

gender quest



THE QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF KINDRED SPIRITS

AUTUMN 1999

VISIONARY PLEA FROM A KINDRED SPIRIT

by Diane Rose

It's 3:30am and for the third night in a row I cannot sleep with all the info running through me. I am being asked by Spirit to start truly speaking out about what we need to do to create the Millenium of Peace for ourselves and our future generations.

Tonight I have gone over and over the things in this world that have kept the human race from transcending its own limiting past. The "darkness" is nothing more than what keeps us from finding our joy and living our truth with love. It's clear to me that the Transgender Community is still a breeding ground for limitation and fear. This world is about fear and love, and the continuum between is what creates our learning and decides our future.

Our T Community has such talented, powerful, potentially loving people who could truly make a contribution to this world, and yet it unwittingly perpetuates a mindset that shuts them down with the lower frequency emotions of fear, doubt, shame, guilt, and low self-esteem. And most of us don't even realize the full effect of this on ourselves, and the world around us.

The task that we kindred spirits and others of the Light (who choose to live openly, love ourselves and find our joy by being truly who we are, and teach others about transcending fear) is not an easy one for others of us who attend conferences like Southern Comfort to comprehend. I observed last year at SC the strong "shadow energy" that gets released just by our being together. But I don't believe our shadows are strong enough to keep us from accomplishing our task.

We have before us, on the brink of a new millenium, an opportunity to change the future by releasing past limitations. By claiming our power as transgendered beings, and allowing ourselves to be healed within by accepting who we are, and by sharing who we are with others in a positive way, we can literally change this world. It remains, of course, everyone's personal choice to do this, though I think most of us don't even believe there is a choice. Many who are in relationships that are already in jeopardy, would use this as an excuse to break up.

Part of the solution is to actively seek out competent, grounded individuals who can talk openly with the media, showing how much we belong, and what gifts we bring. We must also raise public consciousness about how many of us

there are, and that we are everywhere. By going public in a credible way, we open the way for others to express their truth, and lessen the media-created stigma. This release of the low frequency emotions like shame can immediately create upliftment, relief and joy, and a willingness to accept what had once been feared.

One of our biggest issues is the fear and negative attitude we have created through the "victim consciousness" most of us have experienced in our lives. We are taught to think there is something wrong with us, when in fact we were created this way to help teach the world about itself. Only evolved beings on top of Mazlow's heirarchy of self-actualization would come into this world as transgendered. This is not a challenge for the novice or weak of heart. And yet there are so many in our community who do not show their light at all, who are resigned to living in the shadows. They live half a life.

So what can we do about this? If people don't engage the spiritual dynamic or have a frame of reference for it, they'll continue to buy into victimhood and unempowerment. But by simply exposing this and naming it in a way that people can deal with it they will have options from which to choose. If we can offer some of these choices and the tools to activate them in the Light, instead of victim consciousness, their world could change immediately. This *can* be done. We have to transcend the effect that our gender issues have on limiting us to our lower three chakras (fear, sex & power).

The forces of darkness are alive and well and still making their bid to be the dominant energy of the new millenium. (Imagine how many people will not even remember New Year's Eve because they were too drunk.) Whatever we can do to make them aware of their choices will open the doors of possibility to living in the Light.

Since we truly do create our own reality, the key to positively changing our lives is what *we* feel and think inside. Release our own beliefs of doubt and fear, and watch our lives align with our internal reality.

I was elated to see a positive shift at this year's Southern Comfort. I enjoyed playing a part in the "Gathering of the Trans Clans", which added to this shift, but was also heartened by all the personal caring that took place. A positive force has been released. We have the potential to do great things. Will you help?

Edited by Holly Boswell

OUR 7th ANNUAL CIRCLE in HOT SPRINGS

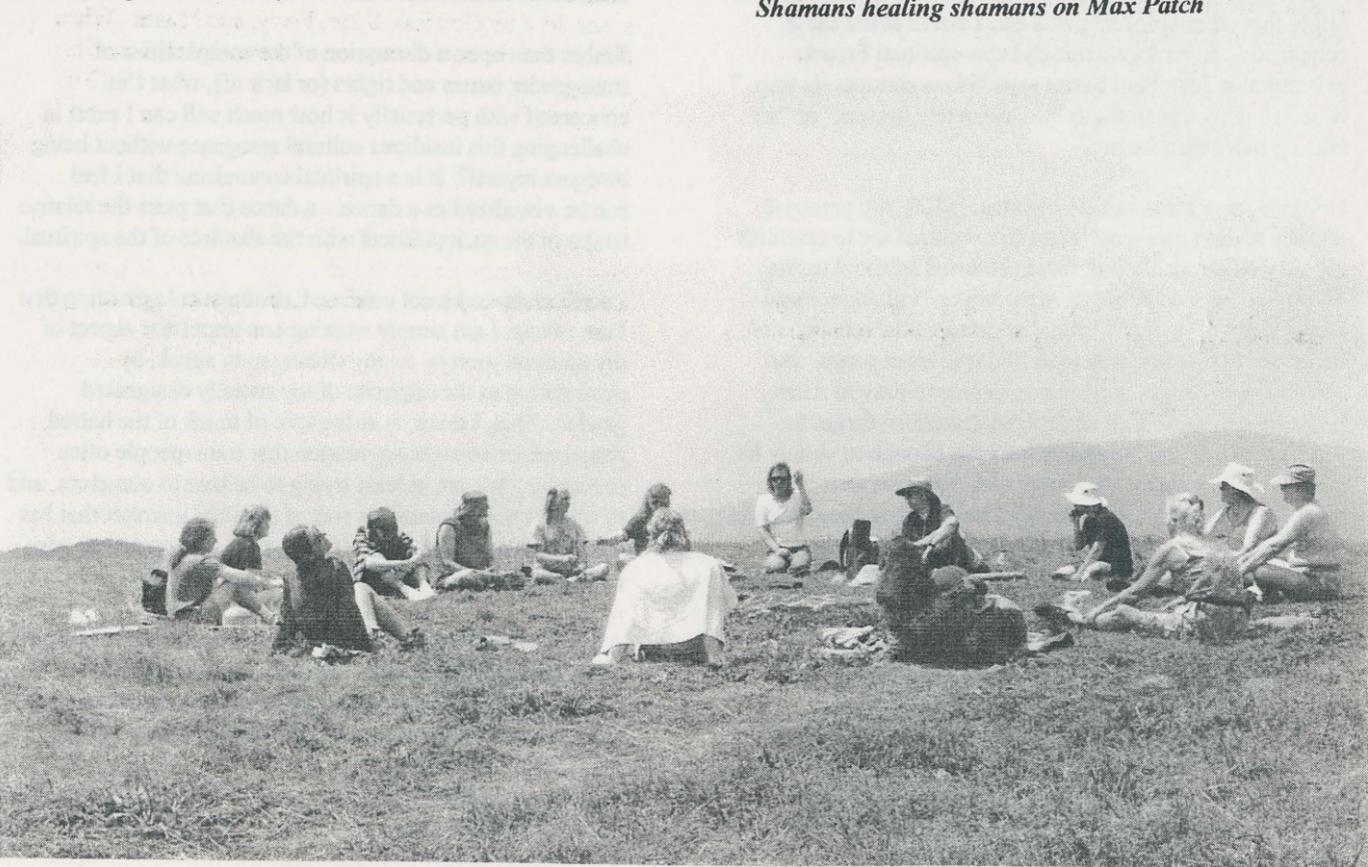
We had a marvelous convergence of 16 kindred spirits this year. We came in and expressed a strong range of intentions: To lighten up, connect, celebrate, and play... To heal ourselves through hiking, swimming in the streams, music, massage, dancing, nourishing food, shamanic soul retrieval, & honoring our losses... To brainstorm the vision of a Traveling Medicine Show... To support the BodhiTree House construction... To establish our presence electronically (internet, etc.)... & to better access the "magic" for us all...

We shared 3 formal circle dialogues:

How can we both learn from and access the lesbian community, as well as share our insights and gifts, the need for new language and bridging, offering new gender options... Sharing our healing gifts with each other (up on Max Patch bald mountain) so that we can find strength to do our work.. How to export the gift of our visions to the world at large, via the Traveling Medicine Show, which involved 3 primary discussions: content, modalities, & audiences...

Also, for the first time, we were confronted with issues around drugs and sex (previously sacraments and affection). We ask you: which dynamics most truly serve us as kindred spirits, especially when we converge?

Our healing and visionary circle on Max Patch



Cast (front, l-r): Diane Rose, Stephanie Bedinger, Zantui Rose, Marc Eden, Lola Cola, Christina Comeau, Gabrielle Boeldt (middle): Rhonda Fay, Shelley Emerson, Angela Brightfeather, Kara Sweetwater, Amy Alley, Carla Pridgen, Yvonne Cook, Holly Boswell (top): Chryse Everhart, Emily Singleton, Jamison Green



Shamans healing shamans on Max Patch



DEBUT OF THE KINDRED SPIRITS TRAVELING MEDICINE SHOW

The Kindred Spirits Traveling Medicine Show had its debut performance at Southern Comfort, September 24th, with close to 100 audience/participants. Our intention was to offer a venue at a major Transgender Conference in the way of welcoming them back to their true selves, and to empower the full recognition of themselves as transgendered people, within their own community and the greater sphere of humanity.

The piece, initiated by Zantui Rose, was devised by herself, Holly Boswell, Kara Sweetwater & Marc Eden on September 4th. The cast members were then invited to find their own costumes, and get in sync with a simple outline/script of the event, which we "rehearsed" (talked through) 3 hours before the event. These were very brave performers.

The piece consisted of "Muses" out in the hallways seducing the "audience" into the prepared space through a "portal", where 2 of 4 "Spirit Guides" welcomed them with a kiss and the blessing: "Welcome Home". The other two Spirit Guides lead everyone into a spiral dance to form the circle. Then the 4 Spirit Guides pronounced the convocation: "I am another you". The Faery entered to welcome and invite attention on the "Dance of the Sacred and Profane", which evoked themes of gender also. The Faery delivered an Epilogue of blessing, the Spirit Guides invoked response to questions like "Who are you? What energy do you bring? What clan are you from? Name yourself and claim your power".

The responses were in the realm of "beauty, joy, healing, bridging, compassion, passion, grieving, understanding..." Then the drums kicked in and everyone danced out of the space, lead by Goddess, Satyr, Faery, and Muses. When they exited the portal, they were blessed by all 4 Spirit Guides with the words, "Remember who you are." The Muses then showed them to mirrors and told them "You are beautiful".

Suffice to say it was an uplifting event, received very positive feedback, and we have been asked back next year to do the next installment of this piece. The IFGE Conference next March, also would like us to bring such a piece.

Meanwhile, the writers and conceivers within our circles are invited to prepare more pieces, more themes, and more opportunities to share our experiences and wisdom artfully beyond these venues. There are also support people who are willing to do the contract negotiations and bookings to make this dream of ours a reality. These two entities (conceptual and support) will be conferring over the next few months. Performers will be invited into a collaborative rehearsal retreat May 27 - June 4, at a location yet to be announced.

Please tell us if you see yourself in here somewhere, and how you would like to be a part of this most important contingent that can activate new consciousness around these issues. And, if truth be told, is there not something within your own unique life experience that could lead to a transformation for other people? We must seize these opportunities. Talk with us about your place in the Traveling Medicine Show.

THE BODY THING

by Zantui Rose

I have spent 50 years moving through this culture identified as a woman, and have had to work hard, as do so many women, to overcome what the male-thought culture says to women about their bodies. I wrote this article after reading several writings that offended me personally by my MtF family members.

Admittedly, I have not experienced 50 years of life as a transgendered spirit and cannot speak clearly about the experience of that spirit as it moves toward the feminine expression. But I can speak from 50+ years as a culturally defined woman in a patriarchal culture. I can speak about not only my personal experience, but I also can draw from the deep personal exchanges I have been gifted with by aculturated women in my private therapy practice. MtF's often wonder why aculturated women are offended and even angry with them. I wish to offer, without apology, my perspectives on that question.

I am concerned about the obsessive attention by some MtFs concerning women's looks, size, body parts, clothing (particularly undergarments) and the seductive flaunting of the scantily clothed body. Referring to women's body parts as "hardware," "knock em-dead boobies" and "becoming a little hussy" with estrogen induced breasts is extremely offensive to many oppressed women.

Body hating is an epidemic. Girls as young as 9 are dieting, applying makeup, battling eating disorders, and compulsively exercising, all in an effort to stifle the chronic internal voices planted by a culture that says however it is they look as a culturally defined female, it is not right. The diet industry alone makes \$33 billion annually in profits. A person attempting to be a transwoman who is stuck in the mentality of "a woman is her body", is continuing to play out the heterosexual belief that objectifies women as sexual trophies, as body objects that must look and act in a way that is appealing to a man's sexual fantasy. This person is contributing to the epidemic of sexual oppression that culturally defined women live with from birth.

Body-hating for both gender dualities is generated by institutions that benefit from this chronic state of mind. Whether you are a culturally defined woman or man, or a transperson, as long as you hold the focus on the body as the expression of who you are, the body-hating will go on because you can never get it right. The voices, internal and external, that evaluate the exterior of a person will always be correct because the media model image is, by definition, an illusion -- an unattainable state for anyone of either gender.

If flaunting the body parts is your focus as a MtF transperson, you are not helping those who walk the planet as culturally defined women. You contribute to the oppression created by gender duality when you reject the stereotype as a male and replace it with the stereotype of a female. Gay



The prehistoric sacred Goddess of Willendorf

men who do drag are often playing off of, and feeding the "female as a sexual body" image. The male vision of femaleness is adding to the killing of women as we diet and exercise ourselves into anorexia or bulimia.

Our form is simply a container for the Spirit essence of yang and yin. Our bodies bring forth our spirituality precisely because they form the bridge between "inner and outer" -- connecting the Soul with the playground of this thought-created reality. Certainly, playing with the form is healthy, as is sexual expression. But we must remember that the form is just one piece of the whole and it's dualistic label, male or female, as a social construct. If you as MtFs feel the need to express yourself more wholly, more fully as a human form, I invite you to consider putting your attention and focus on the internal energy of the yin. This expression is attainable, and the peace you seek can be found there. I can and do personally support this because I do believe it is important for the genders to fly closer together and, indeed, integrate.

Ridding ourselves of gender oppression is an incredibly difficult thing. I have deep respect and compassion for any and all of us who walk this path. We have so few, if any, models. Many of us are reprogramming ourselves to make all the facets of our True Being come into harmony. I ask you to have respect and compassion for me also, for all culturally defined women who feel the pain of female stereotyping

We are trying to educate ourselves and others as we journey out of misogyny. We have to be open and capable of helping each other, because we are, in truth, "the other" and in fact, that is all there is.

SURFING THE BLACK HOLE OF GENDER IDENTITY DYSPHORIA

by Gabrielle Boeldt

There was a time when I could only mourn the passage of a large part of my creative energy into the darkness I had been conditioned to find during my search for free, authentic gender expression. This area is a Netherworld of conventional Western society. It is only safely envisioned through harmless symbolism such as Bugs Bunny in false eyelashes and a dress, a Milton Berle comedy routine or camp humor. To be presentable for public viewing, the transgendered must be less than real. We must be ineffectual, comedic, absurd, or downright insane.

I invested a great deal of my youthful energy in the search for myself within the socially recognized panel of TG roles. I didn't fit. I was beyond it. I frequently must be serious and effective, especially when entering a living at a university medical center. I am tired of intercepting subtle or blatant messages from people who accept me primarily as a joke. For awhile, I welcomed it as preferable to fear and anger. Now I would just as soon have someone tell me I was damned to hell for my unnatural ways as have someone insinuate I am a full-time comedienne. Not that I have lost my sense of play or humor. Without that, I would've been sucked into the black hole long ago. I still know how to smile.

Minnie Bruce Pratt said, "Our imaginations are enthralled by the institutions of oppression." I recite this to myself often, along with Mark Twain's "My life has been filled with terrible misfortunes, most of which never happened." Attention to my daily thoughts and actions in the light of that wisdom has taught me to surf in, rather than be tossed about and crushed by, the turbulent waves at the "event horizon" of the black hole of gender identity dysphoria. Society exudes incredible amounts of mental energy in its attempt to steer clear of any link or passage connecting the feminine and masculine forces. This energy must go somewhere. The transgendered inhabit the event horizon of this energy exchange. It is largely negative when first radiated by the transphobic, but will turn to light and positive energy as it passes beyond the event horizon of shame and fear into the realm of love and light.

I'm not saying that surfing this energy exchange is always fun. Like ocean surfing, you can be injured or drown. But it is better to learn to ride the curl and move along in joy than to resign yourself to the crush of the black tube. Look to the light side of the blackhole. Glide with the wind, water and sun. Enjoy.

Tolerance for genuine gender expression is a benchmark of free society. Fear is a dark sign of oppression. We must not forget those who have lost their lives to transphobia. But, we must not forget how to smile and be ourselves.

WRAP ME IN BLANKETS

by Harold Littlebird

wrap me in blankets of momentary winds
run soft rain fingers through my coarse hair
let unending earthly vapors excite my nostrils
bring seeds of sun to pollenate my naked awareness
through tit-like mountains
through clear running streams
in soft pine needle beds
in ascending hills and rolling grasses
bring clouds to clothe my body
bring the fruits and berries of a thousand sunsets
that I may eat and shine within
shed leaves of warmth to make my bed
that I will always sleep with you and
together our spirits will make love and give birth
to the seasons

NIRVANA, THE WATERFALL

by Shunryu Suzuki

Before we were born we had no feeling; we were one with the universe... After we are separated by birth from this oneness, as the water falling from the waterfall is separated by the wind and rocks, then we have feeling. You attach to the feeling you have without knowing just how this kind of feeling is created. When you do not realize that you are one with the river, or one with the universe, you have fear. Whether it is separated into drops or not, water is water. Our life and death are the same thing. When we realize this fact we have no fear of death anymore, and we have no actual difficulty in our life.

HUNTING SEASON

by Gary Snyder

Once every year, the Deer catch human beings. They do various things which irresistably draw people near them; each one selects a certain person. The Deer shoots the person, who is then compelled to skin it and carry its meat home and eat it. Then the Deer is inside the person. The Deer waits and hides in there, but the person doesn't know it. When enough Deer have occupied enough people, they will strike all at once. The people who don't have Deer in them will also be taken by surprize, and everything will change some. This is called "takeover from inside".

A MILLENNIAL PERSPECTIVE ON TRANSGENDER

by Holly Boswell

It's as good a time as any to step back and look at the big picture – not just for a better understanding of what's happening, but to envision where we might go.

First, I reflect back on the great expanse of transgender history: the Indian hijra, Roman galli, North American two-spirits and Siberian shamans... I have reverence for their sacrifices and accomplishments. They had honorable places within their cultures. I find their examples empowering.

Then, I look at my hormonally enhanced, surgically altered peers of the last 50 years. I see how we are being compromised by our newly found ability to hide and assimilate. We gain comfort but lose power, and the world sees less of our unique gifts. We don't have an honorable place within our culture. Maybe it's time to reclaim one.

Looking forward, I have to wonder if our technologically enabled transgenering is nothing more than peripheral for those of us who no longer feel that we are simply men or women. While this is an appropriate remedy for a precious few, it seduces and subverts the rest of us from becoming as uniquely gendered as our visions would otherwise lead us.

Too many of us have merely traded one gender program for the other, merely reacting to the oppression of our bi-polar system rather than regendering ourselves altogether. There are so many colors in the rainbow of gender that have yet to be dreamt of, let alone worn. The intersexed will have much more to teach and inspire us, once the mutilation of their natural gifts is halted.

And are we not all mutilated by the ignorance and fear that surrounds our gender expectations? How much longer will the invitations and licenses to our gender destinies be granted solely on the basis of our genitals? Probably only when we stop asking permission from external authorities to become authentically ourselves.

So here we are on this brink of human evolution, with more options, more choices, and greater possibilities than ever before. Will we become so enamoured of the dazzling new tools to alter human form, that we forget how to listen to the ancient voices that inform our content? Or, will we commit to the entire adventure of discovering new ways of being human, reinventing ourselves beyond gender in order to unlock the immense potential of spirit manifesting in the flesh? If so, then we, the transgendered, must do the hard work of pioneering our visions back to society as a whole.

