

Thank you very much for inviting me to deliver this keynote address. And I appreciate the conference theme this year, because I believe there is no more important concept than “working toward a greater diversity” as an underpinning for ANY effort with respect to addressing our own collective political and social needs.

When I came into contact with a group of transsexual people and realized that there were support and social groups for cross-dressers just over twenty years ago, I realized right away that diversity and inclusion was a major issue for trans people. First, the high cost of trans-ness – whether wardrobe or medical access – kept people from actualizing themselves. Second, there were very few people of color participating in the support groups that I was able to find, and this has more than cultural implications. Third, there was little comprehension among MTF people about FTM issues, and vice versa. Fourth, the fact that we all exhibited gender difference or violated gender norms in various ways meant that we needed to gain the understanding and respect of the gender normative, non-trans world if we were to survive and thrive.

I began working on these issues in the San Francisco Bay Area in a very conscious way in 1990. Prior to that, I was dealing with the personal effects of my own transition from female to male. As a transsexual man, I viewed trans-ness as an individual thing, as something to be dealt with and then moved beyond. This attitude reflected the prevailing

ethos of the time: psychologists advised us that it would be best if we transsexual people worked very hard to blend in, and never let anyone know we were transsexual. Don't associate with other transsexual people because non-trans people might figure out that you are one of them. And cross-dressers were a completely separate species: even though there was considerable overlap between the behaviors of cross-dressing and transsexual people, the boundaries were drawn with very bright lines. Virginia Prince herself said that while cross-dressing was part of full personality expression, transsexual people obviously had a mental illness because they wanted to amputate their genitals. I know Virginia has modified her position considerably since then, but that was the world that I entered in the early 1990s. And female-bodied cross-dressing people simply did not exist! How was I supposed to make sense of my own experience, my own trans-ness, when I could not find it reflected in any literature or community, in any theory or practice?

And yet trans men were out there. Reed Erickson, Steve Dain, Jude Patton, Lou Sullivan, Mario Martino, Rupert Raj, Johnny A., Jason Cromwell and other unsung support group leaders from around the country – these were the American female to male transsexual pioneers. How many of those names do you recognize?

Reed Erickson financed the work of Dr. Harry Benjamin, Vern Bullough, and other important researchers, and supported the fledgling Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association. His philanthropy put

transsexualism on the academic and medical professional map. Ultimately a reclusive millionaire, Erickson died in Mexico in 1992.

Mario Martino wrote the first FTM biography published in the U.S. (1977) and ran support groups in New York and Florida. I don't know what's happened to him; he had retired from community before I came on the scene.

My friend Jude Patton ran support groups in southern California and was one of the first FTMs on national television talk shows. He was active in IFGE many years ago. He also worked with Lou Sullivan in San Francisco for a while in the mid-1980s, helping Paul Walker with the Janus Information Society. Jude also joined forces with Joanna Clark, an attorney who was instrumental in establishing administrative and statutory procedures in California for transsexual people to change their driver's licenses and birth certificates, and who later became Sr. Mary Elizabeth, a provider of HIV related support and education services.

Steve Dain, who died last October from breast cancer, was the first really famous FTM in the modern world: in 1975 he was California's Teacher of the Year, and in 1976 he was the pariah of the year because he had transitioned from female to male and was fired from his teaching position, twenty years before Dana Rivers went through the same struggle, but Dana was reinstated as a teacher, while Steve had to start his career over again, even though he won his court battle to retain his credential. Steve Dain, in the

1970s and 80s, was my inspiration, and when I finally met him in 1987 he became my mentor, and my friend. The last time I saw him was at my wedding in 2003, 4 years before he died.

Johnny A. passed away just in the last year or two in New York City. He was a support group leader, 1980s newsletter publisher, and a provocative gender-bender.

Rupert (in Toronto), Jason (in Seattle), and Jude (near Bellingham, Washington, far to the north) are still alive, and they have been good friends and important leaders in the FTM community, but it was Lou Sullivan who started the little support group in San Francisco who pointed the way for me to my political destiny. When Lou died of complications of HIV in 1991, he bequeathed me his group, his newsletter, and his vision of a community of transpeople that would help one-another. I knew that if we didn't learn how to reach beyond ourselves, we would never escape the marginal and often damaging lives that transpeople were forced to live. I enlarged that concept of community to mean something beyond transsexual experience. I learned that communities of color have their own trans cultures that are different from those of white people. I learned that working class people experience gender oppression in more violent ways than people in the middle and upper classes. I struggled to make FTM International relevant to the widest possible range of people who were born with female bodies, yet experienced themselves as masculine to varying degrees.

I began to write and speak about connections between gender and sex, between gender and oppression, and between gender and self. I took it public, I took it political, and I took it international, because I was frustrated with the status quo in those days. I was angry about the inequities; I was angry about the shame and fear that I saw reflected in the lives of so many trans people, both cross-dressers and transsexual people, and I saw the need to broaden the categories and introduce the term transgender in order to move us forward politically and socially.

This effort has not been without its problems, but it has also been exceedingly rewarding. In 1993 I took my first trip to Europe as a trans man, and I wrote to people who subscribed to the FTM Newsletter from every European country, told them I was coming, and asked if they would like to meet with me. Only a few responded. Only two were willing to meet with me, out of eleven people in 8 different countries. And when I met with them, it was awkward and uncomfortable – they didn't understand why I would want to meet them or speak with them. I explained, over and over again, that I wanted to know how their lives were. I wanted to know what their problems were. I wanted to know how they felt as trans men in their villages, cities, countries. I wanted to know if what we in the United States were struggling with from a social and political perspective was the same in other countries. And in fact, they were.

People were concerned about their relationships with their families, about their employment, about their health care,

about violence against them born of prejudice and fear. People with different religious backgrounds were uniformly concerned about their faith's rejection of them. People used different language to describe their experiences, but nevertheless, those experiences had much in common.

By 1996, I had appeared in at least 4 documentary films, countless newspaper and magazine articles, and television broadcasts around the world, most notably Columbia and Argentina, Israel and Turkey, South Africa and Nigeria. That year I made a trip to Germany, where I was told that the term transgender was meaningless. By 1998, it was in common usage there, and the concepts underlying that terminology had been successfully used to access medical care and social benefits. In 2000, I was able to go to Japan, and in 2001, Australia, and in 2004, Taiwan, where I have seen much the same kind of concern and struggle, regardless of race, cultural norms, religious standards, or medical access.

Trans people everywhere want to be themselves, want to be loved, want to have respect, safety, equality. And trans people everywhere have both problems and successes in achieving their goals. In Denmark, the mythological home of sex changes (courtesy of Christine Jorgensen), I was able to influence the National Hospital Psychiatry Department, where all Danish transsexual people must be treated prior to surgery, to improve their testosterone regimen and recreate their program to be supportive to their clients rather than directive. In Sweden, long thought to be a haven of sexual knowledge, I was able to influence the

surgeons' acceptance of a variety of genital reconstructive techniques, techniques which they had previously denied existed and had obscured from their patients.

I am a middle class, well-educated, white man who was born in a female body. I was able to afford to pay for my surgery because I had a management job in a successful company. Though I had to borrow \$10,000.00 from my mother for my hysterectomy, I was able to play the game hard enough and long enough to get my insurance company to reimburse me for that hysterectomy, even though I was registered with that company as a male and they don't pay for female procedures in males, or vice versa. That's one of the ways transness is penalized in the bureaucratic world: we are told we don't fit, so we don't exist.

This phenomenon is very apparent in the current media blitz about the pregnant FTM. Have you all seen this story? It was on Good Morning America this morning, it is breaking in People Magazine, and it will be on Oprah! this afternoon. I believe I would be remiss if I did not discuss Thomas Beatie. Is it Beetie or Batie; I don't know. I'm going to say Baatie. Thomas Beatie is the female-to-male transsexual who had made international news lately for being pregnant. He sold the story to People and Oprah, and he leaked it in a first-person article in the Advocate, a gay community publication. He thought he was the first FTM to be pregnant, the first pregnant man, but he isn't. Many other trans men have given birth from within male bodies, but they did not seek publicity. Matt Rice gave birth in 1999 to a son, with his partner Patrick Califia, another trans

man, and they got a fair amount of publicity within the LGBT community, most notably because the act caused controversy among transmen, some of whom even wished the baby dead, but also because Patrick Califia was a previously a famous lesbian author of numerous sexuality-related books. But Thomas Beatie is like a lot of young trans people today – he is reinventing the wheel. Many young trans people today believe that they have invented gender fluidity, that they are the first to break gender boundaries. I find it rather sad that our young people are so unaware of their history. But it's not just our young people: many of us are unaware of what has gone before. It can be harmful to others when we make pronouncements about our experience that negate or invalidate everything on which our experience is built. As our media and public reach increases, spreading misinformation can have complicated consequences, and typically others have to clean up the mess.

I wish Thomas Beatie had not turned himself over to the media because it may end up being difficult for his child down the road; however, money is tempting for many people, and our society encourages capitalistic opportunism, so I think it is hypocritical to fault him for that while we praise others for the same behavior.

With respect to whether it is “okay” for him to get pregnant/be pregnant/give birth, I say why should our definitions of men and women be so limited that we cannot tolerate a little variety? We have these notions about what men do and what women do, and we've seen many of the

limitations on each sex be broken down over the past century; why not this one? It does bring up notions about “real” men, and “real” women, but these concepts are often used to exclude and adversely discriminate against people who do not fit some prescribed mold, and don’t serve any constructive purpose. They’re damaging, not expanding. They are categories that people have used historically to limit people’s self-actualization (particularly that of women and feminine men) and impose a hierarchical social order that is actually oppressive to most people. One has to question who holds the power to create the categories, and why? What benefit do they derive from that power, and what does everyone else lose in such an arrangement? As human beings, we may find comfort in having responsibility removed from our shoulders and taking on the roles and responsibilities assigned to us because we are accustomed to it. But when we challenge ourselves to step outside those boundaries and find that the world is round – not flat – we are enriched for it.

I always wonder why people find a need to criticize others – it seems they do so because it takes attention away from themselves: better to criticize others so that people don’t see the faults in us. I don’t agree with this practice or the psychology behind it. We all need to be secure in ourselves, to know ourselves, and to have self-esteem; if we do this, others are much less of a threat to us. The fact that Thomas Beatie wants to carry a child and sell his story to the media does not make me less a man. As far as I am concerned, he has the right to do what he wants with his body and to define himself. If we deny him this right, it can

also be denied us by others. I won't participate in that paradigm.

Even with respect to the criticism that his child may suffer health problems because of his prior testosterone use, I think it is (again) hypocritical to fault him (and his wife) for doing what they needed to do to have a child. Couples all over the world go to extreme measures to have children, sometimes engaging in tactics that others may find questionable (fertility drugs, surrogate parent arrangements, egg donorship and in-vitro fertilization, etc.). AND couples all over the world have children with health problems, some preventable (fetal alcohol syndrome, certain inheritable diseases), and some completely unexpected. Every time a child is born it is a mystery and a risk – it is opening oneself (the parent/s) to the unknown future that is surprisingly beyond one's control. Society does not (and rightly should not) control who can have children and who cannot. Many people have unplanned pregnancies, and many people are not cut out to be parents, yet we do not take their children from them except in circumstances of extreme harm or extreme prejudice. There is no evidence of harm to the Beatie child, so there is no reason to intervene. We should have learned by now how to avoid extreme prejudice, and we should not exercise it against the Beatie family

There are some legal systems that require trans people to have their reproductive organs removed in order to achieve the legal status of the opposite sex. I postulate that these criteria were established so as not to frighten the horses,

that is, to avoid the concept of a pregnant man or a woman impregnating another woman – in other words, to maintain the status quo with respect to social gender roles and behaviors as much as possible. This is fine for people who are gender-normative, but is not fine for everyone. The solutions to social problems that we seek, both as a transgender community and as a wider society, must not constrain individuals from either achieving their full potential or from fulfilling their dreams. Instead, it is institutional oppression that we must constrain.

We must widen the liberties to which we are all entitled, nurture the sense of responsibility that individuals must hold to fully exercise those liberties, and open our eyes to the richness of possibility within human nature. This is our promise as transgender people: that we can rise above the finger-pointing, the joking, the diminishing, the beating, the punishing, the murder of soul and body that others may inflict on us out of fear. We can rise above those comfortable constraints that encourage us to belittle others, to hide behind our own fears, to keep our distance from those with whom we think we disagree, or whom we don't understand because they are not like us.

If we are to move toward greater diversity, we must let go of our fear of others who are different from ourselves. And if we are to create a community that is welcoming, that is supportive, that is capable of working together to ensure that our rights are codified in law in this society of law in which we live, we **MUST** move toward the inclusion of greater diversity.

We **MUST** deal constructively with racial issues. We **MUST** acknowledge class issues and work to rectify the disparities our community experiences. We **MUST** accommodate trans otherness – transmen need to understand and accept transwomen’s experience, and transwomen must come to grips with the existence of trans men without projecting their own ideas of masculinity or femininity on us.

Race, class, gender, sex, privilege, consciousness, responsibility. These are the concepts we must address, rectify, and master if we are to show the rest of the world the gifts that we bring. As we move toward a greater diversity, I ask you to cultivate a consciousness of a world in which people enjoy equal respect, equal access to the benefits of society. I ask you to think and concentrate and cultivate a consciousness about the way you value human beings, including yourself. I am asking you to take responsibility for creating the greater diversity we **MUST** incorporate if we are to succeed in the political arena, in the social arena. My vision of the transgender movement is that we call for respect for **ALL** people based on our humanity, independent of gender expression, economic worth, sexual orientation, race, class, age, ability, religion, national organization, or taste in wardrobe. There is not one way to be transgender.

I am asking that you give up your fear of other people’s identities and beliefs. I ask that you be willing to allow other people to be different from you and still be worthy of

respect. I'm asking you to stand up for me, for my right to be myself. And I promise to do the same for you.
Diversity and inclusion are the keys to our future.
Diversity and inclusion are the lifeline for our movement.
Will you make an effort to reach beyond your comfort zone and comprehend difference, respect difference, honor difference? Will you help move our community forward? I hope so. We have a bright future together.

Thank you!