

History Theft: How Gay and Lesbian Historians Appropriate Trans History

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Abstract

As far back as we have history of transgender people, we have appropriation (a nice word for theft) of our history by gays and lesbians. I wrote a post about Albert Cashier, who was a veteran of the Civil War and lived as Albert most of his life. His identity stayed intact for most of [...]

Article

As far back as we have history of transgender people, we have appropriation (a nice word for theft) of our history by gays and lesbians. I wrote a post about Albert Cashier, who was a veteran of the Civil War and lived as Albert most of his life. His identity stayed intact for most of his life. Only until he was admitted to Watertown State Hospital was it widely known that Cashier was born female. When he was forced to wear dresses, he would take pins and fashion pants out of them. This is not someone that identified or lived as a woman. Yet the “Out and Proud in Chicago” documentary page states:

“These include the story of Jenny Hodgers, a cross-dressing Civil War hero who lived the majority of her adult life as a Albert Cashier”

Cashier even hid his identity at the cost of his Civil War pension. When required a physical exam for the pension, Cashier declined. If he went to such great lengths to hide his birth sex, why would anyone use female pronouns and call him a crossdresser in a supposed LGBT documentary?

OutHistory sent me a link to “Earl Lind (Ralph Werther-Jennie June): The Riddle of the Underworld, 1921”. One of the story’s header descriptors says “Transgender Memoir of 1921 Found”. The article itself is a pretty fascinating look at a transgender person from the turn of the century. I was captivated by it until I read:

“In his published Autobiography, also excerpted on OutHistory.org, Lind describes “Paresis Hall”, a New York City resort for “androgynes” in the 1890s, and their alleged formation in 1895 of the Cercle Hermaphrodites “for defense against the world’s bitter persecution” -- an organization which, if not apocryphal, is the earliest-known homosexual emancipation organization in the U.S. No other evidence of the Cercle has been found.”

Androgyne is a gender identity, not a sexual orientation. Calling Cercle Hermaphrodites a “homosexual organization” is an artful form of theft. Transgender people in times past didn’t have a name for themselves, but we do. According to Greek mythology, Hermaphrodites was the child of Aphrodite and

Hermes. Hemaphroditos was said to have “merged bodies with a water nymph, becoming a creature of both sexes.” Does that sound gay or transgender?

When Joe Solmonese lectured John Stewart (of the Daily Show fame) on the difference between gender identity and sexual orientation, he proved he knew the difference. I wish gay and lesbian historians would acknowledge the difference as well and not try to do a smash and grab of our history when it's convenient for them.

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