

THE SEAHORSE SOCIETY OF N.S.W. INC.
October 3rd 2008

RITE OF PASSAGE NO 2.
EXPLANATION LETTER TO N.Z.

Dear Kathy,

It was good to catch up with you on the phone this morning. Once again may I thank you for your efforts last week, and the interesting address that you delivered to the members of our Society.

However, when I received your email on Thursday regarding the "Harry Benjamin Syndrome", written by Joanne Proctor, I was dismayed and affronted by some of her views. I am only frustrated by the fact that I cannot confront this person personally and/or have the typing and computer skills to enter into a debate in an on-line forum.

I would like to also express very definitely, that I do not agree with the way that this form of "communication" was even presented. As the old saying goes: "There are ways of saying things and there are ways of saying things." I believe this forum was set up primarily to access information on "transgroups" or communities, their journeys and difficulties, their need for helping to explain to others out in the general community, and to help them understand some of the difficulties associated with our phenomena, and I include, all (not just one) areas. In this vein, I applaud what our Human Rights people, both in Australia and New Zealand, have achieved already and are attempting to do for all our futures.

I do agree with one statement that we all have a lot of work ahead of us as to laying out acceptable formats of protocols and rite of passage for, again I say, all people in the general Australian and New Zealand Communities. The "To be who I am" program in NZ - so far has been a very good start. As we all know, you have to start somewhere, and we all are starting with basic communications, expressing some of our basic needs and requirements - so as to achieve what we all need, and that is to have a basic understanding of each other's needs and directions in the trans communities and how all this impacts on the greater and wider communities.

I had intended in going through Joanne's statements, point by point, but what is the point of such dissection?

There are a few main areas that we all do need to look at very quickly.

One is the youth suicide rate of our youth in both countries. I am not saying that sexual deviation or gender diversity are the cause, but I am suggesting that many of these behaviours that are generated by these two areas, can be a catalyst for leading to other major social problems for individuals who battle with self-esteem, self-worth, acceptance with friends and family, alcohol and drug abuse, leading to the final "destruction" of the person mentally, physically or both.

These forms of reactions and problems can also reappear later in life, the old "mid-life crisis" or is it?

For example. "I cannot live with this secret life any longer. I don't know who or what I am. People tell me I'm crazy or I am a deviate. I am frustrated or depressed all the time. I don't feel a complete person. Why aren't I happy with myself. I have a good job, earn plenty of money, have a nice life style, but... The secrecy is driving me nuts. My wife/partner knows I am up to something. Then why do I want to be a person of the opposite gender? What will happen here? Why why why? Welcome to the next mine field!"

These are just the tip of the iceberg of comments that I receive constantly from the general public who approach our Society by emails and phone, with requests for support, and some with explanations etc.

LABELS! I love the English language!

Heterosexual, homosexual, transsexual, transgender, pansexual, pre-operative transsexual, the list goes on. Tick the boxes. In the Western thought, we all have to fit in a box: either male, female, inter-sex, doctor, lawyer, bus driver, sanitation engineer, priest, pastor, femme fatale, scag, oldie, wop, slope, (oh oh! The Aussie coming out in me?)

Let's just say for this exercise: "What is the answer?" There really is no answer. Do not we all pride ourselves on the person that we are? We are a person first. Well, that makes us a person first / box 1 - then all the rest of descriptions fall -or should surely fall below that 1st statement.

The expression I am finding being used by many in the Trans-community is just that "I am a transperson, living in the trans-community". Then for sharing or statement purpose on a need to know basis the other language boxes may need to be used as adjective descriptions only.

To further explain, may I use this example in language? I could say in general conversation "I am a Christian and I occasionally worship in the Anglican Church". Does that statement create a communication problem? It might, if I was in the company of people in a mosque, but I definitely am not going there. Even just in this one paragraph, one word that I have used stirs up a reaction. It also hints of my predisposed assumption and judgment of another race of people, who may not even react or care about what I have just said?

Sorry, people, but we are stuck with our language. However, we do have the choices of how we use it and present ideas and communicate, hopefully without the element of abrupt, uncaring disposition, and irresponsible confusion. It is easier to criticize and pull down ideas and of others - than it is for all to put in and build a working framework that will be suitable and agreeable to a majority.

I accept that we may never achieve a 100% plan, but we all can achieve some pretty good workable compromises. In other words, we may not achieve a total acceptance within our broad main societies in our life time, but we may achieve at least understanding and tolerance through communication with not only our own groups, but through those who are now willing to help us as a trans-community achieve a rite of passage.

Before I conclude, I would like to make a comment on a common aspect of thought that seems to be continually coming through in my communications with other people. This is, that it seems

everyone is trying to find a common identity name or a way for identification, without the use of emotive words or descriptions.

As I said earlier, I did take offence to a paragraph written by Joanne Proctor. I directly quote, “still you (HREOC) have clearly absolved your conscience and given the floor to a variety of self-professed cross-dressers, gender f***kers, drag queens and transvestites of various persuasions, choosing to turn away from the genital mutilating, etc”. I won’t even justify the rest. Yes, we must identify ourselves at the moment by what language resources we have at our disposal. This is just a fact of life. Also it does describes all of our own individuality within the scheme of things. However, having said that , we all need to now look at the Big Picture.

We, as citizens of our own respective countries, already use identification codes or protocols that operate and exist in society, like drivers licenses, passports, airline security, census documentation etc. This is all necessary for everyone in society, not just us, in the trans-community. However, maybe we as trans-people need some form of our own added identification. For example, a card like our driver’s license. This could be in the form of, for example, a Club Card (A Seahorse Society Club Card) identifying the member as a member of the society and a transgender person.

For those who are in position of transition from male to female full-time, yes, please develop and continue all the other things that are being implemented at the moment, passports, change of documentation, birth certificates etc. However, you seem to already have this in hand. I think we need to have one term of reference – (transindividual, transperson, trans-community) to signify a group – then other descriptions fall underneath the opening statement.

So in conclusion, may I say to all of us. Lets forget “abracadabra movement” and all the political naming and bagging, and get these communication bridges built. Then we will be in a position to discuss our own individual needs and requirements, not only amongst our own groups and organizations, but then be able to meet with our politicians and government commissioners with some firm concrete plans and ideas of how we can move on in direction, not only individual transpeople, but members of the larger trans-

community, sharing our experiences, life styles and resources with the main frames of our own countries societies.

And, just maybe by doing this, working together and maintaining our own individuality and personal directions, we can continue crossing these information bridges, building new ones of knowledge, by sharing these experiences and resources collectively as a trans-community. The end result is, maybe that we all can help to create an easier Rite of Passage in social tolerance and understanding for those people coming behind us, mainly our youth, and give to the future people communities of our great countries. As a good book says, "Rome wasn't built in a day" but it has stood the test of time, by the social legacies that are still in place even now in the 21st century.

I thank you for reading this paper, and I ask all who do read this, to be encouraged to be part of this great journey of change. We do live in exciting times, so why not enjoy and share the experience with all of us.

Written by Phil/Julia Crawshaw

(President of the Seahorse Society N.S.W.INC.)