

Don't Let The Door Hit Ya In The @!#*!!

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Abstract

Like a herpes sore, certain arguments pop up continually in the transcommunity and never seem to go away. Recently Gwen Smith wrote the editorial “What’s In a Name?” that discussed the term “women born transsexual (WBT)” or “Harry Benjamin Syndrome.” Suzanne Cooke responded to Gwen’s editorial with “Good-Bye to Transgender and All That.” In it [...]

Article

Like a herpes sore, certain arguments pop up continually in the transcommunity and never seem to go away. Recently Gwen Smith wrote the editorial “What’s In a Name?” that discussed the term “women born transsexual (WBT)” or “Harry Benjamin Syndrome.”

Suzanne Cooke responded to Gwen’s editorial with “Good-Bye to Transgender and All That.” In it she announcing her “divorce” from the community. She claims that Gwen Smith

“castigates post-sex reassignment women who identify with the term “WBT” or ‘women born transsexual,’ a term coined by my life partner and me in 2001 as a reaction to our sense of disappearing, being erased by the all-enveloping cult of “transgender as umbrella.”

She does? I’ll let you read it for yourself...keep in mind that castigate means “to punish.”

“In this I agree - to a point. Really, there should be no stigma attached to being transsexual, no matter what you choose to call it. Nor should there be a stigma to wherever you happen to fall under the umbrella term called transgender. We simply are what we are, and there should be no shame placed upon us for simply being ourselves. Where I part ways, however, is when we choose terms as a way to divide, and try to gain some legitimacy by saying “I’m OK, you’re a freak.” By trying to legitimize under the banner of Harry Benjamin Syndrome, how many are actually showing their own internalized shame and simply trying to pass their own discomfort onto those they want to exclude? Ultimately, too, no amount of terminology tweaking will change one important fact: You can call yourself a victim of Harry Benjamin Syndrome all you want, or call yourself transsexual, or Woman Born Transsexual. Call yourself a blue spruce, if you wish. No term matters when those who will have a problem with your gender orientation or expression see you and apply their own crude labels.”

What a smear queen, that Gwen Smith. How dare Gwen make such a statement! Can you believe the audacity of what she said? *smirk*

Suzanne Cooke’s arguments in the editorial are:

1. Self appointed community leaders decided to use the moniker “transgender.”

“Self appointed leaders” are there because they’ve taken it on themselves to change things. Most of us have sacrificed to the point of putting our safety and security on the line to change things. We are “self appointed” because the work is there in front of us and it isn’t being done by anyone else. There is a vacuum, and the need for that vacuum gets filled by whoever steps up.

2. The political entity called the transcommunity is composed of groups of quite different people.

The reality in politics is that numbers are POWER. Regardless of position in the gender spectrum, the reality is that we either advocate together, or suffer alone. Someone that discriminates against you, or physically harms you isn’t going to make a distinction between a transsexual, a drag queen, or a transgenderist. Hector Arturo Diaz, Willie Houston, Fred C. Martinez, Jr, Chanelle Pickett, and Kent Perry are all dead. Their murderers didn’t stop to ask them if they’d had surgery, or if they had a syndrome. Peter Oiler, Steve Stanton, Jimmie L. Smith, and Diane Schroer were all fired. Their employers didn’t ask them if they had an intersex condition before they were let go.

3. Virginia Prince was a hateful bitch that coined the term transgender. She hated those who had surgery, especially those that are lesbian identified.

The reality is that the world isn’t interested in these battles. They will define us together, whether or not you like it.

I find it very ironic that Cooke chooses Harry Benjamin Syndrome to name her “condition.”

“If these attempts to define and classify the transvestite and the transsexual appear vague and unsatisfactory, it is because a sharp and scientific separation of the two syndromes is not possible. We have as yet no objective diagnostic methods at our disposal to differentiate between the two. We - often - have to take the statement of an emotionally disturbed individual, whose attitude may change like a mood or who is inclined to tell the doctor what he believes the doctor wants to hear. Furthermore, nature does not abide by rigid systems. The vicissitudes of life and love cause ebbs and flows in the emotions so that fixed boundaries cannot be drawn.” - The Transsexual Phenomenon - Harry Benjamin, M.D.

4. Leaders in the community are forcing the term transgender on me. Sex reassignment surgery (SRS) made me a female.

I’ve never seen Riki Wilchins, Mara Keisling, Ethan St. Pierre, or Denise Leclair out policing labels. I DO see them working for legislation that protects everyone under the transgender umbrella.

As far as surgery making you “female,” while Michael Kantaras, J’Noel Gardiner, and Kristie Littleton might agree with you, but the courts didn’t agree with them. “Leaders” in the community are simply dealing with the reality of how the society views us.

I am a bit sensitive about this subject. I’m very tired of people taking pot shots at those that are actually in the trenches working for the equality for all people under the transgender umbrella, even “women born transsexuals.”

You want a divorce? You want to leave? THEN GO. All I can say as you leave is see ya, bye-bye, cheerio, sayonara, so long, adieu, adios, au revoir, auf wiedersehen, later!

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