

TRANS SPIRITUALITY

A TRANS-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

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

Issue 03, Summer 2006

Cybele faith alive and well
in New York

Humor -
including
Body Language

Imposing gender norms,
a form of abuse?

Sounding Off!

Zoe on stage,
at drag show

Transamerica reviews
reviewed

T* spirituality online:
our "T-S_TRD" group

Plus much
more...

Wiccan and
resourceful

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

Double takes,
double talk

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

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

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“Chrysalis” on page 15
 by Mistey Stover;

Cover: Cybele.

*Letters...**to the Editor*

Hey Steph. I'm enthused to see Trans Spirituality #1, forwarded to me by Mikki. Great effort. Good mix. Thanks. Enclosed is a little cash. [Ed.- \$4, thanks!]

One thing of note is Amanda's piece on the Gallae. I mention it because you'll likely get a bitch letter from the Maetrem of Cybele here in the Catskills. The Cybeline are active and prominent in transgender affairs in New York State.

The Gallae pre-dated the Roman Empire by thousands of years. Most current resource material relies on 2nd century Christian sources, which were attempting to abolish the Gallae, and is frankly slanderous.

Amanda seems to have relied on these sources for her research, which isn't uncommon. The Gallae were priestesses, not priests. The Christian history of them is opportunistic revisionism. Some of the better research of the more ancient sources is done by Dr. Lynn Potter at the U or California, and Cathryn Platine and others at the Maetrem of Cybele in Palenville, New York.

Thanks again.

Best,

Susan Poe

Albany Transgender Social Center

Dear Steph,

Here's a few thoughts for you and Amanda. On page ten of *Trans Spirituality* (Issue 01) you speak of the primordial gender of human anatomy. I would like to share with you some interesting complements to your article. For instance, why do males have "nipples"? Could it be possible that at one time both the male & female could bear children? The function of nipples is to provide nourishment for the newborn. And what about that zinc replica men have attached to their prostrate? A female uterus! And why put a prostrate gland around our rectum in males that provide sexual stimulation when probed with penis or phallus?

I studied anthropology at the University of Texas @ Arlington and I am a TRANSReligious Christian. There is so much more to be learned about our knowledge of GOD/GODDESS. We can no longer turn our eyes from the facts we sometimes find hard to accept. An open mind is required for anyone wishing to know the truth about our existence.

Well, I hope you girls find this interesting. And I do thank you for sending me a copy of your "TRANS SPIRITUALITY."

So long for now...

Your Sister,

"Mother Kerri" ☺

Dear Steph,

Thank you for TS issue 01, Winter 2005/2006. Excellent!

I was very surprised to read in the "Sounding Off" section that I had become involved in some kind of controversy about offensive speech!? This is the first I'm hearing about it!!!

I would like to know what it is that I've written that was considered offensive? Who felt offended? What was their response? And if I could possibly have the opportunity to respond???

I was amazed that there was this dialogue taking place and my name was being printed in a public forum without anyone contacting me personally!

I welcome any and all personal pen pal correspondence questions, criticism, and dialogue.

Sincerely yours,

J. Gann



Ed.- In the summer of 2005, as the TRD was about to expand into this format, Sarah j. Babcock expressed her critique of Johnny's resource list material. Her tone reminded me of the frequent "flaming" that has burned many bridges in the T community. If we gravitated toward a "flaming rag" I was concerned the zine might alienate more readers than it attracted, killing a dream before it could grow roots. (And whatever became of Tapestry anyway?)*

I suggested we steer clear of any derisive tone, and Tsunami shot back with a concern for freedom of expression. Out of our dialogue emerged the SOUNDING OFF concept we now have. It segregates our need for blunt expression from our more diplomatic expressions. This satisfied the initial concern I expressed, about

shaping the culture of our enterprise and not letting it be pulled by events misinterpreted. So it never was about Sarah's reaction to Johnny. That only served as a potential example for something that itself was not.

Dearest Ms Mandy Armstrong,

Hello there, Chicago. I was really thrilled to see your work and to hear from you again. It's been a while. And yes, unfortunately, I'm still doing time. I just wanted to let you know of my address change. And yes, I'm interested in purchasing *Trans Spirituality* in the near future. *March 7, 2006.*

Also, you may use anything I write for the purpose of communication with the outside world. Nice to see some faces too.

My second request [*Ed.- I didn't notice a first request*] is to address or possibly contact the following people.

To Ms Natasha T Chort: (from your Satanic Sister) I question all things as I stand before the festering and the varnished facades of the apartheidious moral Dogma. Yes, girlfriend, as I also stand with the altar looking upon the Baphomet I truly see it all. (Write if you're able.)

To Sarah j. Babcock: Have been wondering if you're out! Write to Jim Jimerson for correspondence, if you're still locked down.

Well, that's a wrap. I don't have any art or poems. However, I look forward to your next publication! Stay strong all of you, and be safe.

AKA Satannia

Always in Sisterhood

Dean A Fortune

Dear Editor:

How are you at this time? It is my hope and prayer that this writing reaches you and your mom and other family members all well and sharing in the very best of health and spirits.

Again I am writing you after receiving the second issue of our **TRANS SPIRITUALITY** zine w/enclosures. The additional contributor's copy was an added plus that is presently proudly displayed on the mag & zine shelf inside of this facility's library.

Thank you for another exhilarating issue of fresh ideas, information, also reflecting my personal contribution inside of another issue of our wonderful zine. I am very hopeful that my gratefulness expresses the appreciation I generously send to you for some great work on behalf of all of us involved.

I am also tickled pink that we are finally on-line! The Yahoo group sounds simply marvelous, darling. (smile) I do not have any objections to the email account that you must set up for participants. I am all in, so please do include me.

I would like to convey to all Founding Corps Members that I am really feeling a sense of family developing as we extend our souls and minds over the miles, hills, and mountains to share in our spiritual points and views.

It is a very special feeling of belonging to truth, speculation, and a shining guiding light. A peaceful place of reflection and spirituality combined with a gumbo mixture of sparkling trans-personalities. What a marvelous journey and experience this has developed into. I see much success in the future evolving from our *TransSpirituality* God-Child.

"*The History Of The TRD*" was a memory lane moment for me. I am elated that you are intrigued with the idea of this

being a regular feature in our zine. I hope the other ladies embrace the idea as well.

Your piece on *homoreflexuality* was very dramatic and heartfelt. I felt much of what you felt when I wrote my submission for **Sounding Off!** You state in your letter that a statement in my piece in **Sounding Off** is what inspired you to write "*The Evils of the Homoreflexuality Lifestyle.*" My most favorable verse in this piece states: "Who am I to declare unclean what God in His infinite Wisdom has made possible? Whom am I to project my lack of emotional development as the standard for which everyone else must conform?" I think I said the same thing in my **Sounding Off** piece – in my own literary style.

Your aim to post our opening statements on our web site is a grand idea. Is the June 1st date still your goal? [*Ed. - some goals just have to be adjusted.*]

With Love & Prayer,
Valjean Royal

Dear Steph:

I just received my second issue of *Trans Spirituality* last night. I have already filled out the survey and included it with this letter. [*Ed. - Thanks!*]

It was another great issue! I liked the "thought for the day"! Now I know where all my shitty ideas came from! ☺

By the way, I like your personas. Especially Issie A. Mann. You've got a great sense of humor!

Thanks again for the zine. The next time you speak with or email Amanda, please say hello for me.

Take care,

John

Dear Editor:

I have received our issue two, and it is just amazing. It is also impossible to believe how fast it has come together, and how good it looks. It has to be in the top 10 T* zines out there, and probably the top 5 dealing with T* spiritual experiences.

On that note, I hope our editor did have time to share her review of the movie "TransAmerica" in this issue. [Ed.- *Why, yes, I did. Page 36.*] I am also hoping that everyone heeded the call to assist and returned their surveys timely. [Ed.- *Thanks to all who did!*]

Hey, if you notice any mistakes (and you're *that* focused) just don't say anything. [Ed.- ☺] Live true!

Tsuanami

TRANS SPIRITUALITY is open to submissions. Material can be submitted to: Steph Turner, **TRANS SPIRITUALITY** Editor, N9494 Haltur Ln., Eagle, WI 53119. 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 copies to distribute. We are looking into how to maintain this offer with ad revenue and grant writing. We also remain open to other ideas. *See p. 16.*

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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.

Christians, Crossdressers, and Child Abusers, Oh My!

Aaron-or-Erin Lee

Christian child rearing

Before encountering Christian spirituality in my youth, I endured a “nominal *Christian*” childhood filled with “*Christian*” abuse. I just could not fit into some people’s notion of what a Christian should be, no matter how hard I tried. I suspect it wouldn’t have been much different if I had been raised in another world religion.

When I was conditioned as a *Christian* child to fit neatly into a “boy” mold, whose needs did this really serve? Mine? What difference did it make, really, for a seven-year-old boy to be told he mustn’t cry or play with dolls? Or wear a dress? Were these reprimands truly for my benefit, or more for the benefit of others?

Ostensibly, I was being conditioned for later in life when my role as a “man” assumed I had to develop some gender-specific traits early in life. I was being “disciplined” to fit into some predetermined role, apparently sanctioned by God due to my genitalia. It just happened to fulfill the hopes of the grownups around me that I would find my place in this predominantly *Christian* society.

**Amerindian child rearing**

Had I been born to my Native kin several generations early, before being “*Christianized*” into the white man’s ways, I would have been freer to simply be a child. In our indigenous religions, we were confident that each child would emerge naturally into the path destined for hir. To impose rigid gender norms at such a young age, especially where they resist the harmonious forces of nature, was generally unheard of in traditional Amerindian cultures.

According to Dee Brown’s *Bury My Heart At Wounded Knee*, some Indians saw a settler “not spare the rod” with his young ones and were appalled. Since children are most responsive to parental modeling, how could these setters discipline their child without being disciplined themselves? In contrast to their own nurturing form of discipline, they thought these settlers must hate their children.

Lasting legacy

Though there is greater realization today of the limits and transgressions of corporal discipline, remember that most American adults endured such childhoods. Their norm is to have

an embattled will that has been repeatedly beaten into submission to social norms. Either by violence or the mere threat of violence, it has been done in the name of discipline. Whatever blessing could have naturally unfolded was long ago squelched.

A generational pattern of abuse sets in as children repeat what has been modeled to them. Such abuse begins early as play,

when targeting a gender nonconformist who

is laughingly labeled a “sissy” or

“pansy.” Such teasing often had the tacit approval of adults, who viewed

gender norm transgression as worthy of such ego-damaging scorn. When the majority hold such attitudes, what is a gender-gifted minority to do?

Harmful legacy

As awareness grows about the lingering effects of corporal discipline, how much attention is given to its role in shaping society today? Does the American obsession for “freedom” stem from this conditioned adherence to outmoded norms? Does the legacy of the Enlightenment, with its rigid empirical orientation, help to

rationalize any maltreatment of those who cannot scientifically prove their blessed uniqueness?

What about those whose natures refuse rigid conformity to these polarizing norms? Does the lack of social support propel them down a cycle of transgressive activity? Does the blunt reaction by authorities echo the norm of gender-nonconformity violence in

which they were raised?

What about those gender gifted who spent years struggling their best to conform? I suspect many of these struggled repeatedly with the

natural build up of sexual tension. And didn't always find an appropriate release, for lack of cultural supports. In a frustrated attempt to fit in, did some gender-gifted souls ultimately transgress the sexual boundaries of another?

Did a cycle of shame result in transgressing other legitimate norms? Do cultural leaders hold these up as typical of all transgenders to rationalize their stereotypes? Are these issues swept under the rug by the continued “discipline” (corrections?) of incarceration?

Such teasing often had the tacit approval of adults, who viewed gender norm transgression as worthy of such ego-damaging scorn.

Let he without sin throw the first stone

Why is there this assumption that adult sex-roles hold paramount importance even through childhood? While it supposedly addresses the future role needs of the children, doesn't it immediately placate the social needs of the adults? Why the impatience?

And for what? To hurriedly emphasize our gender differences at the cost of all we share in common? Why should prepubescent children with few reasoning skills be concerned about sex roles? So they can have ingrained in their developing personalities that we are more different than we truly are? Doesn't this just create more sexual tensions for pubescence? And then feed into that insidious perception that young boys and girls must be kept apart?

The adult imposition of gender norms upon very young children can be seen as a type of child molestation. Yeah, that's what I said. Is it not an attempt to manipulate natural child development towards the adults' sexual agenda?

The adult imposition of gender norms upon very young children can be seen as a type of child molestation. Yeah, that's what I said.

The implication, or course, is grand. All those who have manipulated children to fit into sex-segregated gender norms are to some extent child molesters! Don't they project their guilt onto those whose spirits refuse gender conformity?

Nature's gender norms

By contrast, the traditional Native American child was typically allowed to "emerge" into the best gender fit amidst puberty. Only then was the child considered of sufficient development to have gender-ascribed roles, despite anatomical distinctions. If nature prompted more than two options then so be it. There were up to six recognized gender categories in Native American culture.

The Native worldview tended to place more emphasis on what naturally arose up from within the spirit, questioning any need for external pressures. Since identity emerged from nature within, and less imposed from without, it was natural for the young Native to assume more responsibility for their individual expressions.

Nature having her way

When given a set of norms to follow in my “Christian” childhood, I didn’t have to be as responsible for their development. I was encouraged to be dependent upon others for finding meaning in my life. Like others in this “*white man’s world*,” I learned to put more emphasis on the outward demonstration of gender norm conformity. Like a good little American boy, I learned to fake it.

The more I struggled to conform to gender norm expectations the more my inner spirit naturally

counterbalanced me towards my true gender identity. The more I resisted this pull the more sexual energy built up, to insist upon needed balance.

The more I stifled this sexual energy, for the sake of this conformity, the more the pressure mounted and eventually exploded into compulsive crossdressing – with an erotic twist. As long as I continued to subscribe to social norms the longer I would be trapped in this vicious cycle. A cycle of *Christianized* shame.

Instead of finding the complimentary gender energies outside of myself, they were gifted

within. If I continued to resist nature and find release of this tension only in some perceived complimentary other, I could get myself into a lot of trouble! My spirit knew this and compelled me to avoid getting trapped into the whole gender-norms dating scene.

Response-ability

For me, being gender-gifted means I do not have the ability to fit into polarizing gender norms. Rather, I have the *response-ability* to cultivate a deeper level of balanced humanity. From a

conventional perspective, this includes “crossdressing” as a natural expression of that gender transcendence, as the feminine within comes into union with the masculine within.

For many who are still rigidly attached to polarizing gender norms, I’m sure this smells too much like sexual irresponsibility. For me, sexual responsibility doesn’t come by following some prescribed list of what to do and not do. Sexual responsibility comes from knowing my body and understanding its needs, then finding the best way to address those needs without transgressing

**For me, sexual
responsibility doesn’t
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the personal boundaries of others. All too often I find social pressure to “be more responsible” perpetuating more irresponsibility.

Have I been deceived?

Perhaps this is all just a bit too much to take in. Perhaps it would be easier to assume I have been deceived, that I’m too confused about my identity to get it. Maybe. Am I trying to deceive anyone? Or simply invite others to try another perspective while being true to their own?

Maybe the stereotype of crossdressers as deceivers gets in the way. If

gender norms weren’t imposed upon children at such an early age then it would be less likely for adult children to assume that all who don’t conform to these socially prescribed and narrowly

This assumption that there is only a narrow range of legitimate gender expressions is the ultimate deception!

defined gender expressions were trying to “deceive” them. This assumption that there is only a narrow range of legitimate gender expressions is the ultimate deception! An assumption still used by those who try to molest me and guilt me for their shame.

Parting words I heard in a dream

“I respect the views of those who see eternal damnation upon those who fail to live up to certain expectations, but I don’t exist there. Deep in the spiritual realm that I have encountered, where all spirits exist beyond the influences of this

temporal realm, there are no throwaway people. Where I exist, every soul has some intrinsic value...and nothing can ever take that value away from the spirit within.” Live true indeed!

How to Craft Your Altar Resourcefully

Gypsy Otter

Here I was, stranded far from home, with an Esbat coming up. None of my ritual items were available to me, or any of my usual sources of supply. What was a devoted Wiccan to do?

Asking the Goddess for inspiration, I looked at the items I

happened to have with me. I glanced at the orange in my hand, and thought of the packet of sugar in my pocket. Hmm. I also had one of those flexible plastic pens, and a container of a single serve liquid coffee creamer. An idea was emerging into fruition. Suddenly, I

knew I had what I needed!

The only “tool” I had to work with was a small plastic spoon. I began by drawing out Goddess and God symbols onto the orange skin; i.e., the Triple Moon Symbol and the Horned Circle symbol. I bore down on the pen, cutting the image out of the skin. Then I used the spoon to pry them off of the orange. These symbols were about an inch across in size. I laid these out to dry flat, using the orange as the weight.

Next, I used the spoon to cut out a one and a half inch circle from the bottom of the orange; with the pith scraped off. This made a wonderful Bowl for Offerings.

Next, a pentagram was cut out of the orange skin, ending up with one about an inch across.

A strip of orange skin two and a half inches long, and one eighth of an inch wide, was cut out to form the Atheme blade. One less than half that size was cut out and slit in the center to form the Atheme hilt. A little touching up trim with my teeth gave the blade a pointed tip and the hilt a finished look.

A poorly discarded banana peel also proved resourceful. The banana skin was still flexible, and had turned black from the air. I scraped off the soft tissue, and wrapped a small piece of this black skin on the handle of the Atheme, so that it would have the traditional black handle. If this skin were not available, I would have just colored it with my pen’s ink. I

found that this skin had a slightly adhesive quality, so I also used some on the head of the Wand, since it was available. These items were set aside to dry.

Obviously, the creamer container was used as a Chalice, and required no modification.

The Altar cloth was made from a sheet of toilet tissue. This was where I could really express myself, as I used the pen to decorate the tissue. *Great* care needs to be taken, as too much pressure will tear the tissue.

All items were, when dry and ready, consecrated in the usual manner, with only the following changes. The *sunlight* coming in from my window was used as the Fire (South), and my breath, mentally charged with energy, “censed” the items.

I used some water as an offering to the Goddess, and sugar for the God offering when the Altar was finally erected.

For the Esbat, I used orange juice and a slice of bread for my “cakes and ale.” The bread was smeared with margarine and sprinkled with sugar. Then, using the spoon, I cut it into crescent moon shapes.

Well, there you have it. A handmade Altar and set of ritual tools, all designed in and for those stuck in the middle of nowhere. Perhaps you will recall this resourcefulness the next time you find yourself in a bit of a hole. I hope this sharing will help you.

Blessed Be!

On Crafting an Inkstand

Gypsy Otter

The idea for this came from my friend Donny Smith, a gifted librarian who has been a Goddess sent for years. Not only for his friendship but also for his kind-hearted supplies of information.

While I was researching my next tattoo (a search still ongoing), he kindly shared with me the Egyptian hieroglyph symbols denoting a "scribe." That is, a writer, which I am – in a manner of speaking. Part of the symbol was a simple line drawing of an inkstand with places for two different colors of ink, traditionally black and red. It was this rectangular depiction of an inkstand that refused to leave my imagination. Soon, my hands began doing what they do best, which is craft things.

I used the same basic materials I used earlier to make the case protecting my Pen of the Art. Dense gray cardboard and handmade paper maché, made with ground up toilet tissue rolls mixed with glue. The only new items were two oval plastic cups, items left over from an exhausted watercolor paint set. These oval containers will hold the ink, when prepared, in the stand. Thus, even with water-soluble glues, one may have waterproof receptacles for the inks once designed and made.

First, a cardboard box (about 6cm by 4cm by 1.5cm) was made from the dense gray cardboard. Then ovals were cut out of it to snugly fit the plastic ink receptacles. Each of the 4cm sides was

fitted with risers, about a centimeter square, running down their lengths. I had originally intended these to be the legs of the inkstand, but later changed my mind and added a solid base. This base was a little over 9cm by 6cm by .75cm, to add stability when in use. It also gave a more impressive look to the construct.

Then, the construct was entirely covered with the paper maché mixture. This gave it a one-piece appearance. This material was also overlapped on the edges of the plastic receptacle ovals, to permanently seat them into the construct.

Once this part of the construct was mostly dried, work began on the top. It was intended as much as decoration as it is to protect the ink soon to be within. As I wished a custom fit, I covered the top of the inkstand with a thin layer of plastic wrap, then using sections of soaked toilet tissue rolls and glue. I have literally "built" the top right there, on the construct.

Once it is almost fully dried out, it can be safely removed to allow the inner surfaces time to dry out as well. I am a "thrifty" sort, as well as a minimalist when it comes to decoration of items to be consecrated for ritual work. So I combined these two traits of mine by using one of those ovals, previously cut out of the dense cardboard, as a plaque centered atop the lid of the inkstand. Using bits of leftover tissue roll, and a lot of patience, I was able to finally

fashion within the oval the Egyptian symbols for my "public" Wiccan name. (At its widest the oval was about 1.5cm and at its longest point a bit less than 3cm in dimension.) It felt proper, as the inspiration for this crafting had been Egyptian. This plaque and symbols were all glued down firmly to the lid.

The next step is simple, a smooth cardboard base covering the bottom of the construct. And lastly, a patina of some sort. At the moment, I am looking to doing the same treatment I did upon the Pen

case, which will reinforce the feel that these items are of a set. This applied patina is an easy one to make, requiring nothing more than the ashes from two sheets of carbon paper, water and some water-soluble glue, mixed together and applied with a brush onto the dried construct. The material will "pull" the patina into its pores, and the glue will anchor it there permanently, as well as add a measure of protection from handling and the elements.

I hope this is of use to you.
Blessed Be!

On the Crafting of Ink for Your Inkstand

Gypsy Otter

I had a lot of trouble working this one out. I truly wanted to share in a way that all could avail themselves of.

First, if you're living situation allows smoking, then the means to craft a spot based black ink is possible, via the ash of carbon paper, for example. I recall a factual account from a Russian gulag, where captives made the tattoo ink for their tattoos by using the soot from a burned boot. There is no reason that soot cannot be turned to our needs as well.

Depending on how much ink you craft, you should find that one sheet of carbon paper will provide the ink you need for at least a couple of times. As I chose to not use this alone, I added some light burnt umber watercolor paint into

the mixture. For others, there may be Tempera paints, or some other water-soluble art paint available.

Whatever the color medium that best suits you, *make sure you do something to dedicate this material to solely ritual uses!* I did this by using Consecrated water and salt in the making of the material, as well as some ash from Incense that had been burned on my Altar. (I also liked the "gritty feel" this added to the ink.) Once this dedicated ink is done, simply pour it into your inkstand and allow it to dry into an easily managed solid. It can then be rehydrated when needed.

Now, what can one do, if your living situation will not allow for paints or the byproducts from flame? The need is simple: a

colored medium which has been dedicated for ritual use as a Spell Ink. If you are in a situation where you are fed blueberries, for example, then your need is fulfilled. Add a few of them. Consecrated the salt to the juice, and you are in business.

If seasonal fruits are not available, then turn to a teabag. Wet it in *just* enough water to soak. Then collect the squeezing for the making of your ink.

Is some sort of instant coffee available? Then give up a morning brew to make yourself a workable writing medium. Some places supply those dried instant drinks like Kool-Aid. If these are available, then you also open up

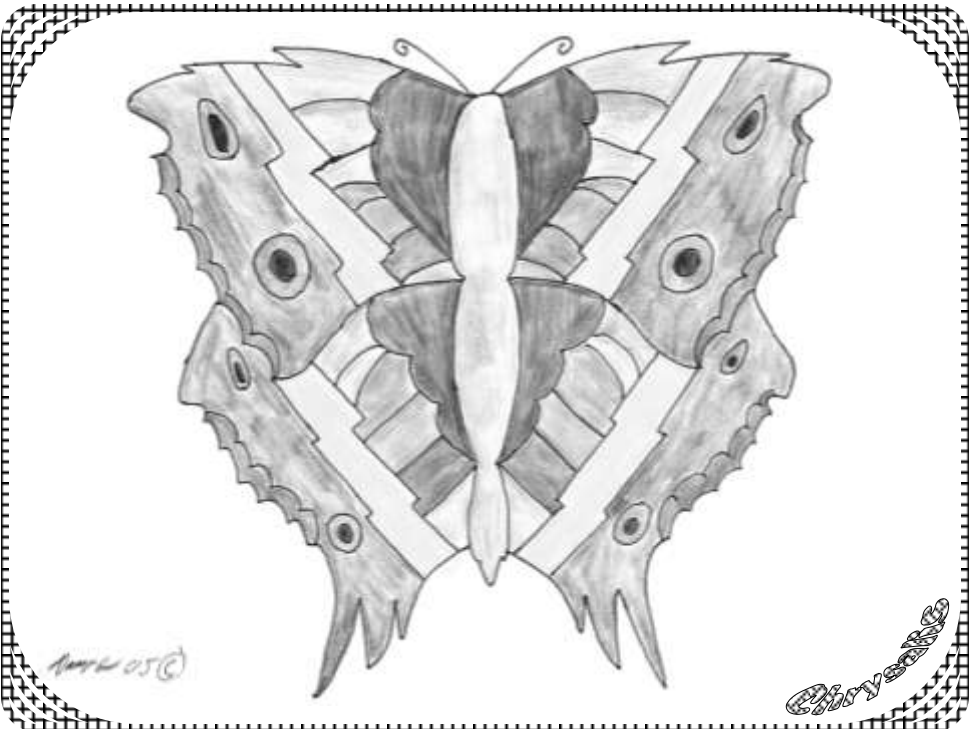
the possibilities to several different colors of available Spell Ink.

For those who, for whatever reason, can't even manage this, don't despair. You will find that a mere pinch of soil, along with a bit of Consecrated water, will also do the trick. Or a pinch of dust, if your surroundings are totally enclosed, cut off from access to soil.

So as you can see, whatever your particular living situation, Spell Ink is not far from your reach. Just use the inspiration the Goddess shares with all of us at need, and you will have what you need to accomplish your intentions.

I hope this sharing is of use to you.

Blessed Be!



eBay: The Search for Justice by Larkin Warren, Robert L. S... (item 464376696 eml time M

File **FRESH IDEAS: On Financing this project** Search

Address <http://cgi.ebay.com/TransSpirituality> Valjean Royal Go Google

I have an idea that I would like to share with you and Amanda. I include Amanda because this is an area in which her and I have discussed in detail on several occasions during our previous correspondence.

It is an idea that, as I think about it and kick around with a few associates, may prove very fruitful towards this zine's sales, resources, advertisement, and revenue. It's an idea that may very well guarantee our zine's fiscal wellness on levels presently unimaginable.

To begin this introduction, I will outline my thoughts to you. Please review and think about it with Amanda, and let me know. Am I dreaming or what?

What do you think about a personal profile section on our website where visitors may go to a selective Founding Corp. Member's file? Visitors can go there for an up-close look into the personal journey of us Founding Corp. Members. This could ultimately lead to


their present status into our T-S_TRS circle. I will attempt to outline my vision for my own file if this concept were to be adopted:

For the purpose of advertisement support and revenue, I have a vision for bidding on eBay. (Please keep in mind my limited knowledge of eBay's operational procedures.) Bids would include a portion as "investments," guaranteeing a percentage payment (to be determined) of any compensation received as well as offering the same

percentage from any royalties obtained from book sales or any motion picture productions.

I am told that nothing like this has ever been done, however it is highly possible

that it may work. The more I think about it and discuss it, the more elated about it I become. See the following demonstration for a better idea of the format I have in mind.

Location: 

Bid For: **Justice**

Subject
African American - Male to Female
Transgender - Born Again Christian - Served A Platter Of Injustice.

INVESTMENT:
Fact Finding into Transgender woman's case of **JUSTICE DENIED** > Valgene Royal -vs- State of Indiana

REWARDS:
COMPENSATION GUARANTEED - Royalties and Percentage Payments for any Profits gained from Book Publications, and/or Motion Pictures Publications.

For a more personal & up-close examination of the subject and pleader for your bid»
go to **TRANS SPIRITUALITY** online @:
http://groups.yahoo.com/group/T-S_TRD

Description: TRANS SPIRITUALITY is a quarterly zine published by Jen Durr Press for demonstrating how transgender experiences include a rich spiritual dimension. It was borne of the "Trans-Religious Dialogue" (TRD), a process begun among incarcerated T* of various faiths and spiritual expressions whose spirituality is often sharpened by enduring repeated discrimination, oppression and violence to their gifted souls. As we transcend gender barriers we also transcend religious barriers. We "connect" beyond cultural limits, because we spiritually transcend our gender cages and LIVE TRUE.

Body Language

insightful humor by Zoe Kala



Feedback

Call for T* Pagans from T* Pagan Author [Steph]

In another Yahoo group addressing T* issues, I received the following group message from a Gypsy Teague.

Dear Transgender Pagans;

I am editing a book on Transgender Paganism: Magic in Transition. I am looking for pagans who continued with their chosen path during and after transition and how it did or didn't change. I see this book as a series of articles, in your own words; the good and the bad.

As the editor of The New Goddess: Transgender Women in the Twenty-First Century, and a witch, I believe that I can present our story in a respectful and accurate manner for other transgender pagans who have yet to begin the journey. If you are interested in participating in this project please contact me at: gteague@clemsun.edu.

In a short while I responded with the following message.

Dear Gypsy:

I am the editor to a relatively new quarterly zine for transgender spirituality, called TRANS SPIRITUALITY. Among our readers are some pagans. Two of our "founding corps" are Wiccans.

Most of our readers are incarcerated T* whose transitions were abruptly interrupted. Their earth-centered goddess-oriented spirituality is sometimes all that provides them enduring meaning amidst their strained lives. And they indeed have a story or two to tell, which has sparked the creation of this quarterly zine.

If you are interested in hearing their stories, despite their incomplete transitions their further marginalization, then I can get you in touch with those I know who are pagan. And I could post your request for respondents in our summer issue.

Deadline for material is May 1st, so I trust this gives you plenty of time to think it over.

The zine features a regular book review, and we look forward to elucidating your book once it reaches print. Our readers, especially our pagan ones, may want to then buy the book for themselves - since most can purchase books from established publishers and/or book vendors. In fact, if you are still working on a book proposal and need to demonstrate to a potential publisher that you have some target audiences in mind, this may be just that extra audience you need.

If you are interested in seeing this zine I can send you a copy, if you can give me a delivery address. We offer two versions of the zine. The first is a quality version for \$6 an issue, or \$20 a year's subscription. The other is a more generic copy (no color or cardstock cover & sent out a month or so later) for free.

To learn more about us you can visit our Yahoo group: T-S_TRD (TRANS SPIRITUALITY Trans-Religious Dialogue) homepage. You are welcome to join, and be a part of our dynamic dialogue discussing the interesting intersection between the transgender experience and spirituality.

Blessed be.
-Steph

If any T* Wiccan would like to pass along a message to her then I will try to get it to her. Blessed be.

“The New and Improved Galloi/ai” Revisited

Valjean Royal

Bella Donna got me to thinking about the possibilities here! It sounds as if *The New and Improved Galloi/ai* definitely desires more research.

The Goddess Cybele would also appeal to many transgender women that may be able to claim this religion in order to obtain

gender arraignment surgery as a religious right. I do wonder how many would falsely claim this religion out of a desperate need for the castration, rather than worshipping The Goddess Cybele.

Thank you Bella Donna Night Raven, for more food for thought.

SOUNDING OFF!

“Double Takes + Double Talk”

Valjean Royal

Inside of my Trans Spirituality during captivity, most days for me are relatively routine. I wake up at five-thirty (am) and by six fifty-five I am at my work desk in the prison Production/Inventory/Control (PIC) office.

Most offenders, rookie correctional officers, tour groups and visitors never fail to take a double-take when walking by. They enter the industrial complex building and pass by the office where I am usually seated in front of the computer at my desk, entering jobs for production or some other data.

This morning started much the same. My face is fully beat, but I do know how to apply make-up for before as well as after five. My base and foundation is golden brown, and besides eyeliner I do not wear any other eye cosmetic during work hours. My lip gloss is



a clear slightly tinted rose. My hair is premed (worn wrapped during work hours) and colored passion plum, which makes my hair appear purple.

So *why* the double-takes should be quite obvious! A beautiful, self-confident, seasoned, African American Queen of a Transwoman is perched where, in the minds of most, a man should appear. How shocking am I? How many of my

sistuh have had to ask themselves that very same question?

Sometimes the double-takes turn into whispers among some groups, of course, and sometimes giggles. Then there are the stares of disgust because I exist at all. I must not forget the polite hellos and silent thumbs up for simply living true!

Today I was not confronted by either the above. Today a young gentleman (inmate) who saw me for the first time actually displayed his bold ignorance. He states to the inmate walking with him, "Man, that's a fag!" He stated it loud and boisterous enough for me and all of my coworkers to overhear him.

I politely got up, walked all up into this man's face, and asked him what did I do to indicate to him that I was a fag, as he put it. He just looked into my eyes, I guess, and sensed that this was not the time to say anything foolish – because I was prepared to "knock him the hell out." He stated that I was dressed like a woman, and I had on make-up.

I then said to him, "Sir, I am transgender. I am dressed in a prison uniform identical to your own. I have no desires to engage in any homosexual endeavors with anyone. And I wear make-up due to my desire to groom in accordance with my personality. Please see me as I really am: a prisoner fighting the freedom fight, a person struggling to be allowed to live righteously, free of violence or abuse by haters of any kind."

I further stated that I would

appreciate his respect – even if his acceptance is not applicable. I left it at that. (Well, I did twirl and left him with "one" snap to the downward!).

Later on I saw him again at lunch in the mess hall. This time he did not say anything. However, he got out of the line that I was in. He made it his business to let me know that he did not want to be anywhere near me or my kind. I just "finally" said a little prayer and asked God to touch the mind, heart, and soul, of this man and others like him that choose to hate without cause or reason.

Sometimes I do not understand why this senseless hatred against my spiritually gifted soul and loving heart is still alive. I know what it is and always have, but most of the time it is hidden behind false smiles and diluted acceptance. I can even accept this.

However, I still just cannot, after all of these years of injustice, suffering, witnessing this persecution first hand – I just cannot give up hoping, praying and working towards change. I cannot give up home for a chance to educate some of the younger generation for the sake of our young Trans-Children and adults.

How can I convey that I am not the enemy? How can I get across the fact that I just don't want to fight anymore? Why can't we all just join hands and maybe Rise-Up? How do I protest for the right to Learn, Teach and Know the Love spoken of in our beloved Bible?

Staying “Connected”

Cellá

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

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

As individuals, we are certainly entitled to our own opinions and beliefs based on our individual education and life experiences. We should also realize that there will be times when we don’t exactly see “eye to eye” on all issues.

Sometimes friendships and affiliations can be altered, or even end, over differing viewpoints. Shouldn’t we avoid that all cost?

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

In closing, I send my love to all transgendered individuals and pray that everyone remains safe and healthy.

Blessed be!

Cellá





T-S_TRD@yahoogroups.com

Steph, Moderator

Start up

Shortly after Issue 02 was completed and sent out, our presence was available on the Net, via a Yahoo group. The blogging situation didn't pan out, since there is no efficient mechanism in the blogging sites for drawing readers to what we've written.

On the other hand, Yahoo groups are set up by categories and subcategories. And Yahoo, of course, has better name recognition than e-blogger. Those seeking a Yahoo group (which is an easy to manage listserv with added features) can easily locate us by

typing into the search box: transgender spirituality.

The group was up on March 2nd, the day after I finished the layout for Issue 02. Initially, we had only five "members," which represented two actual people – Amanda and myself. After some initial postings, a couple more members appeared. But these new members haven't posted much, but then neither have we.

My scholastic priorities prevented me from putting the kind of time I had hoped to put into the site. I had these high hopes of posting our Opening Statements

from 2004 by June 1st. But I just haven't had the spare time or energy to reach that goal. Despite my lack of steady involvement, I was hoping others could utilize that space to share their thoughts on transgender spirituality – or to just Sound Off! For a while we did have a SOUNDING OFF exchange.

Cybele today

Mikki shared her copy of Issue 01 with someone in her pagan network, and a string of events were set in motion. You're welcome to climb aboard for the ride. Ready? Buckle up. This ride has some interesting twists and turns.

Susan Poe of the Albany Transgender Social Center wrote me a letter to share her thoughts about Issue 01, which she received from Mikki. (See letters to the editor.) After sharing her complements and support she warned me I was about to receive an acerbic reaction to Amanda's Cybele piece. She shared that copy of Issue 01 with a modern day Galla. She announced that the "ancient" Cybele faith is in fact alive and well!

Days later I received an email at our gmail address from a Cathryn Platine. She is a self-

described Cybele scholar and latter day practitioner of this vibrant tradition. "Battakes" Cathryn Platine has studied the Cybele tradition for a dozen years, capping a lifelong study of ancient paganism. She points to a couple other experts on the subject (like Prof. Lynn Roller) who have been

reliable sources for getting to the truth to this historic cult.

According to Ms Platine, this Cybele community is quite familiar with all the

scholarly writings about Cybele in the last 150 years. She speaks of going beyond their work and returning to source materials. She describes this community in the Catskills of New York as "a living continuation of the Cybeline faith." And she pointed out their website, which was listed among the Transgender Shaman links on page 24 of Issue 01. The site contains many scholarly essays, including hers.

I copied this message to our new "website." Her message was frank with her dissatisfaction with Amanda's "bad scholarship," so I posted it as a SOUNDING OFF message. A few days later Amanda posted a rejoinder.



Sounding Off?

In a 600-word message, Ms. Platine raised many points to challenge Amanda's scholarship. First, she points to early Christian apologists as a primary source of distortion to what the Cybele were actually about. She pointed out that only those opposed to the Galla referred to them in the masculine form, Galloi. She added that "Gallae" is used specifically for referring to transsexual and intersexual Cybele priestesses.

Ms. Platine explained that castration was always of free will by Gallae priestesses, for specific rituals. She indicated that it was early Christian misinformation that suggested children were castrated against their will. They did indeed take children in, but the unwanted children of the area that they raised as their own. She compares the repeating of this misinformation with the gross mischaracterization of all Catholic priests as pedophiles.

Ms. Platine went on to challenge the claim that the Cybele faith was not well accepted in Rome. She characterized it as being the only "official" religion in Rome from the latter years of the republic on through to Constantine. The

most celebrated Roman holiday (the Spring celebration of *Meglamensia*), she asserts, was in dedication to Cybele. Only occasionally in Roman history, she explains, were citizens prevented from becoming Gallae priestesses. Though during this time biological female citizens continued to join the cult as a matter of pride.

Ms. Platine was annoyed with what she saw as gross information being passed along as scholarly fact in Amanda's article. As anyone whose sacred tradition is under assault, she mounted a thoughtful and vehement counterdefense.

Linking her concern for accuracy with the fragile esteem of many contemporary transsexuals in need of uplifting information, Ms. Platine claims that publishing Amanda's article has "done a major disservice" to their efforts to reclaim the sacred ground of the transsexual experience. And she concludes by declaring her disappointment in this published article's disservice to the active Cybele faith in particular.

Why don't I print her message word for word? I'll get to that later. Still strapped in? Okay, let's continue this ride.

Too much is posted in 3 months to reprint all the material. So I will attempt to publish the more relevant and interesting messages. Your feedback will help guide my decisions. One reason I haven't posted much is because of this uncertainty of how to best capture 3 months of material for these pages. Any suggestions? Though I cannot respond to each message, I would love to share them here.

Amanda's rejoinder

Re: [T-S_TRD] SOUNDING OFF! to Amanda's Cybele article in T-S Issue 01

I am honored to be in a dialogue about the history of the Cybeline tradition with a prominent modern practitioner of this faith. I want to say at the outset that, while we may come to different conclusions about the ancient Cybelines and their status in the Roman Empire, I have nothing but the utmost respect for Cathy Platine and other modern Cybelines—women who have done so much to nourish and sustain the bodies and spirits of my transgender sisters. Now, in response to the substance of Ms. Platine's letter:

Regarding the issue of forced castration, I absolutely never said in my essay that *Cybelines* castrated young boys against their wills. I agree with Ms. Platine that there is no evidence for this other than highly biased 2nd century Christian polemics, such as Justin Martyr's accusation that, "there are some who prostitute even their own children and wives, and some are openly mutilated for the purpose of sodomy; and they refer these mysteries to the mother of the gods..."^[1] What I said in my essay was that some people who grew up

and joined (by their own free will) the priesthood of the Galloi/ai may have been castrated against their will by *slavetraders* when they were young. Ms. Platine does not dispute my point that certain slavetraders were so brutal that they were willing to forcibly castrate young boys in order to sell them for a higher price to elite Romans.^[2] My point was simply that some individuals castrated and sold into slavery in their youth may have joined Cybele's priesthood after they were manumitted from slavery. There are a number of reasons to believe that this likely was the case. Most significantly, castrated male-assigned individuals were denied citizenship rights in ancient Rome and were excluded from most forms of officially legitimized employment.^[3]

Participating in the worship of Cybele may have been one of the only ways for gender variant male-assigned individuals to find a degree of acceptance and political protection in the midst of a very hostile environment.^[4] This is not to say that these individuals did not believe in Cybele, just that there may have been "non-religious" incentives that partially motivated them to join her priesthood. But again: I do not think that the Galloi/ai ever, under any

circumstance, forced anyone to join their priesthood.

Now, about terminology: there really are two issues here. The first is whether it is proper to use masculine or feminine constructions when referring to Cybele's castrated and otherwise feminized priests. The second is whether we are using Greek or Latin forms. For my essay, I chose to retain the gender ambiguity and to use the Greek forms. Ms. Platine prefers to use feminine Latin forms. I certainly don't have any problem with that. However, as a historian, I do not think that the evidence from late antiquity shows beyond a reasonable doubt that the Galloi/ai used female forms when referring to themselves. The vast majority of references to the Galloi/ai in ancient texts (almost all of which are written by elite men) use masculine forms. The primary exception is to be found in Catullus' poem 63.^[5] However, the general scholarly consensus on Catullus' use of feminine forms is that it is done for rhetorical effect, not because elite men generally referred to the Galloi/ai with feminine forms. While we can say with confidence that most elite men used masculine forms when referring to the Galloi/ai, the question of what forms the Galloi/ai themselves used is a much

more difficult one, since there are not many, if any at all, texts written by Galloi/ai that have been preserved since late antiquity.^[6] Personally, because of the extent to which the Galloi/ai worked to gender themselves female, I believe that they probably used feminine forms when referring to themselves. However, as a historian, I don't find this argument strong enough to merit using only feminine forms for the Galloi/ai in my writing.

In terms of the issue of ethnicity, and the related issue of the Galloi/ai's popularity in Rome, I should start by saying that one of the lines of my essay was not entirely accurate. I said that, "throughout much of the Imperial period, Roman law stated that Anatolians were the only group allowed to castrate themselves and become Galloi/ai." The inaccuracy in this sentence is related to my statement that *only* Anatolians were allowed to become Galloi/ai. This is not exactly true. Roman law did not, as far as we know, prevent non-citizens who came from non-Anatolian ethnic backgrounds from becoming Galloi/ai. On this point, Lynn Roller writes that, "We know that Galli (*sic*) could not be Roman citizens, but that left many candidates for the role of Gallus (*sic*), including many who had been

born in Rome and were thus thoroughly acquainted with Roman customs, even though their parents had come to Rome from abroad."

[7] For much of Roman history, however, when people did become Galloi/ai they were automatically presumed to be Anatolian (specifically Phrygian). So, while it is almost certainly the case that non-Anatolians legally became Galloi/ai, it is also the case that, after having joined Cybele's priesthood, these people were assumed to be members of the Phrygian ethnic group. Thus, as I argued in my essay, "gender variance was thought of in what we might now call racial terms." The clearest piece of evidence in support of this argument comes from Dionysius of Halicarnassus, a historian of Rome writing in approximately 7 BCE. Dionysius writes that,

although many thousands of races have come into the city, who need to honor their native gods according to the customs of their homelands, the city has not emulated any of the foreign customs publicly, a thing that has happened in many cities; even if the rites were brought according to oracles, such as the rites of the Idaean goddess, she honors them according to her own traditions, rejecting all fabulous sophistry. The praetors hold annual sacrifices and

games for the goddess according to the laws of Rome, but a Phrygian man and a Phrygian woman act as priests for her. They carry her through the city, begging alms in her name according to their custom, wearing pectoral images and playing the Mother's hymns on the flute for their followers and beating the tympana. But according to the law and the Senate's decree, no native Roman may go about through the city decked out in a brightly colored robe and playing the flute while begging alms, or celebrate the goddess's orgies in the Phrygian manner. [8]

Not only does Dionysius suggest that all of the individuals who carry Cybele through the streets of Rome during the *Megalensia* are Phrygian, he also notes that Roman citizens are not legally permitted to participate in this ritual. Evidence from a number of other Greco-Roman authors, especially Lucretius and Virgil, supports my assertion that, by and large, Romans understood the Galloi/ai to be Phrygian. [9] In support of this argument, Maria Grazia Lancellotti (one of the most prominent historians currently writing about Attis and the ancient Cybelines) writes: "It is from Rome and no longer from Pessinous that a new model [of the Cybeline religion] is spread in which numerous elements come into play,

even if that model is always presented, in classical sources, as "authentically" Phrygian. As he is 'Phrygian', Attis is seen through the filter of what to Western eyes is 'oriental'.^[10]

In terms of the law regarding self-castration, it is true that this law probably was not in place throughout all of Roman history. That is why in my essay I said that this law was in place for "much of the Imperial period." In the 40's CE, for instance, the Emperor Claudius reformed the laws relating to the priesthood of Cybele. While we do not have very clear evidence concerning the exact nature and effect of these reforms, it is possible that Claudius lifted the restriction on Roman citizens castrating themselves in service to Cybele. However, this is not certain. What is certain is that Claudius instated a non-castrated Roman man as the highest priest of Cybele, and that he generally increased the power of Roman elites over the worship of Cybele.^[11] But even if the explicit ban on Roman citizens castrating themselves was lifted under Claudius' reign, there were still a number of laws that would have strongly discouraged Roman citizens from castrating themselves. For instance, the legal principle of *Infamia*—a principle

that was applied to the Galloi/ai—stated that sex workers, castrated people, and other people who might today be called "sexual deviants" were denied basic legal rights, including the right to recourse in the event of physical assault.^[12] Thus, a Roman citizen would still have been punished for their castration with the loss of rights afforded to citizens. And while Claudius may have lifted the ban on castration in the 40's, the Emperor Domitian reinstated this ban sometime before 100 CE.

While I do not dispute Ms. Platine's argument that the Cybeline religion was a very important Roman religion, she is not right to say that the Cybelline religion was "the only official religion of Rome." Roman public religion was very complex and multifaceted, and involved the worship of the Emperor, various public rituals at the Temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline hill, celebrations of Hercules at the *Ara Maximum Herculis*, and the list could go on and on.^[13] And while it is true that the *Megalensia* (the springtime celebration of Cybele) was a very important Roman ritual, it is also the case that this ritual, possibly more than any other, made clear the extent to which the Galloi/ai were marginalized in Rome. As revealed in the

previously-discussed quote by Dionysius of Halicarnassus, the *Megalensia* (at least in the early Imperial period) involved two starkly divided ritual celebrations: one involving the Galloi/ai and other marginalized women and men, and another involving only elite Roman men. Thus, not only were the Galloi/ai denied legal protections given to Roman citizens, they were also excluded from the official Roman celebration of their Goddess.

Having addressed Ms. Platine's criticisms of my historical claims, I will turn now to her statement that I "have done a major disservice to our own efforts to reclaim from gay scholars and mainline historians our own rich and ancient roots." As someone who has spent much time and energy in learning about, and learning from, the ancient Galloi/ai, this criticism really stings. I may not be a member of Ms. Platine's religious community, but I am very committed to the study of the Galloi/ai, and I consider this study a form of religious devotion and a therapeutic way of dealing with my own self-esteem issues. The Galloi/ai inspire me, but not because they were accepted wholeheartedly into the Roman state-religious structure. They inspire me precisely because they fought tooth and nail to retain a place within this structure, and because they didn't let the vicious forms of transphobia and racism that they faced in the Roman world prevent them from living-true and worshiping their Goddess the way they knew was right.

--Amanda Armstrong

3.23.06

[1] Justin Martyr, *First Apology* XXVII.

[2] For a discussion of this practice, see: Jennifer Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity* (Cary, NC: Oxford University Press, 2002) 87.

[3] On the issue of citizenship rights, see: Lynn Roller, *In Search of God the Mother* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999) 292. While we still await a scholarly treatment of employment issues facing castrated male-assigned individuals in ancient Rome, evidence suggests that the Galloi/ai were forced to engage in informal economic activities (such as panhandling, ecstatic performance, and prostitution) in order to make a living.

[4] This is precisely the argument made by Francoise Dunand. See: Dunand, "Le Statut des 'Hiereiaï' en Egypte Romaine," *Hommages à Maarten J. Vermaseren* (E.J.Brill, 1978) 352. On this point, see also: Roller (1999) 319.

[5] For an extensive discussion of Catullus' 63rd poem, see: Ruurd R. Nauta, "Catullus 63 in a Roman Context," *Mnemosyne*, Vol. LVII, Fasc 5 (2004), 598-628. Available online at: www.brill.nl

[6] The most likely possibilities are inscriptions made in honor of Cybele. Some of these inscriptions are penned by individuals with male names, and others are penned by individuals with female names. We do not know whether they were written by Galloi/ai or by other devotees of Cybele.

[7] Roller (1999) 301.

[8] Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities* (2.19.3-5). Translation by Roller (1999) 293.

[9] Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things* 2.600-671. Virgil, *Aeneid* 10. 614-620. Translations of these texts can be found on the internet.

[10] Maria Grazia Lancellotti, *Attis: Between Myth and History* (Leiden: Brill, 2002) 102.

[11] A discussion of the Claudian reforms (and an extensive list of scholarship about these reforms) can be found in: Giulia Gasparro, *Soteriology and Mystic Aspects in the Cult of Cybele and Attis* (Leiden: Brill, 1985) 57.

[12] See: Ross Kraemer, *Her Share of the Blessings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992) 57-9.

[13] For a discussion of Roman religion, see: Robert Turcan, *The Gods of Ancient Rome* (Routledge: New York, 2000).

And then...

Not a whole heck of a lot. I wish I could have found the time to read through Amanda's response and posted a comment on line.

One exception I had (besides the wearying length of which I've also been guilty) was the choice of those six words: "she is not right to say..." Ms. Platine is right to say anything she pleases, as long as her expression "ends at the tip of my nose." (That's a quote from a Supreme Court decision on the only constitutional limits to free speech.)

I can think of more tactful ways for rebutting her claim that the Cybele was the "only 'official' religion of Rome" for the period in question. But I appreciate that Amanda was still stinging from some of the harsher jabs of Ms. Platine's critique. And this *was* a SOUNDING OFF exchange...but perhaps we need to do a better job at explaining this practice to our new readers.

BTW, Ms. Plantine's emphasis on *official* informed me that she didn't regard Cybele as the only sanctioned religion of Rome. For reasons not specified, she appeared to me to be saying it held some "official" status among the pantheon of religious practices that none other shared in ancient Rome.

Until Ms. Plantine qualifies what she meant by "official" I am reserving judgment on how accurate her assertion may be. And that's my "official" stance.

In truth I reserve judgment indefinitely. I do not think in terms of who is factually right or wrong. Like the gender binarism, that polarity has no space in my spirit. I am more inclined towards who is more relationally right. In the spiritual path I walk, an emphasis on "right relationship" is supposed to take care of "right speech" and "right action." So far, it has.

Ms. Plantine is obviously more invested than I in how carefully the Cybele cult is portrayed. This gives her a characteristic perspective of that faith. She can provide a more intimate look into what it can mean to live as a Gallae. As with almost any practice, she may also be too close to the subject matter to be as "objective" as the contemporary mind would like.

Likewise, Amanda offers a more objective perspective, one in which the contemporary mind is apt to appreciate. But she brings to the table a detached perspective, and this can potentially result in subtly missed cues that only the initiated would note.

Like the depth perception provided by two eyes, I appreciate

both of their perspectives. Just as I appreciate “both” of my genders. I only wish I could reproduce Ms. Platine’s message for you in full. But she abruptly unsubscribed to T-S_TRD and sent a terse message withdrawing permission to reprint anything she had written. (That’s one way to “sound off.”)

I fear this could slant the reader’s sentiments toward Amanda’s perspective, especially since the average reader of this zine has a more personal connection with her. You see, you too can be too close to a subject matter to think objectively. *Not that there’s anything wrong with that...*



Adieu (parting message sent to Battakes Platine)

I am sorry to see you leave our yahoo group, and especially mournful that you chose to withdraw your permission to publish your feedback to

Amanda. I thought what you wrote provided our readers with an important alternative to this important historical matter. Now my challenge is to put Amanda’s words into context for our readers.

Sorry I didn’t make the time to post my responses to either of your messages. As I had my reasons for delaying a response I trust you have your reasons for withdrawing permission to publish your writings, and can respect that.

It would be more meaningful for us to know what those reasons are. But you certainly don’t owe us any explanation. It’s just that parting company with awareness as to why has always meant more to me than parting without that awareness.

Whatever the reason, I wish all the best for you and the other Galla on your

continuing journey through life. Live true!
Steph

Thanks for joining me on this lengthy ride. Come again next time, you hear?

For Fun, *Zoe's humor*

From: "Zoe Kala"
 <zoe.kala@hotmail.com>
Date: Mar 2, 2006 11:30 am
Subject: Thank you for
 welcoming [me] aboard

Some gender related
 humor for you all.



**CROSSING OVER WITH THE POWER
 OF PRAYER** (from <http://www.conservativetruth.org/humor.shtm1>)

One day three men were hiking and unexpectedly came upon a raging river.

They needed to get to the other side, but had no idea how to do so.

The first man prayed, saying, "Please, God, give me the strength to cross the river." POOF! God gave him big arms and strong legs, and he was able to swim across the river in about two hours, after almost drowning.

Seeing this, the second man prayed, saying, "Please, God, give me the strength and the tools to cross the river." POOF! God gave him a rowboat and he was able to

cross the river in about an hour, after almost capsizing.

The third man had seen how this worked for the others, so he also prayed, "Please, God, give me the strength and the tools, and the intelligence to cross the river." And POOF! God turned him into a woman. She looked at the map, hiked upstream a couple of hundred yards, and then walked across the bridge.

THE MOMMY TEST
 (source unknown)

I was out walking with my 4-year-old daughter. She picked up something off the ground and started to put it in her mouth. I took the item away from her and asked her not to do that.

"Why?" she asked.

“Because it's been laying outside,” I replied, “and you don't know where it's been. It's dirty and probably has germs.”

At this point, my daughter looked up at me with total admiration and asked, “Wow! How do you know all this stuff?”

“Uh...,” I reached somewhere for an answer her young adorable mind could appreciate. “All moms know this stuff. It's on the

Mommy Test. You have to know it, or they don't let you be a mommy.”

We walked along in silence for two or three minutes, but she was evidently pondering this new information. “Oh, I get it!” she suddenly beamed. “So if you don't pass the test you have to be the daddy.”

“Exactly,” I replied, with a big smile on my face and joy in my heart.

*Switching gears again,
from a light to heavy heart...*

A Dedication in Memoriam Tsunami Caryl-Averlyn

Dear Sistas and Friends,

On February 24, I lost my biological sister, and closest sibling. On March 2, I also lost an aunt.

I want to give a special thanks to all of you that sent your condolences, well-wishes and prayers. Words cannot adequately express the deep heartfelt gratitude I feel. All the messages, cards, and prayers you sent have helped me to heal faster.

In thinking of the loss of my sister, I cannot help but think of the strength of my mother. In the last ten years, she has had the most unfortunate task of burying her mother, husband, two sisters, and now a daughter. Yet she always exhibits a spiritual strength and character that is unbound.

I was fortunate to observe that same spiritual strength and character in my

dearly departed sister. She was always supportive of me. Even in my often challenging T* lifestyle.

I am comforted at this time in the knowledge that death is no enemy. It is a friend who, when the work of this life is finished, cuts the cord that binds the human boat to earth. And then lets it sail on to smoother seas.

No words can satisfactorily describe my sister's worth. And hers was tried and true. She was not called to the next leg of the journey until her task here was done.

My only prayer now is that she is finally able to enjoy a peace which passes all understanding.



Tsunami Caryl-Averlyn

In Memoriam Valjean Royal

While Tsunami gives condolences to family and friends of the late Dr. Stanley Barber, I also extend my heartfelt condolences to Dr. Barber's surviving family members and friends as well. I would also like to express my condolences to the families and friends of five other very special people that have passed on to a better and greater place this year.

(1) The sistuh/sibling of our very own Tsunami. I know that it is hard to loose a family member, and to be in captivity during times of grief is extra hard. Our prayers for strength and guidance are with you, Tsunami.



(2) Rosa Parks, who's stand against oppression by refusing to give up her seat on that bus during an era of segregation in America. She continues to stand as a symbol for all of us living under oppression that suppresses our growth – mentally, spiritually, emotionally, economically, and otherwise. May her remains rest in peace, as her spirit continues to soar high in our memory of this historical personality.

(3) Coretta S. King.

I continue to embrace the image of the mother and daughter family photograph at the funeral of her late husband Dr. Martin L. King. Mrs. King stood for a lot of things, and they all spelled just one word; "EQUAITY." Do you think her and Martin are together again at last? My heart says yes!



(4) Betty Friedan. The women's



movement wears her name, as author and liberator – She Lives!

(5) Lou Rawls.

Education is the key towards making intelligent decisions and choices in life. Mr. Rawls continuously reminded the world that: "THE MIND IS A TERRIBLE THING TO WASTE." He dedicated his life and talents to higher learning opportunities for low-income students of color, via the Negro College Fund Telethon.



All of the above named pioneers had one thing in common. They all served humanity righteously with grace and dignity. They will all be sorely missed, while their legacies will continue to be embraced for generations to come.

A Transgender Driven Life

← Book review by Tsunami Caryl-Averlyn

I just finished reading a book titled “*The Purpose Driven Life*” by Pastor Rick Warren. The book bills itself as “the most-sold spiritual book in all history aside from the Bible.”

The book seems to fire up so many souls because it feeds the fire of hunger/thirst tormenting so very many in today’s society. So many people feel unfulfilled and empty here in America, despite the fact that no world society has ever had more.

By “more” I do not just mean materialistically, but in terms of knowledge, health and longevity as well. Everywhere there is so much... so many “*things*” to have. While it seems apparent that man’s lower self does tirelessly and voraciously lunge after worldly things, it remains no less true that deep within each human heart there is a Grand Canyon screaming to be filled up.

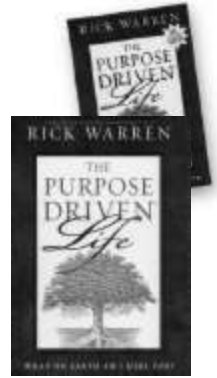
At the heart of every human soul the Creator has installed a sleepless yearning, longing hunger

for spiritual awareness and fulfillment. At the bottom, there is no soul that does not yearn to love and be loved. And perhaps by Divine design, the only way to truly achieve this love unconditionally is by knowledge of self.

The central purpose, I believe, to be driving every soul is quite simply to learn to love yourself so you in turn will love/meet you Creator, and be able to love others. So it seems

it would be wholly spiritually unhealthy if anything, even gender identity, was preventing a person from achieving their knowledge of self and complete spiritual love.

I find this thought to be comforting, whereas in the T* community there is often conflict as whether our choice of gender expression will interfere with our spiritual atonement. So, by all means, live true!



TransAmerica: a journey across Americana

← Movie review by Steph

“Partly a journey of self-discovery, family drama and road trip adventure, the film also examines the struggle of transgender women in America.”

This was a brief summary from one review I found online. Most reviews were mainly positive. Some were less than enthusiastic, like those weary (or wary) of another road-trip movie.

While much praise is heaped upon Felicity Huffman’s portrayal of Sabrina “Bree” Osborne, some reviewers were second guessing director/writer Duncan Tucker’s decisions. Why not use an actual MTF actor? Doesn’t the seriousness of the struggles trans-women endure get lost in the light humor of the script? And was it really necessary to have her son be a street hustler who turns tricks for money, with dreams of becoming a porn star? Or doesn’t that detract from the storyline?



“Just because a woman doesn’t blab to the world her whole biological history, it doesn’t make her a liar!”



“I’m from the church of the potential father.”

When I read this last critique I felt the reviewer just didn’t get it. To me this was a brilliant stroke of cinematic genius. Throughout the road trip, Bree is surrounded by the many flavors of Americana – the conflicted Christian mother whose husband is Jewish, the recovering alcoholic sister, the exfelon Indian who has his own reasons for not prying into Bree’s past, the inquisitive tyke echoing a tactless world, the charismatic hitchhiker who turns out to be a thief, the pedophile stepfather getting his due, and the freewheelin’ teenage son Bree never knew she had.

Despite posing as a volunteer church worker to bail Toby out of jail, she really is a devoted Christian. A rather conservative Christian trying to make sense of God’s role for her. She describes her body as an act of God’s creation which just happens to still be unfolding. Gone is the stereotype that “God must’ve made a mistake.”



"My body may be a work-in-progress, but there is nothing wrong with my soul."

It is her conservative persona, juxtaposed against the backdrop of these street level characters, that prompts her to keep her gender transition a guarded secret. Toby counterbalances her character with his more up front "in your face" approach. His brashness by comparison challenges stereotypes many Americans have about transgendered people. A quiet conservative church mouse transwoman? Who knew?

When Toby finally realizes Bree is still biologically male he confronts her "dishonesty." Bree replies brilliantly, "Just because a woman doesn't blab to the world her whole biological history, it doesn't make her a liar!" Instead of



Dad: "Your mother and I still love you."

Mom: "Yes, but we don't respect you."

dumping the "truth" on Toby, she dispenses it in graceful measures. The truth that she is also the biological father he is seeking would have to come later, by grace. This was just another way the film touched on the spiritual dimension of being transgendered, challenging the spiritual "truths" in us all.



"Are you a boy or a girl?"



"Doc, I don't know if I can *do* this. I've just been read by an 8-year old!"

Each in our own way we search for what is true. Perhaps we strive so hard we miss life's simple truths, like the depths and diversities of humanity pushing up through the cracks in our hardened beliefs. When you think about, it's kind of funny. I am glad Duncan Tucker found a poignant way to help us all laugh together.

Openness? You'll have to "drag" it "out" of me!

"Zoe" at hir first drag show

Along as I am surrounded by a sea of ignorance that is free to trample upon the sacred ground of my gender-giftedness, I find little room in my spirituality for the rigid convention of "coming out." Even a *closet* can be underrated. I appreciated that whole political dynamic and what it means for others, but it's just not for me. Maybe it was those dozen years of being down that jaded me.

So when I was asked to go to a campus drag show I felt anxiously hesitant. Soon I realized the invitation wasn't to merely attend the show but to actually be *in* the show. Woe! I'll have to give *that* some heavy thought.

If the campus has an ongoing tradition of a GSA sponsored drag show, then perhaps much of the unacceptable ignorance has melted away. Slowly, I warmed up to the idea and pledged my involvement.



I was new to the GSA (Gay-Straight Alliance) and eager to express my support. After hours of helping decorate the hall, I initiated my transition from gender-neutral Steph to all-fem Zoe Kala (my stage name for the night).

Surprisingly, the only thing I was nervous about that night was forgetting the words to the song I selected: "I Don't Know How to Love Him." Which may seem ridiculous considering I would only be lip-synching the words.



"Should I speak of love, let my feelings out?"

As the other performers did just before show time, I went through a whole dress rehearsal to solidify my confidence. The pic here of "Zoe Kala" in PVC dress and cheat sheet in hand is that practice run. (I'm wearing a skirt beneath to keep the *view* a little more discreet.) Some of my new GLBTQA friends had shots of the actual show, but I have yet to see any with me in them.

The "moment" was exhilarating, as I stepped out in front of some 200

people in my PVC and sixers, faking that song. While the singing was fake, the experience was quite real. For those few minutes I stepped into an extravertive persona who could command an audience's attention. My everyday introvertive self avoids being the center of attention.

Afterwards I received many heart-lifting complements. Some were amazed I could dance around in 6-inch stiletto heels without missing a beat, or falling. I've learned there are some genetic females who cannot stay poised on any kind of high heel. My physical poise is not as much of a blessing as the new social poise their complements gave me.

After the show I changed into something a little more comfortable.

The pic of me in my denim outfit, and 4-inch heeled boots, was taken after the show. After helping with clean up duties, I joined a group of my new GLBTQA friends to an aftershow party. No drinking or drugs, just a bunch of GLBTQA students doing a lot of talking, joking and laughing together – without retribution. One even commented how this show went better than the one last year.



"Don't you think it's rather funny I should be in this position?"

It was surreal, you know, sitting there among people I hardly knew while wearing my long denim skirt and high-heeled boots. It helped that another student was there in his skirt. An “out” gay, he was in the GSA last year and had since moved on to Chicago. (No, he didn’t know Amanda.) We enjoyed a thought-provoking discussion about GLBT spirituality. When I

commented that I believed the GLBT experience is itself a kind of spirituality, I noticed some ears perked up.

Someone asked me if I was going to be in the next show, and I assumed I would be. A couple weeks later I was voted as the GSA secretary. Now I’m committed to be involved with the next show in 2007. *Thanks* for putting me “out” there!



“I never thought I’d come to this – what’s all about?”

“God made me for a reason,
and nothing is in vain.

Redemption comes in many shapes
and many kinds of pain.”

- Dolly Parton, “Travelin’ Thru,”
theme song to “TransAmerica”



Am I Normal? What *is* “Normal”?

Electra Carew

I’m afraid I am not *normal*. I dread the idea of having my true self exposed to public view and vicious scrutiny. I mean, if I let others see my *whole self* what social gains could I risk losing?



uniqueness. After all, much of what makes us different from one another has nothing to do with pathology. I wonder if we suffer more problems attempting to “be just like others” than simply being our beautiful selves? I

Surely I am not alone. Certainly there are others around me who must also feel this fear. That sad look on her face, is that an expression that cries out, “Why can’t I fit in like others?” That angry look on his face, perhaps it’s his way of saying to the world, “Leave me alone because I’m not anything like you.” I heard a t-shirt’s slogan intent: “I just want to be left a loan.”

Perhaps a majority feels this angst, at least on some level. In fact, if there is so much social pressure to fit into unrealistic “norms” then perhaps this anxiety is ubiquitous. After all, who measures up perfectly to popular norms?

What waste of human potential! As desperate souls struggle to hide their beautiful diversity, in that vain struggle to appease one others’ expectations, I wonder how much we miss of each other’s blessed

wonder if there is anyone can truly really “fit in” to aspirations of *normal*. Do we *hide* our authentic selves in vain?

I recall a piece of animation that illustrates this beautifully. It starts with that classic scene of Dr. Jekyll downing a flask of some chemical concoction. As you would expect, he chokes and gags on it, then falls to the floor. Only to rise slowly with a grotesquely green face. His guard has been dropped and while all alone he is indulging a moment of being his truer self. Sound familiar?

But then a knock on the door disrupts his moment of secret indulgence. Another knock followed by, “Dr. Jekyll, are you there?” Quiet. Perhaps they will think he’s not in and just go away.

“Dr. Jekyll,” another voice pipes in, “We have a matter of urgency we need to speak about.” Still no

response. Now as *Mr. Hyde*, he starts to back away, perhaps to hide in some back closet. But he bumps a flask that goes crashing to the floor.

“Dr. Jekyll!” another voice shouts through the door. “Are you all right?”

“Go away!” he yells back.

“But Dr. Jekyll,” one of them insists, “we must speak with you now.”

“Go away, I tell you. I can’t see anybody now!” And *Mr. Hyde* scurries off to some back

room or closet. His colleagues are left at the front door to wonder why he isn’t being responsive. Perhaps they have some inkling to the reason why.

The next scene you finally get to see his three colleagues. They each have sampled the potion and they too all have grotesquely green faces. So much for having to hide one’s “secret” self. So much for failing to be “normal.”



What is “normal” anyways? Isn’t *normal* being whatever is average? The “average” life I know is filled with much strife and desperation. Why would I aspire to a “normal” life? Isn’t there

something better, beyond the scope of *normal*?

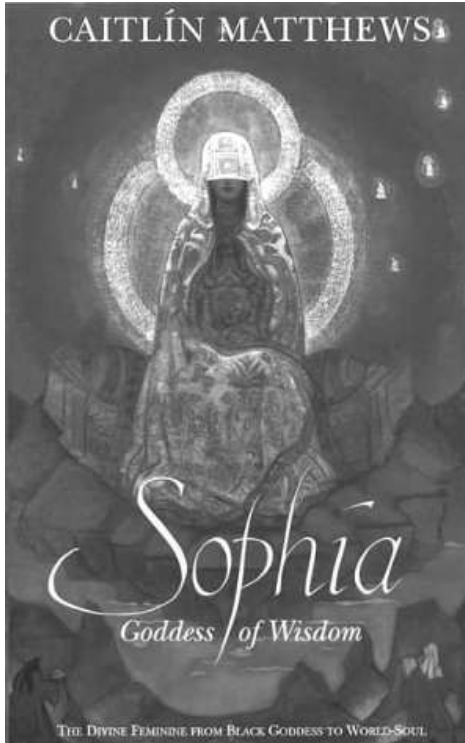
I sense I am “abnormal” for a good reason, for a divine reason. I’m glad I am gifted in a way that stretches beyond the limits of “normal” to find new vistas of profound human potential. In fact, I am content to let go of

any gains my pretense forces me to carry. And embrace the greater joy of transcending norms, even if I crash into some sacrosanct conventions along the way. Maybe this isn’t normal. But I’m glad I am not *normal*.



Transgender Spirituality from a Neopagan Perspective

<http://members.aol.com/theloego/gay/page8.html>



Matthews, Caitlin. *Sophia, Goddess of Wisdom: The Divine Feminine from Black Goddess to World-Soul*. London:

Aquarian/Thorsons, 1992. A classic from the day it was published in 1991, *Sophia: The Goddess of Wisdom* is an intensely scholarly yet highly poetic work. Modern history (his story) may have buried the Great Goddess under suffocating layers of denial and revisionism, yet as we move deeper into the

"sophianic millennium," scraping away the fallow ground of patriarchy, She emerges anew. Author Caitlin Matthews unveils the veiled Black Goddess (the primal manifestation of the Divine Feminine) in her many hiding places over the last several thousand years. Disempowered and hacked to pieces, she has survived in the major Western religions, philosophies, and mystery schools in many guises. With the aid of the author's trained and intuitive eye, the reader tracks Her faint footsteps through the long dark night of the feminine soul. Along with *The White Goddess* by Robert Graves, this book is a must-read for those who wish to understand why the Goddess fled, where She went, and how we can reaffirm Her as the giver of practical and spiritual wisdom--celebrating Her primacy in the manifestation of all things. --P. Randall Cohan

Bookseller
BOOKSELLER

Here would appear an ad for a bookseller, as soon as that idea takes fruition. Until then, this link I found at whitecranejournal.com provides info on the types of books I had in mind.

TRANS SPIRITUALITY

BACK PAGE

Thanks for all the positive feedback to the 2nd issue. Thanks for the ideas. Thank you to all who filled out the reader survey and returned it.

It will take me some time to process them all. And time like money remains in short supply since I am taking classes year round.

My energy level is also limited. My summer meal plan is sparse, so I am eating much less. On the positive side I can now fit into all my skirts. 😊

Between classes and lethargy I have fallen behind on many of my goals, like responding to all the letters sent to me. But my goal of maintaining my 3.97 GPA is still intact.

While my financial health isn't where I'd want it, my spiritual health is. I know my spirituality will empower me to rise to any challenge. After 12 years down there's not much left to phase me.

Thank you for all your support. And trust I am supportive of you, despite limited resources to convey it personally. Remember, you are loved. And no manmade institution can ever take away the bountiful blessings that are yours in beautiful genderland – despite any contrary appearance.

Live true with love!

Steph

NOTE: Deadline for submissions to next issue is August 1st, 2006.