

TRANS SPIRITUALITY

A TRANS-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

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

Issue 05, Winter 2006/2007

Chicago Excursion:
Mandy and Steph meet again

TRANSaction:
a vision for trans re-entry

Cruel and Unusual
tells it like it is

Bella Donna Night Raven
back with us again

Holiday giveaway

**Plus much
more...**

TRANS SPIRITUALITY is a 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.

TRANS SPIRITUALITY
A TRANS-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

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

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

In this issue...

Letters to the Editor 3
 News Briefs 40

FEATURES

Chicago Excursion 31
Steph is invited by Amanda to give a presentation prior to screening of C&U
 Cruel and Unusual 34
Amanda sponsors a screening of this groundbreaking documentary

FRESH IDEAS

TRANSaction: envisioning a trans re-entry program..... 10
Natasha inspires Steph to action, Valjean weighs in on the need
 Open letter to *Trans Spirituality* 21
Bella Donna Night Raven updates us on her life and shares her poetry & some info

FEEDBACK (sort of, or merely more Fresh Ideas)

Hail and Greetings 7
Another open letter from Natasha, reminding us of the challenges upon release
 Religious Right..... 27
Tsunami reflects on one Republican’s admonition to the party’s extremist wing

SOUNDING OFF

A November 1st deadline?!?!..... 6
Tsunami takes Steph to task for leaving so little time for submitting material

For Fun:

Humor from Bella Donna, and Zoe’s ‘Body Language’ 28
Keeping it light
 Flag on the Field..... 29
More humor by Zoe, since it IS football season...
 SEASONS GREETINGS from Valjean 42
Valjean shares some “gifts” during this winter solstice, Tsunami too

Letters...

to the Editor

Dear Editor,

Once again, congratulations to you and Mandy on another fine issue, over all. I note my few little gripes, my donation was not mentioned (as if we get thousands of them, and their easy to forget). And you have me listed as a "Universalist Unitarian" on pg. 36. That should be Unitarian Universalist" and you neglected to mention that your participation in the drag show is available on "Facebook" for anyone who links as a friend (?) and oh, I do believe you rattled my sista Sarah's chain with the "flaming" and "flaming rag" reference. Can we expect to see you two in the "Sounding Off" section? Heeey, get it right, keep it tight! ☺ (*Ed.- Oops. Oops. Oh well, my imperfections are leaking out!*)

For those who don't know, I have rotated to that new location as I previously indicated. I am now in the Gulf of Mexico, smack on the Texas waterline, in a city that was wiped out by Katrina and Rita. Oh well. (*Ed.- But now in CA.*) On the plus side, they have like 9 months of summer here. I mean a *really* hot summer! Picture me with 6 months of booty short's wear.

OK, what "2000 summer issue" was Val talking about? Did I miss something?

I note Amanda touched on *a lot* of the lost Native American culture in her Octavia Butler article. I was just going over some of the same points with Steph coincidentally. The systematic genocide of their culture is clearly evident today,

even in some Native elders' decision making process.

Now I have a TS sista here, "Leslie," who is a Sunni Muslim. She took great issue with the listing on the table of contents (pg. 2) under features which suggest that on pg. 16 one will find an article that "Sharia legitimizes transsexualism." Not only does that article on pg. 16 *NOT* say that, the Sharia does *NOT* either. More correctly, "Al-Sharia" is Islamic law; derived and composed from various sources, into a governing doctrine, e.g., Al-Qur'an, the Hadith, and the Sunnah. Al-Sharia even forbids cross dressing actually, and is *very* gender specific in the mode of dress for each gender. Many of you may note the lasting controversies over Islamic women's manner of dress. Indeed, the Apocalypse of Al-Qur'an speaks of the "end days" when men will masquerade as women and vice-versa, and not being able to tell them apart because of the great veil the Shaytun (Satan) will place over man's eyes, etc., etc.

So, when she spoke on it, I researched it, and she's right. The Ayatollah Khomeini can only issue a "fatwa" (Islamic Directive) to his people in Iran, as *their* leader. Just like Osama Bin Laden issues fatwa's *all* the time, but they only carry weight with *his* followers. The actual Islamic council that issues fatwa's does not even include the

Ayatollah Khomeini. The “original” council claimed to be either direct descendants of Prophet Muhammad, or direct disciples (first taught by the Rasullallah). (*Ed.- To all my Muslim kin, my apologies for overstating the point by referring to Sharia in the ToC. Allah is all merciful, praise Allah!*)

So, with all respect to everyone’s religion, we need to get it right, keep it tight. My grrrl would have been oh so thrilled to learn some type of acceptance existed in Al-Sharia, by *any* stretch of interpretation. Remember, we’re talking about a law that *mandates* death by stoning for adultery. Big shout outs to my sistas in Rome, no less. Heeyyy, we T-ing all over the world.

Now Valjean, what can I say...*go on* with yourself...and you got me down like downtown! I’m feeling you on all your submissions. Get with me *quick* on the “Trans Injustice” tip. I’m trying to see how gender pref. has anything to do with my case (if possible), or how you connect that period.

Slice in the mattress, hip to that. Plastic bag (gloves, etc.) OK. Now wait a minute...raw ground beef!! You’re kidding, right? That’s a new one on me...and a 10 on the gross out factor.

And, on another subject, I know somebody else besides Amanda whom gets caught up in the moments...

Isn’t Zoe’s humor fabulous! (*Ed.- If only she knew how to spell “practicing.”*)

Gender loving care to all my sista’s out there!

Tsunami Caryl-Averlyn

P.S.- Val, knowing how I like to review and critique books, how come I didn’t get an excerpt of “Transchildren of the Corn”? Don’t make me have to take my earrings off sista grrrl.

Ref: November – Trans Spirituality
October 12, 2006

Dear Editor,

My issue 04, Autumn 2006 of T.S. is the best ever. It just keeps getting better. I love you all for all that you are and all you will become, in my life and the lines of countless other trans men & women.

My submission for November is a T.R.D. flashback. (*p 13*) From the booklet project that joined many of us together, narrated by none other than our own Mandy Armstrong. “Post-Release Programs and Gender Variant People.” With additional comments: Parole Board Discrimination.

In Gender Loving Care,
Valjean

(*Ed.- Interestingly, Valjean submitted this piece without any knowledge of Natasha’s need and the subsequent vision for a ‘TRANSaction’ re-entry program.*)

Dearest Steph

Hello, I hope that all is well for yourself and loved ones. Thank you for including me in last month's edition. I really appreciate your work. I was trying to put things together in my head and had to rewrite my letter, because it just wasn't going like I wanted (too long). Then the library was closed, so here I go.

1) I'd like to say thank you to my boyfriend on the street, and I love and appreciate him for helping me and waiting on me until I discharge (that included no sex while imprisoned with him). Tim told me I couldn't write much about him because there wasn't much to say! I promptly informed him that there are not a lot of guys who would understand or take the time to read the books on transsexualism & transgenderism that I gave him. Plus, he's not a practicing homosexual. Gee, what more can a girl ask for? I would like to carry on about my praises to him, but I know your short for space. Thanks, Tim. "Sempre Fi."

2) Satanic literature...etc. Satanism represents undefiled wisdom, instead of hypocritical self-

deceit! Satan represents man/woman as just another animal, sometimes better. More often worse than those that walk on all fours, who because of higher "divine spiritual and intellectual development" has become the most vicious animal of all!

Open your eyes that you may see, oh people of mildewed minds, and listen to me, ye bewildered millions. For I stand forth to challenge the wisdom of the world, to interrogate the "Laws" of man and God. Before none of your printed idols do I bend in acquiescence, and he/she who saith "thou shalt" to me is my mortal foe. No hoary falsehood shall be a truth to me; no stifling dogma shall encramp my pen! (by Anton Szandor LeVey)

Other quotes: I thought this was particularly meaningful. "La vida hay que vivirla y eso lo que quiero!" Loosely translated: Life is worth living to the fullest, and that's what I want!

Well, I thank you, Steph. Please use what you can and I'll work on getting money sent to Chicago.

Hugs & Blessings
Satannia
Fortune Dean A.
#1119411, Unit 1-A

SOUNDING OFF

Dear Editor,

A November 1st deadline?!?!
Yeah, right! Be advised I did not receive my Issue 04 (and subsequent notice of the deadline) until *September 29, 2006*. (*Ed.- What a coincidence! Neither did I.* ☺)
And so my response to that ridiculous deadline is...peeee-u!

Tenderly,

Tsunami

(*Ed.- Thank you, Tsunami – and Natasha, for submitting your material far ahead of “that ridiculous” deadline.*)



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
Steph Turner

Contributors
Valjean Royal, Tsunami Caryl Averlyn, Zoe Kala, Natasha T'Chort, Bella Donna Night Raven, Mandy Armstrong, Steph Turner

Editorial Advisory Board
& Founding Corps of TRD
Valjean Royal, Bella Donna Night Raven, Karen Krebs, Tsunami Caryl-Averlyn, Sarah j. Babcock, Natasha T'Chort, Steph Turner, Mandy Armstrong

Circulation
Mandy Armstrong

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!*

Hail & Greetings.

To all my sisters, and TRD once again. Yes, I too knew I'd have to write again, this concrete crypt is definitely cramping my style.

It's amazing...I read this publication and I'm impressed with the power comprised into a single force. If this isn't an example of transspiritual power (from multiple facets) I don't know what is. One day I get a copy of the GIC TIP Journal and I write to a girl I've never before known (Hello Mandy!) about a project, and the next thing I know I see my name in print! Wow! And to think this is only the start. Someday this will become a full glossy magazine for the world to read. And to know that girls like us had a part in it...well, I think words don't quite express the feeling.

Speaking of TIP Journal (a quarterly from the Gender Identity Center in Colorado), I just wrote them. Funny how I felt out of my element, like I was nervous for people I don't know to read my



words. I don't feel that way with TRD. I feel safe, or at least comfortable here. Maybe that's an inward "spiritual" connection, telling me to continue and not let go...hmmm?

However, I wrote TIP Journal and wasn't able to say all that I had with my last submission to TRD. So if any of you read that too I'm sure you'll now understand my

meaning. But I also wrote them to try and find something out I think is important, and important enough to make word of it now again.

A lot of us trans sisters come into a prison system with very little to no knowledge of what is, or isn't, available to us once we pass through these gates for the second time...on the way out! And like all of us, we don't want to come back! But there are some of us who have nowhere to go but back to the streets. No friends or family to give a lending hand to have a half chance to live prosperous, happy lives.

Others may have this option still, but we also know after a few

more field trips back to the concrete zoo, that changes for the most part and for the worst. There are some of us who come in with some back up plan for the future. But somewhere down the line that has since changed, or will change. This happens greatly with any of us who's made short terms into long term stays. Or long terms (sentences) take their wear and toll after a few years of outside support. Those of us who don't fit into this category, bless your hearts and try to understand that it can happen still. Take heed and care to your actions. If it won't, or can not happen to you, well, then maybe you can take time to help create action in what I'm about to ask.

I've been locked up/down (whatever) for twelve years now. I found out today I've got only one year left instead of a year and a half like I thought.

Many of us go through our time focused on doing our time, until..."Oh no, I'm getting out; I have no one, nowhere, with nothing. What do I do? I'm no longer a 'spring chicken' to run the night, to

play the run away kid game anymore. I have no medical insurance...and I'm a trans-girl! How do I get treatment, hormones, makeup, clothes, much less...how will food be sought?"

We didn't want to go back to the life that put us here. Violence, drugs, robbery and, well...the streets. All of a sudden all of the yesteryears of much younger arrogance, all of the strength of a trans-girl doing twelve years of prison survival means nothing, zero, nada. And fear starts to fondle my dreams. Can't sleep, can't eat or function conditionally.

My mentality has shifted from street life to prison life with an insight (while controlled to my current environment) I wish I knew nothing of. Well, that's a debate all in its own, isn't it? The people out there know nothing of it. "Respect" has a whole new meaning in here. They won't know of that out there, and I won't know how to counter react, etc.

Violence is at a different level in two different ways. And being

**...some of us ...
have nowhere
to go but back
to the streets.**

treated entirely in a different way inside the system; going into a much more rough world that I no longer know? That is scary as hell.

I remember when I first fell, I scoffed at convicts when I heard them say the very same thing. "I've been down so long, I'm scared to get out." Well, who's laughing now? Not me. If I were still a boy, or if were a man without the needs that I do need (being a trans-girl), it would be much more simple.

*A sister told me once, "If you can survive being trans, you can survive anything." Well, I agree. And if you can do that from both worlds, you are a **super-girl!***

Well, enough of painting the picture, because now I need some input, answers or info. Can anyone tell me if there are any clinics that I can go to and get the treatment I need? I have no insurance. How do I get that without having a residence, job, or a life for that matter?

I don't want to stay in Nevada; I'm a California girl. But I think maybe if I go to Vegas...it's a 24-hour town. That is a plus to come up, right? Or I can try to go to Frisco, to where I can find the girls of our kind and get my hormones going. That is if I can

avoid the whole prostitution thing in either place. All this as a downfall to all I lost, as I pretold.

I know this isn't a "personals" connection magazine, but hey: I'm 5'2", 115 pounds, black hair, hazel-brown eyes, build of about 34A-28-35, I'm Irish and Slavic, and I'm swimming in tattoos. I'm a Satanist, and a Goth who is looking for someone like me. Tell you the truth, I want to be with a trans-girl. Pre-op a must. I want the best of both worlds. I'm also a tattoo artist, and not to boast but I'm pretty good. I'm ultra fem, with a feisty side too. If anyone can give me any info, advice, or just wants to write, you can do so at: Jen Durr Services, N9494 Haltur Cane, Eagle WI 53119. (Ed.- I can only provide this service now for Founding Corps members for matters concerning Jen Durr Press or Jen Durr Services). To avoid problems, don't mention prison stuff. I'll answer all - I promise too. And I'm not limiting my options, so boys, girls, or both, write me if you wish. I'll be here. Aughh, do I sound pathetic or what? I'm going crazy...damn walls!

♥Natasha♥
T'Chost



~~Fresh Idea - trans post-release programming~~

TRANSaction: envisioning a trans re-entry program

By Steph

Something about Natasha's call to create "action" for a T* prisoner re-entry program resonated within me. I wrote to her to say I would check into what can be done about this vision. After all, Valjean has already done considerable work towards this effort.

But alas, I am a staff of one and can only do so much in a day. I could truly use help not only with the zine but also with the *Transinjustice* project started with Val.

When Natasha replied that upon discharging next year she could get a bus ride to anywhere in the states, my burdened shoulders took some courage. Especially after she expressed not only her willingness to come out here but even her enthusiasm to help



Ruth Ellis Center, Detroit MI

with these emerging projects. Suddenly I realized that if I could make the time to find some place for her to land upon release, I just might get some help with all this work.

I shared this vision with Valjean and after expressing her enthusiasm she requested a mission statement. The **TRANSaction: A residential program for trans inmates** was drafted in response to her request. It is drafted in a way to share this hope with others who would also want to know what this vision is all about and the needs we hope to address.

So what's out there?

Perhaps there already *is* a T* re-entry program or something like it somewhere. I have started checking around here for what exists locally for troubled GLBTQ. And have thus far only scratched the surface for information online.

I have written to GIC of Colorado for any info they may have. And I have written to IFGE. I have yet to write to the TGIJP in California.

From GenderTalk radio (*which discontinued broadcasting as of 9-30-6*) I learned about a shelter being set up for trans in trouble. Here in the Detroit area there is a drop-in center for GLBTQ youth who are homeless and may have had trouble with the law. It is called the Ruth Ellis Center in honor of the late Ruth Ellis who took in kids of every stripe, but has since passed on.

A few miles north of the REC is a GLBTQ community center, called Affirmations. I visited the facilities on Saturday, Oct 28 (in my Goth

getup, provoking various gazes). I learned they have a biweekly trans youth meeting and considered volunteering, to boost my visibility in the community and offer my services. But I am stretched thin already. I visited the center again on Sat Nov 19th and had an inspiring chat with two of the staff. Apparently this vision for a trans prisoner re-entry program fits right into some of their visions for proactive engagement of what the community needs.

Another avenue I am looking into is funding that might be available from the federal government through the Mentally Ill Offender Treatment and Crime Reduction Act. As long as gender dysphoria is considered a mental disorder, this 2004 legislation may provide the basis for government funded amelioration for gender dysphoria; i.e., GRS, HRT, FFS. How this would apply to those without a diagnosis of GD is yet to be seen.

TRANSaction: A residential program for trans inmates

Jen Durr Services, a nonprofit social justice organization addressing the needs among the most socially disadvantaged segments of the transgender community, introduces this vision for a post-release transition program. Here the idea of “transition” has more than one meaning: not only to address needs specific to transitioning from prison to life beyond prison but also addressing transgender inmates’ gender transition needs. Leaving basic needs unaddressed upon release correlates with recidivism, and for transgender inmates this includes their gender identity needs. Coordinating resources to redress their gender identity needs improves their chances for success after prison.

About the TRANSaction program vision

“Why provide gender transition resources to those who are known criminals? Isn’t that, like, rewarding them for breaking the law?” Such an objection is understandable, since many transgenders who have never been incarcerated still don’t have access to such resources. However, denying the most disadvantaged segment of our population the resources other released inmates enjoy for their specific needs was never a part of the punishment for incarcerated transgenders.

It was from lack of such support that some transgenders succumbed to transgressing more than gender barriers in seeking relief from imposing gender norms. Support for their gender identity needs can help them break free from a cycle of shame that spills over into hurting those around them. This not only serves them, but indirectly serves those who would otherwise be victimized by their continued desperation to seek relief from needs they may still poorly understand.

For many incarcerated transgenders, it was desperation to address their persistent gender identity needs that led to crimes of survival. These are often committed in the absence of resources that many non-incarcerated transgenders can take for granted, such as access to hormones. It wasn’t long ago when any attempt to address our gender needs was deemed criminally deviant, and a lack of legal protections still leaves us vulnerable to abuses by the authorities.

Some transgender inmates were targeted and harassed by authorities, and the self-protective behaviors by these typically poor and urban transfolk became defined as criminally deviant. Because our adversarial justice system is capable of labeling anyone as a criminal deviant, and the continuing stigmatization of the transgender experience influences the interpretation of our actions and the reactions of others toward us, there is no transgender immune from needing these services some day.

Jen Durr Services, N9494 Haltur Lane,
Eagle WI 53119; jendurrserv@yahoo.com

Program purpose and goals

The purpose of TRANSaction aims to attend to a need that has yet to be fully addressed, and that is for a post-release program specific to the needs of transgender inmates being released from jail or prison.

Among the goals for TRANSaction:

- Provide a safe living environment that respects the gender identity needs of each resident
- Provide access to resources for addressing gender identity needs along with developing the independence to secure such resources responsibly
- Provide sanctuary for exfelon transgenders who have been abandoned by their families
- Debriefing from the harsh prison environment and preparing for a smooth transition to life after the unpleasant realities of prison
- Provide references to counseling services
- Provide references to skills building resources and educational opportunities
- Provide a sense of community with others in similar circumstances, providing peer support and inspirational encouragement from others succeeding free from crime

This vision may take considerable time to unfold. Of course, the need for such services will not wait.

Those requiring such services may have an integral role in shaping this program. And how the startup of this program is to be funded has yet to be seen, not to mention how the program is to be fiscally viable in the long run. Part of that answer is in the vision of community: sharing a living space (while enjoying greater privacy than found in prison) along with communal property will help to reduce costs. This approach is also green: less individual consumerist and therefore more earth-friendly.

This vision stems from the ideal of sharing a common experience that, like the gender binarism itself, transcends any socially divisive differences. A sense of transgender-related spirituality will permeate this program, but the expression of spirituality is up to each resident. One another’s needs are to be respected in the context of each resident’s spirituality. Our common bond of shared transgender experience shall bring us together and provide a synergy for living true.

Problems With Post-Release Programs

Post-Release Programs and Gender Variant People

By **Valjean Royal** (reprint by Val's request)

Post-Release Programs, Faith-Based?

On Tuesday, January 20th, 2004, President Bush called for the funding of programs to deal with some 600,000 inmates who will be released from prison this year – without work, without a home, without help. "America," he said, "is the land of second chances," and he added that, "when the gates of the prison open, the path ahead should lead to a better life." The US has a higher percentage of its citizens in prison than any other country in history, and accounts for an astonishing 25 percent of the world's inmate population. Americans are becoming increasingly concerned about what awaits communities that will have to absorb a disoriented and unprepared population of inmates.

The President's promotion of funding to faith-based organizations' post-release programs became the only area in the federal government where the government has merged church and state. Federal funding now allows faith-based organizations to play a key role as part of the states' efforts to reintegrate inmates into their communities, and to help them adjust to society. Before this act was put into place by the President – which provides a chance for inmates to find success – funding for inmate education, drug counseling, and work programs designed to ease the transition from incarceration to freedom had been cut

or remained stagnant.

It is the hope of many that these faith-based post-release outreach ministries some day may be credited with substantially diminishing recidivism rates. However, I know from personal experience that, for most transsexuals and other gender variant individuals, the process of reintegration will follow a rocky path: their families may not be willing to accept them, finding jobs will be difficult, and individuals in their old peer groups will be ready to support the resumption of criminal habits.

Maintaining some tether to family is important for inmates being released. But the reality for trans people is that, for most, that link does not exist or is often difficult to maintain. Going into a post-release program, also known as a transitional program, is a good idea. As with any change in life, a time of adjustment is essential. For inmates being released, adjusting to a drastically different society after having learned the regimented life of prison life, it is crucial to be allowed a slow transition back into society because of the need to learn how to start life over again: how to find employment; home, manage money, and regain independence. Assisting, counseling, and monitoring inmates closely while taking these first steps towards reintegration into society is a way to ensure that they are learning the ropes again properly. I, for one, vote 'yes' for any such programs.

Institutionalized Discrimination

Transsexuals and other gender variant individuals being released from prison are being excluded from the right to transitional programs provided by tax dollars funded to church and state programs as promoted by President Bush. Could this be declared unconstitutional? Before answering, do keep in mind the following realities: in existing case law, the courts have found that transgendered people are not covered under anti-discrimination laws protecting persons on the basis of sexual/gender orientation or sex. Trans people were specifically excluded in the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1991, and they also are not covered under the disability laws of nearly all the states that have them. Both state and federal courts have almost uniformly held that transgendered people are outside the legal definitions and protections of existing anti-discrimination laws. Since changing gender is so readily apparent, trans people often lose their job and are denied employment, or become under-employed regardless of their experience or education. Trans people are frequently denied housing or even evicted from rented homes, and denied many public services. Trans people often must deal with transphobic administrators, directors, and law enforcement. This is a reality for many trans people who have never been to prison, or jail for that matter. Only a few jurisdictions, including the states of Minnesota (by statute), Oregon (by administrative decision), and a small

but growing list of cities and counties, offer trans people protection from discrimination. Thus most transgendered activists have viewed inclusion of Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) as absolutely critical.

Discrimination towards trans people in faith-based organizations cannot be denied. In her book *Crossing-Over* (2001), Vanessa Sheridan suggests that a transphobic socioreligious attitude towards the transgendered is all too common: "Those who fear, hate, discriminate against, and exclude the transgendered often appear to be the routine and even rather predictable products of their culture." Vanessa offers insight into the transgender experience and confronts the harsh reality of the injustice prevalent in society and in the church towards those who are differently gendered.

In his *Trans-gendered: Theology, Ministry, and Communities of Faith* (2003), Justin Tanis writes:

Trans people encounter a wide range of responses when entering a faith community. Many times, trans people choose not to attend in order to avoid what may be an uncomfortable experience and the judgment that they perceive will come from a community of faith... In a number of different ways, congregations can explicitly or unconsciously create an atmosphere that conveys to transgendered people that we are not welcome there. Communities of faith also need to be aware that they need to extend a welcome

that bridges the fear of rejection that a transgender person may have that prevents them from seeking acceptance within the congregation. This one barrier is probably the single largest to the participation of transgendered people in communities of faith... "Barriers to Participate": 1) Fear and unfamiliarity on the part of the congregation and the transgendered; 2) Language issues; 3) Physical layout that separates people by gender; 4) Programs that exclude or separate by gender; 5) Pathologizing or designating trans issues as sinful; 6) Overt hostility.

I gathered from both writers that most faith communities do make careful distinctions concerning gender, and show unjust disfavor towards transgender people. This spells discrimination to me, but remember, there are no laws protecting us from this injustice in most states. This scenario is tragic not only because of the ever-increasing number of gender variant people inside America's prison system that is never mentioned (due to trans being excluded from USA Census reports, which include prisoners by sex, M or F), but also because no one knows how many transgendered are innocent, jailed because of selective harassment, planting of evidence, or inept defense.

For those who doubt the capability of police to abuse the law, the Mark Fuhrman tapes paint an evil picture of police, unfettered by law, framing, beatings, and even torture. In the Philadelphia police scandal officers

confessed to beatings, robbing, lying, and planting evidence resulting in jailing dozens, maybe hundreds, of innocent people. Once there's no justice then crime, chaos and the rate of recidivism increases. And that hurts everybody.

Don't Ask, Don't Tell (of injustice)

Reading the texts of Vanessa Sheridan and Justin Tanis, I realized that, as a Christian and transsexual seeking post-release assistance when released from prison, my primary source of help and support is likely to be from those that may not embrace me because of their embracing religious beliefs that ridicule transgender and view a trans lifestyle as sinful. Be ever mindful that in some cases this reality is subjecting transgendered people seeking post-release assistance to yet another government inspired policy: "Don't Ask, Don't Tell." In order for us to be accepted into a post-release program that will provide some hope or promise of a successful transition back into society and its workforce, we inevitably will have to deny who we really are.

My personal experience was one of much pain and disappointment because I refused to apply acknowledgment to Don't Ask, Don't Tell. For good reason, I must add. Myself, like many trans people, became a victim of discrimination, social rejections, low self-esteem, and self-hatred, which caused emotional disorders. As a teen living as a MTF transsexual, I confessed to a crime for which I had absolutely no knowledge

(my confession was the only thing that ever linked me to the crime), casting myself out of society, and into the hell that my mental and emotional illness at the time made me feel I belonged. What happened next was more nightmarish than your wildest imagination could ever imagine.

It occurred amidst a crusade called "Save Our Children," founded by a woman named Anita Bryant. Ms. Bryant was a spokesperson for the Florida Sunshine Orange Juice manufacturers. "Save Our Children" was a crusade to ban the lifestyles of gay and other alternative lifestyles from American communities in order to save the children of America from being affected by the existence of alternative lifestyles.

From bad to worse

During the height of this era, a correctional officer was murdered at the Indiana State Prison where I was housed. I was eventually charged again for a murder that I knew nothing about. Not wanting to believe what was happening as I continually screamed that I was innocent – my screams continuously fell on deaf ears, and were heard only by uncaring hearts. Countless other inmates that knew that I had never left my cell house on the morning of this crime of murder also stepped forward in an attempt to defend me.

It was an inmate who originally implicated my involvement. Even he eventually broke down and admitted that he manufactured his statements and accusations after receiving promises from state and prison officials for an early release from

prison as a result of his agreeing to become a state witness in this murder. After his recantment, state officials went out and found three other inmates that they made promises and deals with to testify to the fabrication. During the era in which people of my lifestyle were already on trial – just for existing – I was placed on trial, convicted, and sentenced to life in prison.

Again for a crime that today's technology would easily prove impossible, if evidence the state presented is reenacted – the false testimonies of three inmates seeking early releases for their fabricated accounts of the murder. These fabrications were created by state and prison officials. The news media printed things like, "Man Appears in Court as a Woman," "Makeup on Trial," "Anita Bryant vs. Valjean Royal," "The Two Faces of Justice," and "Justice Takes a Holiday."

With no evidence whatsoever to link me to the crime or the crime scene, I was sentenced and later received a life sentence. I received the news while being housed on Indiana's death row, by way of the United States Postal Service. I have never murdered anyone in my entire life. The only person that I have ever hurt has been myself as well as the man whose murder I confessed to, which ultimately led to my initial incarceration. I have not been out of prison since. I was 18 years old then, I'm 51 today (*in 2004*).

A better path

There is much more that I would like to share with you that will demonstrate how my journey was the cause and effect of being a transsexual who's non-acceptance by society and peer groups led to my incarceration and the lowest self-esteem imaginable. However, it will take some time to reveal the story of my life in its entirety – so I will get to the point - where I am now.

I've grown comfortably and gracefully into my womanhood, and I'm a very proud and dignified transwoman despite the hard knock life designed for me and my kind. I cannot begin to express the love and freedom in spirit I feel in just the total acceptance of myself as a transwoman. It feels wonderful to know that you are God's precious jewel, just as you are. I only regret that I had to travel some of the paths that I have in order to find where I truly belonged.

Paths of anger, rebellion, deceit, self-hatred, and self-sabotage all bear my footprints. No path is more important than the path to self, and the ability to finally face a journey inside yourself, and confront all the pain and self-hatred – that has become your public enemy number one – in all reality, and slay a little a day until this enemy no longer lives in you.

Then the path into self can continue on to reach a destination where you can love yourself and be loved. A place where the screaming stops and the Calm begins, a place where you can close your eyes and still find your way around because you are where you belong, a place of

soulful acceptance in your self for your heart, about *your* life. "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" would be like traveling back-in time for me. Not an option!

Parole Board Hearing (what they want to hear)

In July of 2003 I went in front of the Indiana State parole board, as a model prisoner, after having served 30 years. I was placed into a six-month (non-residential) transitional program. As a participant in this program I was disappointed that there did not exist any reference to any post-release assistance for trans people, nor was there any representation from the transgender community among any of the guests scheduled to speak.

I kept a journal throughout this program with thoughts of pursuing this same sort of program geared towards trans people. I hoped that this program could be implemented into the DOC transition programs everywhere it could be applicable. If implemented, my program would encourage, educate, and direct trans people towards support groups after their release that could accommodate the needs of trans people by assisting them toward achieving the same success in their reintegration into communities as afforded to others.

One of the inspirational speakers offering encouragement for those of us in the transitional classes I attended was a former inmate (heterosexual) who had succeeded in reaching goals that seemed unattainable at some points in his life. He gave a very strong and powerful testimony. I

gained a strong desire to be able to deliver the same sort of inspirational speaker for trans folks, to elevate, and make a huge difference in these programs for trans people.

My disappointment was replaced with my vision, and my determination to succeed. Six months later, after my successful completion of the transitional program, I returned to appear before the parole board. At this review I was given 90 days to come up with acceptable parole plans. The board members asked that I have any community support that I may have present at my next hearing, which was set for March 2004. I wrote hundreds of letters to churches and outreach missions for transitional post-release assistance. I never failed to mention my status as a MTF transsexual; I never received any responses.

I wrote to many people in the trans communities asking them to help me by networking on their computers. I had hoped to assemble a support system inside of the trans community that would be able to be at my hearing, so that a support system was present. I hoped that trans people would have packed the place! My mother and father are the only support I already had, and they are both old and ill, so they could not be at my hearing.

Gianna E. Israel, Community Counselor for Transgendered, supplied a Statement of Reference letter that I placed within every application and every appeal for support that I sent out. I began to feel sick inside the closer to my hearing date I got. None of the faith community responded, and none of the trans community seemed

interested at all. When I returned before the parole board on March the 26th, 2004, my heart was broken and I hurt to the core of my soul once again. No one at all was there for me, after all my effort. No one but producer Dan Hunt of REID Productions, who had been granted permission at my request to film my parole hearing, and follow my release after parole as part of a documentary that is being produced for PBS about transsexual life before, during, and after the prison experience.

Beyond Denial

My parole was denied, and as I laid in my bed of sorrow crying my heart out that evening, wanting to just die, I received a letter from the "first application" that I ever mailed to a faith community. The letter stated that I had been accepted into the "Jesus House," a post-release residential program for Christians. The letter came too late for my parole hearing, but for some reason that didn't matter. I felt good about it. So good, I dried my eyes, read it again, and I haven't cried since.

Today, I'm okay. I'm still waiting, praying and waiting. There is a need for post-release assistance for trans-people and I am confident it's coming...

Works Cited

- Sheridan, Vanessa. *Crossing Over: Liberating the Transgendered Christian*. Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2001.
- Tanis, Justin. *Trans-Gendered: Theology, Ministry, and Communities of Faith*. Cleveland: Pilgrim. Press, 2003.

JESUS INSIDE PRISON MINISTRY, INC.
P.O. BOX 88489, INDIANAPOLIS, IN. 46208
PRisonministr@aol.com

3/25/2004

Praise the Lord!

V ALJEAN ROYAL
P.O. BOX 30, # 3943
PENDLETON, IN. 46064

You have been accepted into the Jesus House and we're glad to be able to assist you, as the Lord leads.

The physical address of the Jesus House is: 3147 N. BROADWAY STREET,
INDIANAPOLIS, IN. 46205

The telephone number is 317-931-0102

The RESIDENT DIRECTOR there is Mr. JERRY BANKS.

Upon the day of your release you are expected to come directly to the Jesus House. If you are coming in from out of town, let us know when you will arrive at the Bus station and someone will be there to pick you up OR YOU CAN COME STRAIGHT TO THE JESUS HOUSE.

Please bring this acceptance letter with you.

God Bless!

Pastor Bumphus

**PENDLETON CORRECTIONAL FACILITY
OFFICE OF THE TRANSITION COORDINATOR
December 16, 2003**

To: Valjean Royal #3943
D-D1-104L

Fr: Laurie Johnson,
Transition Coordinator

Re: Transition Completion Certificate


Thank you for the copy of the journal you made over the Transition Program, I think I will be able to use it as a reference guide for the program. I also received copies of the letters you sent to PACE/OAR and Fairbanks Hospital. I wish you the best in your endeavors. I also got the copy of the letter you received from Reid Productions, LLC concerning interest in interviewing you for a documentary. I think you [*sic*] story will bless a lot of people in your situation, so I hope that works out as well.

I've enclosed a copy of your completion certificate for the Standard Pre-Release Orientation Program. A copy is also put on your institutional packet. I hope all goes well for you in January at the Parole Board hearing!

PAROLE BOARD DISCRIMINATION

The sentencing law is the controlling law that determines how a sentence is executed and what the parameters are that must be met, whether there is a possibility for parole or not. A sentence cannot be modified or altered in any way by a new sentencing statute unless there is amelioration (an improvement or benefit for the person sentenced prior to the new sentencing law), which must be granted to all persons similarly situated.

The Indiana Parole Board has taken it upon itself to practice discrimination on the Lifers sentenced under the old sentencing statutes prior to October 1, 1977. The Parole Board is using a 1994 sentencing and parole statute that negates the legitimate expectations each year of going before the Parole Board (in person) and the possibility of being granted a parole. The new sentencing and parole statute is a punishment for those sentenced under the old statute and has taken away all benefits, rights, and privileges guaranteed under the old sentencing and parole statutes. The Parole Board is knowingly and with malice practicing a cruel form of discrimination that is in no way legal or mandated by the Indiana Constitution or the controlling sentencing laws or statutes. The Parole Board is knowingly abusing its power for no other reason than that they have the supreme power. But the Parole Board must be brought to bear in mind that the Indiana Constitution, its laws and statutes, must be applied fairly, and amelioration and fairness must be a consideration.



Open Letter to *Trans Spirituality*

To: ***Trans Spirituality***
From: **Bella Donna Night Raven**

Dear friends,

I hope that this correspondence finds you all well. I am sorry to say that I have been out of touch. Due to a lot of reasons. When I transferred earlier this year none of my mail was forwarded. I did send a change of address, but like a lot of my mail it never made it out of here or to its intended destination. I may go into further detail later in this letter. But for now let me say how glad I was to get four issues of *Trans Spirituality* in the mail today. ☺ ☺ ☺ ☺

I have also had to deal with some other important issues that had to be attended to. I finished the final administrative remedy process necessary before I can seek redress in court. (Re: trans issues)

I got to spend most of my summer in the hole under what was termed an investigation. I was never charged with any type of wrongdoing, nor was I told officially what was being investigated. While in the hole I received an adverse ruling from the U.S. Court of Appeals. Which means I have to go on the Supreme Court soon.

I ended up getting out of the hole after about 40 days. I was not and am not a happy camper. Besides being thrown in the hole, I have been denied a job in the prison factory system, which pays about 195% more than I am getting now. All in all, it has not been a good year for myself.

But now that I have been reconnected to *Trans Spirituality* I feel a little bit better. At least I have a shoulder to cry on, and the company of my kindred spirit sisters.

There was so much material in the four issues that I received I may be hard pressed to make a decent reply. But I will do my best.

I was going to try and rush off a response to make sure I got something in before the submission deadline (Nov. 1). But I think that I will at least take the weekend to work on it and digest everything there is to read in the issues I received. I am just so excited to hear back from you all. It is kind of scary that it means so much to me, but it does.

I have been rather depressed this year and somewhat lethargic, given to apathy in many ways. Some I can blame on my

emotional state. I do really try to act and not react, but it can be hard at times. Given the level of control they have over me/us.

I am not sure what I will be able to come up with in the way of any submissions. It may all be new or I may redo some things I have done in some other forum. We shall see. It is just really good to be back, and I do really love what I have seen so far. It is also very nice to see the effort that others have put into their submissions.

I think the key to making a publication and concept like *Trans Spirituality* work is to have a diversity of input and a healthy dose of tolerance, respect, and patience.

I have my own closely held spiritual beliefs and practices. They are what I have chosen, received, developed and retained over the course of my life. They are sacred to me, and while I practice them I am on sacred ground. I would not tolerate any challenge, profanity, heresy, disrespect, etc.

But once I bring those beliefs into a public forum and I enter into a free flowing discussion of spirituality, I am fair game, not withstanding the general rules of polite discussion. In such a situation one must be ready to

suffer some minor or unintended insult. That is the price we pay for new ideals and honesty.

I am very happy with what I have seen so far in *Trans Spirituality*. I hope that I can get my affairs in order enough before the next submission deadline. So that I may be able to give you all some really thought provoking material. And maybe even cause some senseless act of beauty, kindness, or happiness.

In the meantime, please accept these humble submissions of mine for our joint efforts.

Blessed be.
Yours in sisterhood,

Bella Donna Night Raven

Lunar Phases for 2007 CE

Month	new	1 st qtr	full	last qtr
Jan	19	25	3	11
Feb	17	24	2	10
Mar	19	25	3	12
Apr	17	24	2	10
May	16	23	2	10
June	15	22	1, 30	8
July	14	22	30	7
Aug	12	20	28	5
Sept	11	19	26	4
Oct	11	19	26	3
Nov	9	17	24	1
Dec	9	17	24	1, 31

I have included lunar phases because many spiritual traditions use the lunar cycle for practical as well as spiritual reasons.

Here is a name I found in the Wiccan Encyclopedia (2nd Ed.) by Raven Grimassi. It is Raven Kaldera, who is listed as an intersex FTM activist and the author of "Hermaphrodities: The Transgender Spirituality workbook." (*Ed.- I'm looking forward to someone purchasing this gem and providing us all a useful book review.*) Raven is also the spouse of Bella Kaldera, a third gender person. – You may find some Trans-Spiritual info related to these folks on the Internet. FYI.

Lunar Phases, 2007

According to a couple online sources, the lunar schedule for 2007 looks like this. (Not that Bella Donna's is incorrect, since this one may be incorrect for all I know.)

<u>Month</u>	<u>new</u>	<u>1st qtr</u>	<u>full</u>	<u>last qtr</u>
Jan	19	25	02	10
Feb	17	24	03	12
Mar	19	25	02	10
Apr	17	24	02	10
May	16	23	01	08
June	15	22	30	07
July	14	22	30	05
Aug	12	20	28	04
Sept	11	19	26	03
Oct	11	19	26	01
Nov	09	17	24	01
Dec	09	17	24	31

<http://www.astrostar.com/MoonPhases.htm>

<http://www.lunarrepublic.com/info/phases.shtml>

Spirituality Resources *by snailmail*

Here are some updated addresses from Bella Donna Night Raven. She shares these as spiritual resources for the readers of *Trans Spirituality*.

Azure Green
PO Box 48
Middlefield MA 01243

Ask for catalog. They are an approved vendor for Fed Bureau of Prisons and have lots of Pagan books and other items.

Branching
PO Box 3155
East Hampton NY 11937

Newsletter for Pagan prisoners

New Worlds (of Mind and Spirit)
Llewellyn Worldwide
PO Box 64383
St Paul MN 55461-0383

Quality book catalog and magazine. Pagan and New Age. First one is free, and it's free with book order.

PanGaia
PO Box 641
Point Arena CA 95468-0099

Very professional Pagan magazine.
Goddess focused, but balanced. Write
for current rates.

Pagan Educational Network
PO Box 1364
Bloomington IN 47402-1364

Low cost not free membership and info
for Pagan prisoners. Accepts stamps as
payment.

I Am a Galle

I am a Galle, a Transgender Priestess of love,
I gladly gave what's below,
To find what is above.
As in the days of old, it is in the new,
To the spirit inside you must be true.
Under the pine tree Attis did cry,
To be one with the Great Mother, he had to die.
As the violets did rise,
Attis did receive Her prize.
The son was now gone,
The Daughter was now where she belonged.
My Journey here has been full of hardship and strife,
But as a Priestess and a Gallae, I can now live my life.
I will sing and dance till I swoon,
I will become one with the Goddess, under the blood
of the moon.
To be as I have always long to be,
Cybele and Inanna, You have set me free.
With the violets I will share the waters of life, as I
did for Inanna,
Let them grow under the pine, and let my sisters call
me Bella Donna.
I came as the Raven in the dark of the night,
Nevermore to suffer from fear, oppression and fright.
O Goddess, to You I give so many thanks,
Please add the grateful Gallae to Your ranks.
Worshipping You in true devotion is how my love is
shown.

Note: I based this poem off of some historical material from the Internet that someone sent to me. This story, myth, legend, or history of Cybele, Inanna, and Attis is an inspiration to me. I will study any and all material I can find from all sources, make my own judgment and/or conclusions and act accordingly.

Let us not create a Jihad, Crusade, Schism or trans-tempest in a teapot.

Before I ever heard of the word or term Galle, or even knew they existed, I knew I was one. It's a shame that Ms. Platine did withdraw from the discussion. But frankly, my dears, my current feelings as to my Gallehood have not changed one bit.

By **Bella Donna Night Raven** 3/21/2001 C.E.

I am curious and somewhat miffed that anyone would deprive me of some historical knowledge they possess. As if they were the high priestess denying me a transgender sacrament. Am I or the rest of us in Transgenderdom not worthy of this truth you possess and withhold. I came a wee bit late to this cat fight, sisters, but I would love to jump in with both feet. Meow!

But in all seriousness, if one refuses to be willing to have an open discussion or debate upon any kind of fact or issue in dispute, then that

person is either intolerant, biased, or has missed the whole point of a dialogue or discussion. I did not sign up for Galle 101 at Transgender University, taught by Ms. Professor Know-it-all. I want to hear from the scholars of the world but not to be preached a sermon by them as gospel.

Did I get carried away? Feel free not to print this or edit it for cattiness. I feel so much better now, prrrrr! –Donna (*Ed. - only minimal grammatical editing done for continuity*)

Sappho

You lived on the island that gave our love a name,
You worshipped Aphrodite and wrote poetry that brought you fame.

You celebrated the Sisterhood of all Women and Girls,
Your words had value beyond diamonds, gold and pearls.

We need you and Your Goddesses even more now today,
There is so much that holds us back and stands in our way.

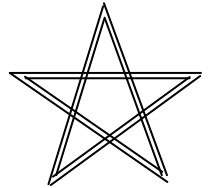
Every Woman who Loves another Woman owes you a debt,
We have come a long way, baby, but it's not over yet.

Until all Women are equal and free, able to live unchained
As eloquent and determined as Sappho we must remain.

We must claim our love as our Goddess given right,
Against all forms of oppression we must fight.

By Bella Donna Night Raven

July 27, 2001 C.E.



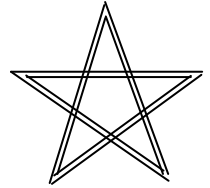
Sappho and *Trans-Les-Sister* were previously published under my name and copyright in an anthology of lesbian poetry and stories called "Women Loving Women" in prison, around January 2004. You can confirm this by contacting Judy Greenspan, 2327 Spaulding Ave., Berkeley CA 94703. Judy is associated with "Sinister Wisdom" of the same address. She would most likely love a copy of *Trans Spirituality* and would share it around in her community.

I wrote *Sappho* as a tribute, and in recognition of my bi/lesbian nature and feelings.

I wrote *Trans-Les-Sister* in response to some exclusionary type policies and attitudes in various women's groups towards transgender women and persons.

Trans-Les-Sister

I am a Trans-Les-Sister,
 Don't shut me out 'cause I used to be a mister.
 When I make love with my mate, she knows I am her girl.
 The Goddess made us this way, She put us in this world.
 I am not trying to take anything away from you,
 So please be understanding and give me the right to choose.
 Even though it was hardly a choice,
 'Cause deep inside of me I heard her voice.
 I have been swimming upstream for so long,
 Oh, my sisters, please don't tell me I am wrong.
 Judge me only on my acts, not by bio-gender.
 Please don't call me a pretender.



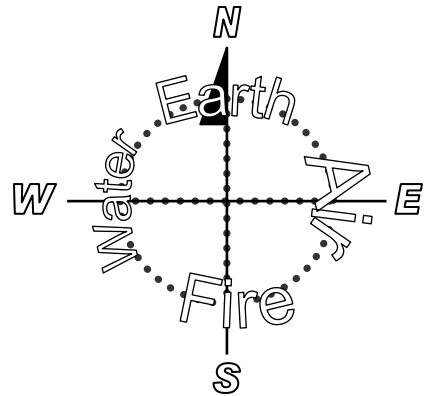
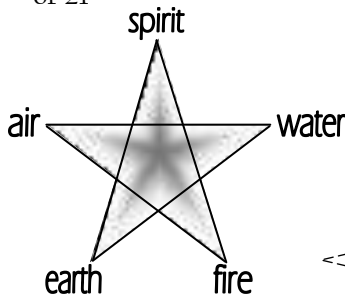
By Bella Donna Night Raven

Major Pagan Holidays

- Samhein (pronounced *sow'-en*) Oct 31
 (aka Halloween, All Saint's Day, Day of the Dead)
- Yule (Winter Solstice) Dec 21 or 22
- Imbolc (pronounced *im'bolck*) Feb 2
 (aka Candlemass, Groundhog Day)
- Ostara (aka Easter, Spring Equinox)
 March 21 or 22
- Beltane (aka May Day) May 1
- Midsummer (aka Litha, Summer Solstice) June 21 or 22
- Lammas (aka First Harvest) Aug 1
- Mabon (aka Fall Equinox) Sept 20 or 21

Some practical Pagan info

- The concept of the Goddess Trinity
- The Maiden – Young Goddess, Virgin
- The Mother – Life giver, Caretaker, Nature
- The Crone – Sage, Wisdom
- Symbol = ☸



Elements of the pentagram

**Tsunami**

Religious Right

By Tsunami Caryl-Averlynn (now residing in Adelanto CA!)

Jack Danforth, a former U.S. Senator, has published a memoir and presentation of issues, titled "Faith and Politics", of today's religio-political agenda.

Before I get into that, let me give you ladies some background on Mr. Danforth: He served 18 years in the U.S Senate, repping Missouri. A former presidential special envoy to Sudan; U.N. Ambassador; Investigator of the Branch Davidian disaster in Waco, Texas - hell, you'd think he'd rest on his laurels.

But Danforth has a new ambition: Rescuing his beloved Republican party from what he sees as a great danger in his book, the too intimate fusing of religion with politics.

You need to know Danforth is not just a GOP part elder, but a man of the cloth, an ordained Episcopal priest. Indeed, his education is impressive, dual degrees in law and divinity from Yale University, and in the *same year*. Though he opted for law, he has remained active in some part of the ministry ever since, even presiding over former President Reagan's funeral.

Borrowing from one of his quotes: "The question is not whether people of faith should engage in politics, but *how* we should go about doing so..." (emphasis added).

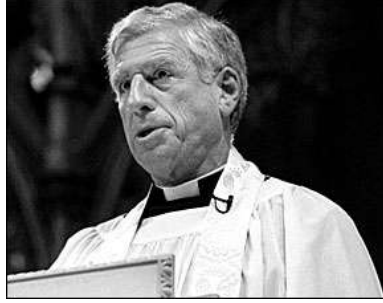
It's not discomfort with religious values in public life that's behind his new drive, but concern that 'religion' is being deliberately used to divide Americans.

Remember, politics practiced rightly is the glue that keeps a diverse nation together and the catalyst that moves it forward. Yet today the political arena is plagued by rancor and incapable of resolving the most crucial issues confronting America.

Danforth sees a link between that unhappy state and the power of Christian conservatives within his own party. He says the GOP has been taken over by the Christian right. His book offers, in his opinion, a desirable alternative. The center. He uses for example the Terry Schiavo case. (Remember her?) To him, Republican leaders "abandoned with ease" the party's principle against government intervention in state matters when they sought to block the removal of her feeding tube.

**Jack Danforth, former Senator**

Then there are the stances on stem-cell research and federal marriage amendment legislation, which Danforth says are attempts to legislate a particular religious view. What do you think, grrrls? Is the Christian right guilty of using politics to wedge issues between Americans? Who was it that made same-sex marriage a political issue?



Who made abortion on demand an issue?

But I would hate to see us exchange one 'agenda' for another one. What moves me most is the divisive role of religion, here and abroad in politics - ladies, it's time we think/talk about these things more seriously. Your 'faith' needs it, your future depends on it.

Humor/Joke Time Shared by Bella Donna Night Raven

Q: What is the hardest and most dangerous part of a female-to-male sex change operation?

A: The part where they remove half the brain, and put the other half between their legs.



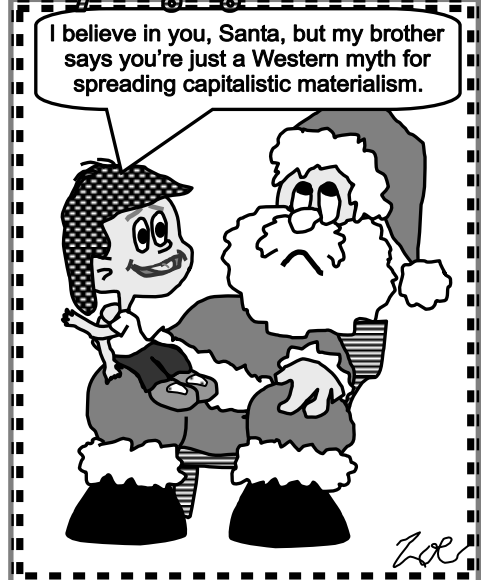
Body Language

Zoe Kala



Body Language

Zoe Kala



Flag on the Field

Zoe's humor

Sure, the “team” metaphor for distinguishing between ‘gay’ and ‘straight’ is easily overdone. Perhaps it could use more mileage with a fresh application. Consider with a smile how these football “penalties” apply to the many “fouls” we endure, as gender gifted *players* out in the field of life.

What penalty could you call on a zealous ex-gay? Off-sides.

What penalty could be called on you if you embraced your nervous partner in public? Holding.

What penalty could you call on another LGBTQ who moves in the one you've been flirting with? Pass interference.

What penalty could you call on another who rejects your flirtations with homophobic or transphobic remarks? Roughing the passer.

What penalty could be called on you for flirting with another who keeps giving cues of being too straight for T*? False start.

What penalty could be called on one who pressures you for sex after you have already expressed disinterest? Encroachment.

What penalty could be called on the “system” for not allowing you to get out there and play the field? Delay of game.

What penalty could you call on a straight who hints he is interested in you only if you have all the “right plumbing” down there? Illegal Fair Catch Signal.



What penalty could be called on the guy who uses us T* only long enough to get back to his girl in the world? Illegal substitution.

What penalty could be called on the guy who gets physically intimate too fast? Illegal use of the hands.

What penalty could be called on the guy who brushes up against you just to get his kicks? Illegal touching (or illegal contact).

What penalty could be called on the guy who forces you to the ground to perform on him against your will? Intentional grounding.

What penalty could be called on the guy who treats you as a mere sex object and fails to appreciate the gift you really are? Unsportsmanlike conduct.

What penalty could be called on the guy who flirts with the trans who insists she is only interested in other girls? Ineligible downfield.

What penalty could be called on the guy who gets too presumptuous with you when trying to make a pass at you? Illegal forward pass.

What penalty could be called on the guy who runs to PoPo to set you up 'cause you won't do the nasty with him? Contacting an official.

What penalty could be called on the prison industrial complex for the way it mishandles the gender gifted? Unnecessary roughness.

What penalty could be called on a "corrections" policy that refuses to help "correct" our imposed gender assignment? Illegal procedure.

What penalty could be called on the Wisconsin Republican legislators for interfering with the WDOC policies for correctly ameliorating the medical condition of gender dysphoria? Illegal blocking.

What penalty could be called on the policymakers who put up too many barriers for much needed GRS? Blocking below the waist.

What penalty could be called on any authority who demeans and mistreats a gender gifted soul? Personal foul.

Sorry if you truly do like football. But you may never be able to watch a game again with a perfectly straight face!



Mikki departs

By Amanda Armstrong

Mikki (aka Gypsy Otter) has decided to move on without us, and we respect her decision. She has requested to no longer be a part of *Trans Spirituality*.

Due to her deep disagreements with two recent editorial decisions, one having to do with the title of her submission and the other with the manner in which she was invoked in the description of Amanda and Ms. Platine's dialogue, Mikki has decided to discontinue her participation in this venture. For this reason, Mikki's name will no longer appear in this publication as one of the Founding Corps, as she requested. We are respecting her request, beginning with the previous issue.

Nonetheless, we honor the role Mikki had with the beginning of this project and acknowledge with gratitude all her previous contributions. Her presence will be sorely missed, as we wish her well on her life's journey.

Chicago Excursion

Steph

Some venues that showed a screening of *Cruel and Unusual* were accompanied by a discussion with someone involved with trans prisoners. The airing at the University of Michigan (Ann Arbor) included Dean Spade, of the Sylvia Rivera Project.

Mandy picked up her own copy and prepared to screen it for the GLBT center of the University of Chicago. Though she is herself involved with trans inmates, she invited me, Steph, to come to Chicago, and share something from what I have learned from the inside. So I prepared a PowerPoint presentation and bought a plane ticket to Chicago (my first time flying!).

After flying into O'Hare on Friday, November 10th, at the expense of the GLBT center, Mandy and I met up and stopped off at the bank.

After adding her name to the Jen Durr Press business account, we went to the Hyde Park (Chicago) campus to prepare for the evening's presentation and screening. The program was to start about 6:30 pm or sevenish, after the pizza's arrived. Around 6:00 pm a heavy rainstorm came through Chicago, dampening our expectations for a high turnout. Perhaps a dozen or so would endure the downpour.

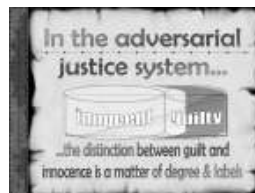


By 7:30 pm we were ready to roll, and amazingly there were around 24 who showed up. Quite wet, of course. After some technical difficulties resolved by Mandy's friend, she introduced me to the attendees. Then I segued to my prepared slide presentation, with 24 slides.

A 'brief' presentation

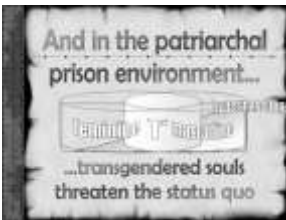
Oh, there's so much to say and little time to say it all. Where do I start? To provide context for what I wanted to share, I briefly shared my background. My activism began in 1993 with trans prisoner outreach. The first exfelon I could assist was my transsexual sister. Then I shared how that led to us both becoming unjustly incarcerated.

This naturally raises a question about guilt and innocence. I used this binary as another cultural norm that falsely dichotomizes reality into extreme categories, just like the gender binarism. I used a slide to illustrate



how few if anyone is absolutely guilty, as few if anyone is absolutely innocent. Considering how transfolk transgress social norms simply for being their gifted selves, it can be easy to see how a bias toward guilt is often applied by social control agencies.

This rigid divide in gender, I explained, is intensified in what I've encountered in the typical male prison environment. The prison culture, from top down, doesn't allow much room for the reality of an overlap. So they continue to make the blatant mistake of



housing us according to whatever is between our legs. "And in the patriarchal prison environment," I asserted, "transgendered souls threaten the status quo" of this *hypermasculinized* gender divide.

For added depth, I shared what I observed were some unwritten rules in this patriarchal system that are so threatening to the trans prisoner:

- Masculinity is measured by the size of his phallus
- Those not "*man*" enough risk being subjugated into a passive feminine role as a "*bitch*"



- The "*bitch*" has only limited worth, mostly how much "*she*" satisfies the "needs" of her *man*
- A "*bitch*" is included in the man's world by allowing herself to be penetrated any way he sees fit
- Power is reserved to the *man*, and anyone too "*feminine*" shall remain powerless
- The man shall show no fear, and the "*bitch*" shall show no anger to her "*man*"
- "If you weren't scared when you did whatever got you here, then don't get scared now!"
- Never trust prison staff, unless you're a stupid *bitch*
- Staying out of trouble is an imperative for going home, but not if your *manhood* is being challenged
- The *man* must appear strong at all times, and the *bitch* must appear subservient to the men

In stark contrast to this atmosphere of violence, I then suggested, is the transwoman or gender variant prisoner with a remarkable depth of spirituality. The fortitude they carry each day to stand up to this gender

violence is inspiring! As they transcend the gender divide, being profoundly



connected to the masculine and feminine aspects of humanity, they also transcend the artificial division between sexuality and spirituality. This can either inspire others to see past their own arbitrary limits and grow into greater wholeness, or it can unfortunately incite new forms of violence from those too spiritually stunted to learn and grow.

“When masculine energy seeks the femininity within” is a slide I used to illustrate what I theorized as the working distinctions between the “gender-normed male” and the “transgendered person.”

Gender-normed male	Transgendered <i>male</i>
Taps 'fem' only in the complementary "other"	Can find such energy "within" (and without)
Tension from 'gender imbalance' persistent	Tension from 'gender imbalance' transitory
Body compels relief via sexual contact with <i>other</i>	Body compels relief via 'transgender' expression
Implies need for restraint and sexual self-control	Implies a mystic link to a deeper sense of being
Reinforces social barriers, like the gender binarism	Transcending barriers to encounter full web of life

If the hypermasculine male is always looking outside of himself for complementary completeness, then it

is understandable to me how he becomes intensely aroused at the sight of every gender variant soul. We intuitively remind him of what is being repressed in his own soul, and nature communicates this need via repeated arousal. By contrast, I can tap into the whole spectrum of gender energies to enjoy wholeness. Since embracing my gender identity, I have found an empowering mystic connection within that liberates me from that kind of persistent discontent.

Of course, others have other views about how their sexuality, gender identity and spirituality converge. I shared how Mandy began the Trans-Religious Dialogue in 2004 to encourage this sharing of ideas. And how in 2005 this TRD has since emerged into this publication.



To put a “face” on these spiritually developed souls, I then shared some slides of those Founding Corps members who have provided a picture.



Once these beautiful women are seen, and their humanity encountered, I utilized the moment to share some of their pressing concerns. From Valjean's pix, comparing her 1975 photo with her more recent portrait, I segued right into the "Trans-injustice" project I have been developing with Valjean, sharing a little bit of her amazing story. And then to the "TRANSaction" vision inspired by Natasha, explaining how these grrrls often have nowhere to go after prison but back to very environment that first led them to prison.

Right before closing, I had to mention how all this activism operates on not even a shoestring budget, and how we hope to soon raise ad revenue and apply for grant funding. Then I opened the floor to Q&A, responding to many informed inquiries into what it's like to be transgender in a men's prison and to some of the ideas I presented.

Cruel and Unusual screening

After the discussion, we watched the Reid Production of *Cruel and Unusual* (released by Alluvial Films).

What I shared in my presentation was largely theoretical; here these women explained the experience vividly in the first person. Janet Baus, Dan Hunt, and Reid Williams painfully captured the essence of what a transwomen experiences in such a caustic environment.

Five transwomen openly shared their struggles inside and outside of prison. As one online review put it succinctly, "Ashley, Linda, Anna, Yolanda and

Ophelia describe their experiences including rape, violence, solitary confinement, and denial of medical care." Access to necessary treatment, inside and out, is also central to its theme.

Ashley, like Ophelia, courageously expressed their exasperation for their circumstances while still inside,

serving longer sentences. Detained in Arkansas, Ashley mused: "A lot of times I wake up, and I look around at my surroundings, and I see all these men. I think,





Anna



Ashley



Linda



Anna (& T* host)



Yolanda

‘What am I doing here?’” Like others, she had already started hormones prior to her sentence, but being denied them has left its oppressive mark.

Yolanda, the youngest of the interviewees, has been on hormones since age 12 and candidly shared how she was sexually abused while under custody. She was interviewed from both inside, while still in harm’s way, and outside as she started to get her life back on track.

From within a Virginia facility, Ophelia (*not pictured*) shared how she began to take matters into her own hands, literally. Her desperation for GRS began years ago with a not-quite-armed holdup, to get money for the operation. After being denied treatment for *gender dysphoria*, she began cutting. Starting with her wrists, then eventually that appendage below.

She appealed the VDOC decision to deny her the treatment she had already begun prior to prison. Initially her suit failed, but with a little help it succeeded in changing Virginia’s policy toward prisoners with *gender dysphoria*.

Linda shared a similar story. She revisited the events that led up to her desperation to be rid of that ‘thing’

between her legs. The Idaho Department of Corrections refused to take her seriously, so she removed it herself. Like the VDOC, the IDOC now has a policy in place for others in her situation. Upon release, Linda couldn’t find employment in her true gender, and subsequently returned to the only place she can get the hormones her body needs – back in the care of the IDOC.

Anna recounts how she was held at gunpoint to assist in a liquor store robbery. Her story sounded so eerily close to mine. Like me, she lost contact with her child as a result of this tragedy. Like the other girls interviewed, she also lost many of the feminine features after being denied the hormones she had been on for five years. Not to mention the psychological damage along the way.

I was encouraged that this documentary at least touched on an issue familiar to many of us: once the authorities know of our unusual gender status, there is a vicious trend to guilt us for crimes we didn’t do, or punish us more harshly for crimes others are punished less stringently. The 67 years imposed upon Ophelia is another case in point.

Valjean's story in this regard would surpass them all. But since the Indiana Department of Corrections didn't permit any direct interviews, Reid Productions chose not to use the footage they took of her last parole hearing.

The documentary also interviews Dean Spade of the Sylvia Rivera Project and others with some knowledge of what we girls go through. For critical balance, there was also another side presented. For example, the lawyer assigned by the VDOC to challenge Ophelia's lawsuit shared his perspective. It was the kind of

"perspective" that exposes how ignorant the majority continues to be about this practice of "masculinizing" transwomen by neglect, and violently imposing the transgressive social norm of the gender binarism against our spiritual being. As this documentary makes its rounds, that ignorance should begin to shrink. And a new hope can begin to dawn.



After the show

Mandy thanked everyone for coming, despite the heavy rain. At least it would be a little dryer on their way home. And they were given much



to think about, amidst this freedom they took for granted.

Several approached me after the screening to either complement me on the presentation or to ask specific questions about its subject matter, or both. It was both encouraging to receive the positive feedback, for all the work I put into it, and to know there is this growing concern for this most marginalized segment of the trans community.

Mandy let me stay in her apartment alone that night. I started watching *Cruel and Usual* again on her DVD/TV, but after a long, long day I fell asleep about half way through it. And slept soundly.

Saturday together in Chicago

After picking me up at her apartment, Mandy took me to a folksy diner called the Heartland Café. After enjoying a mid morning brunch, we headed off to the Field Museum. You see, I had to miss my anthropology class to make this trip, and when I told my professor I'd be in Chicago instead she compelled me to visit the museum. After checking out the Native American exhibits at the museum, we headed

back to Mandy's apartment for some much needed studying time. (I slept through most of it.)

In the late afternoon, Mandy took me to another of her

favorite dives, right there on Clark St. It was a cozy restaurant where we sat on the floor Japanese style (but it's not a Japanese restaurant). We



resumed reading our study material, as we ate and talked casually. And we talked with a common friend on my cell phone, about the Transinjustice project, before heading back to Mandy's place to prepare for the evening.

20 Centimeters

That evening, Columbia College was the location for "Reeling 2006: The 25th Chicago Lesbian & Gay International Film Festival." The event included a screening of "*20 Centimeters*," a Spanish movie about a preop transsexual who is also narcoleptic. During the scenes where she falls asleep, "Marieta" breaks out into song with a full ensemble in her theatrical fantasies. It is only during these musical excursions that we hear any English, like when she covers classic hits by the likes of Queen and Madonna. Otherwise, it's the English subtitles that bring the story to life for us.

As in *Trans-America*, the storyline



weaves in humor that is not at the expense of her gender variance. In contrast to *TA*'s more conservative tale of "Bree" Osbourne, Marieta is a part time

sex worker. She is also compelled to don a male image to get "regular" work. So she reverts to "Adolfo" to clean a mall on the nights she isn't working the streets, all to save up her money for that big operation. She falls in love with a man who likes her anatomy just the way it is – all *20 Centimeters* of it – and this creates some of the cinematic tension.

Where *TransAmerica* breaks the ice, *20 Centimeters* turns up the flame a little. The most you see of the appendage in *TA* is when Bree needs to take a roadside leak. In *20 Centimeters*, there are actually moments where all "20 cm" (8") of it is visible. In one scene where she reflects upon her nude image in the mirror, she closes her eyes and entertains some invisible erotic fantasy in her mind. The view then

switches to the mirror, which suddenly gets a blast of warm stuff as her fantasy is apparently fulfilled in her mind. (Can you imagine the

audience's reaction?) If America isn't quite ready for "Bree," they are not likely to know what to do with "Marieta" – except to hope she stays far away in Spain. Without the mass distribution of *TA*, she likely will.

For those of us outside of Middle America and its middle class perspective, we know this image is much closer to home. In fact, we may see something of ourselves in Marieta's life. Ironically, it was mostly a middle class audience of Columbia College alumni who were there that night. As Mandy noted after the show, it was kinda creepy to hear them laugh at the times that were not scripted to be humorous. It sounded almost as if they were nervously laughing at images that could be found in downtown Chicago, if they ever took the time to see beyond their economically privileged world.

TransAmerica was a wonderful opener to invite mainstream America into the larger experience of being transgender. *20 Centimeters* takes the viewer a step further and dares to invite them into our bedrooms, and to see life with our pathetic check-books. So marginalized is this revealed perspective that it will likely remain within the circuit of gay film venues, where social and economic pressures continue to converge beneath its mainstream veneer. When economic pressures push one of us over the edge, then what? *Cruel and Unusual*, that's what!



After Party

After the screening was a drag show. This was my first drag show in which I wasn't also a participant. They did have an open mike later, and I *was* "en fem," so it was possible. But I hadn't practiced any song, nor confident this was a stage appropriate for my chosen presentation.

There was this air in the room I could feel, and I think Mandy felt it too. It was that almost-liberal attitude that was welcoming only from a distance. "Let us help those poor trannies rise to our beloved station." Have you ever felt that condescending tone of paternalism?

It reminded me a little of that classic Sidney Poitier movie, *Guess*

Who's Coming Home For Dinner. Liberal parents amidst the emerging civil rights era who are all for the "blacks," but not quite sure what to do when one of "those people" starts dating their





daughter. Now there's a good idea for a movie, don't ya think? Devout Democrats who are all for their daughter dating whomever she chooses, until they find out her boyfriend was born female.

Mandy noted it was an older and wealthier crowd. But since the tickets to see the screening included this show, buffet table and all, we certainly availed ourselves. After a few performances we agreed it was quite late, so we headed back to her apartment.

Returning home

The original plan was for me to sleep another night at Mandy's apartment, while she spent another night at her friend's place. My plane was to depart at 7:05 am, so it seemed smarter to drop me off at the airport that night. After packing and getting my things in order, we left for O'Hare around 2:00 am, some ways west of where Amanda lives on the north side.

Mandy dropped me off at O'Hare airport about 2:25 am, as I reflected on what an

amazing weekend it had been. Only then did I realize that, somewhere in the rush to get set for this weekend, I misread my plane ticket. Though the flight from Detroit arrived at O'Hare, the

return trip from Chicago was actually from Midway airport, on the south side of Chicago! *Shit!*

It was too late for Mandy to come back and escort me to the proper airport, so she talked me through the use of the Chicago Transit Authority. I picked up the blue line L-train to downtown Chicago, and from there a local bus down to Midway, just as my cell phone went dead. From my error, we both lacked much needed sleep that night – oops!

On Sunday, November 12th, I made it back to Detroit. And by that afternoon I was back on campus. And back into my little corner of the world where gender giftedness has yet to be fully

appreciated, regardless of economic status or stigma of exfelon. It was encouraging to know I am not alone.

T-S



News Briefs

☺ Donations appreciated

Thanks to Tsunami for donating \$25, helping me to offset the cost of ink cartridges. Thanks to Sue Poe for contributing \$10 and later \$5. That first ten went to the \$11 DBA fee for Jen Durr Press (which was a prerequisite for starting our own business bank account, which itself is something of a prereq for soliciting ad revenue). Thanks to Val for arranging for the Trans Injustice web service to be paid in full.

Thanks to anyone else I have neglected to mention, such as those who contribute with stamps. Of course, thanks to Mandy for fronting most of the cost to this project! Isn't she amazing?

And all my gratitude to everyone who is understanding of my ongoing financial strains. I feel caught between the *rock* of the campus financial aid office and this *hard place* to find a job. There is a possibility that I might have to move to cheaper quarters, so I will keep you posted.

☺ JDP account opened

On June 30th, I attempted to open a business account at the local Chase branch. Since I did not yet have a "doing business as" certificate, that plan was delayed. When I was back in Wisconsin at the end of August I drove down (my first time getting to drive alone since coming home!) to the

county seat (Elkhorn, WI) and filed a DBA for JDP. While I was in Chicago during the Veteran's Day weekend, Mandy was joined to the account on November 10th. It will now be much easier to receive revenue without getting it mixed up with our personal finances.

☺ T* Online: Trans Injustice update

Since the free Geocities site is too limited to post the material Val has sent to me, I have been window shopping for better web services. Val is arranging for the means to pay for a more professional website.

In the meantime, I have been entertaining various ways this online presence can be organized. One idea is to set it up as a kind of blog. After registering, members could post their tragic stories of injustice suffered largely because of their transgender status. Other registered users could then respond to these stories, perhaps rating them by some criteria of degree of injustice. Those voted most tragic would go to the top of the list, to be viewed first.

Val's story would remain a feature of the site, not only because her story inspired it but mostly because her story is so emblematic of this notion of transinjustice. The site could be limited to Val's story, since she has given me sufficient material to fill a website. But inviting others to participate would increase the traffic, and therefore draw more attention to Val's enduring struggle for justice still denied.



If the site can generate enough traffic, it can start paying for itself with moderately placed ads. Of course, one ad would be to promote *Trans Spirituality*. This vision is still new enough for fresh ideas, if you care to give us some input into what you think would work best. We are confident that there is plenty of injustice suffered for being transgendered, from the miscarriage of justices when wrongly convicted for murder to being sentenced three times as long as others in similar situations. Your ideas count, while your life stories count even more.

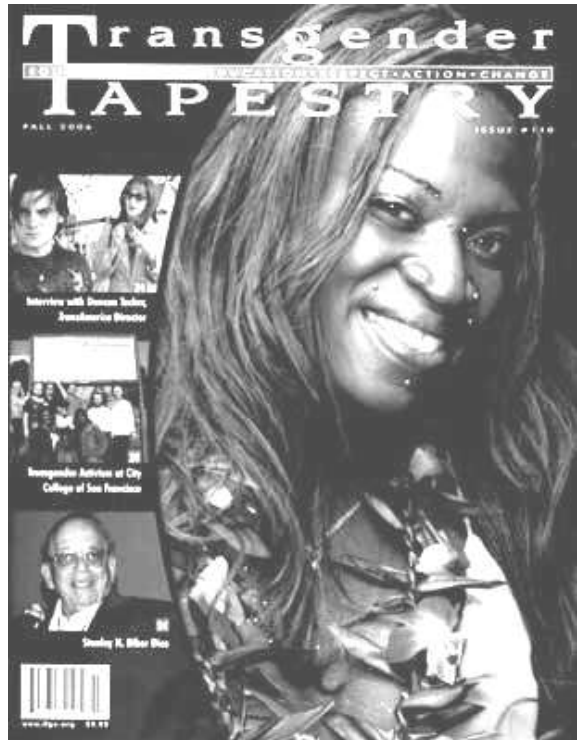
👄 **Tapestry resumes publication**

After a long hiatus, IFGE has resumed publication of *Tapestry*. They switched to a different printer, which is actually delivering higher quality for less cost. Dallas Denny and Monica Helms have moved on. Denise Leclair, the IFGE Executive Director, is serving as the interim editor. For more information you can write to: IFGE, PO Box 540229, Waltham MA 02454-0229.

One of the ways they've cut costs is by eliminating the manila envelope and shipping it in shrink-wrap. To accommodate those sensitive to its contents, they have added a white cover over the original glossy cover.

That such a central publication to the transgender community could falter gives me cause to pause for thought. With most T* out here getting their news and commentary online, there seems less of a need now for such a print journal. But the need persists for many, not the least are all those denied access to the Net.

I hope to see publications like *Tapestry* continue in print for years to come. Obviously, because I expect *Trans Spirituality* will continue to be available in print into the indefinite future. Especially if the Net continues to be off limits to this most marginalized segment of the trans community.



~~For Fun~~ from Valjean Royal

Seasons Greetings

10/23/06

Dear Editor,

To all, I wish you holiday and seasons greetings!

My O5 submission is enclosed as a very special gift to all my friends of our zine T.S.... Lovin' it!

Enclosures:

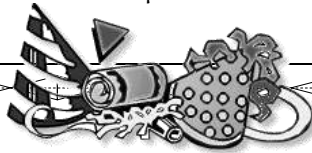
- (A) Birthday Celebration Invitation!!!
- (B) My Gift to all: "Treasures Out of Darkness"
- (C) "Blessings In Disguise"

Happy New Year &
Much Love

To all of you...

My *Trans Spirituality* Family.

Lovingly yours,
Valjean



You are cordially invited to

A BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION!!!

Guest of Honor: Jesus Christ

Date: Every day. Traditionally, December 25
but He's always around, so the date is flexible....

Time: Whenever you're ready.

(Please don't be late, though, or you'll miss out on all the fun!)

Place: In your heart.... He'll meet you there.

(You'll hear Him knock.)

Attire: Come as you are... grubbies are okay.

He'll be washing our clothes anyway. He said something about new white robes and crowns for everyone who stays till the last.

Tickets: Admission is free.

He's already paid for everyone...

(He says you wouldn't have been able to afford it anyway... it cost Him everything He had.

But you do need to accept the ticket!!



Refreshments: New wine, bread, and a far-out drink He calls "Living Water," followed by a supper that promises to be out of this world!

Gift Suggestions: Your life.

He's one of those people who already has everything else.

(He's very generous in return though. Just wait until you see what He has for you!)

Entertainment: Joy, Peace, Truth,

Light, Life, Love, Real Happiness,
 Communion with God, Forgiveness, Miracles, Healing, Power,
 Eternity in Paradise, Contentment, and much more!
 (All "G" rated, so bring your family and friends.)



R.S.V.P. Very Important.

He must know ahead so He can
 reserve a spot for you at the table.



Also, He's keeping a list of His friends for future
 reference. He calls it the "Lamb's Book of Life."

Party being given by His Kids (that's us!!)
 Hope to see you there! For those of you whom I will
 see at the party, share this' with someone today

I Received "*Treasures Out Of Darkness*" from Robert Sambosky of Companions On A Journey. (A Prisoner Reentry and Reduce Recidivism Program). A project of Central United Methodist Church of South Bend, Indiana. It came with the following message; "A couple of months ago we received the following word from an e-mail conference of which we are a part. It so impacted our hearts that we felt we were to share it with everyone we possibly could. The reason that it affected us so dramatically is because it gives voice to what we have believed and preached for years. We now seeing those things come to pass. We tried to track down the author, Bill Yount, but were not successful. We have shared it on our on-line newsletter, prayer letter, and now we are sharing it with you. Share it with a friend!"

I personally found this piece to be powerful,
 encouraging gospel that I want to share with you –
 from behind the walls of the Pendleton Correctional Facility



Valjean Royal w/Love & Prayer



Treasure Out Of Darkness

By Bill Yount

It was late and I was tired, wanting, to go to sleep, but God wanted to talk. It was about midnight, but it dawned on me that God does not sleep. His question made me restless. "Bill, where on earth does man keep his most priceless treasures and valuables?" I said, "Lord, usually these treasures like gold, silver, diamonds and precious jewels are kept locked up somewhere out of sight, with usually guards and security to keep them under lock and key. God spoke, "Like man, my most valuable treasures on earth are locked up."

I then saw Jesus standing in front of seemingly thousands of prisons and jails. The Lord said, "These have almost been destroyed by the enemy, but these ones have the greatest potential to be used and to bring forth glory to my name. Tell MY people, I am going this hour to the prisons to activate the gifts and callings that lie dormant in these lives that were given before the foundation of the earth.

"Out from these walls will come forth an Army of Spiritual giants who will have power to literally kick down the gates of Hell and overcome satanic powers that are holding many of My own people bound in My own house. Tell my people that great treasure is behind these walls in these forgotten vessels. My people must come forth and touch these ones, for a mighty anointing will be unleashed upon these for future victory in My kingdom. **THEY MUST BE RESTORED.**"

I then saw the Lord step up to the prison doors with a key. One key fit every lock and the gates began to open. I then heard and saw great explosions, which sounded like dynamite going off behind the walls. It sounded like all-out spiritual warfare. Jesus turned and said, Tell my people to go in now and pick up, the spoil and rescue these." Jesus then began walking in, touching inmates who were thronging Him. Many being touched instantly began to have a golden glow come over them. God spoke to me,

"THERE'S THE GOLD!" Others had a silver glow around them. God said, "THERE'S THE SILVER!"

Like slow motion they began to grow into what appeared to be giant knights in armor-like warriors. They had on the entire armor of God and every piece was solid and pure gold! Even golden shields! When I saw the golden shields, I heard God say to these warriors: "Now go and take what Satan has taught you and use it against him. Go and pull down the strongholds coming against MY church."

The spiritual giants then started stepping over the prison walls with no one to resist them, and they went immediately to the very front line of the battle with the enemy. I saw them walk right past the church and known big-name ministers, for their power with God was surpassed by the giant warriors like David going against Goliath! They crossed the enemy's line and started delivering many of God's people from the clutches of Satan while demons trembled and fled out of sight at their presence.

No one, not even the church, seemed to know who these spiritual giants were or where they came from. All you could see was the armor, the golden armor of God, from head to foot, and the shields of gold were there. The shields were restored to God's House and there was great victory and rejoicing. I also saw silver, precious treasure, and priceless vessels being brought in. beneath the gold and silver were the people that nobody knew: **REJECTS OF SOCIETY, STREET PEOPLE, THE OUT-CAST, THE POOR** and the **DESPISED**. These were the treasures that were missing from his House.

In closing the Lord said, "If MY people want to know where they are needed, tell them they are needed in the **STREETS**, the **HOSPITALS**, the **MISSIONS**, and **PRISONS**. When they come there they will find Me and the next move of my spirit and they will be judged by My Word in Matthew 25:42. 'For I was hungry and you gave me no meat; I was thirsty and you gave me no drink; I was a stranger and you took me not in; naked and you clothed me not; sick and in prison and you visited me not.'"

Blessings In Disguise...

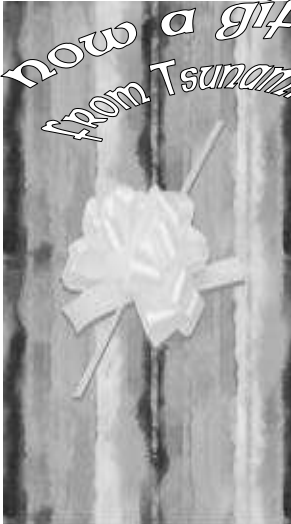
*Seasons
Greetings
from
Tsunami*



We all want happiness
and dread the thought of rain.
When the sun fails to shine,
we worry and complain.
We forget that God above
is infinitely wise,
and sometimes our ails
are blessings in disguise.
For if we're always happy
filled with sunshine and cheer,
our hearts would hold no mercy
for others who shed tears.
So when trouble comes knocking,
remember to stay strong.
Rainbows always follow the storm
and dark clouds never stay long.



*More Fun
now a gift
from Tsunami*



Dear Lord,

So far today, am I doing all right.



I have not gossiped, lost my temper, been greedy, grumpy, nasty, selfish, or self-indulgent. I have not whined, complained, cursed, or eaten any chocolate. I have charged nothing on my credit card.

But I will be getting out of bed in a minute, and I think that I will really need your help then.

Seasons Greetings

NOTE: Deadline for submissions to next issue is February 1st, 2002

Submissions that arrive after the deadline are likely to be used, but I cannot guarantee I will have enough time to fully review and edit such late material.

Because of the many snailmail issues endured recently, I am suggesting that any editorial business be directed to my new residential address: **Steph Turner, 3204 University Student Apartments, Rochester MI 48309-4401.** This will be my "home" starting January, at least till next fall. By then I hope to find my own apartment, if I can only first find a job!

By the time Amanda will take this issue to the printer, I will have moved out of 210 Hill House. Any mail sent to that address *should* reach me, but I lost my faith in mail snail to count on it.

All formal business with the zine should still be referred to the Wisconsin address. Thank you for your gracious feedback to the previous issues. And for your honest critique. As you know, my schedule is now so busy that I cannot always review the manuscript in fine detail, and mistakes slip by. My deep apologies if this drastically alters the meaning of any content.

Tsunami suggests I start a section to correct these errors. What do you think? "CORRECTIONS," but not in the institutional sense of the word. Then I can aim to shrink the section over time.

Thanks for your understanding and support. Thanks for just being you, living true!

Steph

TRANS SPIRITUALITY
BACK PAGE

Winter Solstice



Join me in welcoming the return of the sun.