

TRANS SPIRITUALITY

A TRANS-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

Issue 09

Winter 07/08



TransAction Program begins

TransInjustice & TDOR

Plus much more...

**TRANS SPIRITUALITY
A TRANS-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE**

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

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

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Letters to the Editor

Hello Steph,

It was fabulous to receive your Autumn newsletter. Thought I would never hear from you since my response to your newsletter was returned to me. (Because Steph had moved off campus by the time she sent this letter.)

I apologize for the delay (*as do I*) in responding to your newsletter. However, things have been a little difficult for me as I continue to struggle for my freedom, and to be treated with dignity and respect until that glorious day of release comes.

I am really intrigued with your Trans Injustice website efforts. I will try to get a hard copy of it. I liked your SOME IDEAS FOR TRANS ACTION and faith-based.

I have a solid legal background if in any way it could help improve the lot imprisoned trans-women. Just let me know how I might be able to help.

If I had to label myself it would be naturalogics—considering everything a natural aspect of life that, with reason, can be understood logically. Natural plus logic equals naturalogics. An individual studying naturalogics could be considered a Naturalite. Hence, my last name.

Naturalogics is pretty much how you defined “spirituality.” I just cannot associate myself with anything that could be remotely considered “religious,” such as “spirituality.” Just cannot be part of something that has

slaughtered more people throughout the blood stained pages of history than a thousand Hitlers could do in a million lifetimes. Perhaps and over-exaggeration, but I am sure you understand.

Thanks again for sharing your newsletter with me. Find it really edifying and inspirational. Keep up the good work. Drop me a line when you can.

Sincerely,
Your sister in our struggles,
Jami Naturalite

Amanda,

Hello! This is Delicious. I am writing to you in response to a letter I recently received from Ms. Tsunami.

She reminded me to be on the look out for issue 09 of Trans Spirituality. Honey, I wasn't even aware that issue 08 came out! I figured that maybe you and Steph came into financial difficulties.

I'm relieved to hear that you girls are still doing your thing. Is there any possibility that I can receive a back issue of the summer edition and be put on your mailing list to receive the winter issue?

I began receiving another newsletter and it's weak in comparison! I want my TS-TRD!

I'm tired of hearing about chicks complain that the state won't provide

them hormones. Please! They need to focus on bigger, better positive things. I mean, if you're real, you don't need breasts to validate your femininity. Did I spell that right?

I'm too lazy to look up the definition!

I applaud you for inspiring us to do better and I'm grateful that we, the trans community, have role models to help motivate us to "live true" in society – post release.

Okay, girl, I'm tired! I'm misspelling words like crazy now. I've been up all day, writing letters and putting in the finishing touches on my songs (for my rap/pop album).

Yes, I'm going to the first transgendered hip hop artist to make it in the mainstream.

Okay, Amanda. Thank you for your time. I know you're a busy girl, so this letter requires no response. I just hope to see those 2 issues come in the mail.

Love,
Delicious

Steph, Natasha, Mandy,

Hey, Girls, what's going on? I just thought of you hard workers and thought I'd drop you a few scribbles to tell you *thanks*, for one, just being you, and also thank you for all the wonderful things you have done and are doing for people's lives. I and *many* other people appreciate you girls. I have *a lot* of love for all of you.

Steph, please tell Natasha and Mandy I said 'hello' and send my love. I can't tell you how good it feels to hear from you girls. The last of my family just passed away (my mother) and I am all alone now. You know how alone we all can feel. This just makes it worse, Steph.

I hope that somehow somehow I can find someone to help ease the pain of being alone. I need friends. I pray that you girls will feel free to write me if you need a friend. Again, thank you, Steph.

Honey, I am willing to help your cause any way possible. Our cause, I should say. When you received a pen-pal request you may send them to me, as I am working on pen-mate pen pal program of mine. People like us need all the love and support we can get, Steph. I realize you two are very busy but I would very much love to continue to stay in contact with you, as I am all alone now. I pray you might find me a single girl to get to know. I am from Laguna Beach, California, and I will help you girls any way I can.

I can't thank you girls enough for your loving concern. Again I urge you to send *all* your pen pal requests to me. My service is *free* and open to *all*. Please help me in turn help others looking for a pen mate by placing my hookup in your zine. Thank you. I want to join you in the cause. Tell Natasha and Mandy I'd love to hear from them.

Love,
Chance

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

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

TRANS SPIRITUALITY is open to submissions. Material can be submitted to: Steph Turner, **TRANS SPIRITUALITY** Editor, 3575 Grove Lane, Auburn Hills MI 48326.

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
Steph Turner

Transcribing
Natasha T'chort

Layout
Steph Turner

Contributors
**Mishka Alexander, *Angel*,
Tsunami Caryl-Averlyn,
Izzy Gay, *Zoe Kala*, Valjean
Royal, Jason Lee Sutton,
Natasha T'Chort, 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,
MaryKay Condit, Mandy**

Circulation
Natasha T'chort

Revenue, Distribution
Amanda Armstrong

FEATURES

Hail and Greetings...

21-Dec-2007

By Natasha T-Chort

Well, as stated last time, and in my concurring to Steph's request, this is my submission to give you girls something to relate to at some coming point in life...if not, maybe you already had a similar experience, and if not...I'm sure you'll have a good laugh... some ov (sic) my actions sure come to a comical outcome. Other than that, the typical boo-hoo junk.

Freed at last, well, almost

To start, let me say this...I'm finally out, I'm safe, and...the rest is yet to come. The system ov the NDOC is scandalous, depraved, destructive (i could go on and on with tag names for NDOC)...and above all, inconsiderate to the rightful needs ov the system's population. The final act upon me from the NDOC was (i have a very dear friend that has spent 18 plus years in NDOC who should ov been home with his family 3 months ago but isn't, due to the



system's lack ov concern to account to him 117 days flat time, illegally making him reserve)... when the law changed to accommodate the overcrowding... thus placing the computer dates in limbo, therefore, all release dates were estimations at best. Making my plans for where and when, almost impossible...to accompany this little NDOC incompetence... you'll love this, was when I finally did receive a precise release date, and plans have been set and readied, I was then at the last

minute told I was not being released to whom was to pick me up, but turned over to the Las Vegas county jail for a child support warrant!!!

This was a big interruption in the planning process...sending my already mentally unstable mind into a whirl of fears and apprehension. However, I did survive without a single incident. I arrived at the jail on the 3rd of Oct. And was on the Vegas strip on the 5th. What money I had was either spent on makeup, stolen by unseen hands or lost on a bus ticket to Reno, NV....the rest was enjoyed to some degree, withheld at this time...(grin).



Uh, this is not quite what I had in mind

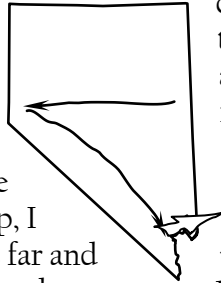
During this time of waiting for my bus...an 8 hour delay, which I misunderstood as 18 hours, I had been careless with my funds...i was drunk and I was talked into buying a little weed, which is where I somehow was ripped for a \$100. I

was in such a state of oddness I contemplated hitchhiking to a nearby town to either see my son or avenge myself and hurt the one who told the cops on me...even worse was not knowing if I'd be successful in either task, much less if my son would want to see me. I started to cry at an alarming rate...and my desperation had me seeking the Trans scene. I thought I would say good-bye to the secular world and go to what I know, rather than face my fears of uncertainty. Fear and self-loathing became overwhelming to the point that when I found the girls, 3 of them turned tricks away to console me. Once being set straight by them (thanks Patricia, I still think you're hot) I was on my way back to downtown to the bus depot.

When I got there, I found out I missed my bus by 10 hours!!! At that point, I was crying again, thought I was stuck in Vegas. Two girls took me into the bathroom (yes, the girl's bathroom, which took me some time to do now without fear of what anyone would say or think... it's a natural thing now once again), they cleaned me up and helped me redo my makeup, telling me they will have the Greyhound

reissue me another ticket. And they did, for free. However...once I got the ticket I had a 3 hour wait...I fell asleep. As I woke up...I watched my bus leaving without me. The clerk told me they already reprinted another ticket when they couldn't wake me up. Yes, I was feeling really stupid by this time. They put me on a bus that was leaving in 30 minutes, and was a different route just to get me out of Vegas. During the trip, I reflected on everything thus far and thought... OMFG, I'm going to have a hard road ahead of me to readjust to the new world before me. I realized the 12 plus years in the system had taken a hard toll on me...that I then truly felt my contempt for the US judicial system at its most personal understanding. Experience is the reality of my opinion, and can not be altered at this time of my life.

As I was led further into the unavoidable experience, the more I recognized my response and actions to my environment. I tensed up in public places that made me feel vulnerable, I put my back to walls...everything you would expect me to say is what I would...so I'll save a few words instead.



Getting back on track

When I finally was picked up by my intended connection to Reno (a preplanned hookup for me to do some tattoo work in exchange for a head start in my TRANS-ition, with clothes, better makeup

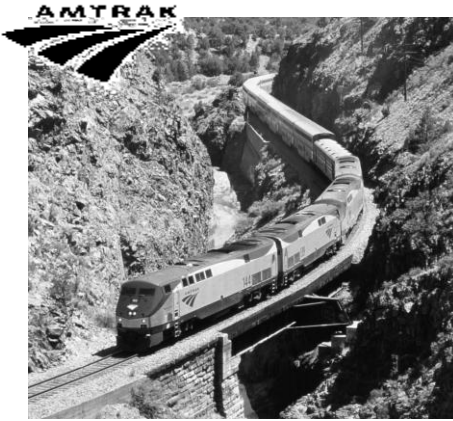
collection and other needed things, as well as an anticipated tattoo kit), I immediately felt a much needed vibe of safety and comfort. It was becoming too much in one length of time to handle public

domain on my own. Strange how I almost felt it wishful to be back in my cell in the NDOC. And that was where all my complaints of the system was controversial... no doubt the system is foul, but I missed my cell with its familiar comfort, I can't explain...but most of all I missed the people who I considered friends. There are only a small few, (hello to Troy, Sandie and Delicious at ESP, and many others, all over the Nevada state where I was removed from long before my exit, I miss and care for you all) but they mean a great deal to my experience in my life's path.

My time in Reno was quite enlightening to what to expect in this new world...and believe it, girls, after the time I served, this is

a new world to me. I got to get my first taste of the computer and the Internet, good food for sure!!! And a freedom that was so odd, I again don't have words to describe. I got to do as I pleased, dress as I wished and a plethora of other go along's that I don't know where to begin... and oddly enough...I didn't know what to do with it all.

After my comfort and love grew for the people I spent this time with, it was time for me to get on a train and head east to Steph's...my objective all from the start



as we had planned for so many months prior. Again, I felt a pull of fear, and anticipation...but most of all a sadness of leaving the ones I consider friends and family. (And even stronger, my dire need to be with Steph.) I had to leave early due to the sudden relocation of my hookup in Reno, and I'm still trying to contact them again. But my time there is a great pool of fond memories.

Time to head east

My train ride was yet another awesome experience, as I had never before been on a train. Friggin' awesome experience...I'll never ride a bus again if preventable. If you haven't been on one either, it's a must do...if you're going to get out and plan to venture to another place...I recommend you go by

train. I won't go into detail on what happened to me... some things are a personal experience... but that was the last place I expected 'things' to happen. I met interesting people and was treated quite well. And to see the county this way is something

I want to do again.

On the train I met a guy who I had enjoyed company with, so after the final destination came to a stop, he gave me his number, and suggested we hook up later that night in Chicago if my friend was up to it. So once I got my fill of hugs from Steph and took my luggage to her car, I mentioned the invitation. Seen as this was our first night together, in Mandy's backyard, and it being Hell-o-ween

night, she agreed it would be an enjoyment to be treated by Vinzant. So, I called him, we meet him outside his hotel, and we went to a cozy pub around the corner. We sat and enjoyed each other's company and stories for about two hours and decided to call it done.

Vinzant and I still talk once in a while by phone to say hello.

Since the timing was right for Steph to pick me up as she headed north to Wisconsin, to see her family, as well as to see her doctor's appointment in Green Bay, I went with her to do just that. Again fears were alleviated once I got to meet her mother and other aspects of the family. I was and am still comforted by her family. I'm welcomed and even treated as if I too am a part of this family. How fitting...Steph is my sister. I'm feeling at home while typing this submission during our next visit a month later, on a laptop we purchased the other day for this very purpose. It's now the holiday seasons, and I'm wondering how this wide range of what this time of year means to each of us



(especially me as a Satanist) will effect my visit this time. As Steph and I share it as a Yule/winter solstice celebration, we join her understanding family with gifts to exchange and feelings to express. It is on the solstice when we return to Michigan. In conclusion to what

I was saying...my experience of the family during both visits is something that means a lot to me.

After those few days spent in Wisconsin in early November, it was time to get going to our final destination in Auburn Hills, MI. On the way, we once again stopped in Chicago, this time to meet up with Amanda. Yes, our sister in arms Amanda. Again, this was a great night to remember... Amanda is super cool, super cute and I am proud to have her friendship. She treated us to a meal and a nice length of time spent going over all of our plans and stories. I also am fortunate to have been able to get a few months worth of b-control to hold me over until I get some support in receiving HRT pills. But that's another story.

Arriving in Michigan

Leaving Chicago behind we finally get home...we arrived late when all were asleep...I got to see my own room, my own computer to use and where I was to be for some time...I was so overwhelmed and a loss of words...i had not a single thought I could express. I looked at Steph and all that came out was 'yefrhliuahrefoqhph'...she said 'what?'... I said 'thank you'. She showed me how to do things and where things were, etc... And we spent the night exploring the things to be in my care.

The next evening I woke up to meet our roommate whom you know as 'Watson' and her boyfriend, Jordan. Yet again, my and all anticipations between us have been conquered... and we are all good friends. I have been here with them now for almost two months and everything is still and will remain a strong bond of friendship and respect. There is nothing any one of them can ask of me that I wouldn't do. Watson is a friend I feel close to and I care a great deal for her... Jordan is a really sweet guy and a



good friend to have...Steph??? Let's just say, I'm very dedicated to her and my loyalty is something I'll always honor...she means the world to me. She literally saved my life from a past I don't care to relive.

The weeks passing had pulled me through a cycle of varying emotions that if I were not already an emotional wreck...i'd of been still in a healing phase. The week of 'the day of remembrance', which is a national recognition day for all trans-gender people passed into death, be it murder, suicide or other, I had the roller-coaster ride of my life...so many things...too many to tell here now. But the

thing that I've noticed most in retrospect...for me...is, it don't get any easier...if anything...this is the hardest part of my life yet. If it weren't for all that I have to support me, there would be one more name on the list for the annual 'day of remembrance'.

There is much more to all of this...all between it as well...but I've shared all I wish to at this point. Enjoy the pictures, I'm sure they say a lot as well. And there will be more to come.

TransAction Program emerging

We are doing all we can to get the TransAction Program created... there is much to do and it is a slow and trying process. So, please bear with us on what interactions you all will eventually have with us on many levels. I have much to learn in the community and the process to do things...and the computer... augh, don't get me started. Many of you have expressed concern as to why you haven't heard word from Steph yet, as well as other responses on other matters. Please understand that with all that is going on, there is little likelihood that you will get a personalized response any time soon. Once things are running more smoothly, I myself will be responsible for responding to all letters. There will also, regrettably, be a decrease in what requests will be fulfilled. There's only so much time in the day and Steph needs to stay focused on her education.

Please try to understand that anything that is requested of me, that isn't deemed an urgent or pressing situation, shall be answered according to its importance and ability of the overall program. Like I heard in a radio ad the other day, "Your call will be answered in the order of its importance to us." They were joking, of course, but I have to keep

focus on what will work and what will continue to work. If I fail to do so, not only will I fail for the reason I am here to start with, but I will fail in my loyalty towards Steph... and that is unacceptable. So, please be kind enough to let me get a grip on all I need and the time to do so, before I can attend to many of your requests. I don't want to be negative in responding to what some of you will ask, so try to be mindful to what you ask...that's it for now, so hold yourself up and remember you're not alone.

Etc.

Oh, in case you were wondering...yes, my son does want to see me and we have been talking on the phone as of late. I also have my daughter in my life now too. We to have been communicating for a few weeks longer than my son and I (different mothers and locations), and I have their support in my current state and accept me in full...as is. They're impressive...my pride in them is beyond measure. My eldest, Ashley, is the girl I was meant to be...my son, Jesse, is the young man I had wished he would turn out to be...neither one could do anything to change how I feel about them.



Until 'necks' time...
Natasha T'chort

Let the TransAction Program Begin!

By Steph

Life is what happens when busy making other plans

Natasha's outdate was moved up, then moved back, then moved again. But I had to pick a date for the bus ticket and stick to it. So we agreed to have her come out here a month after she was released, to give her some time to settle some matters in Nevada and get some things before heading east. And give me some time to address my dental issues in Wisconsin. On my way back to Michigan I would then pick her up at the train station, and on that first Saturday in November we would meet up with Mandy before leaving Chicago. Then TAP would officially begin, or so we thought.

The place where Natasha was staying in Reno suddenly needed to bust a move, threatening to leave her momentarily homeless. She contacted Amtrak and was able to move up the departure date. Now Natasha would be arriving in Chicago on All Hallows, that last

Wednesday in October. However, who would pick her up in Chicago? Mandy? Not on such short notice for she had other plans she couldn't alter. Me? I was anticipating driving through Chicago on November 1st, on my way to Wisconsin for some much needed dental work. Could Natasha wait?

Perhaps Natasha could stay with Mandy until I arrived the next day. But that didn't work out either. One option was to have her take the train all the way to Pontiac or Detroit, for a few bucks more. But by the time the train would get here I'd already be on my way toward Wisconsin. So I left a day early and ended up



at the train station in Chicago on that Wednesday afternoon.

The train was scheduled to arrive around 4:00 pm, but didn't get in till around 8:00 pm. Hmm, guess I didn't have to miss my morning class after all. But then I made good time getting through Chicago, missing the stifling rush hour.

Ah, so we finally meet in person, in Chicago

As I'm sitting there at the station, trying to catch up on my Sociology of Religion reading assignment, I hear them announce on the intercom that Natasha's train has finally arrived. I quick run out to my car to grab my camera and try to capture the moment as she detrains. But by the time I get back the train has already been emptied of all its passengers, and I'm wondering where Natasha went. No doubt, she's likely wondering where is her ride in Chicago?



I return to the second floor of the station, where the restaurants are, and hope we find one another at the agreed upon rendezvous spot. It's a noisy, crowded station, and I scan across the mezzanine to see if I can locate someone I have only seen a few pictures. She spotted me first, and instantly I recognized her with her embellished body of tattoos.

After briefly sizing each other up and getting personally acquainted, Natasha shared some details about her recent days in Reno and the last couple days on the train. She spoke of a new friend she met along the trip, who also stopped in at Chicago. We join him at a local dive to share a bite and drink, and a few laughs.

After a couple hours in Chicago, we head north toward Wisconsin. We arrive at my Mom's place about 1:00 am. Now with my undivided attention, we stay up till around 3:30 am getting to know each other a little better.

Southeastern Wisconsin

By 7:00 am, I am up again and gathering the aluminum to take to the recycler in town. It comes to \$5.80 and we agree to give it to Natasha, so she can have some spending money. We stop off at the

local thrift store, and there goes most of that \$5.80! And she soaks in what money cannot buy, the amazing landscape foreign to the desert vistas of Nevada.

After stopping for lunch at home, we head off in the opposite direction. After a stop at the bank, we head out to Mukwonago to check out boots fit for a Midwest winter. Disappointed in the limited selection, we drove another twenty-some miles to Milwaukee to a major shopping mall. We find some really nice boots at Hot Topic, but priced beyond what we are prepared to pay. At one of the shops we are told of a better selection of boots at a shoe store on Milwaukee's north side, so with a map in our hands and confused navigational directions in our heads we get back on the highway...in search of footwear.

We find a great selection of boots at affordable prices at this place called the Barefoot Shoe Store. For around \$25 each, Natasha and I picked up a pair of suede boots with wedge heels. Hers is black, mine is brown. Hers is petite, mine is, well, much larger.

By now it is dark and time to return to my Mom's, almost 50 miles west of there. After a few more stops, we return a few bucks

poorer but much richer in our shared experiences. And these riches are just beginning. Natasha finds in my family the kind of welcoming warmth she has always lacked in her own. And they find in her the kind of caring person who can put a friendly face on the TransAction Program.

Green Bay

The next morning we pack the car and head north to Green Bay. This is a primary reason why I came; to see the dentist at the Oneida Community Health Center just outside Green Bay. My sister and my mother also have appointments at this health clinic. After I'm done seeing the dentist, and waiting for them to finish their appointments, Natasha and I sit near the front gate and discussed our hopes and dreams for the program. How refreshing it was to see how much our separate visions aligned with one another!

After we are all done at the clinic, we head to the local Goodwill – which has become something of a ritual for each time my family drives up to Green Bay. Natasha found a perfect jacket there, but priced beyond our means. We did pick up some more affordable items, then headed on

back to my mom's place in southern Wisconsin.

After returning that evening, my mother offered to share her stock of surplus food. She is always well stocked for the winter, in case she gets snowed in or is not able to use her car, and had enough to spare for us. This filled a vision I had for TAP, to receive foodstuffs and the like from others. And not merely as a charity but as a hand up to us girls who can express its value to us by doing something in return. Natasha brought new energy into my family, and receiving the food was something like receiving a measure of gratitude.

There was so much food it took me a couple almost three hours to pack it into my trunk. The next morning I packed in some more, till it became precarious to try to open the trunk. We were then stocked for weeks, with some food items put in the back seat since there was no room left in the trunk. Natasha was emotionally touched that this

family that she had never met before would be so caring of a unique girl like her that they would open their food pantry to her.

Chicago again

After packing the rest of the car, by putting our bags in the back seat, we left my family's place that Saturday morning around 11:00 am. We headed back down to Chicago at a leisurely pace, taking some time out at a local cemetery so she



can practice her honoring of the dead. After taking some pictures of us posing next to some tombstones, we headed back on the road, and towards our planned

rendezvous with Amanda.

Around 4 pm we met up with Mandy at the Hyde Park campus, where she was going to the University of Chicago. We met up at a local dive, where Mandy and I have shared a bite before. At a mezzanine table, we talked amongst ourselves over dinner and shared our aspirations for the TransAction Program (TAP) and

some ideas for the zine, etc. I shared my ideas to expand the Transgender Day of Remembrance to include the TransInjustice web project. (See elsewhere in this issue.)

About four hours with Mandy in Chicago, and we realize we should be getting back on the road. We have another six to seven hours of driving ahead, and we finally get back to Auburn Hills, just north of Detroit, around 2 am. After unpacking a few essentials, I take Natasha up to her new room. As I had described it in letters to her over the last few months, there is a bed on the north wall, a desk and complete computer station on the south wall (along side a cabinet that would soon serve as her altar), dresser and sewing cabinets on the west wall below the window, and her own closet and doorway to the hallway on the east wall. The closet already has some items that I had been collecting for her, hoping at least some of it would fit. The bed has black sheets and pillowcases, fitting to her tastes. With access to the Internet, the computer station would be her window to a whole new world, opening fresh opportunities for a whole community of TAP transgirls like her dreaming of a day just like this.



TAP into this

Over the next several weeks she would nurture this space as her own and make a home for herself. She would engender the trust of Kim (aka Watson) and Jordan, living downstairs. She would meet members of the local transgender community at the Tuesday night Transgender Rap session at Affirmations. She would meet others in the larger GLBTQA community and find many of them receptive and even compassionate to what we girls have gone (or are continuing to go) through. And she would reconnect with her kids and find them more accepting than expected.

Not everything is falling into place as expected. Her vision for starting a Satanic Coven has yet to materialize, and the tattooing venture has yet to take off. And not many of the contacts I had

collected over the months have returned her calls. Even getting 'mones has proved harder than expected, since those with a stake in the mainstream system are often less willing to spare a few for those without an endocrinologist's consultation.

But she is *home* among those who deeply care for her. Moreover, she is here helping me take the vision for a post-release program for all of us T-girls and helping to make it a reality. Where I am detail and task oriented, she is much more people oriented. Wherever we go, she instantly earns the trust of others.

TAP aspirations

We drove down to Highland Park within a couple weeks of her arrival here, to check out the Ruth Ellis Center. The REC is one of only four drop-in centers for homeless GLBT youth, and serves as a model for TAP. We had an opportunity to sit down and talk with the executive director of REC, Grace McClelland. Natasha instantly won her confidence that we can take the TAP vision and build it into what the REC has become.

Several miles from this drop in center is a new residential facility, next to an empty old house the



REC owns. Grace told us she purchased it only because it was being used to sell drugs, creating problems for the REC residents. They have no plans to develop this fix-it-upper and would be willing to sell it to us, as a TAP residential place, for only \$5000.

With the housing market in the Detroit area hitting record lows, it's no wonder this is the going rate for such a place. It may take something like \$20,000 to develop it, but such development may be put back into the program. Instead

of hiring contractors to do all the work, we would put a bid out there for a contractor who would be committed

(within legal constraints) to hire T-girls or other GLBTQA workers to do much of the labor. One aspiration for TAP is to provide means for income so that the girls will not have to rely on hand outs. We are not looking for hand outs but a hand up, and opportunities to earn our own way will go far to help build our self-esteem and sense of personal security.



TAP in our future

There is so much to do to build this dream that it may not take long for Natasha to feel overwhelmed. We hope to make room for more, to help bring this dream to life. However, there is only one bed right now. But perhaps this too can change in the not so distant future.

The Creating Change Conference is coming up, and perhaps we will find new opportunities there. I submitted a caucus – called “Who cares about transgender inmates?”

– where I hope to invite a discussion about what we can do and what is perhaps already being done to meet the challenging needs of this oppressed minority within an oppressed minority.

The conference receives many ideas for sessions, and selects only a few. To our amazement, our caucus proposal was one of the sessions approved for this year's conference!

In the next issue we will share how this all went. And continue to work towards helping one another live up to our full potential, to *live true* as we were meant to do!

Trans Spirituality road trip to 'Creating Change Conference'

By Mishka A.D.



Steph and Natasha are heading for Detroit City in February for the **Creating Change Conference** (February 6-10, 2008), put on by the National Gay & Lesbian Task Force.

The conference is focused on a variety of topics, including anti-racism organizing, youth leadership, people of color organizing, trainings for leaders of community centers, transgender health concerns, family issues, marriage equality strategies and other leadership-building sessions. In addition, more than 100 workshops, caucuses, meetings, receptions and social events will be offered over the course of the conference weekend.

The mission of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force is to build the grassroots power of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community. They achieve this by training activists and equipping state and local organizations with the skills

needed to organize broad-based campaigns to defeat anti-LGBT referendums and advance pro-LGBT legislation, and building the organizational capacity of the LGBT movement.

Look to your next issue in *Trans Spirituality* to find out what Steph and Natasha discovered and learned at the conference.



Transgender Day of Remembrance, Detroit 2007

By Steph

Since the unsolved murder of Rita Hester on November 20th, 1998, that day has become etched into the collective conscience of the trans community. Starting with Gwendolyn Smith's "Remembering Our Dead" web project, the anniversary of Rita's death has sparked a global vigil to call attention to the problem of violence toward trans-persons.

While this event memorializes those who were taken from us, I had this vision to include those who endure transphobic violence and have not quite left us yet. While this includes many sex workers, homeless trans youth, and the like, I was emphasizing those transwomen who have been imprisoned in men's prisons largely due to the transphobic beliefs of the authorities.

While not detracting from the solemn message of the Day of Remembrance, I wanted to encourage the trans community to include something of an "Hour of Reflection" for the many T* folk

who could be on the short list toward the TDOR if no one does anything to intercede for their safety.

This would be an opportunity to include the TransInjustice web project in the broader vision of the Remembering Our Dead web project.



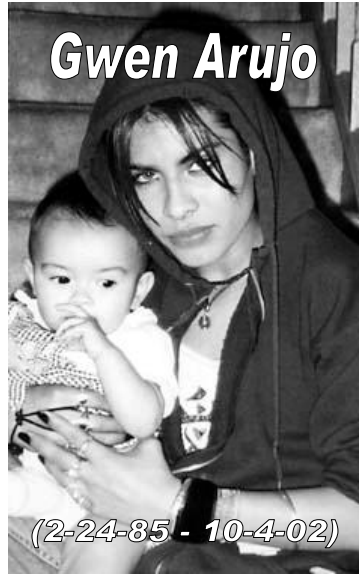
Armed with little more than a vision and plastic money, Natasha and I drove down to Detroit to have a couple t-shirts made to share this vision. With a blown up image of Valjean on the front, along with MLK's inspiring declaration

about injustice – “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere” – and the website’s URL link on the back, we were set to instill our own fashion statement at the next vigil.

There were a couple TDOR events in the Detroit area. The first was at the Metropolitan Community Church of Detroit, where a full nondenominational service was held to commemorate the local transgender victims of violence. On view monitors was a list of names of those we lost globally in the last year. In one of the pews sat Natasha and I wearing our new TransInjustice t-shirts. (Considering Natasha’s regard for such a Christian establishment, I am thankful she was able to set her angst aside enough for this ostensibly non-Christian function.)

The next TDOR event was at the local GLBTQA community center,

Affirmations in Ferndale. While we watched a special screening of the *Gwen Arujo Story*, Natasha and I again publicly displayed our support for the plight of Valjean and all similarly situated. The t-shirt also helped Natasha as a conversation starter for the TransAction Program. In fact, she left before the film was finished to discuss the program with a transwoman, Karen, who expressed some interest in supporting the program’s goals. Karen also had some ideas for transforming the TDOR vigil, to do more to celebrate the lives of those we’ve



lost instead of focusing so much on how they died – something like a jazz funeral. Our lives are indeed beautiful, and this echoes the vision we had for the “Hour of Reflection”.

For convenience sake, these events were held on the weekend prior to November 20th, 2007. On Tuesday, November 20th, I had one more opportunity to wear my TI shirt. As president of the Gay-Straight Alliance at Oakland University, I had a bake sale fundraiser to attend on campus that day. Because of its timing, I blended it into our TDOR event. Along with selling baked goods we handed out bookmarkers with the TI website link, with one person expressing an interest in checking it out.

We look forward to the next TDOR and see how if our idea will take root. We also anticipate a day when Valjean can share her story in person, and not merely by a static account on a website.

Of course, we all look forward to the day when we won't need a TDOR. But we all agreed we will be mourning a long list of names each year, and will continue to remember our sisters and brothers who have been taken from us. And I will continue to remember you as you endure a kind of transphobic violence. For indeed, “*TransInjustice* anywhere is a threat to *Transjustice* everywhere.”



<http://www.transinjustice.org/valjeanroyal/index.html>

Valjean Royal appreciates your support.
So please check out her plight online.



FRESH IDEAS

What is your religion?

By Tsunami Carlyn-Averlyn

We are the consummation of thousands of years of religious history. We are thousand of years that have either pumped up superstition, like I pumped up my tits and ass, or stripped off superstition and battled off tyranny; thousands of years that struggled to take fear out of religion, to take it right out of human life; thousand of years that have marched, sometimes joyfully like a bunch of TLGBQ's on "Pride Day", sometimes in agony, toward spiritual emancipation. We are indeed the consummation of something.

Yet in this world of blood and sorrow, of men wearing skirts, of women wearing prosthetic penises, it is scarcely important, hardly worth mentioning, unless in addition we are the "beginning" of something, unless our religion is new—the religion that has always been new in every prophet who died rather than forsake it; the religion that has been buried over and over again in creeds and rituals and sacred writings; and

mysterious markings, and yet has always come to life in whatever form is most suitable to us. The religion that today is new all over the earth, stammering itself into utterance in every language known to womankind.

The religion that says freedom! Freedom from the ignorance and false belief; freedom from spurious claims and bitter prejudices; freedom to seek the truth, both old and new, and freedom to follow it; freedom from the hates and greeds that divide womankind and spill blood of every generation; freedom for honest thought, freedom for equal justice; freedom to seek the true, the good and the beautiful with minds unimpaired by cramping dogmas and spirits uncrippled by abject dependence. The religion that says womankind is not



divided—except by ignorance and prejudice and hate; the religion that sees womankind naturally as one and waiting to be spiritually united; the religion that proclaims an end to all exclusions—and declares a brotherhood and sista-hood unbounded! The religion that knows that we shall never find the fullness of the wonder and glory of life, as easy as finding the fullness of a bust line that implants give. That we'll never find the Glory of Life until we are ready to share it, that we shall never have hearts big enough for the Love of God until we have made them big enough for the worldwide love of one another. And even as I write this, some of you are so busy “*hatin*” you can't even feel this message.

As you have listened to me, have *you* thought, per chance, that this is your religion? If you have, don't congratulate yourself. Stop long enough to recollect the miseries of the world you live in; the fearful cruelties, the enmities, the hate, the bitter prejudices, the need of such a world for such a faith. And if you can still say that this of which I have spoken is “*your*” religion, then ask yourself this question: What are *you* doing with it?

Seven Sins In A Whisper

By Tsunami Caryl-Averlyn

Most spiritualists are known for not talking about ‘sin.’ Interestingly, the T* community is also silent about “sin”, or faltering in certain areas. And so for those of us whom consider ourselves “spiritual” as well as T*'s, it's a double whammy.

Sometimes I like *not* talking about sin, per se. I like rather focusing on the human aspirations instead of human failings.

But today, I feel like talking about it. There are times we might envy the ready vocabulary other lifestyles have to discuss the human tendencies that can be destructive.

Some human tendencies can be destructive in themselves, and sometimes “positive” human tendencies get out of whack—or get overemphasized—and guide our lives disproportionately. Sin is a handy term to describe these occurrences. And it's not just individual tendencies that can get disproportionately emphasized, but institutional tendencies as well (i.e. our government has a tendency to lie to us, without any remorse). We see it in corporations that focus on profit. That focus becomes

so exclusive that they neglect the human or environment impact of their actions.

We see it in the form of over-emphasis of a positive energy and positive tendency when religions, in attempt to provide a path to salvation, condemn other religious paths.

Our government spends an incredible amount of energy and resources continuing to lie to us about the war in Iraq, even though by now everyone “knows” they lied going in. Bush likes to blow smoke up my ass (*damn, you know him personally too?-NT*), not realizing I charge a fee, even for that.

The philosophies and institutions that we cherish have their own particular ways in which they get out of whack. I love this T* movement, I love what we’re about in this world and the way we work towards it. Still, I try not to close my eyes to our flaws. I can’t speak to the whole movement, nor on behalf of the whole movement, but I know a few things I can say. I’ve seen certain trends, some negative, some positive, which get blown out



of proportion in this lifestyle. But hear me loud and clear, our lifestyle deserves to be celebrated. Our lifestyle deserves to be shouted from the roof tops...but also let there be a small still voice in your head, speaking in a “w-h-i-s-p-e-r” to remind you of the seven sins.

“Hear,” let me spell it out for you: “W”-wanderlust. Open-mindedness and perpetual seeking can lead to wanderlust. That’s a very strong or irresistible impulse to keep going. You know, like after you’ve perfected your T* persona...yet still adds on (this from a woman who’s had over 20 cosmetic surgeries).

“H”-hypocrisy. Now, lifestyle of any kind is particularly vulnerable to the charge of hypocrisy. Spirituality is in the business of establishing ideals and nudging us to that “horizon”. We’ll call that horizon “enlightenment”. Some of those ideals toward enlightenment are kindness, compassion, unconditional love. Spirituality helps us keep that horizon in our vision. And gives us the strength to walk

in that direction. Sometimes spiritual people get accused of hypocrisy because they are not yet perfectly compassionate, kind, or filled with unconditional love.

That's "not" hypocrisy, that's just being human. The kind of hypocrisy we're talking about is when spiritual people glimpse a part of that goal in the distance, and they start walking toward it or even think they're walking toward it, but they don't even try. For example, we say we encourage one another to spiritual growth. How actively do we do that? We say that we promote a world of peace with justice, and acceptance of the T* community. Are we truly committed to that process? What have you done to increase the T* community tolerance and awareness? Are you taking the hands of others to walk and help them towards the goal?

"I"-intellectualism. There's nothing wrong with rationality, or with having a spirituality group where some members are well educated, but I believe there is a problem with turning spiritual experience into an intellectual exercise. Spirituality is not only about talking, it is about experiencing, and that often requires going beyond the intellectualism.

Now imagine later this week you're around someone and they say to you, "Oh, you're a T*, what is that?" or "what is transpirituality?" Think about what your most likely response would be. Maybe you have "it" tucked away for a moment such as this (pun fully intended). You tell them what it means to be T* to you. There are those who seek what we have, and have wrestled all their lives with "it". And you can empower them with your response. T* expression saves lives, and I mean that literally. There are people right now who are alone and starving for a place where they can be accepted for who they are. Not sharing with them, or letting them in on how you cope, how it's been for you, is a form of stinginess.

Yes, "S"-stinginess. It is so easy to take a few minutes to figure out what you're going to say the next time someone asks you what it means to be T*, or what transpirituality is all about. Not taking the time to prepare ourselves to welcome other seekers into our lifestyle, or spiritual enlightening, is in a word, stingy. 'Cause I'm sure I'm having a good time being trans and doing what I do, I would love for others to enjoy this too, if it's in fact what they want.

“*P*”-Pollyannaism. Using a word as awkward as Pollyannaism should count as a sin itself, notwithstanding, some of you sistas could use a broader use of the vernacular. But yes, Pollyannaism is a word, meaning blind optimism. You see this most often in our community view of human nature, now follow closely; were speaking of human evil. When I speak of human evil, I’m speaking of ongoing pollution, famines, homophobia, transphobia, widespread gun violence, gender prejudice, etc., you get the idea. I will only say our Pollyannaism is our tendency to emphasize the good and the beautiful, and in the process of doing so, lose something. Our discussions of the ills of society somehow ring flat and hallow if we fail to engage the presence of evil that lurks underneath. We need to learn to name human evil, how to talk about it. It’s dangerous territory for discussion, for none of us can truly name what’s good and what’s evil. But evil pervades our world and avoiding talking about it only leads to its perpetuation. OK, enough of this “Pollyannaism”.

Now I “know” you already guessed what “*E*” is, “egotism”. We

have it as a movement. We honor wisdom from all the world’s spiritual traditions, but we’re sure glad we’re in the one we’re in, and that’s OK. I’ve never heard any T* actually say it, but sometimes I get the sense that we think *everyone* should want to be trans, at least they would if they were enlightened enough. Indeed, some of us even think we’re more of our trans-gender than a nidal is! And that’s pretty egotistical.

Finally we get to “*R*”-relevance. Or more accurately, lack of relevance. The T* community makes a wonderful difference in the lives of its members, but that seems just a start. As we grow, let us ask: How can our geographically dispersed group minister to both the T* community and the world at-large. How can we stand with the oppressed and build a better world of tolerance and acceptance of the T* community? I’m not going to answer those questions, but the coming years, we as a community “*will*” answer. I’m excited to see that answer, aren’t you?!?! But in the meantime, just remember to still yourself sometimes, so you can “*hear*” that small voice that comes in the form of a “*whisper*”.

W
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FEEDBACK

My Love to Love You

By Valjean Royal

Natasha, welcome in your new position and life, my dearest. It is so very elating to me to see your transformation become a reality!

TransAction is now living flesh because of your work. We are going to grow because of your example.

Thank you for being where you are now!

Your idea for a Satanic Coven is also what we are all about at *Trans Spirituality*; integrating our diverse spirituality into our daily transgender experience. You have my best wishes and blessings in your endeavors to elevate in your accomplishments.

Okay, let me place some light on Tsunami and I. We are truly sisters and can debate on the platform of our publication and hug afterwards. We have unconditional love for each other. And that love extends to all of my TS family.



Before I debated with Tsunami I wrote her and state this would be a good “Feedback” debate to get other people involved into this part of our publication. We acted as sales girls, okay? I felt that this was an issue that could truly prosper into some very good and interest-

ing dialogue. So while I did not fully agree with Tsunami in my submission, I did in my heart. However, I had a role to play, which became the opposition. I guess now some will say I was being manipulative. I

was, and I hope you all will understand, I was only trying to promote our “Feedback” and “Sounding Off” columns to inspire greater numbers in submissions. My true motto is ole school, “Live the life you love and love the life you live.” You can be woman, man or whatever, and love whomever, just be happy, be real and live true.

I have very dear friends that are transgender women and are married

to other women that are also transgender women. I do not look down or feel it is wrong to love who you love regardless to sex or gender. I respect the power of love. I think all people are beautiful, and I could love a person myself for the person, not the sex or gender of that person, trans or otherwise. I am a trans woman, I say to identify. But in this ole heart of mine, I'm just a person, a human being who would love to love even you if it was meant to be.

My article in "Matters of the Heart" (issue 04, p. 26) was a reflection of "my" life in prison aimed at new trans girls who identified as women, not trans women, just women. In prison here you are a girl; there is no in between like in the free world. So my "paintbrush", as Tsunami put it, was not to paint any of you, it was a reflection of the picture I paint for new girls arriving into this life of Oz as I've known it; inside if you are going to live and identify as a woman in an "all male" facility. I guess that was why to me it was only natural to be attracted to a male figure. Two girls could never charm a romantic partnership as a couple in any "prison" I have known.

At any rate, I do not feel that anyone has a right to take the right to love from anyone. Regardless to any of the issues "we" discussed, I'm very happy to have that freedom to debate. However, to learn, and to educate...

Bella Donna Night Raven:

TIP Journal is still in publication. I recently sent Natasha and Steph the latest issues. Hopefully they will share with our readers the new address and some of the contents of this winter issue of TIP Journal. I really did enjoy your submission and "The Bravest Thing" was a beautiful poem that I'm sure many of us can relate to in our own way. You and your future struggles are in my heart and prayers. I hope to be able to do more someday in the future.

TIP Journal

G.I.C. of Colorado
3895 Upham St, Ste #40
Wheat Ridge CO 80033

Tsunami Caryl-Averlyn:

Self-Esteem, Tales of the Crypt, American Pluralism book review and last but not least Tsunami's Life Philosophy was all on point. I enjoyed all of your submissions in

every issue. You keep giving something to ponder on and think about. Keep your best coming, girlfriend, because you are appreciated so dearly. I love you so much, and I miss hearing from you. But don't worry, we will be back directly in touch by May, I promise. April showers brings May flowers!

Delicious:

Yes, I'm one of the girls that said "who is this?" When you made your presence known in issue 07, I was not feeling you at all. But now that there has been a proper introduction, I embrace you with open and loving arms. Your truth was a reflection of many of our own truths. Mine was similar in ways you would not believe. You have found a family now that will work towards uplifting you and keeping you reminded of how special you are. The past is past. You can go own and use what happened in your life to help prevent other children in the life from going down the same roles of self-destruction. We are going to need counselors and survival experts in our future endeavors where I hope you will be a part of. It is about all of us, my dear sistuh. Together we can make a difference in the roads in life available for those children

that are following in our footsteps. Let's not leave potholes, but foot holes instead to help them also be a part of those that will make it to the mountaintop.

Thank you for coming correct, and I say again, we need you and love and welcome you whole heartedly into our circle of protective love, support and encouragement. In closing, I send my love and appreciation to Steph for so much. Girl, I would have to write a list! All of our contributors, and all of our new staff and assistance. Amanda, Vanessa, and Mishka, you are all truly God-sent.

I don't want to give much away concerning our next issue and I am looking forward to it, photos and all.

The 2007 Transgender Day of Remembrance, and the t-shirts Natasha and Steph had made and wore in my honor was so very much more than I ever expected. A very special greeting goes out also to Rachel Crandall, Cj Tune, and Sue Crocker. Also the GSA bake sale where Steph again wore that t-shirt and passed out bookmarks with the TransInjustice website link. I cannot express enough my heartfelt love for you angels of mine (smile)!

Body Language *By Angel*

Yeah, my breast wished they had some Premarin.



All I've been using is birth control pills.



How well do they work?



Good so far. I haven't got pregnant yet!



Sarcasm is best when served cold!

Open Letter to My (Former?) Pastor



By Izzy Gay

Dear Pastor:

There is something I've been needing to tell you for a long time now. Please be patient with me, for this is difficult for me to share. You see, I have been struggling many years with false guilt over something I have recently discovered is quite natural and common throughout history. But from the messages I have heard you and the others speak from the pulpit I get the distinct impression that I should feel ashamed. For too long, I have. But not anymore!

Missing out on love

I don't fault you personally, pastor, for this cloud of false guilt. Something I have come to realize about our faith is its tendency to presume its superiority over other ways of looking at things. In fact, I used to think in such terms not so long ago. But something powerful in the permeations of profound love has jarred my senses free from such a stifling selfish perspective.

While growing up under your ministry I internalized the view that we were somehow endowed with the "truth". Others lacked this truth for some reason, and it was upon us to get this life-changing truth to them.

Resistance to our efforts, I came to believe, was proof of their degeneracy. Only a reprobate, I was told, would resist such divine truth. These were wrongdoers, I remember being taught, who resisted our gift of truth because they couldn't let go of their wicked ways.

Back then, when I hung on your every word, it all made sense to me. I was such a misfit and others would pick on me, and you let me see them all as self-indulgent sinners. Who else would be so cruel? We, on the other hand, were set apart from such hedonistic ways. In your comforting message I learned to avoid the ungodly, with their "alternate" lifestyles and licentious ways. In some ways, I learned to even avoid my own "depraved" inclinations. And put off the inevitable pull to honestly face my authentic self and receive the unconditional love I have always craved.

Changed by love

You often speak of being transformed into new life, and so I have. But not likely in a way you would recognize. By reciprocating this unconditional love I felt spiritually within, I learned the significance of

truly listening to others and dropping my false defenses. In those moments of potent love I have found the strength to set aside biased reference to my own needs, whether it is a need for emotional security or affirmation for my beliefs, and become more in tuned to the needs of others. Instead of seeking consolation for my many pains, I have discovered the profound art of finding solace through empathizing with the hurting lives of others – especially those I had previously understood poorly or even hurt with my ignorance.

No longer can I look upon others who are drastically *different* from our own cozy ways and silently cast aspersions upon them. No longer can I ignore their experiences because I cannot find any value in it for myself. No longer can I rationalize my refusal to listen to them under the pretext that I am avoiding any temptation to their “decadent” ways. No longer can I presume they are *bad* simply because they are different.

How often have I cut myself off from the very love I needed in the name of remaining pure? How often have I missed being warmly understood because I was afraid to let anyone get too close? How often have I pushed away the very ones who already *knew* this profound love we now share? How often have I

neglected my spiritual needs by neglecting the needs of all to exist in this love?

Now I see past the religious platitudes that darkened the corners of my self-understanding and tended to shame me for my god-given body. Now I see my enticement toward self-indulgence as my body’s natural way to attend to severely neglected needs. Now I see a loss of self-discipline as a natural backlash to suppressed self-development. Now I see my life in balance between respecting the needs of others and attending to my own ego needs. Now I see my officially prohibited attractions as an indictment of traditions that squelch the natural unfolding of full human potential and spiritual oneness. Now I see beautifully who I truly am!

Invitation to love

Please understand me, pastor. In my struggles for greater understanding I am not seeking a temperate tolerance. Nor am I asking for apologetic acceptance. If anything, others need my tolerance of their ignorance and my acceptance for their insensitivities. Instead I am yearning for life-giving love. And by stepping outside of these four cold walls and opening my heart to a deep well of love within, I have found it!

A love so grand it pushes through barriers and floods my soul with rapturous delight, a delight I just cannot hold in anymore for the sake of others lack of self-control.

Now I am reaching out to you, and inviting you to encounter this profound power of an all-embracing love. From the mouth of babes is something so priceless you can scarcely afford to brush it off. As you draw closer to this light of inspiring love you will find my vulnerability. In that moment you may encounter what I am reluctant to expose in the absence of such love. For me, it is a gift that I dare not toss to the swine off religious ignorance and to the machinations of false shame.

As I stroll along these quarters where I first learned to hate my true self, and experience my natural desires as incipient depravity, I ponder how long it may take for anyone here to break free from their bonds of self-destructive shame. Will they easily ignore my love as I had learned to ignore the love of others? Will they refuse to listen to any voice they do not recognize, even the voice of life-empowering love? Will they even recognize how much divine love they are truly missing?

If my newfound wisdom and soulful love can find no home here, surely you must know I will not

relent. There is no reason for me to return to a life of “divine” despair and “devout” depression. There is no justice, no goodness, no *truth* in reverting to a life of self-loathing and negated love. A deep and lasting Love has come to me at last, in ways too wonderful for mere words. This love doesn’t depend upon my devotion to any belief system or structured way of being; it simply *is*. This love redirects me toward *being* fully human, away from the constraints imposed upon me in my childhood. And it has taken me until now to find some way to express to you this amazing redirection in my life.

Last call to love

If that love challenges me to step outside of the norms you and the others here hold so dear and sacred, then so be it. Look through the sacred texts and you will see I am in good company. On the other hand, if you hold steadfast to these old ways of thinking that perpetuates a community of quite desperation and defensive alienation toward unique folk like me, remember *I* did not leave the loving fold of God you call the church. No, pastor, *you* did.

Your expatriate parishioner,

Izzy Gay

Another End to ENDA

By Steph

When the Employment Nondiscrimination Act (ENDA) came up in Congress in early 2007, gender identity was included. Then later in the year another version of ENDA was introduced that dropped us, apparently to help the bill make it out of the Education and Labor Committee.

To counter the compromising politics of the Human Rights Campaign and Congressman Barney Frank, a concerted effort by most GLBT organizations fought against any draft of ENDA that didn't include gender identity and gender identity expression as protected groups. Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin, an out lesbian from Wisconsin, drafted an amendment to include us, and this letter campaign was meant to show our collective and committed support for that amendment, and only that version of ENDA.



**Congresswoman
Tammy Baldwin**

A letter campaign was initiated by some GLBT organizations, including ones here in Michigan, to declare our support for only an inclusive-ENDA, the version with the Baldwin Amendment. A template was provided that we could forward online, allowing for our own wording. The template on the next page is the one I used; the words in italics are mine added to the basic text.

In a few days I received a polite response from my local congressperson. It stated how he too supported ENDA, and would vote in favor of it once it came to a full vote. Likely a form letter churned out by staffers, this response completely missed my point! My letter *opposed* the version of ENDA that finally made it to the floor for a vote, passing **235 to 184**.

While I cannot find a job and the government will not help me, I can still vote. And I am not alone in my frustration. Perhaps my local congressperson will soon find out, this election year, what it's like to be suddenly without a job!

Dear [Decision Maker],

I hope that you are going to support a fully inclusive Employment Non-Discrimination Act.

Here in Michigan I can be fired if my boss thinks I'm gay or transgender. My sexual orientation or gender identity has nothing to do with my job performance.

When you are considering your position, please remember that transgender workers are just as vulnerable in the workplace as are gay, lesbian and bisexual workers, and for many of the same reasons. All of us deserve the same rights and protections, not just some of us.

Workplace inequality is a real and pressing problem for sexual minorities. A recent survey of studies from the past ten years by the UCLA School of Law has found that up to 57% of GLBT Americans have experienced workplace discrimination in their lifetime.

No one deserves to be fired because of whom they love or whom they are. *Assuring all transgender persons can remain fully integrated into society, and not lapse into survival crimes, starts with assuring them that they will not lose their jobs as soon as they become fully known.*

If the gender identity inclusive language in the bill prevents it from becoming law, then so be it. This will demonstrate how ready we are to extend legal protections for all vulnerable groups in America. As Dr. King warned us, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

Thank you for your time and consideration. *As you ponder your vote for this bill, I thank you for considering the young transgender children who face the prospect of a jobless and hopeless future.* I look forward to hearing from you that you have chosen to support this vital legislation *and have indeed left no child behind.*

Sincerely,
[Your name]
[Your address]

States currently prohibiting gender identity discrimination in employment: California, Colorado, Connecticut, Iowa, Illinois, Maine, Minnesota, New Jersey, New Mexico, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, Washington, and District of Columbia

Fifteen states currently prohibiting sexual orientation discrimination in employment is interpreted to include gender identity.

States that only protect against sexual orientation discrimination: Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Hampshire, New York and Wisconsin.

Source: Wikipedia

Community Protests Human Rights Violations Against Transgender People In California Prisons

LGBT Community Members Wear Red to Support Transgender Woman Rape Survivor in her Lawsuit Against the State Prison System

Supporters Engage in Silent Symbolic Protest to Demand the Attorney General Push State to Create Better Policies to End Prison Rape

SAN FRANCISCO – The Trans/Gender Variant In Prison Committee (TIP), a grassroots group of transgender former prisoners and their allies, held a silent protest outside the Civic Center Courthouse today to support Ms. Alexis Giraldo, and to demand better policies to end sexual assault in prison. Ms. Giraldo is a Latina transgender woman who is suing the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation for failing to protect her from being raped repeatedly at Folsom State Prison in 2006. Ms. Giraldo asked for help from multiple prison staff members during the attacks, but her pleas were ignored. Her case will be heard at the Civic Center Courthouse until at least Tuesday, July 31.

TIP members and supporters also made phone calls throughout the day to Attorney General Jerry Brown and Federal Prison Health Care Receiver Robert Sillen to communicate their demands. Callers specifically demanded an end to the Attorney General's offensive and unprofessional

tactics. The trial has been marked by repeated attacks on Ms. Giraldo's credibility by the Attorney General's lawyers, claiming that Ms. Giraldo not only lied about being raped but also failed to report the assaults, despite her ample paperwork documenting the contrary. Furthermore, the



Alexis Giraldo

Attorney General's lawyers continue to refer to Ms. Alexis Giraldo as "he" and "him," clearly disrespecting her in the courtroom.

"This case seeks to mandate the state to develop new and better measures to protect transgender people in prison. Prisons do not make us safer. The elements of sexism and racism central to sexual violence are also intrinsically linked to the strength of the prison industrial complex," says TIP member Jayden Donahue.

TIP members cited a recent study by Valerie Jenness, a University of California, Irvine criminologist, as empirical evidence of the widespread and systemic nature of human rights abuses against transgender people in state custody. Dr. Jenness found that in 2006, 59% of the state's transgender prisoners reported being sexually assaulted, compared with 4% of the general prison population. (Jenness et. al., *Violence in California Correctional Facilities: An Empirical Examination of Sexual Assault, A Report Submitted to the California Department of Corrections & Rehabilitation*, Center for Evidence-Based Corrections, University of California Irvine, 4/27/07.)

"The frequency of assault is staggering," stated Miss Major, TGJJP's Organizing Director and former prisoner, "but not surprising. For every case like this that makes it to a jury, there's another 50

transgender survivors who will never get their day in court because they are too traumatized to think about suing. My organization has received numerous reports from prisoners showing that the Department of Corrections & Rehabilitation is fully aware of this problem, but the system is too disorganized and dysfunctional to fix it."

Protest participants wore red clothing, held signs with their demands, and covered their mouths to demonstrate how the transgender community's cries for help go unheard and unheeded in prison. The symbolic act was also meant to show how transgender people who speak out are silenced by vicious retaliation from prison staff.

Protesters also underscored the need for community-based health, educational, housing and employment services as important measures to combat poverty among transgender people, and prevent them from going to prison. Said TIP member and prison sexual assault survivor Kelani Key: "The only real way to end violence against transgender people in prison is to give us the resources to fight discrimination and find meaningful employment so we don't go to prison in the first place. These immoral human rights abuses in prison will continue as long as anti-transgender bigotry is accepted in society."

CA State Prison System & T* By the Numbers

Contributed by Mishka, source:
<http://www.tgjip.org> (7/9/07)

75%

Percentage of transgender people in San Francisco without a full-time job¹. Chronic employment discrimination leads to unemployment and underemployment for most transgender people. The pressure to earn a living wage leads many in the community to commit nonviolent crimes to survive.

58%

Percentage of transgender people in San Francisco that earn less than \$15,333 per year.²

65%

Percentage of transgender people on the MTF (male to female) spectrum in San Francisco who have been imprisoned or jailed.³

29%

Percentage of transgender people on the FTM (female to male) spectrum in San Francisco who have been imprisoned or jailed.⁴

59%

Percentage of transgender people in California prisons who in 2006 reported being sexually assaulted while in the custody of the California Department of Corrections & Rehabilitation. This percentage is nearly 15 times the rate reported by the larger general prison population.⁵

50%

Percentage of transgender people in California prisons who in 2006 reported being raped while in the custody of the California Department of Corrections & Rehabilitation.⁶

200-2,000

Approximate number of transgender and gender variant (people who defy gender norms but do not identify as transgender, such as effeminate gay men) people in California prisons at any given time. This figure is derived from estimates by the Transgender, Gender Variant & Intersex Justice Project. The California Department of Corrections & Rehabilitation does not recognize transgender people, and therefore does not track this information.

1. Woodward, Tali, "Transjobless," *San Francisco Bay Guardian*, 3/16/06, at http://www.sfbg.com/40/24/cover_trans.html
2. *Id.*
3. Clements et. al., *Transgender Community Health Project, Descriptive Results*, San Francisco Dept. of Public Health, 2000, at <http://hivinsite.ucsf.edu/InSite?page=cftg-02-02#S4.1X>
4. *Id.*
5. Jenness et.al., *Violence in California Correctional Facilities: An Empirical Examination of Sexual Assault, A Report Submitted to the California Department of Corrections & Rehabilitation*, Center for Evidence-Based Corrections, University of California Irvine, 4/27/07.
6. *Id.*

Body Language

insightful humor by Zoe Kala



GLAD
equal justice under law

Submitted by
Jason Lee
(an ally)

Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders
30 Winter Street, Suite 800
Boston, MA 02108
Phone: 617.426.1350
Fax: 617.426.3594
Website: www.glad.org

Dear Friend,

Thank you for writing to GLAD. Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders (GLAD) is New England's leading legal rights organization dedicated to ending discrimination based on sexual orientation, HIV status and gender identity and expression.

GLAD is unable to provide substantive legal information or assistance to people in prison outside of New England, because most laws relating to sexual orientation, gender identity and HIV/AIDS status, as well as prison laws and policies, vary from state to state.

You may wish to contact one or more of the organizations listed below for assistance with issues of violence and maltreatment in prisons and jails, or regarding prisoner medical care.

As a general rule, it is a good idea to document your situation as fully as possible. If you believe you are being mistreated, either by fellow prisoners or members of the prison administration, you might consider filing formal grievances within the prison to register your complaints. While filing grievances may be met with a certain amount of hostility from the prison administration, following the established complaint procedure can be valuable in the long run, by showing that the administration was fully informed about the harassment and turned a blind eye or otherwise responded inappropriately.

Additionally, try to keep all correspondence and paperwork between you and the prison administration or others regarding the matter. Keep a log of the harassment or other problems you face, with an emphasis on facts—who did and said what, when and where any incident(s) occurred, whether there were witnesses, etc.

Good luck in pursuing your rights. We hope these ideas and resources are of service.

Legal Advocacy

American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)

National Prison Project

733 15th St., N.W., Suite 620, Washington, D.C. 20005

Gay and Lesbian Rights Project

125 Broad St., 18th floor, New York, NY 10004

The ACLU is not a resource for handling individual convictions or problems, unless related to conditions of confinement. The ACLU operates a number of specific projects, including the *AIDS Education Project* of the *National Prison Project*, and the *Gay and Lesbian Rights Project*.

Legal Services for Prisoners with Children

1540 Market St., Suite 490, San Francisco, CA 94102

LSPC is an advocacy group focusing on female prisoners and their families, and on the role of race in incarceration. They provide information, legal advice and referrals. Publications, including the *Incarcerated Parents' Manual*, may be requested through the mail.

U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division

Special Litigation Section

950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW

Washington, D.C. 20530

This agency enforces the Civil Rights of Institutionalized Persons Act (CRIPA), protecting residents of institutions from conditions that deprive them of their constitutional rights. Also enforces Title III of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits race discrimination in public facilities. The Special Litigation Section has been active in prisoners' rights cases, focusing on conditions of confinement, law enforcement misconduct, and access to reproductive health facilities and places of religious worship.

Legal Reference Materials

Columbia Human Rights Law Review—Jailhouse Lawyer's Manual

435 West 116th Street, New York, NY 10027

The JLM is a handbook developed for inmates, to inform them of their legal rights and how to secure them. To purchase the Manual and Supplement, contact Columbia Human Rights Law Review.

Prison Legal News

2400 NW, 80th Street, #148, Seattle, WA 98117

This monthly publication reviews and analyzes prisoner rights, court rulings and reporting on prisoner news.

Political Advocacy

Amnesty International, U.S.A.

322 Eighth Ave., New York, NY 10001

Amnesty International is a worldwide movement working for international protection of human rights. It seeks the release of prisoners of conscience, and advocates for fair trial for political prisoners.

Citizens United for the Rehabilitation of Errants (CURE)

National Headquarters

P.O. Box 2310, National Capitol Station, Washington, D.C. 20013-2310

Organizes prisoners, their families, and other concerned citizens to achieve reforms in the criminal justice system.

Social Services & Counseling

Fortune Society

53 West 23rd Street, 8th floor, New York, NY 10010

(212) 691-7554 No collect calls

Ex-offender self-help program offering general counseling, HIV/AIDS programming, court advocacy, public education, alternative to incarceration services, housing placement assistance, career development, treatment services, also targets at-risk youth.

NAACP- National Prison Project

4805 Mt. Hope Dr., Baltimore, MD 21215

The National Prison Project's mission is to bring rehabilitation upon incarceration through various life skills programs. Availability varies by state.

Stop Prisoner Rape, Inc.

3325 Wilshire Blvd., Ste 340, Los Angeles, CA 90010

(213) 384-1400, FAX (213) 384-1411 Collect calls accepted SPR provides information about surviving in prison, facts on RTS, offers counseling via telephone for survivors at no cost and provides family counseling as well. Also provides advocacy, legal assistance, and referrals.

Family Resources

Center for Children of Incarcerated Parents

PO Box 41-286, Eagle Rock, CA 90041

The CCID's mission is to prevent intergenerational crime and incarceration. CCID offers education, therapeutic services, family reunification, and information services and a number of publications including the Catalog for Incarcerated Parents.

Family and Corrections Network

32 Oak Grove Road, Palmyra, VA 22963
(434) 589-3036 No collect calls

www.fcnetwork.org, fcn@fcnetwork.org. FCN provides information on programs for families in the correctional system. Also: training, parenting programs, prison visiting, returning to the community, the impact of the justice system on families, and prison marriage.

HIV/AIDS & Health Resources**Body Positive, Inc.**

19 Fulton St., New York, NY 10038

Body Positive is a community organization that works through outreach and education, publications, and support groups to serve people infected with HIV. Publications include magazines and an HIV/AIDS Resource Directory.

Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

To order publications:

CDC- NPIN, Attn: Publications Department
PO BOX 6003, Rockville, MD 20849-6003

The CDC is a government agency that works with national, state, and local organizations to conduct research, publish findings and develop programs to promote health and well being. The CDC publishes information on policy, prevention, surveillance, co-infection, and testing among other topics.

National Commission on Correctional Health Care

1300 W. Belmont Ave., Chicago, IL 60657-3240

Publishes standards for health services for jails, prisons, and juvenile confinement facilities, develops programs for training correctional and health care personnel, acts as a clearinghouse on correctional health care, conducts research on selected aspects of correctional health care.

National Minority AIDS Council—Prison Initiative

1931 13th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20009

The Prison Initiative's HIV/AIDS education, technical assistance, and national advocacy programs publish materials for inmates, care providers, and case managers. Inmates may also access a Resource List for HIV and Corrections, updated bimonthly.

POZ

One Little West 12th St., 6th fl., New York, NY 10014

Published by Smart & Strong, POZ is a magazine about the HIV epidemic, including profiles and updates on treatment. It is published in English and Spanish and available free to people who cannot afford a subscription.



Religious Humor

A male-to-female transsexual who just received breast implants realized her old bra did not adequately fit her new enlargement. Unless she padded her old bras, they were simply too ambitiously large. So she got all dressed up with the smallest bra she had and went out to a clothing store to find a tighter fitting bra.

She entered the ladies section, and shyly asked the woman behind the counter, "Excuse me, Ms., but do you carry a wide selection of bras, one that can best fit my body type?"

"Of course," the clerk replied. "We have many bras in many shapes and sizes. But really there are only three types."

"Three? What three types are they?"

"Well," the clerk answered, "There is the Catholic type, the Salvation Army type, and the Unitarian type."

"What's the difference between them?"

"It's really quite simple," the clerk replied. "The Catholic type supports the masses, the Salvation Army type lifts up the fallen, and the Unitarian type makes mountains out of molehills."



(Adapted from a joke on website with UU humor from Garrison Keillor.)

My Back Page

Despite the cover stating this is the Winter 07/08 issue, we know full well that 2007 is well behind us.

Let's consider this the "catch up" issue. The contents tries to capture what was relevant up to what should have been the deadline for material for this issue, which was 12-1-07.

Natasha and I were just beginning our second month into the TAP program. (Yeah, that's kinda redundant if you read that all the way out.)

Issue 10 will be out in time for spring, perhaps riding along side this issue. And we anticipate getting back on track. So the deadline for more material is May 1st. Really.

Steph

