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The Normalization of TS/TG Along with the Normalization of Gay and Lesbian

By Guest

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Abstract

By Suzan Cooke Transsexual and Transgender people are everywhere, for good or bad, in high positions in life and low. We are not just sex workers and murder victims even though we are often stereotyped as such. Like other minority groups, we are remarkably diverse. So much so that describing ourselves as either transsexual or [...]

Article

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Transsexual and Transgender people are everywhere, for good or bad, in high positions in life and low.

We are not just sex workers and murder victims even though we are often stereotyped as such.

Like other minority groups, we are remarkably diverse. So much so that describing ourselves as either transsexual or transgender says virtually nothing about us as an individual.

I never saw us as a single community. TS/TG as identity seemed to form very weak bonds between us.

Often times friendships required additional shared interests.

Identity politics tells us we should make the TS/TG cause the main focus of our lives.

I found that really problematic right from the start because over the years I started seeing not only the LGBT community as my community but generally the left wing progressive world as my community.

The idea that I should consider myself primarily a member of the “Transgender Community” seemed stifling.

Huffington Post had an article the other day: Jacob Rudolph, Teen Who Came Out In Awards Speech, On Why He Identifies As LGBT (Rather than Gay)

When the push for transgender as umbrella effort started in the 1990s, I was a volunteer at the LA Gay and Lesbian Community Services Center. I even celebrated the 25 anniversary of my surgery at Pride Day in 1997.

If people tried to pin me down as to identity I would have said lesbian or maybe bisexual. I was out about being transsexual, but I never treated transsexual as though it was the only thing about me or even the most important.

As I've said in the past I never wanted either transsexual or transgender as an honorific preceding my name. Now I know there has been a good deal of debate over the proper use of transgender or transsexual as an adjective rather than a noun, but I find the practice of using it as a title to be far more offensive. I'm also troubled by it being used as an adjective modifying a profession. I am a writer/photographer etc who happens to be transsexual.

Last week there was an article on Raw Story: Colin Powell asks O'Reilly: Why do you only see me as an African-American?

It is the same thing: Why should any of us be seen as only TS or TG?

Seriously what do the terms transsexual or transgender really say about us? I mean beyond the obvious.

I always felt more a part of the queer alphabet soup than any one particular identity. I suspect many people do.

Because I feel a part of a bigger community I tended to sort things like the passage of laws along lines based on the dialectic of whether they are good for the LGBT etc community or bad for the LGBT etc community.

Now we (TS/TG) people are becoming commonplace. For both positive and negative attention. While we still have the radfem assholes beating on us we also have a lot of feminists including us in things like the Violence Against Women Act.

In the 1970s it Gay and Lesbian people wore buttons and carried signs that read: "We are Everywhere!"

Now TS/TG people are everywhere and while the struggle is far from over we are at least starting to be part of the discourse. Even when that means speech editors wind up tacking us on to inclusive speeches, "And transsexual/transgender people too."

Even though we watch some people strain to be properly inclusive more and more people in not only the LGBT communities but in the progressive communities are starting to make the effort.

After years of being shut out of the elections and watching a right-wing minority pull together a coalition of racists, homophobes, and religious fanatics; we've started to work together. Obama may not be our ideal but we overcame the differences of the identity politics that kept minority groups apart for all these years.

We showed up at Occupy. We show up at anti-globalization rallies, anti-tar sands, and pipeline rallies.

More importantly, people are beginning to see how diverse a minority group TS/TG people actually are.

While we haven't gotten the big Federal Inclusive ENDA we have had far greater success in getting major corporations to write TS/TG non-discrimination measures into corporate policy.

So we are getting to a place where we receive the same crappy treatment as the rest of the workforce. We are part-timers with no benefits, no sick time or vacation time. We are over-worked and over-stressed just like the rest of the workforce.

I realize there are way too many throw away and runaway as well as adult homeless TS/TG folks. We really treat the homeless and disenfranchised in a manner that is unconscionable. There was an article in the December 10, 2012, New Yorker titled “Netherland” about a young lesbian who ran away to NYC and wound up homeless, as so many LGBT kids do. She was one of the better equipped homeless LGBT kids and became part of a crew that helped each other survive. That crew included a trans guy. They all did sex work and a number of them wound up HIV Pos as a result. But they were the strong ones and managed to work their way through the social services network.

What struck me about the article was how the trans-guy was just casually accepted as part of the LGBT mix. And why not? They were united by shared problems associated with being young, poor, homeless, and part of the alphabet soup.

But homelessness isn’t just a problem for TS/TG folks or even LGBT folks. It has become systemic and hits many working class people. The Nation recently ran an article: Old, Female, and Homeless.

Our employment issues are intertwined with the same issues of employee abuse that all working people face. Part-time, no benefits low paying work in a fire-at-will environment. Older workers and workers whose professions have become obsolete due to either automation or off-shoring are particularly hard hit. See the recent New York Times article: In Hard Economy for All Ages, Older Isn’t Better ... It’s Brutal.

I’ve heard a lot of people use the term “intersectionality of oppression”. Indeed most of us live lives that are filled with an intersectionality of oppression. Identity politics asks us to make one aspect of our lives the primary source of oppression and focus.

When we do that we miss out on the opportunity to form coalitions across the array of intersectional issues.

Educating people to treat TS/TG people with respect and decency requires effort. We have already made that effort with other members of the Gay and Lesbian Communities, now we need to reach beyond LGBT.

As TS/TG people we share the same issues as non-TS/TG people.

Women in society, be they cis or trans, often share the same issues. Gay or lesbian transfolks share the same issues as non-trans gay and lesbian folks.

Our elderly are often without families and dependent upon Social Security as well as other public services. Our immigrant sisters and brothers face the same issues other immigrant people face, no matter their document status.

The environment impacts all our lives. Access to health care, the right to marry. the right to housing and travel without fear of having your papers challenged are basic rights.

We’ve won two Presidential elections and while it is true Obama isn’t as progressive as we might wish, he is a damn sight better than the alternatives we were presented with.

We need to branch out beyond being TS or TG or even LGBT and form coalitions on the community state and national levels to work together to ensure the rights of all.

From Huffington Post: Why LGBT Equality Means Equality for All

Rea Carey

01/31/2013

The LGBT movement is not just about what most people would commonly label “LGBT issues,” such as same-sex marriage. LGBT Americans reflect the full diversity of this country, in every way. Our sexual orientations and gender identities cut across every race, ethnicity, age, religion, class and national origin. And the issues that influence our lives are at the intersections of all those distinctions, just as they are about what connects us all: poverty, racism, sexism and systemic economic and legal inequality.

When it comes to immigration, our movement is again deeply intertwined with the struggle for equality for all immigrants -- which the president emphasized as another crucial component to our national journey in both speeches. There are an estimated 11 million undocumented immigrants in this country, 11 million who have no clear path to citizenship, who must hide the truth about how they came to this country, who must live their lives in constant fear of being forcibly separated from their families and from the people they love most, and who are at continual risk of being detained and subjected to appalling abuses. Many of these individuals and families are LGBT, and our movements have united out of the common cause that no one should be forced to hide any aspect of their identity. LGBT people have joined in calling on the president and Congress to pass comprehensive immigration reform and in taking a stand against blatantly discriminatory laws such as Arizona’s S.B. 1070, and Latino and immigrant rights organizations have joined in taking strong stands in support of LGBT equality.

And one of the pillars of the LGBT rights movement is this truth: The government does not have the right to control our bodies by legislating on the basis of a narrow standard for sexuality. But that same controlling impulse is behind the right wing’s efforts across the country to restrict abortion and access to contraception, and to mandate abstinence-only education. Their intent is clear: to deny women control of their own sexuality. On the 40th anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*, LGBT Americans are among the strongest advocates for reproductive freedom, because our cause is one and the same: to live our lives as we wish, without anyone imposing their judgment and will on our most personal decisions.

Finally, when it comes to economic inequality, we know that LGBT people face this reality firsthand. LGBT people of color, especially transgender people of color, have among the highest rates of poverty and HIV infections and face among the harshest discrimination in our society, whether in employment or in incarceration rates. We join our allies in demanding solutions not just to anti-LGBT discrimination but to the underlying crisis of poverty and racial injustice in America.

See also: *The Georgia Voice*: Activists: LGBT communities must ally with others to ensure equality for all

Cross-posted from Women Born Transsexual

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