

YOUR SOFFA VOICE

Volume 2, Issue 4

September 1, 1999

Editor's Note

Friends.....

The first order of business is for me to apologize to the subscribers of this newsletter for it's tardiness. I delayed the production of this issue by a month for a couple of reasons. Summer is a busy time for many people, so not only did I have trouble getting submissions, but I was also informed that the American Boyz's online list was down and had been for a few weeks. The American Boyz announcement list is the principle means by which I advertise this newsletter. So, without advertising, I chose to delay the issue.

The other reason is due to my own very busy personal life. I have a newfound respect for people who have families and jobs and still manage to handle everything. I went through a break-up and the starting of a new relationship as well as a major project at work complete with much stress and lots of deadlines. How do people with children do it??

Fortunately, the stress in my life is slowly dwindling, so I feel positive that future issues will be more timely.

Thanks!!

~Jodi

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Loving Outside Simple Lines

By Sonya Lorenzo

Part 3-continued from the June/July issue

Over the course of the next several months, we embark upon a journey filled with dramatic peaks and valleys. You start testosterone treatments and your very thinking is changed, along with your body. Most profound is the change in your sexuality. You are more driven yet more open and vulnerable. You want me like men have wanted me. Sometimes I am so frightened, it is only your love which makes sex possible.

And yet, if anything, you are more sensual to me now. On you, "more masculine" seems like "more butch". I never thought it possible that you could be more butch.

You strut more. Sometimes I find you looking at yourself in the mirror, curious and even delighted. I never saw you take interest in your body before. You let me touch you more.

There is a giddy feeling to our lives. Clothes shopping, making love, just being together in this journey is funny, surreal and filled with a strange joyful expectation.

And there are stray moments when I stop in my tracks, suddenly realizing my own transition, how I have also changed. How I am changing, even now.

On one such day, I make a word for myself: "transensual". And in naming myself, I feel substantial... connected. I am reminded of when I discovered the word "lesbian" and later, "femme". These words name who I am and help create me at once. My self has reached for these identifiers, found them and filled them out. Now I make them unique to me. Transensual Femme Lesbian.

I often bless this path you have taken, for your own sake and for mine also; it has propelled me into my own journey, and I have found a part of me which needed to emerge. I see people - the world - differently. I am different. I am trans-formed.

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AMBOYZ SOFFA CONTACTS

National SOFFA Coordinator:

Loree Cook-Daniels: 707-648-2113;
Email: loreecd@aol.com

Local SOFFA Coordinators:

-New York City: Natalie: Email:
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-Tennessee: Tracy: 615-431-9540; Email:
WrkingGal@aol.com
-Minnesota: Beth: 612-376-7648; Email:
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debra@hwr.arizona.edu
-Toronto: Kaia Kruus, 416-466-0235;
FAX: 416-466-8812; Email:
kaia@ca.ibm.com
-San Antonio, TX: Debra: 210-434-6044;
(leave msg on answering machine);
Email: debra@mac.hwr.arizona.edu
-Richard Brown in Delaware, (gay man,
tg ally): Delaware: Richard Brown: 302-
366-1805; Email: horned@sprintmail.com

We also have SOFFAs serving in regular positions:

-Lee Smith, Midsouth Coordinator, is a
SOFFA and also the Online Outreach
Coordinator:
PO Box 118, New Haven, KY, 40051
Email: STHRNBOYZZ@aol.com or
Alphavamp@aol.com
Phone: 502-549-3846

-Arlene Sandoval-Guerra is the
Southeast Region Spanish-speaking
Liason
(ally): Latino/a Issues: (Se Habla
Español)
Email: asandoval@aol.com

Letters: A Journey of Finding Love

By Jana McDonald

Letter 1

I didnt meet my guy from this list
(others have) but I did meet him online
and have been best friends with him for
over a year and a half.

We would tease each other about me being
his best man at his wedding someday. We
were both open and honest about our
feelings of there being more to 'us'. I
just wanted him to be happy and if it
were another woman that brought him
happiness, I was proud to stand at his
wedding and share in his happiness -- I
also was unaware of his TS at this time
in our relationship.

As time went on, (we chat EVERY day for
a couple hours + online)he finally
shared his true feelings for me and I
finally quit pushing mine down. We were
both involved with others at the time
and on opposite sides of the states. He
shared every thing with me (except his
TS) and I with him and eventually he
shared that also...he figured I needed
to know whether it meant he would lose
me or not.

He decided that if I couldn't still see
him as someone more in my life than just
a friend he couldn't stay with me; that
it would cause him too much heartache
and took the chance of losing me (so he
thought) by sharing. I surprised him
with my response (I knew there was
always something very deep in him that
he was hiding from me and I thought from
himself). During our on going
friendship online, he found the info
site for TS and finally saw that there
WAS something he could do to make things
right and went on to set it all
straight. I still didn't know at this
time, so he went about it all alone,
secretly thinking that he could hold me
off from meeting him until he had been
on hormones for a bit and had top

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

~~Accepting Submissions

FTM Int'l Newsletter is a 12-year-old quarterly out of San Francisco. We have an ongoing interest in submissions of work from SOs, family, and friends of FTMs. Poetry, artwork, or writing are all forms that we could use: 600-1000 words is a good length to shoot for, though longer pieces will certainly be considered too. Topics are pretty unlimited: personal stories, political work, kvetching, what's going on in your area; you name it.

The easiest forms for us to use are email or floppy disks, but typed or even hand-written work is fine too if you don't have access to computers. Our contact info is: Jed Bell, FTM, [redacted] San Francisco, CA 94103; phone (415) 553-5987; email: jedbell@igc.org (newsletter submissions only).

~NEW SUPPORT GROUP-Michigan

FAMILY MATTERS is a discussion and peer support group for parents, siblings, children, spouses, partners, significant others, friends, allies, and loved ones of transgender people. The group meets every first and third Monday at Northside Presbyterian Church, 1679 Broadway, Ann Arbor. We meet on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of every month, from 7-9 p.m. Bring a snack to share, drinks are provided. The group is open to anyone from the Southeast Michigan/northern Ohio/Windsor, Canada area.

For directions, to check on the meeting dates, or further information, contact:

Debbie Accetta - (734) 662-7830 or Email: daccetta@umich.edu

Bonnie Clark - (734) 481-9043 or Email: Xling2@excelonline.com

Univ. of Mich. Office of LGBT Affairs
(734) 763-4186 or Email: lgbta@umich.edu

When you came out, over thirty years ago, a young butch in the Chicago bars before the lesbian feminist movement swept you up in its passion, did you ever long for this second chance?

When you burned your last bra and wore your last dress, did you ever think your path would lead you to this future?

When you swore to yourself as a child that you would somehow find a way to put your elbow in your ear if it would change you into a boy, did you ever think your wish would come true?

You are a boy now. And you are a transgendered butch with a fifty year history. Your politic and passion; your anger and hurt; your emotional capacity and human consciousness: these can never be erased. When I move against you, when I hold you to my breast, when I take you in my mouth, I take in your whole self. You feed my soul and I respond to you, as a femme, as a lesbian, as a transensual woman... as myself.

Tonight, I wake up to see you lying next me, your chest softly rising and falling with each breath. I hardly notice the scars, you are so beautiful. Sleep well, my butch, my boy, my man. I will be here when you wake.♥

~~This was part 3 of at least a 3 part series. Parts 1 & 2 were in the June/July issue. For a copy of that issue, email SOFFAUSA@aol.com and ask specifically for the june/july issue, or postal mail:

Jodi burchell, Editor
PO Box 1916
Smyrna, TN 37167

SAMPLE COPIES

This newsletter is available on a one-time basis as a sample copy via postal mail. To receive a print version of the latest issue, send SASE to Jodi Burchell, Editor at: PO Box 1916, Smyrna, TN 37167. Or Email: SOFFAUSA@aol.com or visit Websight: www.angelfire.com/tn/yoursoffavoice/index.html

All donations are greatly appreciated to help provide materials and postage.

To receive future issues, complete the subscription form on the last page.

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The following special contacts are also SOFFAs:

-Legal Issues: Phyllis Randolph Frye,

Esq: PRFrye@aol.com (lawyer and transwoman)

-Medical Issues: Dr. Kathryn Thomas, Ph.D., RN: 410-625-1095; Email: katesx@juno.com (gender therapist)

-Family Issues: Mary Boenke; Email: MaryBoenke@aol.com (parent of tg)

-Official Jewish Mother: Leslie Ann Alpert; Email: fluffyc-access.digex.net (ally)

If you think you'd like to be an AmBoyz local, regional, or SOFFA contact, see the American Boyz website, <http://www.netgsi.com/~listwrangler> for a "job description" and then contact national SOFFA coordinator, Loree Cook-Daniels, at:

LoreeCD@aol.com
or American Boyz's Coordinator-in-Chief, Gary Bowen, at:
transman@netgsi.com.

American Boyz

American Boyz is a support and social group for people who were born female but who feel that is not a complete or accurate assessment of who they are and our significant others, friends, family, and allies (SOFFAs). Our membership includes Butches, FTMs, Transmen, FTV's, Gender Outlaws, Transexals, Drag Kings, Boychicks, She-Bears, Shapeshifters, Tomboys, Passing Women, Amazons, Intersexuals, Female Guys, Boss Girls, Transgenderists, Sirs, and our SOFFAs. We provide education, support, social events, newsletters, online forums, local meetings, political action, and a national conference.

To learn more about The American Boyz, send email to majordomo@netgsi.com with the message 'info amboyz' in the body of the email, and it will automatically return the 'Welcome and Info' article with more detailed information about our online resources.

Or send email to listwrangler@netgsi.com

Or send SASE to: The American Boyz, 212A S. Bridge St., Suite 131, Elkton, MD, 21922

Non-transitional & Pre-transitional Status

By Arthur Freeheart

Most people who identify more strongly with the gender they weren't assigned at birth don't "transition." Those of us who are part of the trans community tend to not realize or forget that.

Being unaware that the possibility of medically "changing sex" existed used to be a very big factor in not transitioning. There are still lots of people who don't realize there are female-to-male transexuals. There are still people who don't have access to the media transexuality is-discussed in. There are people who selectively avoid exposure to trans info because it hits too close to their unfulfilled longings.

A significant percentage of "female born people of male experience", who are fully aware of the possibility of medically-assisted transition, don't transition. The top four reasons for not doing so seem to be:

- * family considerations
- * not having the economic resources to cover treatment
- * geographical distance from professionals qualified to provide gender related services
- * medical contradictions

Many transmen don't take another person's FTM status seriously unless he's on hormones and/or socially presenting as a man and/or having gender-related surgery.

My marriage partner is a "female born" person who realized he felt male several decades ago. He isn't sure whether he will transition. He's asked me whether I prefer that he transition a number of times. I believe it's solely his decision. My position is neutral. My support is unconditional.

It bothers me when people use the "wrong" pronouns for him or refer to him as a

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surgery done. He later found out that there was a lot more time involved than he wanted it to take before meeting me and KNEW he had to finally spill the beans and be honest with me. I have children and they were a big concern for him too and he wanted things to be all *correct* before he met any of us.

When he finally told me and I said I NEEDED him to call me on the phone, (he was not doing this either because the voice would give it away) I was afraid he would be too scared. As we signed off from being online, I thought I would never talk to him again. He was scared that I would scream and yell and hate him forever or maybe not even answer the phone. We talked for hours !!!!! (big phone bill on that one)

I reinforced that I still loved him *unconditionally*, and that this really didn't have much impact on me, that I understood his life long struggles and loved him more for all he has had to endure. He wanted me to seek out other woman and SOs to talk to, but I didn't want to at that time...I wanted to *know* him totally and not the experiences of others yet, I wanted to make sure I understood every little thing about him. When it came the time, when I had questions he couldn't answer and the desire of getting to know another couple he knew about that met online and fell in love like we had, I sought out to get confirmation on some of the feelings I was dealing with and to learn answers to the questions neither of us could answer ourselves.

Letter 2

During our early chats he told me of a person that knew a lot about him, the only one that knew so much about him and he had her permission to pass on her phone number to me..(for one, since he didn't want to give me his phone number for fear of me hearing his voice and two, in case of emergencies she could always contact him and him her to get word to me or me to them).

I talked with this person several times online and a few times on the phone. As I talked with this person, I felt that she knew an awful lot about him and really understood him quite well...as if they were right for each other but couldn't.

It was a way for him to have contact and allow me reinforcement of my needs. A way for us to have 'outside' security if something were to happen to one of us and he was able to use *her* at one point to contact me and let me know that he had been injured and would be out of touch online for some recovery. He kept an eye over me to make sure I was safe.....but later (after the secret is revealed) and I get that phone call from him finally.....Wellllllll.....it turns out she was really him! His heart ached so bad when he would talk to me on the phone wanting to just say "Jana, its me!" when he would hear me tell her my pain of not being able to just talk on the phone with him. Well, its all out there now, I have been sorting through the deceptions and the truths. Understanding the whys and feeling the pain of the whys, being hurt and angry about the lies, loving him more, getting a clearer understanding of what I had been feeling at times and joyous that I still love him and he loves me and we are on this journey together.

Letter 3

Once I was finally told about his transitioning, I wanted to be with him even more...I was so pulled toward him, I wanted so much more to see him from out of behind this pain I knew he had been carrying. I have all along wanted to be able to just sit with him face to face and talk the days and nights away...we tend to really open each other up real deep and allow the other to just crawl right in and curl up.

I wanted this even more after the truth finally surfaced, there was no more of his doubt about me loving him even though he wasn't a bio-male. He didn't have to make excuses for me not meeting

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him anymore, it was all in the open and I hadn't left him over it, I even felt him grow closer to me, letting the guard down, the walls I had to try and break through or jump over. I was so full of compassion and empathy for all he has had to endure for all his years...to be stuck in a shell of a body that wasn't portraying who he really knew he was inside (and also worry for his safety).

I wanted so much to run to him and stand by his side in total support and love for this man, this man that was finally finding some peace, love and total understanding without judgment. I had *unconditional* love for him and wanted to share EVERY moment of his journey with him, the little noticeable changes, the big changes, to be able to walk down the street together and be seen as a couple (male and female), to share in the joy and love through the disappointments. I wanted to be with him so much more than I could have ever thought I had felt before.

I told him I was willing to put together a trip to visit him and his mouth hit the floor that I would STILL want to be close to him, even after all I knew about him now...(I guess he just didn't get the *unconditional* love yet). I felt his joy and his fright as I announced that I would be able to visit him, and we went on with the plans of when the best time to do this would be.

I wanted so much to meet the key people that had been support to him during the time I was unaware of what was bothering him so much, (his therapist and doctor) so we arranged for my visit to be during his up coming appointments. He wanted to show his love to me, with these people and they wanted to meet the person in his life that was so accepting and understanding of him too.

I just wanted to show off my love for this wonderful man and to thank those that have been helping him get to the bottom of his pain. I arranged a flight that would allow me to arrive early in the morning so that we could have a full day to start our meeting of face to face.

Letter 4

I strangely felt at ease about the whole trip and the meeting. It was something I needed very much to have and my heart felt peace at finally meeting this man that I felt so much love for.

I arrived without incident after all night flights (still not knowing what he really looked like, I was just following my heart) and stepped off the plane to many faces and awaiting people of their loved ones.

I managed to get through the crowd and step to the outside and out of the path of others...looking about the people waiting to finally meet his eyes with mine and I felt him walk up to me as I turned to meet his smiling and still insecure face as our eyes met. He told me he knew that it was me, that it just had to be, and we embraced...time seemed to just go on about its course all around us and we had no care in the world but each other and that moment.

Next thing I wanted was to get out of that big populated airport so off we went to locate my baggage and off to spend time together. Just us, just the two of us, alone, touching each other, looking into each other's heart through our eyes. We went back to his home, I unpacked my things and we sat down together to talk the night away.

During my stay, he had planned several different things he wanted to take me to or see, but when it came down to it, we just couldn't (at least I didn't want to) stop talking, sharing, exploring our feelings about one another, getting to the bottom of each others hearts in person...climbing into each others hearts to curl up and feel the love that we shared.

We spend our first night together in his bed in each other's arms.

Like it was always meant to be.

During my stay with him, knowing I had only been with bio-males, he still felt like I might be disappointed in who he was and would ask if I was disappointed at all....of course, I would say, "not at all" and I finally turned the tables on him and asked him the same question, if I was everything he expected...and his response, "even better".♥

~~CALL FOR PAPERS: Desire in Transition

Partners and potential partners of trans people are both extremely diverse and often politically invisible. We are people of all genders (trans and otherwise), people of all sexual identities (straight, lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual, trans-sensual, s/m, vanilla and some of us still searching for terminology), not to mention body sizes and shapes, races, ethnicity's, health statuses, physical abilities, economic classes and so on.

Part of our invisibility is that there doesn't seem to be a simple name for the one thing we have in common. "Homosexual" might work for similarly gendered trans people in relationships, but not all of us with differently gendered preferences are comfortable with "heterosexual," and "transsexual" is already taken.

It's time for an anthology to begin to illustrate who we are (in all of our diversity), the issues with which we struggle, and what we're doing to make the world a better place. I hope that this book will provide a resource that would have helped me when my then partner first told me that he (then uncomfortably "she") wanted to pick a more masculine name. I imagine this book as a beginning of a conversation among trans-lovers and the varied communities to which we belong.

So, I'm looking for writing (essays, memoirs, stories, poetry, etc.) on the following topics or others that you believe would be important for such a book:

Coming out stories (How has your thinking about your sexual identity and relationship changed over time? Did a partner you were already with, come out as trans? Or, did you find a pattern in the types of people you were attracted to? What have you come out as? Have you come out more than once, with more than one sexual identity? How did

woman. He maintains that his gender is his business not theirs & he doesn't much care what pronouns are used.

Depending on what gender people see me as, we are usually seen as a male-female couple or a female-female couple. I wish that more people we interact with saw us as a male-male couple. That wish isn't strong enough to want either of us to change appearances to be more clearly seen as such.

I'm happy and honored to be sharing part of our life journeys together. ♥

~~Arthur is the American Boyz Gay/Bi FTM's & SOs liason

HELP!!! SUBMISSIONS NEEDED!!

Because this newsletter's main focus is on support of SOs, it relies on readers to send in submissions. The only reason this newsletter exists is because people care enough to reach out and touch other SOs, share their stories, and let them know they aren't alone.

We are in need of personal stories, essays, poems, announcements, letters, memoirs, etc. about any issue you may have encountered on your journey as an SO. Also, if you know of someone who likes to write, suggest that they send in a submission. Even if they don't presently subscribe to the newsletter, they will receive a copy of that issue in the mail.

Some sample topics:

How did you meet your guy? Was he already trans or did he decide he was trans after you were together? What issues did you face as he transitioned? Did you have the support that you needed? Do you have advice for others? What would you have done differently?

Send submissions to SOFFAUSA@aol.com or snail mail:
Jodi Burchell, Editor
'Your SOFFA VOICE'
PO Box 1916
Smyrna, TN 37167

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others react when you told them? What were your hopes and fears in coming out? How have they come true or not? Did your partner or ex come out to you? And how did you react?)

Sex (Desire, erotica, safer sex, S/M, vanilla, topping, bottoming, phone sex, public sex, fantasies, fuck-ups, and so on...)

Relationships (Is there anything special about trans or differently gendered relationships? How have your views on relationships changed with your partners and/or identities? Changes during transition, trans people telling their partners, non-trans partners' transitions, how to be a political ally to your romantic partner/s, inter-racial relationships, internet dating, monogamy and polyamory, commitment ceremonies, state-sanctioned marriages, domestic violence...)

Creating Community (Where do we fit, and how have our communities responded? How have our non-trans-identified communities adjusted or changed? Who has come into our lives that we might not otherwise have met? What barriers have obstructed our efforts to create community, and how have we dealt with them? What has been fun and/or fabulous about your gender community?)

Organizing for Social Change (What kinds of trans/partners political organizing are we doing? What tips do we have for others? How do we work with and in existing political organizations - queer, people of color, labor, feminist, anarchist, fat liberationist and other movements? How has being a partner of a trans person fit with and/or changed and/or enhanced your political analysis?)

Submissions should be no more than 15 pages (double-spaced) or 3700 words.

Send paper versions to Rebecca Widom, [redacted] Brooklyn, NY 11215, USA or electronic ones to rebeccawidom@iname.com *by 1 FEBRUARY 2000*.

~~From the Web-New List

"I have created a list for children over 21 of parents who are transgendered. To join, write me at julieg@amnix.com as I would like some information first, such as age and qualification. I will then be happy to add you to the list. The same rules of etiquette that most lists have -- no flaming, courteous behavior -- exist. Thank you for your interest! Julie Gilkey,> ListMom."

Also, Julie told me that she's looking for an FTM to be her "listdad." "There will only be two [adults] then and we are there mostly to provide answers to questions."

~~From the Web-Family Violence

This website contains a number of resources that are available at no cost, such as articles that discuss the specific barriers and issues facing transgendered and intersexed survivors of family violence. It's at www.caramia.g-net.org/survivorproject. Its director is Diana Courvant, and she can be reached at survivorproject@netzero.net.

Family violence is not a happy subject by any means, but our community is not immune from it. The Survivor Project is primarily aimed at helping the domestic violence network do a better job of serving members of our community, but if you think you or someone you love is in a situation that might be domestic violence, this would be a good place to at least start

***NOTE: Please send any SOFFA-related announcements for future newsletters to: Jodi Burchell, Editor
PO Box 1916
Smyrna, TN 37167
Or email: soffausa@aol.com

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