that can be found. I also write about the injustice of our courts and justice systems. The name of my book is called *The Crime of Prison*.

I have devoted an entire chapter to prison love and sexuality, which is dedicated to transgenders and their way of life in prisons. The chapter is not trashy but written with respect towards all my transgender sisters. In fact, the entire book is not trash, but a

honest truthful look at prison and justice in our country. I wish to ask a favor of you.

Could you put a little memo in your next issue urging your readers in prison to write me about their experiences as a transgender in prison? I won't use their names unless they designate that it is OK to do so.

I wish to add on to the chapter "Prison Love and Sexuality" with real life experiences. No trash please. They can write me at the



address below. Thank you, Steph, for your time and consideration concerning this matter.

Respectfully,  
J. "Cat" Erickson

**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!*

**TRANS SPIRITUALITY** is open to submissions. Material can be submitted to: Steph Turner, **TRANS SPIRITUALITY** Editor, 3204A University Student Apartments, Rochester MI 48309.

We prefer to receive submissions online, at [jendurrpress@gmail.com](mailto: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

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**Feature message from our sister Natasha T'Chort**

# Hail & Greetings

*Hello to all at TRD, transsisters and brothers, supporters, lesbian, bay, bi and all...*

*Oh so much to say... I firstly feel the need to rest Steph's fears of what she thought was going to be a "lesser than..." issue of TRD in issue #06. Wrong! Steph, honey, great job as usual and try to remember...even though you wished to regain your angle on TRD being in the spirituality aspect, remember that such manifestations of the projects at hand (TransInjustice/Trans-Action, etc.) are also parts of our multifaceted spirituality.*

*You haven't failed to focus on our spirituality. Rather, you merely capitalized on one or two parts of our overall spirituality.*

*If these issues never received any focus, how can we then transcend issues that hold so much reason, fear or any level of urgency to allow us to flourish in*



*spirituality? So please, love, understand you have done much to add to the powerful force that gives so much more to our spirituality. And I believe I speak for us all when I say, "Thank you."*

*And just so you know, I love the way you balance out your need to express your own multifaceted spirituality. As it is for all the work inside TRD, the experience is always a treat.*

*Coming to view my own work in issue #06, I feel my work was a tad "selfish" as I attempted to*

*expose "Satanic/Vampyric/Ego" as I faced my own inward fears, to a small success. I seemed to not only forgot the overall of everyone in TRD, taking up nine pages (wow! Thank you, Steph, and I ♥ the layout with research photos too?!), but also now looks to me as a narrow point of the image of myself.*

*It's not the immortality as a single reason for me or "my" kind, as I think I gave the impression. It should also be understood that once "we're" awakened to our latent nature... a need, a must, an insatiability or living lust is also awakened while in the flesh. this...immortal coil. And this thirst must be fed as well, to quench our spiritual, physical and mental needs.*

*Not as a substitute for our "weaknesses" but for our strength. Many of us have a high necessity for this energy, this life-force and lifeblood. Some don't! But that's another story, another time.*

*All I'm trying to say here, now, in retrospect to my last submission, is that there is more spirituality in its existence than the goal of self-conscious immortality. More as,*

*once awakened, to bring our spirituality or spirit itself to the surface. For me, when we feed is more powerful than anything else. More potent than an exotic, erotic, endorphin drug. Only...it's spiritual.*

*As a living vampyre attempting to achieve this immortal goal, I'm very emotional. I feel the vibes of the world itself. In psych, sang and in astral spirit, I feel as a feed. I see all things, known and unknown. And I am enamored by all who I desire, be it of fear, lust, compassion or other. My emotions are my own, but my emotions induced are of the "prey" I hunger for.*

*I read every word in TRD. At times I'm moved so much I'm weakened and cannot motivate myself to fulfill my desire to write to you all in response to those provocative words.*

*Bella Donna, forgive me if I tread unwontedly...but you're beautiful. I admire your open words you give to all through TRD.*

*Tsunami, by now you've received my letter to you, right? Thank you for sending me such*

*supportive words. I look forward to hearing from you again. And the "other" things you've said. Your words on "Matters of the Heart" says it all. Nice to know I'm not a total freak loner.*

*Valjean, hope we all hear good news of your parole hearing. If not, try to remain focused. You know how senselessly they love to test us. You're stronger than you know and I've seen your freedom.*

*The contributions from Valjean, Satannia (would love to hear your take on "my" last submission; "hail" to you, in all Satan's glory), Sue Poe (your very intelligent – I admire and respect that a great deal), myself, and teamed up with the all-mighty Steph and our favorite boy-pal Watson (hey, baby, want to dance?). I don't see how we (and who else I may have overlooked and those yet to surface) can ever fail? I don't see any failure as a possible fact. There's just way too much brains, power, emotion and spirituality to be anything but successful!*

*Valjean, thank you for such kind and powerful, true words. You are my family, all of you. And I*

*am getting ready to come home; I'm in the mix and I'd have it no other way. Just try to forgive me when I'm in my "gravest" moods. I'm not the most stable person, k? Think anyone is willing to start a "hormone collection" to add to my mood swings?*

*Anyway, I hope I've said all this right and my words are felt. I try to stay focused as the days/nights give way to a new era for me...as well as for us all. Sometimes it's hard and I, well, we don't need any sympathy tears here...do we?*

*So you see, Steph, no matter where you take TRD, the eagle does soar. Above all, it trans sends us all in its multifaceted world of spirituality. And the union that TRD brings gives me reason to try, to be, to support the existence that we all are now a part of.*

*Until "necks" time,*

**♥Natasha♥**

**T'Chort**

*P.S.- Amanda, a long time ago I was completely alone. No one to write to, to share or learn from, to grow or to connect with, not in anyway a transgirl needs. Then you wrote me, as you did with many of us here at TRD. I owe you a great deal of gratitude...I thank you and would love to hear from you again.*

# TransInjustice update

By Watson



“Life comes and goes...and soon enough time passes by.” Time flew by for me in the month of April. I couldn’t help what God intended. Therefore, much has happened to me since our exciting launch of this website. As time flew by, not much had happened to the website. However, please do not take this as a bad thing, have hope. Because the month of May has opened up some time in my schedule.

Dear women, as the angels say, “I bring you news of great joy...” for I promise by the end of May the website will have Valjean’s complete story up and ready for all to read. Yes, Valjean, this means Oprah too.

As a perfectionist would say, there’s always room for improvements. I will make those small improvements as time is given. When I say “some improvements” I mean the small details. I’m not saying they’re not important, but they’re not the big picture.

Now let’s talk about the big picture. The big picture would include such things as having external links to the Justice Denied

website, a website about false confessions, and having Val’s amazing story shine through. Later down the road when we get this site running at a steady pace we will incorporate blogging as a way for others to share their stories. At least Valjean now has her own email address through this website: [valjean@traninjustice.org](mailto:valjean@traninjustice.org).

Val has been getting the word out and the site is drawing attention. This attention was sooner than the site was ready for, I have to admit. This is not a bad or good thing, it’s more of somebody testing to see how well the site works. Now everything is coming together. Soon that “under construction” sign will be coming down.

Anyone can reach me through this website at [watson@transinjustice.org](mailto:watson@transinjustice.org). If you got something to share through anyone with access to the Net, this is how you can reach me. Just remember this is Valjean’s baby, and the fruit of my hard work.

Now...I’m just waiting for Steph to give me her story to post.

# TransAction: An Unfolding Vision

## By Steph

With only a few months left till Natasha gets here, there is much to prepare in laying the foundation for TransAction. With Natasha's assistance, I envision us starting a prototype version of the program. Some of the details can wait till after we have deliberated carefully over the needs and resources.

Of course, some things just cannot wait. Natasha will need a place to stay, food to eat, access to a better wardrobe, and, of course, some 'mones. Other needs will manifest themselves, and I am dedicated to be ready.

Between taking classes year round, working on this zine, and my leadership role in two student organizations, I will do what I can to see this vision take root. I have taken Sue Poe's advice to heart, and launched into much social networking to build the needed support. We definitely cannot do this on our own.

A couple months ago, I worried how I would be able to build this support when I couldn't even get around. Bus lines are limited and do not run in the evenings when

much of this support building would take place. It became imperative to me that I had to get a car. So in late March I bought a used Camry.



## Have Car, Will Travel

At last, I was able to drive down to the Ruth Ellis Center, where they address the needs of homeless GLBTQ youth. The REC is in Highland Park, about 22 miles south of where I live, just north of Detroit.

On Friday, April 27<sup>th</sup>, I dropped in their open house. Lori Anne, a beautiful trans participant in the program, gave me a tour of their new facilities. Then I met a couple of the REC staff. One of them provided much helpful information for our TransAction program. As Natasha shared in the previous

issue, there is indeed some state money to assist your reentry.

On Saturday, April 28<sup>th</sup>, I spent much of the day at Affirmations's new facility. Just two miles north of REC, in Ferndale, Affirmations is a GLBTQ support center for the greater Detroit area. I met up again with Knoll Larkin and Laura Sorokin, who had already expressed their support for the Trans-Action vision. Knoll was busy that day heading up the annual GLBTQ health fair. But we pledged to keep in touch.

I returned the next day to attend a training session by OUTSpoken, guiding us to better tell our stories to impact society for what we need. Most of the attendees were lesbian couples who suffered family issues from poorly drafted legislation. I shared with them that my "family" is a group of transgender inmates, who suffer indeed. More ideas, more contacts, and another fine day of seeing this growing network of support blossom.

On Tuesday, May 1<sup>st</sup>, I drove down to Affirmations again. Each Tuesday evening at Affirmations is

their Transgender Rap session. Once again, I shared the Trans-Action program vision. Received much encouraging feedback, and contact information from the facilitator. She heads Transgender Detroit, and shared how TD would be interested in seeing this vision become a reality.

After the rap session, many of the girls enjoy an *afterglow* at a local dive. There I met Jennifer, Espar, and CJ. I received contact information from all three after sharing the Trans-Action vision. CJ chairs Transgender Michigan, and looks forward to seeing what TM can do to

help us become a reentry reality.

Jennifer passed my contact on to another trans lady, who will pick me up Tuesday to return for another weekly rap session and afterglow. More opportunities to share the TransAction program, and come all that closer to see it take root and sprout into a dream come true. (*Editorial note: I've made more contacts since writing this article.*)



Photo of Steph by Jennifer

### Your Sew Special

Gas costs money, and without an income I may not be able to keep up this traveling. Will need to stay home and work on pursuing grant sources. Aim to be working soon with Amanda on a grant proposal and apply Sue Poe's advise on applying for nonprofit 501(c)3 status.

In the last issue, Sue reminded me how grant sources are apt to support those programs that demonstrate some fiscal independence. So I shared in issue 06 my idea of starting some kind of sewing co-op.

I didn't wait long for feedback to this idea before acting upon it. I bought a used sewing machine and picked up some sewing supplies. And various fabrics. And some patterns. Along the way I learned we would need a serger to sew in competitive seams. Don't have the money for one now, so I will see how much I can get accomplished with what I have in hand.

Once sufficient resources are in place, I can see us going beyond ready patterns to design our own stylish clothing line. Ideas for clothing can come from those still inside doing time. Valjean shares she already had a vision to do such a project!

Natasha sent me copies of Gothic Beauty Magazine, which is full of some eye-grabbing styles. I'm looking forward to Natasha being here to guide these ideas into something that will help us raise revenue and awareness of our plight, via the Web.



### Trans\_Formations

Making our own fashion designs is merely one avenue of opportunity opened up to us. Natasha sent artwork to sell on eBay, and this may set the tone for other projects to follow. Perhaps there is some craftwork or other tangible items we can sell on eBay.

To sell our stuff on eBay, I needed to start an eBay account for us. We now have a collective eBay account called jendurrserv, linked

to the Yahoo account by the same name. After reading Delicious's ideas, the name Trans\_Formations came to mind.

With our diverse creativity, there are many different things we can *form* for sale, as we raise awareness of our desperate need to *transform* ourselves from a gender-norm imposed prison culture to the liberation of living true in this reentry program.

While raising our own funds via Trans\_Formations will help attract grant funding, its main objective will be to provide participants an opportunity for financial independence. This will provide a backup for those who find it difficult to land a job.

Trans\_Formations could also provide opportunity for participants to demonstrate their talents and skills, as they rebuild their résumés. Since the general public views the exfelon with distrust, TransAction aims to provide opportunities to demonstrate the trustworthiness of each participant.



## Donations of Clothing

It would be great if we could make all of our own clothing. We're not likely to have the resources, at least for a long while. The good news is that donations of clothing to TransAction has already begun!

In April, I received donations of beautiful women's clothing from one and then another fellow student. Then I have donated some of mine, which either proved too small or not appealing to my emerging tastes.

I have also started picking up items from resale shops like Salvation Army.

Each weekend, Salvation Army features "five items for five dollars" on the items that have been on the rack for four weeks. With minimal cost to my self, I have amassed a humble collection of community fem wear, some of which I chose with an eye to Natasha's gothic tastes.

Once we have established our nonprofit 501(c)3 status, I have

been assured, we will have easier access to donated clothing. Then we can provide retail items NIB (“new in box”) for the participants needing to rebuild their wardrobe.

### Jen Durr Network

With the contacts I mentioned above, and beyond, I am attempting to build a support network for this program. The first layer of support I am tentatively calling “allies.” They are those who see the need, support the need, and would defend that need if asked. Allies are those who have no further commitment to the program but their tacit support.

“Friends” are the next level of support in this network. Friends are those who are willing to provide some commitment to spend some quality time with the participants in the program. A friend is one the newly released participant can call upon to ask questions about their transitional needs (transitioning back into society as well as gender identity expression transitioning).

Friends provide a commitment of time, while the next layer, “supporters”, provide some level of financial investment into rebuilding the lives of the participants. Some may only be

able to provide a one-time investment of \$5, while I am hoping others can provide a monthly or perhaps weekly stipend that will be sufficient to address the participant’s material needs.

Among these supporters will be a “sponsor,” the one who serves as the participant’s primary source of support. The participant will work closely with the sponsor to develop workable a “transition plan” with the resources collectively available. The sponsor is to keep the participant accountable to their mutually agreed upon transition plan.

It will generally be through this sponsor that the supporters and friends will provide needed attention to the transitioning participant. Each sponsor will be served by a Program Guide and Program Coordinator. The Program Guide will ensure compliance to all applicable policies and procedures, serving in a kind of enforcement role. The Program Coordinator oversees the various sponsors and ensures each element of the program has the requisite resources to fulfill our goals.

The Executive Director shall also be the public face of the program. As resources become available, a staff is to emerge to fill

out the needs of the program. For example, a grant writer.

For their investment of time and resources, participants will be expected to show in some way their gratitude toward their “friends” and “supporters”. This may include helping them with some chores, allowing the participant to invest her own resources of skills and time to the typically time-strapped friend/supporter.

At the back end of the program, participants will be encouraged to become “advocates” to those still inside. (See “The Evolution of Jen Durr Services” article on page ##.) As participants graduate from the program, and are able to transition successfully, they will be expected to serve as the next generation of friends and supporters. Who else can best model a path to success than those who have already been through the program?

### Program Phases

As currently envisioned, the TransAction program will unfold in three phases. After a brief orientation upon initiating the

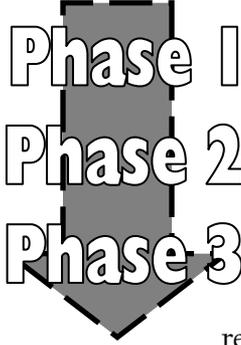
program (where a mutual understanding of one another’s expectations is worked out in a way that affirms one another’s equal value), the first phase begins.

This opening phase, stage one, will be something like a halfway house. It shall be a 90-day phase to debrief from the intensities of the harsh gender-oppressed prison culture to the demands of living responsibly with little or no supervision.

Once in place, this phase can receive parolees. Those discharging from prison may be placed into this phase along an accelerated path, to ensure bed space to those with a lengthier commitment. Parolees who complete the 90-day program may need to stay longer if stipulated in their parole conditions.

The next phase will be a transition to independent living, likely in an area apartment or house with others. This phase will be shaped by the needs of the participant, what is economically available, the resources available to the sponsor and others in the program, and any requirements set by law.

This second phase of independent living will likely span nine months, so at the one year anniversary of entering the



program the participant will be ready to enter the third phase. At this point in the program, it is expected that the participant now has a means of legal and reliable income, and can then reinvest a portion of that revenue back into the needs of the program.

This third phase is where the participant is encouraged to become much more autonomous and stretch her wings to freely fly.

TransAction is to continue to serve as a nest to which she may return for solace. At this point, she may be ready to move wherever she likes. Perhaps moving to a city where another TransAction program is starting. Or perhaps moving closer to loved ones. Maybe even staying right here, helping us to continue to grow.

### Unfolding Vision

While everything is new, much of this remains tentative. Much work is ahead of us (and me!) to determine what is feasible and what is necessary. Your continued feedback will ensure that I do not

neglect the needs that will inevitably face us along the way.

Natasha will serve as a kind of guinea pig to help us determine how to best address this dire need. I plan to reach out to current halfway houses and learn from

them, and from their mistakes when it comes to treating gender variant exfelons.

We may be a long way from being able to provide housing to parolees to this stage one vision. Since there is no current post-release program

geared to the specific transitioning needs of the gender variant prisoner, concerned citizens may marshal the needed resources sooner than expected.

Perhaps we shall see TransAction unfold quickly. Let it unfold with your input, to be sure it addresses real needs. Respond to the ideas presented in the Feedback section, sharing with us your own aspirations for TransAction. Help us consider what TransAction can do that other reentry programs fail to address. Yes, we all need the liberty to *live true!*



# The Evolution of 'Jen Durr Services'

## By Steph

By now, some of you have received a form letter from me, along with a Request Form, noting the necessary changes in my earlier outreach program. I don't care much for form letters, they're so impersonal, but in this instance it was the best way to communicate to a growing list of inquiries for favors.

Lately, the demands placed upon Jen Durr Services have outgrown its capacity. A staff of one volunteer, me, has become overwhelmed with the need. Lately, the amount of requests has skyrocketed, and I can no longer keep pace.

The time has come for me to organize this process so that requests don't get lost in the mounting paperwork. Till recently, I was shuffling through shoeboxes full of letters and losing track of what was asked and when. On those occasional weekends when the homework load was low, I would look around for the most recent letters and reread them to find the requests. And then attempt to catch up on my letter

writing. Taking out time to fulfill these tasks dragged out my letter writing process, so I never could catch up. In fact, I am far behind in my plans to send out the form letter and Request Forms.

About a month ago I picked up a used desk and file cabinet, and this has been immensely helpful in getting organized. Now I have a hanging folder for each respondent, and started a loose-leaf binder to keep handy the filled in Request Forms. With it so handy, I can more easily integrate the requests into my consuming schedule. But not quite there yet, perchance after I finish this issue of the zine.

Of course, my schedule just got busier with all the preparations for starting the TransAction program. And I am already spending some of my time on tweaking the TransInjustice website. Valjean is waiting for Watson and I to publicize the site to various media outlets, and I am hoping to publish the "transinjustice" I suffered. There just hasn't been enough time yet for me to develop Trans\_Formations (see page 12) to the point it can be started.



## Request Form



Legal Name / Preferred Name	Today's Date	Hopefully done by	
Request			
Any special/specific instructions			

Other (use back side if necessary):

Common Requests for *Trans Spirituality* (check any that are appropriate):

- New subscriber to zine (free): Write your address in the Request box above, thank you.
- Change of address: Write your new address in the Request box above, thank you.
- Submission of material for zine: Please write title of submission in box above, thanks.

**Thank you**

5/19/2007

Seeking help to address these many needs is one of my motivations for the TransAction program. It is my anticipation that those who know the experience of being a trans prisoner, along with a spirituality to endure that experience, would be more emotionally invested in the program than volunteers who have never been inside.

What I envision is a network of “advocates” who can step in to fill my shoes. After Natasha has settled in, I will see if she can serve as an advocate to some of these fresh voices, allowing me more time to respond diligently to the veterans of JDS.

Natasha may have more in common with some of these respondents, as she inevitably does with Satannia. (Wow, I got her name right that time, hmmmph!)

Then with Natasha’s assistance, I can be more focused on my work and perhaps catch some of these mistakes I have made – I mean, I have made. You see?!

Hmmm, I gotta get this waist cincher off and let some blood back into my brain!

Ahhhh... that’s much better. Now what was I saying?

Oh yeah, “advocates.” At this point, I am still contemplating how

such *advocates* can be integrated into the TransAction phases I shared in the other article: An Unfolding Vision. I have some ideas, but they might be scrapped by the time the fall issue is out.

As more of my time and effort is given to building the TransAction reentry program, there will regrettably be less time to respond to individual inquiries. Jen Durr Services will then cease to be the one-trick pony it is now, and evolve into what I have been calling the Jen Durr Network – a network of concerned citizens, many of them free-world T\*, who are willing to help if only someone can show them the specific needs they can address. Please consider this transitional phase in my life as an investment to the needs of the many over the needs of a few.

Within a year I hope to reward that patience with a resource of many advocates who can respond more readily to your expressed needs. There is much to be done for our precarious situations, and the synergy from this emerging Jen Durr Support Network will be able to do far more than my solitary heart can even attempt to do alone now. In due time, we shall grow into a more robust network that can better assist us all to live beautifully true.

## ***Can You Do Me a Favor?***

### **Open letter from Steph**

Dear Sistahs,

It seems I may have given many the impression that I will do favors as the editor of this zine. I do not. As a year-round full time student preparing myself for graduate school next year, active on campus and now in the GLBTQ community to build up the TransAction vision, I simply do not have the kind of time these requests would demand of me.

Prior to this publication, Amanda had published a resource book in which I submitted as a resource Jen Durr Services. It is when I set my editor cap down and can make time to put on this cap that I am able to respond to requested tasks.

When I began this service, there were few enough respondents to keep the exchanges informal. Initially, the requests were few and didn't demand too many of my resources. Each letter included merely one request. A photocopy here, a scanned photo there, and a little online research over there. Lately, not only has the number of letters with requests spiked, but the number of requests per letter has expanded well

beyond the capacity for a staff of one.

Consider how it can take me at least an hour to carry out a task. If each letter I receive averages three tasks, then each letter represents an expectation to commit at least three hours of my time and limited resources. Now multiply this by five, the average number of letters I receive in a week. If only I had thirty plus hours to respond to these expressed needs!

Between the deadline for each zine and when I have sent it to Mandy, about a three- to four-week process, I am kept busy with the editing and layout process. Other projects typically must take a back seat, and often I cannot find the time to even write during this time. Usually, right after I have sent Mandy the manuscript, I try to catch up on my letter writing. That is why some of you may receive a letter from me after a long silence, right about the time you receive your current copy of the zine.

This means you are not likely to hear back from me right after Imbolc, Beltane, Lughnasa, and Samhain. When are they you ask?

Well, ask your Wicca sister or Pagan friend, they'll know. It is my aim to have each issue published on the turning of the seasons, so that each comes out on a solstice or equinox. It is my dream to someday build up enough resources to help make that a reality.

Another misunderstanding seems to have crept in, that I have the material resources to do these tasks. FYI: I am still unemployed, getting by on whatever my student financial aid can spare me for living expenses, which isn't much. I owe the school a thousand dollars, and am now in debt to family for another \$2500. Out of the many applications for employment I have received on a couple interviews, and no job offers.

The earlier respondents to this service, like Tsunami and Valjean, made arrangements to forward me the funding to carry out their requests. Even with their financial help, they respected how it could still take me some time to get them done. Others at least sent me some stamps when they can to help defray the cost of our exchanges, and this has all been greatly appreciated.

I regret that I am not able to live up to the expectations of some who seem to believe I have the

ability to balance all these errands with all my other chores. Especially when something is sent that I either do not have adequate time to manage. Or worse, when something becomes lost in the mail.

Please note that the Wisconsin address is a business address until I can find facilities here in Michigan. It is not a reliable mailing address. Please use my residential address in Michigan once you receive it. Please note that my campus address is Steph Turner, 3204B University Student Apartments, Rochester MI 48309.

Since this is campus housing, I cannot use it as a business address. When using my campus address, please keep it simple by addressing it to my name and not addressed to Trans Spirituality or Jen Durr Services. This may cause the letter to be undeliverable since the mailbox is attached only to my name.

My original intent was to utilize Jen Durr Services as an exchange of ideas about a concept I called *transconventionality* – that insistent compulsion some of us feel to resist imposing social norms. This compulsion for me has a spiritual dimension I call *transspirituality*: I intuitively transcend any human convention

that impedes our inner connectivity, including rigid gender norms.

This aspect of Jen Durr Services never blossomed. With little feedback to this idea, I settled into a routine of doing for others what I would have had them do for me when I was in their shoes. After TransAction is in place and time permits, I would like to reintroduce this idea of *transspirituality* with our growing readership.

Another intent I had for this service was to explore a revolutionary idea. I believe it may be groundbreaking for the whole GLBTQ movement. In fact, one of the main reasons I am back in school is to investigate the plausibility of this inspiring idea with scholarly tools. And perchance publish the findings with academic credibility.

One way to test this idea is through surveys. In order for such a survey to have credibility, I cannot share what that idea is now –lest the responses to survey questions become biased toward an anticipated response. Not knowing what that idea is will allow the survey taker to give more of objective reaction to the questions.

It was my anticipation last year to send out surveys to you, the readers, to start this social research. And then publish the

preliminary findings in the zine in 2007. Okay, so it's already 2007 and this dream is on the backburner.

The cool response from our first reader survey discouraged me from believing there would be enough return on my effort.

Not that I have given up on the idea. I aim to begin this research before I apply for graduate school this fall. Maybe you will see something about this here in the next issue. In fact, one of my motivations for doing requested tasks was to build the requisite rapport to request such a favor in return. I may still make this request, likely after I start receiving help from Natasha this fall.

Then I can expand into some other treats I had in mind. For instance, I could “dress up” your pic to reveal your true fem self. With a little virtual makeup and virtual wig, I dressed up John last year into “Joanna” for our cover. My idea was to “dress up” the first respondents to the reader survey, as an incentive to respond promptly. But this proved too time consuming to do on my own. With some help and if I can find the right software, perhaps we could dress you up virtually into the proper wardrobe, especially for anyone with a painfully unsatisfied *need* to express her true self.

As Jen Durr Services folds into the Jen Durr Network, along with the TransAction reentry program, I hope to expand the capacity to meet these mounting needs. Till then, I beg for your patience. In the form letter, I encouraged those who hadn't heard from me in two months to write again. This is still a good idea, but the window of opportunity for me to respond is regrettably moving past two months.

Soon I will receive help with these endeavors and I trust your patience to be rewarded.

Soon I will be more empowered to respond more promptly to your inquiries once I receive more help. Until then, I appreciate your prayers and thoughtful support as we struggle together through this growth spurt.

I thank you for utilizing the Request Forms, if you have received one. If not, you may write to me personally (my campus address) and ask for one. Generally, I will send only one form initially. Too many requests to process may mean fewer resources to reply to everyone else's request.



By November, I will likely no longer entertain any requests that are not submitted with this or some revised form. Perhaps Natasha will have the time to screen out the anomalous requests. I simply will not have the time for it myself, unfortunately. It's also unfortunate to lose that informal edge where no format was necessary, but I trust the anticipated efficiency of this new process will make up for it in some way.

For now, I must take off my JDS hat and put back on my editor hat.

There is a zine to get out, homework to do for Monday, and some calls I need to make for TransAction. And some time to take for myself, as I kick back and relax in my high heels and miniskirt. With my life energies back in balance, I trust I can better serve these needs so you too will enjoy a day to sit back in high heels and miniskirt, or whatever is your feminine joy. Yeah, we all need to live true!

In gender loving care,

**Steph**

# FEEDBACK

## Feedback continuing for Trans Action vision

### By Valjean Royal

Our issue 06 of TRANS SPIRITUALITY was full of eager hearts to see our Trans Action project fly like an eagle!

It will, I assure you; I have faith! Each submission in this previous issue is much like the bricks that will build our house to be.

Thank all of you so much for so much love, concern, support, and contributions. This has been a long time dream, and I have mad faith in the endless possibilities that we will be able to embrace and that will embrace us as we expand our vision. I would love a ranch style home to begin! Just a thought. ☺

I love Steph's idea about the clothing. I got you there, Steph, as you already know! We would be able to support our selves very well with the talent that we have all over the states in and out of prison.



I didn't make it to the parole board. Again, I was tricked into falsehood. But God got me! I higher power keeps me going and striving. I cry and I'm sad at times because there is so much more I could be doing for all of us.

Well, I've got Trans Injustice as a voice now. I hope God will bless this web-site and his angels will appeal and carry me away

from here and place me where I'm needed the most, to help all of you. I love ya'll so much!

Please keep me in prayer and keep your heads to the sky, the stars will tell you why.

In gender loving care,

*Valjean*

P.S., Live True!

# Feedback continuing for Trans Action vision

By Delicious

In response to Steph's "...Ideas for TransAction" feature, I'd like to say that she brought a relevant topic to the table with the issue on religion. Speaking from past experiences, I think it's best to allow the girls to practice their religious beliefs in the privacy of their own room or personal space.

The last thing we need is unnecessary tension among the sisters and/or catfights about what makes sense and what doesn't. Especially when discussing religion among those with conflicting beliefs.

I have girlfriends who are everything from witches to born again Christians. We all function and get along fine. We're all well aware of each other's beliefs. We respect it for what it's worth and leave it at that.

In all actuality, no matter how you look at it, Trans Spirituality gave birth to Trans Action. I hope that we'll all agree that no matter what specific religion we're loyal to, we're all somewhat spiritual. "Trans Spiritual," if you will.

In essence, we have the soul of a woman. It don't matter if you believe that your soul/spirit is ½

man or even a quarter man. The bottom line is we have a feminine spirit inside of us. That should be the main focus at TransAction when it comes to what we should believe in as a whole.

Some will agree, many will disagree, but that's my point of view. We're all the same, yet so different. I'm sure Tsunami Caryl-Averlyn enjoys R&B music. Maybe Valjean Royal prefers oldies, okay? Natasha might listen to heavy metal, while Steph bumps country. Who has better taste?

It only makes sense for each individual to indulge in their musical choices in the company of others who are comfortable with it (or on their own). For those who didn't understand that metaphor; Natasha is a Satanic Vampire. Would it be wise for her to debate with some who's Christian about moral values? Hello?!

To avoid that type of situation, each girl should sign an agreement stating she will not bring up certain religion, unless it's otherwise agreed upon by group or individual in a private setting. Meaning that if another person came into TransAction who shares

Natasha's beliefs, why shouldn't they be allowed to converse about the subject in private?

However, them chit-chatting about the Devil while lounging in the dayroom might offend someone who believes in Jesus Christ. You understand what I'm saying, girlfriend? Don't get me wrong, we all have the right to free speech, granted, but we need to keep TransAction a neutral zone.

It will be our temporary home and we all have a job to make the next person feel welcomed. A lot of eyes will be watching, probably hoping that this program fails. So let's show them that we're civilized and serious about TransAction, as well as Trans Spirituality.

Now I'd like to address the second half of Steph's article. I love the idea of making clothes and selling them on eBay. That's pure genius!

What about taking it one step further and start pushing our own brand? TransFashion? I'm sure one of you will suggest a better name, but how do you like that idea?

Jasmine is a professional, in her own right, when it comes to making clothes. This girl was born with a sewing needle in her hand, as painful as that may sound. Seriously, though, she sells

homemade shorts, t-shirts and thongs to other convicts in here.

So all this business of running a clothing line is right up her alley. In the meantime, in between time, I'm confident that some of the ladies can *transform* a few of those donated jeans into fashionable pieces of work. It's amazing what a handful of rhinestones and gorilla give can do. ☺

I don't doubt for a second that Ms. Natasha can turn out some stylish Gothic wear. We'll see, huh? All we can do is believe and keep supporting one another.

I love all you girls, and I know that we can help each other lead better lives if we continue to stay strong and focused on our goals. It's easy to talk the talk. Sometimes, when we hit the street, we walk a different walk.

We deserve better than this. If you're currently incarcerated (or have been previously) you know how we're treated. Let's not come back to this.

In a few years from now, I hope we're all toasting glasses of champagne in celebration of the success of a bigger and better TransInjustice, Trans Spirituality and TransAction – as well as TransFashion.

We can do it, girls. Now let's get serious.

# Feedback continuing for Trans Action vision

**By Sue Poe**

Satannia brought up some prerequisites to most grant writing; tax-exempt status. A lawyer isn't necessary. File the business name, draw up a constitution (the IRS supplies guidelines for what's required for exemption), get a tax ID# from the IRS and file a form 1023 for 501(c)3 tax exemption, which is usually rubber-stamped.

The IRS forms and instructions are available from IRS.gov, or from me. The 1023 form is about a dozen pages, I think. It used to be a simple nine pages, but a few were added a year ago. The filing fee was also raised from \$150 to \$300. I haven't looked over the new form, but I can advise.

The good news is that if you screw up the 1023, the IRS will work with you on it. You don't have to be incorporated or even have by-laws. It depends on what type of working structure you develop. ...

Once you have your 501(c)3, many cities have buildings they give away, or close to it, for development programs. You wave the 501(c)3 at clothes retailers and they pile outdated or slightly irregular (button missing) clothes on you for a tax-deduction.

In an afternoon you can collect more good free (new) clothes than you'll be able to handle. Most stores love a charity that can respond more readily than the old standards, like the Salvation Army.

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## **Error In Print**

**By Valjean Royal**

In our 06 issue on pg 28 & 29, "Feedback Comments and Review" appears an embarrassing mis-print/spelling error!! Correction: On the subject of the FeFe created by prison sexual predators, the word intended S.L.I.T. appeared incorrectly with S.H. \_\_ instead of S.L. \_ \_!

Personal Note: I personally send a very sincere and heart felt apology to any of our readers offended by this unfortunate error. I assure you, I avoid the use of profanity in my language in print or in person. Again, please accept my most humble apology.

Sincerely yours,  
*Valjean Royal*

(Editor's note: My apologies not only for any transcription error in this text, but for any snafus that escape my notice. As more responsibilities accumulate in this one-person-show, it is an unfortunate statistical reality that errors are bound to increase. I strive to avoid errors, and lean on your gracious understanding when they get by me anyhow.

One faux pas I caught too late was misspelling Satannia's name, aka Fortune Dean A. For some reason, my fingers added an 'n' to distort her name into 'Santannia'. I apologize to you, Satannia, for blundering your identity label — that sacred element so precious in that environment. Ask Tsunami, and she will confirm that I'm not too good with names. Thanks for using mine, lest I also forget how to spell that one correctly. ☺

As for the other typos, I'll have to get back with you later after I've checked my Rolodex of ready excuses. ☺

**Body Language**

*insightful humor by Zoe Kala*



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# SOUNDING OFF

**By Valjean Royal**

Trans Woman vs. Trans Gender  
vs. Trans Sexual and On and On...

This writing is being submitted to our "Sounding Off" section due to it being a topic deserving of an open mike...

My dear friend Tsunami writes in our 06 issue of Trans Spirituality that she disagrees with my statement that as a "trans-woman" it is only natural to be attracted to a man. This statement was quoted from 'my' "Matters of the Heart" article printed in issue 04 of our zine.

I would like to make myself a bit more clearer about my personal self-identification as a Trans-Woman, and why it is an important personal right, which I strongly hope our readers will support.

**What does 'Transgendered' Mean?**

Transgendered people are those whose gender identity or gender expressions differ from conventional expectations for their physical sex. Gender identity is one's internal sense of being male

or female, which is commonly communicated to others by one's *gender expression* (clothes, hair style, mannerisms, etc.).

Although transgendered people have been part of every culture and society in recorded human history, they have only recently become the focus of medical science. Many medical researchers now believe that transgenderism is rooted in complex biological factors that are fixed at birth, and thus it is not a choice but a personal dilemma.

**Who are Trans People?**

Trans people include pre-operative and non-operative transsexuals, who generally feel that they were born into the wrong physical sex; crossdressers (formerly called transvestites), who wear the clothing of the opposite sex in order to fully express an inner, cross-gender identity; intersexed persons (formerly called hermaphrodites); and many other identities too numerous to list.

It's important to note that the term 'transgendered' describes several distinct but related groups of people who use a variety of other terms to self-identify. For example, many transsexuals see themselves as a separate group, and do not want to be included under the umbrella term "transgendered".

Many post-operative transsexuals no longer consider themselves to be transsexual. Some non-operative transsexuals identify themselves as transgenderists. Despite this variation in terminology, most trans people will agree that their self-identification is an important right.

### Then Who am I?

On a more personal note, I've always been seriously unhappy about my sex characteristics assigned at birth. I have lived my entire life in need of proper treatment for my body and social role. I made it my ultimate decision years ago to pursue sex reassignment surgery.

I have *never* for a single moment in my life time accepted any male gender roles sexually or otherwise. To not have a problem "pitching" as Tsunami describes finding pleasure in, I would rather "die" before having to endure or indulge in such a role!

I self-identify myself as a trans-woman because I choose to live as a woman, without additives. That is, I am not a gay woman, or a bi woman.... Just a woman that wants nothing more than to live and be free to be.

I'm not even saying I could never love another woman. Maybe I could. Who is to say whom you will love? However, I know that this won't ever happen, nor is it possible before I am equally a woman through sexual reassignment surgery. My gender desires are to be female, my sexual preference, well, that has to take a back seat for now.

### Live True the Full Gender Spectrum Through

For now, I just want to get right the person I am inside and out, so that I can live my life and pursue the things and people that will make me happy. I know that trans people come in all forms, shapes, and sizes. I would never place any of us in a box. Do keep in mind, however, all that are in dresses, aren't women. OKKK!!!

(Note: I've never read or heard our editor or publisher-distributor identify themselves as trans-women???)

*(comments welcomed)*

# Real Talk

## By Delicious

Okay, bitches, Delicious is about to SOUND OFF! I'm getting sick and tired of hearing how bad we get treated. "It could always be worse."

That being said, I seriously think it's time we stop crying about how life is so unfair to us and be grateful for what we've got. Life is way too short for sisters like us to be feeling sorry for ourselves. Okay, now we all agree that we (being who we are) are special, right?

Now did you really believe that being blessed with this gift would be easy? I mean, let's get real. If our sexuality, flamboyant femininity and attitude were fully accepted by society, how "special" would we really be?

We were destined to be on this path because deep in our heart, mind and spirit, we are strong individuals. Feel me when I say people fear what they don't understand. It's our job to help them get a better understanding about us.

If we don't, who will? Once they realize that we're really not all that bad or different from them, they'll start to embrace us. If we continue to act nasty and lash out, they'll distance themselves further.

What I'm saying is this: let's stop portraying ourselves as victims. We are



survivors. We've walked through fire, been devastated by the loss of loved ones, endured pain and dealt with more stress than the average Jane.

We're still here, ladies. For that, you should be grateful and considered blessed. Once you lose your gift or neglect it for too long, the world has no use for you. So whatever your gift is, you need to focus on using it to better yourself and others.

If we begin to display strength about our situation (no matter how unpleasant), those who now discriminate against us will take heed and hopefully start to give us more respect. If not, we'll still be strong and they'll continue to be weak and feeble minded.

Now all you girls know that nine times out of ten, the ones who hate us are the ones who either want to be with us (sexually) or desire to be one of us. Insecurity makes them do us dirty, so they can "prove" (to themselves or to others) that they don't approve of how we get down. In all actuality, the people who don't care one way or another what we do are the ones who treat us as they would anyone else.

Now check it; if you should experience any kind of neglect or abuse, take it in stride. Crying or complaining won't change anything.

Being in control over your emotions and not letting them see how they affect your feelings will make them more determined to get your off your square.

Trust me, girls. If you stand your ground, remain civilized and refuse to lower yourself to their immature level, they'll eventually back off and start to give respect.

## Building Community

By Cella

This is my first submission and I am hoping that there are other individuals in the transgender community that can relate to the thoughts I am about to share.

I feel that it is very important for all of us in the transgender community to never forget where our journey began. Sometimes publicity, a change in financial status, our environment, or tragedies in our lives can briefly distract us and we may show less interest in, or place ourselves above, those transgendered whom are just beginning to blossom into the beautiful individuals that they are.

We, as transgendered, may sometimes find that we have very little in common, and may remain separated by our distinctive and different live experiences. As a result, we may find ourselves actually feeling separated from other transgendered.

We are certainly entitled to our own opinions based on individual life experiences, and should realize that

Let me tell you sisters something...it's not all about you. Let that sink in for a minute. Now recognize that you're representing for all of us. Get with the program!

Transinjustice shouldn't be about airing our sob stories. Let's use it to inspire and encourage each other. Get your panties out of that bunch because the pity party is over.

there will be times when we will never see "eye to eye" on some issues. Sometimes friendships and affiliations can be altered, or even end, when viewpoints differ and we should try to avoid this when possible.

I feel we owe it to ourselves and to our transgendered sisters and brothers to form an inclusive, embracing, and justice-loving community...a community that educates, supports, and acts in cooperation with others as we struggle towards the goal of achieving religious, political, legal, human, and civil rights for transgendered everywhere.

In closing, I want to thank Steph and Amanda for the great work they have done. It is very educating and refreshing to read the various viewpoints share, by your readers.

Blessed be!  
In gender loving care,

**Cellă**

# FRESH IDEAS

## Sisterhood

By Delicious

I was inspired to write this article by two women I've had the pleasure and privilege in meeting while incarcerated at Ely Maximum Security Prison, here in Nevada. When I first got placed into a "population" unit (which is on 23-hour lockdown), I didn't know anyone.

One night I overheard two people from two separate cells having a deep, intellectual conversation. However, it wasn't the topic of their discussion that caught my attention. One voice I recognized as belong to a queen. The next day I did some investigating and discovered that the queen in question was none other than Ms. Natasha!

I reached out to her in a letter, explaining that I'm a drag queen. In it I expressed interest in making friends with another girl, so I wouldn't feel alone. It goes without saying that Natasha embraced me with open arms. We began to pass kites to each other on a daily basis, building a bond and strengthening our friendship.

While she lived in a single cell, I was forced to deal with *whomever* the administration felt needed to be placed in my cell's unoccupied bed. While the first guy was, somewhat, clean and respectful, the second one was loud and nasty. While he slept, I tiptoed around. While I tried to sleep, he screamed out the door to "talk" with his friends.

He never brushed his teeth. When showers were offered (every other day), he refused. My once clean and fresh cell was suddenly transformed into a pigsty. It smelled heavily of stink feet and bad bio. As Tsunami would say, "Peee-u!!!" ☺

Well, I couldn't stand it another day in there with him. I requested to be moved ASAP. It broke my heart, because I had to leave behind my newfound friend, Natasha. Without her help, I wouldn't have had anything that I do now.

Although she's broke and single celled, Natasha gave and share

what little she had. I can never thank her enough. Also, because of her kind heart, I was introduced to this 'zine. So you can imagine how greatly she's appreciated by me.

After sitting a month on death row, I was moved to a segregation unit. It holds people who are able to cell up with another, to be able to be placed in "population". Here is where I met Jasmine.

I came in and immediately became assaulted verbally by every insecure individual on the tier.

Jasmine spoke up and all the hooting and hollering died down. She introduced herself and asked if I needed anything. I told her my name and let her know that I wasn't in need of whatever she had to offer.

But an hour later, Jasmine had a team of convicts working together in transporting a care package from one end of the unit to the other. A huge feat, considering that all the doors were closed and the fact that I'm one tier above her. Talk about determinism! ☺

In addition to all of the treats and goodies she sent me, what

meant the most to me was the letter she enclosed. Jasmine explained that a lot of girls in the system are two-faced and greedy. She also made it clear that there's only a rare few who practice real sisterhood nowadays.

In a world of lies and fake smiles, it's like a breath of fresh air when I'm able to cross paths with genuine people, such as Natasha and Jasmine. To them, their words of advice and acts of kindness directed towards me were no problem. To me, it opened my eyes

and made me realize that no matter what, we need to stick together and support one another. We cannot be bringing



each other down.

I learned a valuable lesson from these two beautiful ladies. I hope that they're able to read this, so they can understand how by simply being themselves they have made a major impact on my life. Thank you for being real, girls!! Others reading this, please be inspired. *Live true!*

# Transgender and the High Cost of Poverty

**Mishka A. D. a.k.a. fabled m**

Gainful employment leads to higher self-esteem, better health and more choices in what we choose to do with our lives. For the transgendered that means a choice to transition or not to transition.

But we do not live in a 'perfect world' and unemployment and more importantly, underemployment is prevalent all around us and finding an employer who is fair and willing to pay a living wage is increasingly difficult these days.

Unemployment and underemployment leads to low-self esteem, poorer living conditions, domestic abuse, self-abuse (i.e. drug and alcohol abuse, crime, etc) we know the deal.

But we, as transgender people need to be more pro-active in finding solutions. I propose that there should be more connections created in the transgendered community to form alliances and

build some of our own infrastructure to help find gainful employment and safe places to live. This most importantly also applies to those incarcerated and need a way to integrate themselves back into society, (i.e. half-way housing-an existing structure that is woefully in disrepair).

I also propose that we, as a whole, must find a way to set up and fund some sort of national or regional medical spending account for transgenders to aide in paying the cost of 'Gender Reassignment Surgery' for Male to Female and Female to Male.

None of this is going to occur if we don't talk more to each other and start sharing our resources more efficiently. We hide from

the rest of the world to protect ourselves, but we have to stop hiding from each other and take some risks in trusting each other. It will be difficult. Lack of trust is why so many support groups fail and fall apart. If we can't come out of the closet to each other what chance to we have for the future?



<http://ca.groups.yahoo.com/group/transgenderedjoblinks/>

In an effort to be more proactive, on my part I have attempted to start an online resource to help form employment links for the transgendered. So far my efforts have been futile.

We need more transgender people willing to form net-working groups and alliances to find solutions to our basic needs and the special needs of the transgender

person (i.e. counseling, spiritual support, GRS, etc.) including those who are incarcerated and for the most part abandoned by the system.

All of this is a no-brainer right? So why aren't we doing it? So lets talk to each other and more importantly- let's do something, every one of us.

## So What Do You Love?

By **Tsunami Caryl-Averlyn**

So what do *you* love? Me, I love my family, my T\* sistas, and my extended family of new found friends. I love sex with my current partner. I love reading (especially TRD submissions), signing, dancing and having my toes sucked.

I love flowers, trees, chocolate and coffee. I love ice cream, especially on body parts. ☺

In some ways, the most important thing you can know about a person is what they love. What we love, in a sense, is who we are. Not, I suppose, that you would know a lot about me by knowing that I love coffee and ice cream.

It turns out the things that really define us are usually bigger and harder to describe, like loving freedom, or honesty, or fairness. These big, hard-to-define things are called "values". And our values are what help us make decisions that shape our lives.

Values are a big part of what religion is all about. Religion leads us to name the big things we love and helps us to live in ways that express that love.

Different religions have different values. Buddhism values what they call "non-attachment," just accepting life the way it is. While Islam values submission to Allah (God). Confucius valued knowing your place in society, while Jesus valued the idea of



treating all people equally, regardless of what society said.

But religions have a lot in common. For instance, most religions value compassion and sharing and kindness and

respecting your parents.

So what does Tsunami value, since we've already discussed some of my loves? Tsunami values freedom of expression. Especially the freedom of people to live true. I value the freedom of the people to choose for themselves what they believe in.

Unlike some religions which value doing deeds they believe will get them into heaven, sincere heart of not, I value doing deeds that will make the world a better place *while we're alive*, and for future generations. Unlike some religions which love a particular "holy" place (e.g., Jerusalem or Mecca), I love the planet as a whole, and think that *all* of nature is "holy". Unlike some religions which value conformity and believe that the members should all dress alike and believe alike, I value diversity, and think it's great that people look and act differently, and have different beliefs. Who the hell wants to be the same all the time?

But...I "*still*" value compassion and sharing and kindness and respecting your parents...and the rights of others to love differently.

# Tsunami's Life Philosophy

By Tsunami Caryl-Averlyn

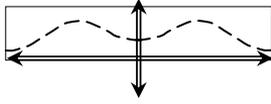
1. There are at least 2 people in this world that you would die for.
2. At least 15 people in this world love you in some way.
3. The only reason anyone would ever hate you is because they want to be just like you.
4. A smile from you can bring happiness to anyone, even to those who don't like you, if there are any.
5. Ever night, SOMEONE thinks about you before they go to sleep.
6. You mean the world to someone.
7. You are special and unique.
8. When you make the biggest mistake ever, something good comes from it.
9. When you think the world has turned its back on you, take another look.
10. Always remember the compliments you receive. Forget about any rude remarks.

AND~~~~~

when life hands you lemons, ask for tequila and salt, and call me over!

# The *Other* Gender Spectrum

By Steph



Recently, I have been seeing more use of the clever acronym TGQ. Transgender-Gender variant-Questioning. Clearly, not everyone who challenges gender norms consider themselves a transgender.

I think of 'transgender' as the more emphatic transgression of gender norms, applied to transsexuals and frequent crossdressers. For others who relate more comfortably within the gender binarism, but still challenge gender norms to some degree, it seems a label other than transgender is often sought.

Gender bender. Gender variant. Genderqueer. Even genderfuck. Something other than how 'transgender' has come to be used to categorize those who transgress WASP gender norms in oft dominant culture ways. How about a category label for living beyond any gender category?

A term that liberates some can feel limiting to another. A label meant to be inclusive can by default turn exclusive to another. However, some type of category is

essential for our minds to wrap around like concepts. But it is cultural attachment to such categories that seem to cause us so much trouble.

## *First Wave gender spectrum: lateral fem-masc*

When the transgender movement emerged a few decades ago, society was introduced to the notion of a "gender spectrum" where the polarity between femininity and masculinity proved to be a mere social construct. Alas, there was this bridge in between where we who did not exist comfortably in our socialized birth genders could claim a space for ourselves.

Much of the discourse since then has tended to emphasize a distinction between a minority of gender transgressors and the majoritarian gender-normed. How much is this distinction is itself a social construct?

Because of our shared history of being marginalized by a majority (who assume gender norms exist as an indisputable fact of nature), we are prone to see ourselves in a distinct category that is more

understanding of the fluidity of gender. Us against them, if you will.

Could it be that our collective defensiveness against any assaults to this First Wave gender spectrum blinds us from some common ground? What if there is also a hidden bridge that gradually spans between the gender normed and gender transgressors?

*Second Wave gender spectrum: vertical by degree*

Where Transsexuality sits at the far left end of this spectrum, the TGQ labels hints at this bridge. Just to the right would be transgenders in the generic sense of the word (i.e., frequent crossgender expression while existing mainly in birth-assigned gender).

To the right of these would be the gender variant, who aren't trying so much to express an opposite gender as express themselves apart from either gender norms. To the right of the GV would be those Questioning gender norms, like the tomboy or metrosexual.

To the right of this I would add "S" for Supporters. This includes those individuals who exist comfortably in their birth-assigned gender, but are not so rigidly

attached to it that they cannot empathize with those who don't. These would tend to be overshadowed by dominant culture pressures to fit into gender norms, and likely feeling some social distance from transgenders who thumb their noses at such conformity pressures. But with a little bridge-building they may actually prove a rich source of support for T\*. They may even experiment with crossdressing, if only to see what the fuss is all about.

Farthest to the right is "n" – normals. The gender-normed. Those who are typically so attached to the gender binarism (because it provides a deep source of meaning for how their lives have been constructed) that they find it difficult to understand the transgender experience. When challenged by gender transgressors, they are apt to feel at least some transphobia. But with some carefully cultivated bridge-building, even they could be guided to a greater enlightenment of a nonthreatening T\* experience.

Hence, I am suggesting this "TGQ" moniker could be expanded to TGQSn or something like it. Something inherently more inclusive than our current us-vs-them referents.

### *Transspirituality*

For me, a vital point in my transgression/transcendence of gender norms is to intuitively stretch beyond limits to human potential. I feel compelled to stretch beyond any cultural norms that would hinder my self-actualization.

Once my need for security is met, I feel ready to at least remain open to building bridges to those who previously expressed some transphobic sentiments. I want to reach out to these former foes and encourage them to see how my true self, actualized beyond their gender values, does not compromise their security.

I want to “connect” with the depths of their humanity as well as remain connected to the depths of my humanity, beyond the narrow scope of cultural norms of gender. Actually, I *yearn* to respect the common cords of our collective humanity no matter how threatening they may react to my gender identity.

At my best, I find ways to maintain interpersonal peace, by transcending our external differences. I find my inner spirit isn't bound by cultural norms that set elements of humanity against each other. I find a natural energy

to stay above the fray of debilitating contention,

At my worst, when not embracing this energy to transcend norms of divisiveness, I tend to slide into passive people-pleasing. And after being repeatedly violated, especially by those whose norm is to contend with me, I am prone to lash out in self-rationalized defensiveness. And this cycle can lead to intense self-loathing.

As I yearn to integrate feminine energies with my masculine energies, I yearn to integrate various degrees of gender-transcendence with gender-normality. I tend to slide between a feminine and masculine expression. And I tend to slide somewhat along this vertical spectrum: sometimes ascribing to gender norms of femininity and other times drawing away from either set of gender norms.

Sometimes I maintain a “safe” masculine façade, albeit somewhat androgynous. I am compelled, because of this “transspiritual” energy coursing through me, to keep the lines of “connection” open. It is in this approach that I remain grounded, and spiritually fulfilled to live true.

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# Notorious K.I.M.

## By Delicious

The Queen Bee, Kimberly “Lil’ Kim” Jones, has been praised and hated since she exploded on the music scene in ‘95 with the late Notorious B.I.G.’s Brooklyn rap crew, Junior M.A.F.I.A. A year later, she released her critically acclaimed solo album, “Hardcore”.

While that LP has gone on to sell over 2 million copies and is viewed as a Hip Hop classic, it’s her sophomore album that has been considered a failure, despite the fact it has been certified platinum in a time when female MC’s had trouble going gold. Lil’ Kim’s first (official) single from Notorious K.I.M. was “No Matter What They Say,” a bubbly dance record.

Where she states, “Now what you hear is not a fake, it’s the real Lil’ Kim, Queen Bee / Now I know y’all heard a lot of females rap, they ain’t got nothing on me!” However, the song wasn’t as popular as her previous efforts, so the lyrics were undoubtedly overlooked.

The second single, “How Many Licks?”, became an instant club classic, but did nothing to motivate Hardcore fans back to the record store. The album, executive produced by Diddy, was dismissed as Hip Pop and ignored by music fans throughout the U.S.

Faithful fans who did have the opportunity to listen to her whole album can vouch that Notorious K.I.M. was just as dirty and gangsta as her debut.

Displaying her undying loyalty for Biggie, the Queen verbally dismantled fellow rapper, Shyne—a “bum-ass nigga”.

She accuses her of “trying to live Frank White’s past.” Big Momma also spreads rumors of her lyrics being ghost-written, and challenges Foxy Brown to start penning her own rhymes.



When it’s all said and done, Kim provides enough oral/anal sex talk to satisfy the freaks as well as gunplay/drug tales to please the streets. With an impressive line up of special guest appearances, including everyone from Mary J. Blige to Cee-Lo (of Gravis Barkley), it’s the solo track, “Who’s Number One?”, which stands out. Over an addictive, hypnotic beat, Lil’ Kim spit harder than the majority of her male counterparts, including all of the “jealous ass hos” who she claims are “still trying to recoup from the first album.”

Song after song, Kim switches her flow, flaunts her endless versatility and delivers one of the best on Hip Hop albums of all time. In the words of the late Notorious B.I.G., “And if you don’t know, now ya know!”

# Down & Out

**By Delicious**

I'm broke as a joke, living bummy as hell.  
Another day behind bars, no mail, no mail.

I hate my life so much, I feel like giving up.  
It's a coward's way out, but I don't give a fuck.

I've had enough of wondering who I really am.  
Dealing with self issues that I don't understand.

Fuck a pity party. I'm just speaking my mind...  
Straight from the heart. Anger keep me from crying.

Tears don't better situations or take away the pain.  
No matter what I do, shit will stay the same.

I've tried to change for the better, but I guess I'm weak.  
'cause I end up using drugs, selling sex for cheap.

I don't know where to go, more or less what to do.  
I miss my family and I hope that they miss me too.

I love 'em so much, but I'm ashamed to go home.  
It's probably best for me to leave 'em alone.

I guess I lied about the crying, 'cause I can't stop my tears.  
I miss 'em all so much, I haven't seen 'em in years.

# My Back Page

Much of what I had to say this time is in the open letter on page 20. With so much going on these days I will likely respond to personal letters more and more through this format. And beg your patience in responding to your more personal matters.

All this busyness shall have its rewards. In fact, it has for Amanda. Join me in congratulating Amanda on finishing graduate school. She is an encouragement to me, since I will be starting graduate school about a year from now. I will likely be in one of the graduate programs here in Michigan. But not here at Oakland University, since they do not have a Master's program for sociology.

It is good to hear from fresh voices and seeing us grow. Next issue is bound to have even newer writers, and more from out here as we expand our readership. Of course, next issue will be our last prior to Natasha's homecoming. Wow!

Can you see the day when that will be you? Thanks for your continued support as we put our trans spirituality into action for a reentry program. May we all continue to celebrate our beautiful selves as we find ways to live true!

In gender loving care, Steph.

**Congratulations!**  
**Amanda**  
**for earning your**  
**Master's degree!**

**Next deadline is August 1st, 2007.**

