

inexpensive or painless), we claim our humanity and our right to be treated equally under law and within the purviews of morality and culture.

... Look! No, don't! Transsexual men are men. Transsexual men are men who have lived in female bodies. Transsexual men may appear feminine, androgynous or masculine. Any man may appear feminine, androgynous, or masculine. Look! What makes a man a man? His penis? His beard? His receding hairline? His lack of breasts? His sense of himself as a man? Some men have no beard, some have no penis, some never lose their hair, some have breasts. All have a sense of themselves as men.

... Look! No, don't! What is true, what is false? What is a "real" man?

I am real; I am an authentic and reliable man. I am also a transsexual man. I am a man who lived for 40 years in the body of a woman, so I have had access to knowledge that most men do not have. Invisibility has been a major issue in my life. Throughout my childhood and young adulthood I—my identity—was, for the most part, invisible. I was always defined by others, categorized either by my lack of femininity, or by my female body, or by the disquieting combination of both. The opportunity to escape the punishing inadequacy imposed on me by self-styled adjudicators of sex role performance was one I could not ignore. I simply will not accept a similar judgement of my masculinity. And I have yet to meet someone who could look me in the face, who could spend any time at all in conversation with me, who would deny my masculinity now the way they would dismiss it before as "just a phase" or "inappropriate behaviour for a girl."

... One of the most difficult things for me to reconcile about my own transition was my movement out of a place in lesbian culture and into a white heterosexual embodiment. Let me emphasize: Not all transsexual men have lesbian histories, and not all transsexual men are heterosexual. Nonetheless, my personal politics are quite closely aligned with queer culture, so I am again a different sort of heterosexual man. I am not afraid of homosexuality, though I do not practice it. Many gendered and heterosexist social constructs collapse like cardboard sea-walls against the ocean of my transsexual reality.

... Look! No, don't! It all comes down to attitude. If you accept me—if you can acknowledge that I am a man, even a transsexual man—then you can accept that life has variation, life is rich, you don't control it, you experience it. You can still analyse concepts, you can still have opinions, you can even disagree with me. And if you don't accept me, well, then you don't. But as you go through life categorizing and qualifying, judging and evaluating, remember that there are human beings on the other end of the stick you're shaking, and they might have ideas and feelings and experiences that are different from your own. Maybe they look different from you, maybe they are tall women with large hands, maybe they are men who have given birth to their own children, maybe the categories you've delineated won't work in all cases. Look! No, don't! Transsexual men want to disappear because we are tired of being forced into categories, because we are beyond defending ourselves.

Look! No, don't! Transsexual men are entering the dialogue from more perspectives, more angles, than were ever theorized as being possible for them. Maybe if we are ignored we will go away. Maybe if we are continually not permitted to speak, not allowed to define ourselves, not given any corner of the platform from which to present our realities, then we will disappear and refrain from further complicating all the neat, orderly theories about gender and sex. Maybe if no one looks at us we will be safe.

At first I thought my transition was about not being looked at any longer, about my relief from scrutiny; now I know it is about scrutiny itself, about self-examination, and about losing my own fear of being looked at, not because I can disappear, but because I am able to claim my unique difference at last. What good is safety if the price is shame and fear of discovery? So, go ahead: Look!

## An Entire Rainbow of Possibilities

Gary Bowen

I'm a gay transman of Apache and Scotch-Irish descent, left-handed, differently abled, the parent of two young children—one of whom is also differently abled—of an old Cracker frontier family from Texas, a person who values his Native heritage very deeply, and who is doing his best to live in accordance with the Spirit, and who keeps learning more about his heritage all the time. . . . I am also a gay author and editor, with several books in print, as well as numerous short stories.

Arriving at this current place has been a journey not only of self-discovery, but of discovery about my family and my culture. Coming out transgendered was easy; grappling with racism, classism and ableism and other barriers is much harder. Once I figured out that "transgendered" was someone who transcended traditional stereotypes of "man" and "woman," I saw that I was such a person. I then began a quest for finding words that described myself, and discovered that while psychiatric jargon dominated the discourse, there were many other words, both older and newer, that addressed these issues. While I accepted the label of "transsexual" in order to obtain access to the hormones and chest surgery necessary to manifest my spirit in the material world, I have always had a profound disagreement with the definition of transsexualism as a psychiatric condition and transsexuals as disordered people.

My own transgendered state is a sacred calling given to me by Spirit, not a neurosis discovered by white medicine. Further, the battles that rage in feminist circles and elsewhere about the legitimacy and nature of the transgendered identity smack of racism to me, centered as they are upon white experience and white authors to the exclusion of minority voices and viewpoints, many of which contradict some of the conventional wisdom about what transsexualism is and what it means. It is extremely important to remember that "transsexual" and "transgendered" are terms that have arisen out of the dominant culture's experience with gender, and are not necessarily reflective of a wide variety of people, cultures, beliefs, and practices relating to gender.

As a person of Native descent I look to my ancestors for guidance in these matters. But the record is broken; trying to learn about the sacred people is like trying to reassemble a million pieces of pottery with only a few hundred potshards as clues. This then is the thing I know: that Spirit gives to each of us Visions of who we are which we must manifest in the material world to the best of our ability. Transgendered people, combining elements of male and female, are at the interstice of the material and spiritual worlds and are thus able to act as mediators for the benefit of our communities. We earn honor for our wisdom and strength, measured by our hard work on behalf of our families and communities. For this reason the sacred people are an integral part of our communities, not alienated or shameful, but often hidden to protect them from the ravages of the dominant culture. And, where white culture has triumphed, they have been almost entirely lost to the contemporary Native world—which means that there are many Native people today who do not know about or who do not value our sacred people.

It is important for Native people to reclaim our sacred people who have been murdered, burned, beaten, hanged, imprisoned, flogged, stripped, humiliated, and otherwise forced into compliance with the dominant standards of gender and sexuality or exterminated when they resisted. It is common for white people to refer to these people as "berdache"

if they have male genitalia, and as “amazons” if they have female genitalia, but these terms are offensive, being foreign terms that depend upon white standards of reference and which ignore Native traditions. I prefer to use the Sioux word “winkte” for those people who are described in English as “m2f” (male to female) and “kurami” (from the Yuma kwe’rhamé) for people who are “f2m” (female to male). However, while these Native terms overlap in meaning with terminology used by the dominant society, they are not identical because Native concepts of gender and identity differ in significant ways from the dominant culture.

I don’t use the term “two-spirit” to describe myself; where I grew up it was a pejorative term for a person of mixed blood. Further, there is no consensus of opinion as to just who is meant by the term “two-spirit,” and not only that, if translated into Native tongues it acquires unfortunate meanings; among my people it means “ghost-haunted”—a powerful concept and important in many Native spiritual systems, but having nothing to do with gender or orientation.

In my understanding of Spirit, Spirit is not divided in itself, but is an integrated whole. It is not a thing in balance, as implied by dichotomies of male/female, gay/straight, and black/white so prevalent in the white way of thinking; but a complete and complex thing which includes an entire rainbow of possibilities—not just the opposite ends of a spectrum. That is why there are seven cardinal directions: east, west, north, south, up, down, and center, as the Native viewpoint embraces dimensions not normally noticed by the dominant culture; so too does Spirit embrace dimensions of humanity not normally accepted by the dominant culture. There are many names for sexual minorities among Native Americans; two-spirits are a particular community that have elected that term to describe themselves, but I am not one of them.

There are many “magpies” who are drawn to latch onto the bright, shiny aspects of Native culture, who misappropriate Native culture, customs, and artifacts in the belief that they are “honoring” Native people by imitating them without understanding them. It is better for non-Native people to follow our example by looking to their own ancestors and reclaiming their own transgendered spirituality. European cultures from the Vikings to the Greeks had and honored transgendered people; even the Christian Church recognized saints that lived as members of the opposite sex or engaged in same sex unions. No European culture lacks a transgendered tradition; white people need to reclaim their own sacred people instead of appropriating ours.

The process of reclamation is an extraordinarily difficult one in which the seeker must come face to face with the atrocities of the past, grieve for what has been lost, and carefully sift through the destruction to recover the little that remains. This is true whether the seeker is examining Native American or Euro-American history. History is not ancient and irrelevant; history is the reason why things are the way they are now.

## Calling All Restroom Revolutionaries!

*Simone Chess, Alison Kafer, Jessi Quizar,  
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Everyone needs to use bathrooms, but only some of us have to enter into complicated political and architectural negotiations in order to use them. The fact is, bathrooms are easier to access for some of us than for others, and the people who never think about where and how they can pee have a lot of control over how using restrooms feels for the rest of us. What do we need from bathrooms? What elements are necessary to make a bathroom functional for everyone? To make it safe? To make it a private and respectful space? Whose bodies are excluded from the typical restroom? More important, what kind of bodies are assumed in the design of these bathrooms? Who has the privilege (we call it pee-privilege) of never needing to think about these issues, of always knowing that any given bathroom will meet one’s needs? Everyone needs to use the bathroom. But not all of us can.

And that’s where People in Search of Safe and Accessible Restrooms (PISSAR) comes in. PISSAR, a coalition of UC-Santa Barbara undergrads, grad students, staff, and community members, recognizes that bathrooms are not always accessible for people with disabilities, or safe for people who transgress gender norms. PISSAR was formed at the 2003 University of California Student of Color Conference, held at UC-Santa Barbara. During the lunch break on the second day of the conference, meetings for the disability caucus and the transgender caucus were scheduled in adjacent rooms. When only a few people showed up for both meetings, we decided to hold a joint session. One of the members of the disability caucus mentioned plans to assess bathroom accessibility on the campus, wondering if there was a similar interest in mapping gender-neutral bathrooms. Everyone in the room suddenly began talking about the possibilities of a genderqueer/disability coalition, and PISSAR was born.

For those of us whose appearance or identity does not quite match the “man” or “woman” signs on the door, bathrooms can be the sites of violence and harassment, making it very difficult for us to use them safely or comfortably. Similarly, PISSAR acknowledges that, although most buildings are required by the Americans with Disabilities Act to provide accessible bathrooms, some restrooms are more compliant than others and accessible bathrooms can often be hard to find. PISSAR’s mission, then, is threefold: 1) to raise awareness about what safe and accessible bathrooms are and why they are necessary; 2) to map and verify existing accessible and/or gender-neutral bathrooms on the campus; and 3) to advocate for additional bathrooms. We eventually hope to have both web-based and printed maps of all the bathrooms on campus, with each facility coded as to its accessibility and gender-safety. Beyond this initial campaign, PISSAR plans to advocate for the construction or conversion of additional safe and accessible bathrooms on campus. To that end, one of our long-term goals is to push for more gender-neutral bathrooms and showers in the dormitories, and to investigate the feasibility of multistall gender-neutral bathrooms across the campus as a whole.

As it turned out, we weren’t the only restroom revolutionaries on campus. We soon joined forces with a student-run initiative to stock all campus tampon and pad machines, a group called, appropriately enough, Aunt Flo and the Plug Patrol. Aunt Flo’s goal is to use funds garnered from the sale of tampons and pads in campus bathroom dispensers (blood