

Communities of Ones

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Abstract

Like some others in the discussion, I do feel a need to say a few final words on the Old Guard (HBS) versus deconstructionist battle in the transgender community, and then move on. I am undecided about any further participation in anything trans, beyond this post. It's clear that resolution is impossible; the majority remains [...]

Article

Like some others in the discussion, I do feel a need to say a few final words on the Old Guard (HBS) versus deconstructionist battle in the transgender community, and then move on. I am undecided about any further participation in anything trans, beyond this post.

It's clear that resolution is impossible; the majority remains entrenched -- and judging by the volume of responses that I've seen, it is in fact the HBS / Old Guard are that majority, at least among transsexuals. But to me, the question was always whether people can set aside the hostilities enough to work for the betterment of all the community, or remain wrapped up in those differences. This has been met with total indifference. I no longer believe that the community even wants to work together.

The olive branch I've extended on my own behalf was very real, despite having been recently burned by Old Guard / HBS sentiment myself... but that offer of putting aside differences has gone completely unacknowledged, in favour of further divisive scorn.

I wish to be clear on something: I have taken the time to educate myself about many of the sub-communities in the transgender spectrum (by getting to know people in those sub-communities, rather than distancing myself from them), and strongly believe that there is much overlap in communal needs and also in the genesis of what drives us -- although more needs to be learned, on a scientific level as well as on the social plane. I use "transgender" in the modern, all-encompassing sense of the term, rather than any now-irrelevant historic one.

And as a transsexual myself (although I know that there are those who will always believe that I cannot possibly be anything other than a male-bodied fetishist, in spite of all evidence to the contrary), I support the rights of transsexuals, and do not see how they've been turned over to some other agenda (there seems to be some duplicity on this point from the Old Guard, in which it's asserted that the community has been taken over by non-transsexual people and that TS issues are being left by the wayside, but then it's later claimed that non-TS people are pretending to speak for them.... you can't have it both ways). But as I see it, the transgender community continues to advocate for transsexuals, and will continue to do so whether HBS-brand transsexuals wish any association or not. There is

strength in numbers -- and like it or not, a unified community is better positioned to accomplish lasting change than those who wish to carve the community up and advocate rights for only a small privileged, arrogant slice of it.

Not to mention that the most disenfranchised of the community still need us, and I'm not keen on anything that suggests that people should be left behind.

A Question of Respect

There is still that fine line between distinguishing oneself and elevating oneself by putting down another.

I've said it before: it is fair to distinguish oneself in order to educate others about who you are and dispel any myths. However, the right to distinguish should also be tempered with a choice to respect and even support (if not try to understand) others in the trans sphere, even when one does not agree with them. And in my experience, you also tend to learn things you never expected to, about yourself, others, and the world around you.

This too remains unacknowledged by the HBS crowd.

The funny thing about respect is that in order to maintain it, you also have to be willing to give it.

Some Disagreements

Diplomacy is sometimes speaking contrary to those you tend to respect (or even censoring, in one case), in order to remain as balanced, objective and neutral as possible. And that's why I've sometimes had comments for people on both sides of the debate. One such disagreement with regards to the deconstructionists:

Those who identify as "WBT" no longer see themselves as being a transsexual, stating that "surgery made me female." They can identify however they like, but if all the facts are taken into account, SRS/GRS/SAS cannot make any male-born individual into a female. It's just not biologically possible. (I don another layer of Kevlar.) In a 1000 years, an anthropologist will lay out the bones of a WBT and say, "Male, age . . . Oh, wait, this was a Woman Born Transsexual. My bad." Yeah, right. -- Monica Helms, "Gender Fundamentalists"

Although GRS won't fix some of the negative effects of androgens, including skeletal structure, I do think that transition (usually including GRS but not always having to) can give one more than enough right to the title "woman" (or "man," in the case of FTMs). When we look at the most extreme definitions of male and female, it's true that we'd fall short... but then, so would a lot of people who've lived those genders since birth and never questioned them -- and that's leaving out traditional roles and expectations, which would further grey the landscape. The human lot is not a perfectly-defined one, but a diverse range of imperfections that we all have to try to make the best of. And it is not impacted in our lifetime by what anthropologists may conclude, it is impacted by our behaviour in contemporary society.

(However, one thing I've found about disagreeing with the "deconstructionists" -- defined by HBS women as anyone in the trans community who is not an HBS woman -- is that I can disagree and still have

mutual respect and a willingness to work together. Funny, that.)

And on the other side, still making wide, sweeping, exaggerated and inflammatory judgments (“They walk, talk, act like men, often dress outlandishly and then wonder why they have problems. They push themselves into women’s space using the most alpha male, privileged behaviour imaginable and then scream foul when they are not accepted by anyone as women....”) to justify excluding people and throwing them to the religious right bonfire, are what I call the Old Guard, although they prefer HBS (Harry Benjamin Syndrome) or WBT (Women Born Transsexual):

There is nothing wrong with non ops as long as they don’t then claim to be transsexual because if they want to keep a penis (as opposed to cannot get the op) they are not transsexual and they do not have anything in common with someone who is. Respecting this difference is the issue, not who is more legitimate or anything else. If you have not walked in the shoes of someone who was driven to bring mind and body into congruence it is downright wrong to claim you are just like them, you aren’t. -- Cat Kisser, “Real Transbigotry”

I have walked in the shoes of someone who was driven to bring mind and body into congruence, and have (perhaps temporarily) chosen to forego surgery despite that need, in order to better understand trans existence and (on a spiritual level) my purpose for having been born as I am. HBS has no allowance for this, as Cat clearly restates with no room for exception. For a transphobic transsexual (sorry, “woman of transsexual history”) to continue to insist that I deserve no place in her sphere, I see no reason to continue beating my head against a wall or to continue caring. There was some track record there that I could perhaps respect, but the current attitudes being volleyed speak louder.

It boggles my mind that people who loudly proclaim that their class should be the only portion of a community considered valid, eligible for legal protections and worthy of entry into sacred spaces, can then turn around and declare that people who are upset about being left out of the equation are undesirables and bigots for feeling that way (funny, isn’t that the same thing we’re seeing from the Barney Franks and the Chris Crains out there?). I refuse to live a moment of my life as male, will never be accepted in society as female (or at least shouldn’t ever be, in the eyes of HBS transfeminists -- I haven’t yet had any troubles with biologically-assigned females, including those who know my biological status), and am once again not wanted by the transsexuals in whose footsteps I’ve come. Is it any wonder that I would cumulatively feel more kinship and empathy with the people that the transsexual community deems misfits and undesirables?

A Few Final Thoughts

Regarding the “deconstructionist takeover” and HBS exodus, I don’t see a whole lot of people leaving from any one particular side, so much as a whole bunch of people leaving from all sides, sick of the bullets flying in all directions. In some parts of the continent, Old Guard still rules the roost and still fights for division and exclusion, in the form of rights for only those transsexuals who meet certain standards.

And:

No Medical Professional or Therapist is going to back a Syndrome based on subectivity, hate and prejudice. In fact the (AMA) American Medical Association, just wrote a document banning prejudice against those with gender Identity and Transgender issues. Doctors will not discriminate to validate HBS as written. -- Laura Amato, "Laura's Harry Benjamin Syndrome HBS: A Peer Review"

And:

Although the brouhaha that has erupted in the time since "Transbigotry?" illustrates the point of that article precisely, this has been by no means a one-issue debate.

It's time for all of us, pre, post and non-op transpeople to take a deep breath, go to our neutral corners, chill out, realize that the Reichers hate all of us and work to codify civil rights protections for 'errbody' in the community. -- Monica Roberts, "It's a White Transwoman Thang"

And:

My apologies to Marti and the folks at Bilerico. I do not speak for anyone at Transadvocate or Bilerico, never professed to speak for a majority of the community and will not speak any further for anyone in the community but myself. We are apparently all just Communities of Ones.

It's time for this one to move on.

(crossposted to dentedbluemercedes)

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