

Enchante' News

A Transgender Newsletter



Vol. 2003-02

<http://florida.enchante.tripod.com>

February 2003

Double-Take

by Dylan Swizzler

The Roman Catholic Church likes to think of itself as one body, as in the body of Christ. But lately it seems hell-bent on hacking off limbs.

Most people expect that sometime this year the Vatican will issue new guidelines for barring gay men from seminaries — a move regarded by many as a shameful quick fix to the church's sexual abuse scandal by getting rid of gay priests. "Off with the leg!"

In the meantime, the church has swiftly and silently cut off transgender Catholics. Separate statements from the Vatican in recent weeks instructed bishops [not to alter the genders](#) on baptismal records and [not to admit any transgender candidates](#) for clerical or monastic orders.

Why? Because transsexuals suffer from "mental pathologies," say the church's orthodoxy czars, otherwise known as the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. "Bye-bye, foot."

But many won't be cut off that easily. "This transsexual Roman Catholic woman will pursue her baptismal call until Jesus tells her to go elsewhere," snapped Michelle Griffin, who was recently appointed to board of Dignity USA, the nation's largest group of GLBT Catholics.

Other transsexual Catholics feel the same way. "I've always been a Catholic," said Karen Loran. "It's the only method of worshipping God that I'm used to, and I want to stick with it."

Loran's devotion is remarkable, in light of both the Vatican's stance and recent events at her parish in

Covington, Wash. Last week her pastor asked her to step down from her position as a eucharistic minister — a post that confers a degree of leadership in a parish — because two or three people reported being "uncomfortable" with her.

While Loran would be forbidden to enter a seminary today, it's interesting to note that earlier in her life, as a man, she spent three years in the seminary, studying to be a priest. It's just a fingernail."

The reason for the church's apparently sudden one-two punch to transsexuals remains a mystery. A spokesman for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops did not return phone and e-mail requests for clarity on the issue.

One transsexual Catholic, who requested anonymity, suggested that the motivation may stem from Rome's obsessive preservation of an all-male, celibate clergy. "It seems to me that the hierarchy is taking a lot of unnecessary action to preclude the possibility of someone being ordained who was not born male," she said.

The existence of a priest who was not born male would certainly give a boost to the numerous advocates for ordaining women, which is a huge battle the hierarchy would rather not fight. Sacrificing transsexual Catholics could be a stopgap measure.

We may not know the reason for hundreds of years, if the church lasts that long. Right now the church as a body resembles the Black Knight in "Monty Python and the Holy Grail," who comically denies that injuries from his hacked-off limbs are life-threatening.

"It's only a flesh wound," he insists. It doesn't take a doctor to know he's mistaken

For Immediate Release: Dated January 10, 2003
From: The National Transgender Advocacy Coalition (NTAC)
Contact Person: Robyn Walters, Seattle Washington
Chair, Vanessa Edwards Foster; Houston, Texas
Contact Email: ntacmedia@aol.com
media@ntac.org
Contact Phone: 832-483-9901
360-437-4091
Website: <http://www.ntac.org>

SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS AND KEY WEST VOTE IN TRANSGENDER RIGHTS

Tuesday night, January 7, 2003, Key West became the first jurisdiction in Florida to enact legislation protecting the human rights of transgender and intersexed people. By a unanimous vote, the Key West City Council amended the city's Human Rights to include 'gender identity or expression.'

At about the same time, the Springfield, IL city council passed a similar ordinance covering both sexual orientation and gender identity. The Springfield vote was 8-1 in favor of the ordinance, with one abstention.

The ordinance in Key West protects people from discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, and lending. By including those whose gender identity or gender expression is different from the expectations of some parts of society, the Key West ordinance becomes the most inclusive civil rights legislation in the state.

The measure in Springfield includes gender identity under the definition of sexual orientation as "having or being perceived as having a self-image or identity not traditionally associated with one's biological maleness or femaleness." The ordinance passed following a long debate in which opponents raised objections based on religious grounds and on the alleged health menace posed by homosexuals. Proponents argued that discrimination against anyone is unacceptable and that the legislation merely promotes equal treatment for all.

In testimony before the Springfield city council, Rick Garcia, Political Director of Equality Illinois, challenged the morality of those who invoked

religion to oppose the ordinance. "Let me remind you that people invoked God and the Holy Scriptures to oppose the abolition of slavery, to oppose the vote for women, and to oppose integration — positions people of goodwill find morally repugnant today. The basic foundation of our Judeo-Christian tradition is justice and mercy, not intolerance and bigotry."

Following the Key West vote, Janice Carney, Executive Director of the Florida Gender Equality project (FORGE) stated, "I am delighted that Key West is starting the new year with a strong stand on transgender civil rights." Carney, who is also a member of NTAC, added, "the Key West City Council was very courageous in recognizing the humanity of transgender people."

"For people who've felt a lifelong sense of personal isolation brought on by biological occurrences beyond their control, unanimous passage of this human rights ordinance was in essence saying we acknowledge and accept you as fellow human beings" Scott Fraser, Administrator of the Gay & Lesbian Community Center of Key West, said immediately following the Key West Council's unanimous vote. "Although this sounds so very basic to most of us, it's been a long-time-coming" for gender distinctive individuals.

FORGE and Key West Community Center were part of a coalition, including Equality Florida, a statewide social justice organization, the National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR), the National Transgender Advocacy Coalition (NTAC), and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF), who also provided assistance to local activists.

"It was a great coalition," said NTAC Chair Vanessa Edwards Foster who contributed to the effort. Foster, who also worked on the first transgender-inclusive legislation in Texas, added, "Enactment of the first trans-inclusive nondiscrimination ordinance in another conservative southern state — another of those initial footholds — is indescribably gratifying. Especially in Bush country!"

Key West and Springfield become the 55th and 56th jurisdictions in the United States to enact transgender-inclusive nondiscrimination laws.

Introduction of GLBT nondiscrimination legislation is currently under consideration in Rockford and Peoria, IL and is expected to come before the Illinois state legislature this year. Carney noted that the transgender coalition is carrying the Key West victory forward to other Florida jurisdictions, including Miami / Dade County, St. Petersburg, Orlando, and Seminole.

"I pray from deep in my soul," Carney added, "that this action will open other hearts and minds to transgender inclusion."

- 30 -

Founded in 1999, NTAC - the National Transgender Advocacy Coalition - is a 501(c)(4) civil rights organization working to establish and maintain the right of all transgendered, intersexed, and gender-variant people to live and work without fear of violence or discrimination.

[TGNI - News and Information](#)

[Transgendered Network International](#)

Prisoners of gender

When it comes to legal recognition of their sexual status, Hong Kong's transsexual community are trapped in a heartbreaking Catch-22 situation.-

MOST PEOPLE DON'T think twice about their right to marry. But for 37-year-old transsexual Miranda, it is not so straightforward. Miranda was born male and had sex reassignment at 33. Now a graceful woman of medium build and a fair complexion, she wears her hair fashionably shoulder-length and straight, and accentuates her features with make-up.

Two years ago, she was deeply in love with a

man who planned to marry her. However, her adopted sex is not recognised under Hong Kong law because it is not possible to change the sex on birth certificates. Had she tied the knot with her boyfriend, it would have been treated as a marriage between two men, which is unlawful. Worrying he might leave her if she spilled the beans, Miranda made a painful decision. "I dumped him," says Miranda, who is now single. "He didn't know I was a transgendered person. I did not know how to tell him."

Miranda is among the estimated 100 or so transsexuals in Hong Kong frustrated by the lack of legal recognition of their new genders. Their plight has been highlighted by academics following the British government's announcement last month of a long-awaited reform to legally recognise the adopted gender of the country's 5,000 transsexuals.

The change had been forced on the British government by a ruling in July 2001 by the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg that deemed its failure to recognise the new identities of two male-to-female transsexuals a breach of human rights. Under the measure expected to take effect next year, the transsexuals will be given the right to change their birth certificates to their new sexes, which effectively gives them the right to marry.

Britain is one of only four European countries - the others being Albania, Andorra and the Republic of Ireland - that refuse transsexuals permission to alter their birth certificates. In the United States, all but three states allow the change. In Asia, however, only a handful of countries provide legal recognition, including Singapore, some parts of Australia and New Zealand.

gender identity development and transgender issues. "It's very unfortunate."

Ironically, marriage is not entirely off-limits for Hong Kong's transsexuals. Because the law recognises a person's biological sex only, a male-to-female transsexual could marry a woman and a female-to-male could marry a man - although Winter says such relationships are rare.

Nonetheless, there is a host of other legal issues that confront transsexuals. According to Robyn Emerton, assistant professor at the HKU's faculty of law, a transsexual such as Miranda is open to prosecution for using a female toilet, although Miranda has not run into any trouble so far. Were she sentenced to jail for committing a crime, she would be sent to a male prison. In theory, Miranda cannot be a victim of rape because rape of male-to-female transsexuals is not covered by the law. "But a female-to-male transgendered person would still be regarded as woman by law and so could be raped. Yet there has been no court case to test the issue," Emerton says.

After Miranda's sex reassignment, she had her identity card changed, with the new one showing her new sex and name. But there is a "B" after the identity number to indicate either the sex, birthday or place of birth is different to that on the holder's birth certificate. According to Emerton, the "B" flags the holder's transsexuality to those in the know, such as the police and immigration officials, because there are few instances in which the other two criteria are changed.

Miranda, whose lawyer made sure she understood her rights before she went under the knife, says with contempt: "I found it ridiculous that I could be arrested for going to a female washroom . . . It's like we're

being treated as the third sex."

Miranda is frustrated because she believes too many things do not make sense, including the fact that her operation in 1998 was fully paid for by the gender identity clinic at the Queen Mary Hospital run by the government, which ultimately does not recognise her new identity.

Winter points to the government's half-hearted stance. "It seems so ironic that the government should help transgendered people to change their sex even to the point of providing surgery at its own expense, and at the end of all this, doesn't give them the legal status they deserve."

According to the Immigration Department, correction of any personal information on one's birth certificate is possible only if the holder is under the age of 11 or if it can be proven an error had been made. Asked whether there is any prospect of the adopted sex of transsexuals being recognised legally, a spokesperson responded in a written reply: "The existing arrangement has been operating well."

Winter calls for the government to respect the rights of the minority and initiate changes. "By changing the law, you would make the lives of a small but significant number of people a lot easier," he says. "What we are looking at are people who suffer fear, social isolation, depression, and many have attempted suicide."

Such experiences are not new for Miranda. Before she had the operation, she made four attempts to kill herself (two of them before the age of 20) by slashing her wrist or overdosing. Having suffered from depression for years, she still entertains suicidal thoughts.

"I had feelings of gender confusion when I was six or seven," she says, explaining that she didn't understand what she was experiencing at the time. She says it was only around the age of 20 that she heard about "sex reassignment". "Before

the operation, every second of my life was torture," Miranda recalls. "I hated my body every morning I woke up. I wanted to damage it because I hated it."

Answering the needs of her feminine side, Miranda began dressing like a woman at 15, but she remembers the unfriendly attention she attracted from strangers. Once a woman approached her on the MTR and said: "Why are you dressed like a woman?" Miranda responded by asking her the same question.

"I was discriminated against for 20 years. It was to do with the way people looked and stared at you," Miranda says, closing her eyes as if to shut out the pain. "You haven't done anything wrong, but people spread rumours about you and that scars you."

Although she chose to wear women's clothes in her free time, at work (she is wary of revealing her profession), Miranda dressed and acted like a man. But that did not stop people from gossiping about her, she says, which aggravated her depression. After her fourth suicide attempt, she was introduced to the gender identity clinic that offered her two years of counselling before she decided to undergo the operation, to her mother's dismay. But Miranda refused to reconsider. She says: "I thought, if I died, my mother would lose a child. If I didn't die, she had lost me [as a son] already. But if I had the operation, at least I would be happy myself."

Miranda had three operations totalling 29 hours over three months, during which she suffered tremendous physical pain brought on by breast augmentation and surgery that involved using part of the colon to form the vagina. "We have to suffer so much to get what other people take for granted," she says. "Right after the operation, I asked myself, 'What's next?'"

Wanting to start a new life with a new identity, Miranda transferred to a different department at work after her operation, trusting only a few

colleagues with her secret. She still sees her mother, who struggles to accept Miranda's new identity.

While she keeps in touch with a few former workmates, she stopped seeing her transsexual friends, a reaction Winter says is typical of transsexuals. "I missed them sometimes, but we all wanted to have a fresh start," Miranda says, referring to her and her friends.

Although she felt "totally relaxed" after the operation, she still is susceptible to black moods. "I don't like this world," she says matter-of-factly, explaining she has learned to protect herself by putting up the barricades. "I try to act tough, speak tough. But I don't want to be tough."

Winter says many transsexuals' emotional problems are largely a result of how society treats them. "Some [medical experts] claim that transsexuality is a disorder," he says. "But you might say that it's society that has a mental disorder, not the people concerned. Transgendered people are ordinary people but their adopted sex is not legally acknowledged. That is an injustice."

Emerton says she and Winter are trying to bring the issue to the government's attention. "We're very much at the beginning. We hope to form a concern group with the transgender community to discuss the issues that most concerns them and to try to effect change," she says. "We may raise the issue with the Equal Opportunity Commission or the Immigration Department."

Miranda says she has never contemplated coming out to fight for her right because the community is too small and, most importantly, she can't risk having her identity exposed. "But I do agree that changing the law would give us something good," she

says. "Even if all else fails, we would still have the law that gives us rights. You can get married and you have a choice. But we don't. That's what we want: the choice and the right."

New Airport Security Devices May Put Transpeople at Risk

Several new detection devices were deployed in Orlando International Airport yesterday (March 15, 2002). These prototype machines will be tested here to determine whether similar machines should be deployed nationwide. These machines may potentially expose cross-dressing or cross-living individuals to public challenge, humiliation, detainment, not to mention flight delays! Transpeople should be aware of these machines, and may want to oppose their deployment on the grounds that they pose a violation of privacy. Information on how to register opposition is given below.

The types of new machines include two for baggage:

A device that uses low level radio waves to scan for explosives residue.

The InVision CTX5500, a coherent scatter x-ray device that creates a 3-D image of a bag's contents.

Three new devices have been developed for scanning people:

The Rapiscan Secure 1000 body scanner uses low-level x-rays that penetrate clothing and a special camera to create a computer image of metal objects in their exact locations on a passenger's body.

The Beringer Ion Scan 400B, a walk through device that uses blasts of air and a vacuum to loosen, apprehend, and analyze particles around a person's body, seeking traces of 40 types of explosive and other hazardous material residue. It

can also be programmed to test for 60 different types of drugs.

The Entry Scan 3 made by Ion Track Instruments, a trace portal explosives detector, that functions like the Beringer Ion Scan device above.

In particular, the Rapiscan Secure 1000 shows airport security personnel a realtime image of your naked body. If you are, for example, an FTM who is binding, they will see your breasts; if you are packing, they will see your prosthesis. Security personnel are viewing scans of same sex passengers, that is if you are presenting as male, and you are asked or volunteer to go through one of these scanners, a male security person will be viewing your scanned image. It is unlikely that these people will be trained in handling transgendered or transsexual passengers with sensitivity or respect.

Once these new machines are placed in service nationwide, the current zonal metal detection devices are likely to remain in service for initial screening. The new enhanced systems will likely be used as alternatives to the wand and pat-down searches when a scan reveals a person to have any anomalous object in his or her possession. A "profile of suspicious character" may be computer-generated at any point in the ticket purchase or passenger registration process and coded on the boarding pass so that security personnel are on alert when the passenger enters the security scan area.

According to CBS News, only passengers who volunteer will go through the Orlando checkpoint while the systems are being tested.

CBS News stated: "One system, the Rapiscan Secure 1000, uses low-energy X-rays to search a person through clothing. When Rapiscan project manager Bryan Allman scanned himself, a plastic knife hidden in his shirt pocket was detected.

However, the outline of his body — every inch of it — also was clearly visible. Mindful of the machine's revealing nature, airport officials

refused to put a woman in the scanner.

Security officials said the scanner would only be used when a passenger shows an "anomaly." Also, the security worker examining the scan would be the same sex as the person being searched.

The potential for complaints about the invasiveness of the search didn't seem to bother Allman.

"Everybody has to learn that the world has changed since Sept. 11, and the world needs a much more thorough type of screening," Allman said.

But the American Civil Liberties Union says the scan is too intrusive.

"This, of course, is a virtual strip-search," ACLU associate director Barry Steinhardt said. "There's no question this has tremendous potential for embarrassment."

Steinhardt pointed out there have been incidents across the nation where male security workers harassed female passengers during hands-on searches.

"We fear this is going to be indiscriminately used," Steinhardt said. "We know that even less-invasive searches are being abused at airports." (End of CBS News report excerpt.)

Airlines affected at present are Delta, Virgin Atlantic, Swissair, and British Airways flying in and out of Orlando International Airport.

There are alternative technologies available that will provide the same level of security without compromising personal privacy, for example infra-red systems that use thermal imaging of the body which is medically safer for people with pacemakers or other implanted bionic or biometric medical devices. If the proposed technology is used, it is also possible to alter the holographic image of the body to resemble a stick figure or a mannequin, thus leaving the personal characteristics of an individual hidden while still

revealing weapons. This should be an enforced minimum standard to prevent unnecessary invasion of privacy.

Readers are advised to write or call their congressional representatives via the capital switchboard 202-224-3121 (just tell the receptionist what city you live in and your call will be routed appropriately) or use <http://thomas.loc.gov> to identify your representative and link to their email. Tell your representative that you are 100% behind the country's need to ensure airline safety, and you are also 100% behind protecting constitutional rights to privacy. Urge him or her to advocate for the implementation of security systems that are less invasive and do not subject people to unnecessary invasion of privacy, potential embarrassment and public humiliation, and unforeseen medical risks to those wearing or having implanted devices, the operation of which may be compromised by subjection to the scanning waves.

Meanwhile, to avoid potential conflicts with airport security, cross-dressers should travel in the gender presentation that matches their legal identification. Pre-op transsexual people who are cross-living should carry a letter from a therapist or physician that explicitly states they are required to present in the target designated gender as a precursor to or as part of the process of medical treatment that will actualize the true gender. The letter should state that the true gender is that of the gender presentation, irrespective of anatomic condition, and that this document is a medical affidavit.

If transgendered or transsexual people are detained or harassed in airport security procedures, please contact the Transgender Law & Policy Institute (TLPI) to report the incident so that we can track these occurrences. TLPI may be reached at info@transgenderlaw.org.

Our Local Story

Members

We welcome new and old members alike; as well as significant others. Transitioning can be stressful for spouses and family, and it really helps to have them on your side. Our February meeting should bring a number of new members. We now have a few medical professionals referring to us.

I've been in contact with area support groups, political activism groups, etc. trying to build communication between us. We each have our own niche, but working toward similar goals - helping the transgendered.

I look forward to seeing old friends and making new ones at our February and future meetings.

Helpful Websites, Mail Lists, Email Addresses, and Clubs

<http://www.ntac.org>
National Transgender Advocacy Coalition

<http://www.temenos.net>
Temenos LGBT Community

<http://florida.enchante.tripod.com>
Enchante' - A support group for transexuals in the Tampa Bay and surrounding area.

<http://www.gpac.org/>
GenderPAC - Gender Public Advocacy Coalition

<http://www.megalaw.com>
General Law Info

<http://www.forge.8m.com>
Forge
The Florida Gender Equality Project

Egroups:
ConcerningSRS@egroups.com
transgender-couples@egroups.com

Yahoo Groups:
postop@yahoogroups.com
transgendergazebo@yahoogroups.com

Other Groups:
genderflorida@sheckhosting.com
SRS-Issues@topica.com

Patty Jean
PattyJts@aol.com
<http://ts.pjtechie.com>
Enchante' President/WebMistress/Editor

Night Clubs (TS friendly):
Waterside Landing - Port Richey, FL