

put an end to transphobia. From identifying gender-neutral restrooms to amending non-discrimination policies, from creating procedures to change names on identification cards to educating folks at the health center, this work is about crossing divides. I remember a meeting on-campus where we were trying to iron out a sys-

plicated, regardless." As I talked, I could see something change for him, see him begin to understand the ordinary experiences of trans people navigating a trail of identity papers. He agreed to reshape the system. Translation is a demand and a hope for understanding, respect, change.

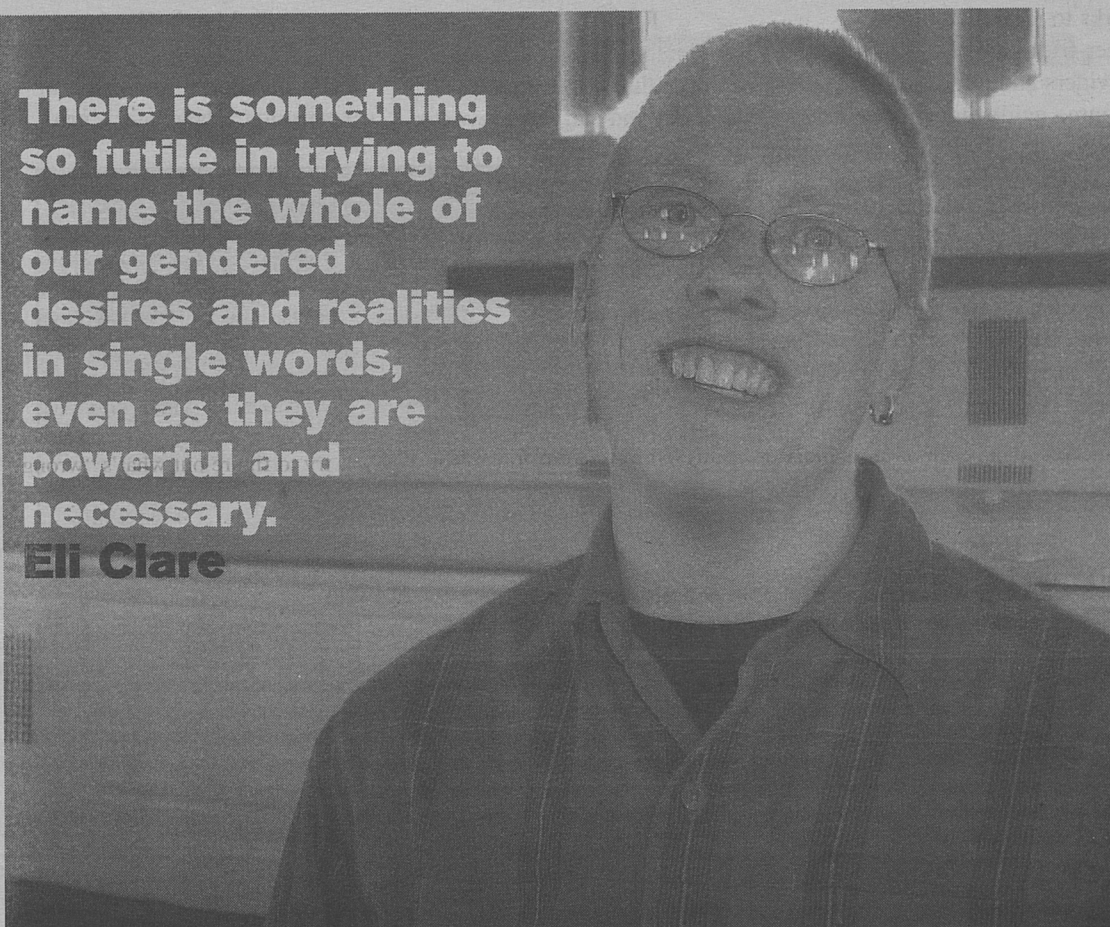
Tell it, talk it, translate it

even if you don't understand all the words.

We need to do this because transphobia still roams free. Because community is worth struggling for. Because the space we create here is necessary: the space to tell it – I used to take my kite down to the sheep pastures, fly it for hours, that tug, that beck-

**There is something so futile in trying to name the whole of our gendered desires and realities in single words, even as they are powerful and necessary.**

**Eli Clare**



tem for changing names on transcripts and class rosters. One administrator kept expressing concern about how complicated this might make the lives of trans students, how they might end up with one record in one name and another record in another.

I finally turned to him and said, "You know, if when UVM had hired me, I had been required to submit transcripts, the human resources department would have seen three different names on four different documents and wondered what I was doing with a BA in Women's Studies from a women's college. I would have had to write one long letter of explanation. It's just com-

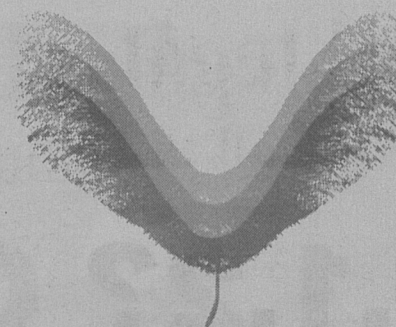
into politics. Me, I want to start with how the gender binary joins with patriarchy, white supremacy, and capitalism. How these systems snarl together, leave us with injustice at every turn, from homelessness down the block to the war in Iraq, from racial profiling to transphobic-motivated murder. And you, how would you start? Translation is dialogue.

But we're here not only to translate across divides of power, but also across differences among trans people. We need to speak boldly and listen hard. Every time I watch the tension flare among us, I want to say: Tell a story, not one but two, and let them contradict each other. Listen

on – the space to be heard and understood, the space to make it bigger than any single story.

Identity is a shadblow tree, a fangle. To translate is to communicate, challenge, bridge divides, connect. Translating identity. Let's do it. ▼

*Eli Clare works at UVM's LGBTQA Services and is the author of Exile and Pride: Disability, Queerness, and Liberation. He is also the featured speaker at the R.U.I.2? Queer Community Center fundraising dinner on April 16.*



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