

Views: All of Me

I don't know what to say. It has been a long time since I have felt love. I mean true love. Not for someone but from someone. It is hard.

I live in a closet. The walls are thick. The windows are small. I pretend that I am gay so that I don't have to really explain who I am to people. Every once in a while I try and it sort of works but on a daily basis it is impossible. It is impossible to pretend I am gay on a daily basis. If the world cannot handle that, how are they going to handle a lesbian like me?

And then this moment came along. It changed everything. It made it real. For the second time in my life, I knew without a doubt, that everything my heart and gut were telling me was absolutely true and right. I knew that I was a normal person, with normal feelings that were okay. I

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knew that those feelings belonged to me, and had a place in my life. I would find a place and time in my life to let those feelings free.

Life as an MtF Transsexual has meant that I did not understand much of how I was suppose to relate to the people around me, for most of my life. As we grow up, we are introduced to collections of social norms and expectations. Once we negotiate past that we may learn about life as members of the gay community. As a Transsexual this still does not answer many of the questions floating around inside of your body. I know for me it did not even answer my sexuality questions.

As young kids, we learn skills when we play with the other kids. What matters is who has the best toys and who has the brother that is going to beat you up. It also matters who is living closest to you so your parents can watch you in the street and make sure that you do not get in trouble. Boys and girls, kissing and all of that, do not come into play until much

sierra burke

later. Even still, you are starting to build the skills, the building blocks that form the foundation for a closet or the beginnings of a colorful and powerful self-image.

I played with Kim and Brian. Brian when Scott, Kim's older brother, was home, and Kim any other time I could. Kim had cool toys and a cool driveway. She had the one hill in the neighborhood so our tricycles could actually move. She also had the kitchen sets and the dolls. Brian had a big yard and two older sisters who were almost never home. When I went to his house we played with creatures he found in the pond across the street.

All of those skills I learned as a young child stayed with me. Many of them came from Kim. While I learned from Brian how to play with animals and mud from the pond, I learned from Kim how to play with dolls and to play house. As I grew older I applied those skills in our house with my family.

I was unable to identify that I was transsexual until recently. In large part, I did not have the vocabulary to explain the feelings. A part of me believed that how I felt had to fit into the genre of "gay." It was not until after I came out as a gay man that I was introduced to the transsexual world, and I learned that the painful yearnings I had lived with for so much of my life were normal.

I remember as a child and adolescent sneaking into my mother's closet to dress in her clothing and try on different outfits. Laundry was one of my favorite chores - it increased these fleeting opportunities. I struggled to bury my feelings and find ways to fit into a norm where I was trying to belong.

High school was a clenching time for me. I entered my school as a new student to the area and was also an extremely serious athlete who promised to perform for the running teams. By burying myself in my training, I avoided most of the social challenges of my entire high school career. But, I, like many other confused transsexual teenagers, could not explain what was going on inside of me. I could not explain how I felt about men and women, and therefore I simply did what came easiest. I followed social pressures and kept a moral line I would not cross. I made it through high school and into college by

basically ignoring anything personal and venting my frustrations into my athletics.

College left me believing that I could live life as a heterosexual male. I could leave behind all of the feelings I had grown up with and find a way to satisfy what I had come to believe was the social expectation. I would shoot for the white picket fence. I soon learned that I could not do it.

After a few years of married life, I came out as a gay man. I was still wrong. "Gay" does not explain so many things. I am sure that every Transsexual has different feelings, but I want to make perfectly clear that being Transsexual is different from being Gay. For me, one of the most telling feelings is that, I have always wanted to have my own children. Adopting is not enough. I also have these indescribable, nagging feelings inside of me, which have grown through out my life. These feelings just cry out that I am a woman. It is not that people have told me I am pretty or that I have a high voice. It is not that I like to dress in women's clothing, a wonderful feeling, or that I like to shop. It is something inside. It is definitely not that I like men. That is not quite true.

Sexuality, as I am discovering, is a very dynamic thing, especially for transsexuals. I have found in myself that I am a gay man and a lesbian. You see I find the idea of homosexuality very comforting and appealing. I find women very attractive but have no interest in them as a man. I find men very attractive but the idea of being with them as a woman sounds awful. Does that make me bisexual, in a way? More importantly, sexuality does not define my gender. My gender is defined by something inside of me. For each person it will be different, but you will know what defines you.

My journey has been dynamic. My journey is just beginning. I hope that some day I can write to you as a woman not as an MtF Transsexual. Until that day comes, find your source of energy. Find your womanhood or your manhood and embrace it. Know that you are the only one who will ever understand why you know who you are. It does not matter if the rest of the world comes along for the ride. What is important is that you find a safe and rewarding space in which to take your journey. Enjoy learning about yourself. ▼

Sierra Burke is finding her way with support from R.U.1.2?. She lives in central Vermont.

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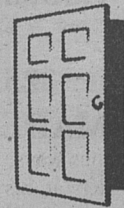


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