

"TRANSGEN & WOMBAT": Use With Caution

By Roberta Angela Dee

The opinions expressed in this article are mine. Although many other people share these opinions, they are neither endorsed, nor dismissed by Transgender Forum. TG Forum is merely providing a platform upon which I can express

I write this article because I am deeply concerned about the transgendered community. For the 22 years that I have lived life as a woman, this community has become an increasingly important to me.

I have made many wonderful friends here. I've published several novellas through Reluctant Press. I've modeled. And I've written several columns for publications aimed at transsexuals and cross dressers around the world.

At the age of 47 years, few would deny that I've acquired a broad perspective of the transgendered community. And while observing the changes that have occurred since I first put on a dress, I've kept an open mind as to every dimension of transgendered life.

My only regrettable experiences have been through my participation in the list servers known as Transgen, and Wombat, respectively. Transgen professes to be a support group for male-to-female and female-to-male transsexuals. Wombat is aimed towards bisexual women. However, several of the transsexuals who post (write) on Transgen are also members of Wombat.

For those unfamiliar with a list server, it is essentially a means for people with similar interests to express their point of view. It can also be used to ask questions or to share information.

When I first subscribed to Transgen, my only intention was to share my perspective as a transgendered woman. I simply wanted to discuss being transgendered as an alternative to having sex reassignment surgery (SRS). Not all transsexuals are suited to sex reassignment surgery. It is the reason that a psychiatric evaluation is performed, and the reason a real life test (RLT) is required for one year before surgery. During the RLT, the preoperative transsexual is required to live and work as a woman.

Neither the psychiatric evaluation, nor the real life test is any guarantee that the preoperative transsexual is suited for surgery. They are merely the tools a professional uses when making an overall evaluation of a patient's readiness. No one knows the exact number of transsexuals who have been recommended by a psychiatrist, and lived successfully as women, only to commit suicide or slip into a deep depression after completing their surgery.

My problem with Transgen is that they refuse to recognize any failures. They encourage everyone to have sex reassignment surgery. This is ethically and morally wrong. Unfortunately, whenever I've suggested that an individual review an alternative to surgery, I've been admonished either for being "hostile" to the group, or for being non-supportive.

I have nothing against sex reassignment surgery for those who are psychologically, emotionally, and spiritually prepared for the transition. For those who are not prepared, I believe it is unethical to suggest that they have it performed.

Being a woman is more than the size of one's breasts or the shape of one's genitalia. It is, in my opinion, a combination of state of mind, state of one's heart, and the strength of one's feminine spirituality. No surgeon can reshape your psyche.

Because of the opinions I've expressed, I've been banned from Wombat for life, and suspended from Transgen for more than a year.

Besides these matter, there is also an apparent unwillingness of an influential person on the list to understand that for an African-American woman --transgendered or not -- race cannot be neatly separated from gender preference. This attituded has alienated African-Americans who use the list.

Recently, I believe that someone from the list was responsible for copying my American Online profile onto a news group without my permission or prior knowledge. Someone, apparently from the list, has also contacted my internet service provider (ISP) to have me banned from all transgendered sites on the internet.

So, allow this to be a word of caution to all within the transgendered community: There are many wonderful web sites from which a transgendered individual -- whether male-to-female, female-to-male, or a non-op transsexual-- can obtain honest and meaningful information. The TG Forum is among the best.

Never rely on a list server for information that only a competent professional should provide.

Remember that sex reassignment surgery cannot be reversed. It should be the result of an individual's relationship with professionals in the field. Avoid opinionated misinformation provided by any list manager with a closed mind and a closed heart.

Roberta Angela Dee is a regular contributor to Transgender Forum. Her "Memoirs of a Transgendered Lady" runs every Fourth Monday of the month.