

Text from GCN, in the Nov. 10-16, 1991 issue

### **Festival womyn speak out**

Some letters have been printed in the press in recent weeks regarding the womon-only policy at the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival as it relates to transsexuals participating in the event. We would like to clarify our policy and explain the circumstances which brought it to light this last August.

In the simplest of terms, the Michigan Festival is and always has been an event for womyn, and this continues to be defined as womyn born womyn. We respect everyone's right to define themselves as they wish.

It's unfortunate that our choice to offer the Michigan Festival as an event for womyn-born-womyn is being construed by some as a position on the merits of people making individual choices on how to live. We only mean to define who this event is for. We hold dearly our right to make this determination and in the same regard we believe that is the right of every other womyn's institution and community to define these issues depending on their own particular needs and concerns.

We regret that the circumstances at this year's festival may have been a result of a lack of current public information on this policy. We think it is understandable that our priority would not be centered around who our event is "not" for, and we have deliberately refrained from placing our focus in that direction, though we have always been definite about our policy when asked.

When it was clear this summer there was a known transsexual man attending the event, the festival security staff dealt with it as respectfully as possible. We provided local housing at our expense, offered return airport transportation, and refunded the festival ticket. Though the letter to the press represents Festival security coordinators have been represented in a derogatory manner, these womyn took much time and care to make sure this difficult situation was dealt with as considerately as possible.

It may be valuable to know that the Festival working community processed this issue in meetings after the event, and it is clear from those discussions that the group of womyn who come together to create this gathering supports this Festival policy. Though everyone was passionate about the issue and held caring feelings for all sides of the experience, it still was the overwhelming consensus that the intention of the Festival remain an event provided for womyn only.

In the bigger picture of "Michigan," we feel very good about this 16<sup>th</sup> Festival, and we are back to work making plans for the 1992 Festival. Our primary commitment is to keep our focus and energy on womyn and on presenting the best week of womyn's culture and community that we know how to create.

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