

No Match, No Job, No Surgery

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Abstract

Maybe it was my naiveté, but I always thought when I got my documentation changed, I transitioned, and was passable, that I'd be able to live the nice normal life I did before transition. It hasn't quite worked out that way. Recently I was interviewed a few times and offered a job... and then I [...]

Article

Maybe it was my naiveté, but I always thought when I got my documentation changed, I transitioned, and was passable, that I'd be able to live the nice normal life I did before transition. It hasn't quite worked out that way. Recently I was interviewed a few times and offered a job... and then I got that dreaded call.

"Marti, we were doing our normal background check and we have a problem. We keep getting a rejection with your gender."

I had to tell my potential future employer that I am a pre-operative transsexual. In this circumstance, I was lucky. I am a skilled worker and the HR person that I was dealing with had family that was transgender. Had not both those things been in my favor, I'd probably still be unemployed.

There's been talk about repealing Title II of the REAL ID Act, but so far there hasn't been a lot of movement. As it stands now, you can have all your documentation changed but one call to the Social Security Administration will reveal your transgender status. This is a form of ghettoization that subjects transgender employees to humiliation and exposes them to discrimination. For many transgender people, this is part of an ugly cycle of workplace discrimination that is almost impossible to prove (that being discrimination in the hiring process). This discrimination leads to increased rates of unemployment or under-employment. Unemployment/under-employment can lead to decreased health care and an increase in risky behavior (especially "pumping" silicone and black market hormones). Because the Social Security Administration requires sexual/gender reassignment surgery (GRS/SRS) to change a gender marker, this also mandates surgery for anyone who wants consistency in their documentation.

In many instances, this unemployment/under-employment causes transgender people to not be able to afford the very surgeries that will fulfill the SSA's requirements. This vicious cycle of poverty forces many transwomen into pornography or sex work, in order to pay for the required surgeries and therapy.

In the end, there are very few reasons for an employer to know what genitals you possess. Until this section of the REAL ID Act is repealed, transgender people will continue to have skyrocketing numbers

of unemployment, HIV/AIDS exposure, and poverty. Gender shouldn't ever be allowed to be used as a weapon of discrimination and oppression.

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