

# transvestite & transsexual liberation

by Angela Douglas

## Definitions

Many transvestites are not homosexual, although the public generally classifies (and oppresses) all transvestites as being such.

Transvestites and transsexuals are actually in quite different categories, but many transsexuals consider transvestism to be a necessary phase of transsexualism — so they are joined together to a certain degree.

A *transvestite* is a male or female who wears the clothing of the opposite gender and usually assumes the voice, habits and manner of the opposite gender. Transvestites are also known as *cross-dressers*. *Female mimics* are usually men who dress as females for purposes of entertainment. *Female impersonator* also applies to such persons, but also covers criminals — such as a bank robber who would disguise himself as a woman. There is some evidence that espionage agencies of various nations train men to be expert female impersonators, and such a character was portrayed in the film "From Russia With Love." Police occasionally use officers dressed as females to attract other homosexuals, and are usually called *drag queens*.

Many transvestites are heterosexual, and are married to females who are either sympathetic to them or find sexual gratification with transvestic males. Some of these females are latent homosexuals.

Laws vary concerning transvestism in public or private, but in California there is no law prohibiting transvestism. In Hawaii, where male transvestites are many, they are required by law to wear buttons with the word "Boy" on them. In the Waikiki area, many transvestites are openly engaged in prostitution. In South Vietnam, male transvestic prostitutes are known as *kai tai* and are quite popular with American servicemen.

A *transsexual* is a male or female who changes their physical sex characteristics usually through cosmetic surgery and female (or male) hormone treatments which are taken in both tablet and injection form. In the case of a male-to-female transsexual, breasts develop, hips spread, the muscular tissue dissolves, there is some loss of facial and body hair, the skin becomes softer, and there are many psychological effects as well. Some transsexuals also get silicone implants for breasts and hips.

In the case of female-to-male transsexuals, an artificial penis is attached to the body, and the breasts are either removed or made smaller. At present, the male-to-female operation is far more advanced than the female-to-male.

There are many *partial* transsexuals. This would be a person who only changes their sex characteristics partially. For example, a male who takes female hor-

mones, develops breasts, etcetera, but does not obtain the cosmetic surgery where the male genitals are rearranged or removed.

There are few doctors who perform such operations, and the cost is rather high. When Christine Jorgensen changed her sex, it cost around \$10,000, seventeen years ago. A similar operation can be obtained in Mexico for \$2500, and in Europe for \$3000-5000. There are several sex change clinics at universities in the U.S.A. where the operations are performed and research is being carried out.

No one really knows how many transsexuals there are.

There are some legal problems involved. In England, a court ruled that a marriage between a transsexual and a male was invalid, that a person's sex was fixed at birth and could not be changed. The ruling is being appealed.

Transsexuals are also called "changelings."

Some transsexuals find relationships with "natural" females satisfying, and could be considered to be engaged in lesbianism.

### Some of the problems:

As the anti-homosexual attitude in the U.S.A. is so harsh and vast, many male homosexual transvestites refuse to accept the reality of their homosexuality and claim, "I am a woman — I'm not a faggot." Of course, they are physically and "legally" males, and engage in homosexual practices with other males. Some males become transsexuals to escape the harshness of the anti-homosexual attitudes.

In most cities, transvestites have no clubs or places in which to meet other transvestites without fear of being exposed or possibly blackmailed. Most clubs that do exist are geared for a homosexual clientele, although there are some which are limited to heterosexuals or mixed.

Transvestites who live in public as females are quite aware of male chauvinism, and some have been raped. . . by heterosexual males.

## Women's Liberation

There have been and may be male transvestites and transsexuals active in Women's Liberation, usually unknown to the other females. Some of them have been able to attain nominations to high positions, but as far as it is known, none have actually taken office. There are many reasons why a transvestite or a transsexual would want to be involved in Women's Lib — some seek to perfect their feminine role as much as possible; some are sexually attracted to aggressive females; others may be intelligence agents.

When Women's Lib became aware of this problem in California, they contacted the Gay Liberation Front for assistance. Not much could really be done. A Transvestite-transsexual Action Organization was formed and at one of the meetings of this group, several guidelines were proposed:

**Transvestites:** Male transvestites should not participate in Women's Liberation unless they publicly proclaim themselves as male transvestites and agree to any special limitations or conditions which may be imposed upon them by the particular feminist group.

**Transsexuals:** Partial and complete male to female transsexuals should be allowed to participate in Women's Liberation without any discrimination.

The overall consensus of the group seemed to be that transvestites and transsexuals should organize among themselves.

It would be best if the various feminist groups make clear policies concerning active participation by transvestites and transsexuals, as there will be many thousands more in a few years, and many will want to become active in Women's Lib.

### Gay Liberation

In California, Gay Liberation has not been of much help to transvestites and transsexuals, and there are few transvestites or transsexuals involved in Gay Liberation at this time. Part of the reason is that many male homosexuals are extremely chauvinistic, and dislike anything feminine — and a male wearing feminine attire or a male who seeks womanhood is particularly abhorrent to such individuals.

The transvestites and transsexuals who were involved with Gay liberation found that they were used only for confrontation's sake at gay power demonstrations, and that nothing was being done to help their lifestyles.

### Transvestite-Transsexual Liberation

On June 2nd, six persons visited Los Angeles City College and spoke with hundreds of students about transvestism and transsexualism. Four were male transvestites, two were partial transsexuals. Most of us had never been involved in any kind of demonstration before, and it was a unique experience. There was very little trouble from supermasculine Black or Chicano students, as had been expected. We had volunteered our time to help inform the public about ourselves, and felt that education of the youth was of great importance. It was very successful, and several male homosexuals who are in the Gay Liberation Front were miffed. The GLF had sponsored the "Teach-in" as a follow up to a demonstration of police harassment of homosexuals on the campus. However, the students seemed to be far more interested in transvestism and transsexualism than gay liberation.

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watching the news coverage of the day and saw a poster that said, 'Starve a Rat Today.' She turned to her long time spouse and declared her cooking days were over and he could damn well cook for her. A protest from her long time exploiter was answered with a fist on the table and 'Liberation or Separation!' He cooked and he's cooking still.

Reports filtered in through telephones and by word of mouth of women demanding the labor be shared. One man in Pennsylvania came home to find a suitcase packed with all his belongings sitting on the front step. The sister had decided to break her chains rather than burnish them.

Wall Street was the scene of more activity when a group of women leafleted the office workers to unionize. The leafleting was planned as an alternative action to all the middle class pomp and circumstance. These few women have been working for months, a few for years,

to help close the class gap. In desperation they have been forced to stop beating their brains out trying to educate middle class women, and they have begun to organize working class women. These women and a handful of other obscure comments from men—yes, those same austere financiers tend to drop the mask of respectability when it comes to women unionizing their 'shops.' The organizers at Wall St. knew better than to ask for support from the glamour elements of the movement. All the cameras and well dressed women showed up on Fifth Avenue and marched down to Bryant Park. There the thousands cheered to the strains of Betty Friedan's 'we want to walk groups, among them the Third World women and the lesbians, have been the only elements in New York City willing to tackle the problem. There were no TV cameras on Wall St. and Nassau, no crowds of well dressed women singing, 'Liberation Now'....there were hurried exchanges with file clerks and secretaries afraid of losing their jobs. There were hostile and

nand in hand with men.' Gloria Steinham and Kate Millet gave speeches of love and sisterhood. The women were enthusiastic. The only jarring note was when a lesbian grabbed the microphone after being discouraged by the heavies. She told the crowd to stand behind their lesbian sisters who were being arrested and harassed for no reason at all—except of course, that they are lesbians. And the show went on. No cheers for the Wall Street workers, no cheers for the Black sisters thrown into jails, no cheers for the lesbians beaten senseless on the streets. The cheers were all for a future of projected goodies and for the old Equal Rights Amendment, the band-aid to heal the gaping, festering wound of rich, white, American male politics.

But the cheers have stirred new women...women who won't make a mockery of the word Liberation...women who trust deeds, not the promise of them...poor women, Black women, Puerto Rican women, Asian-American women, working women and women who love their sisters...women who will bypass rhetoric and make a revolution.

# From the men: Games Male Chauvinists Play



by Perry Brass

The games people play go on and on and on. This is especially true of that cruelist of human games known as cruising. In cruising, the hunt is on and the hunter becomes the hunted. Eventually the tension becomes so high that the whole aspect of meeting someone with the prospect of an evening, a week, or even a lifetime of satisfaction, or even pleasure, becomes lost in this confrontation of wills. Cruising is one of the great male chauvinist games: I can be tougher than you can be. I can hold out longer than you can hold out. I don't need you. I can't open up to you until you open up to me. Most men try to set up their own roles in the first moments of this contest of wills. Whether the playing ground be some street in the Village, one of the Avenues, or any bar or beach there are always the same roles, often enough being played by the same men only wearing different faces. We could begin with the extreme caricature of masculinity who believes that it is below his masculine dignity to ever approach anyone else. He will usually stand like the steadfast tin soldier for hours on end, wondering why this isn't his particular night. Next to him is the aggressive animal, the tiger stalking his way through the situation, looking at everyone but not looking at anyone. He is really looking for that perfect fulfillment of some adolescent sex fantasy (referred to as his 'type') who was possibly his first love at the age of twelve (his first 'type') and whom he expects to walk by momentarily.

There is also the verbal bully who thinks the best way to captivate his latest is to out-man him (voice three

octaves below normal) or outwit him (except that you've heard it all before) or out talk him (most of which you've heard even before he tried to outwit you).

And there are of course also the always-with-us clothes queens (nothing below Bonwits), size queens, body queens, height queens (nothing below six feet), race queens, blonde queens, chicken queens, astrology queens (his sign always agrees with yours), drug queens, campus queens (world's oldest frat men), muscle queens, and even queen queens.

There are the 'numbers' guys who have to announce to you that you're going to be their first of the evening or the week or whatever. They also have to constantly tell you what the cruising report is for every port between here, San Juan, and Dubrovnik. In other words, this is to make you feel like another swell number in his address book. If you're lucky.

And the put-up artist who has to first off embarrass you with how you're the most beautiful thing he's ever seen since the last most beautiful thing he has ever seen.

Or the put-down artist who thinks he has to shake you up to get you out.

There are the fantasy creeps who stare at you all night until you walk over to them and then they walk away. They'd rather not know you, too well.

All of these men add up to a frightening lack of self-understanding and self-confidence. They can not face up to a situation without the roles pre-defined, the definitions roled out. We are all too afraid to find out that that certain gorgeous 'number' over there is just like we

are inside: afraid and alone. Trapped in the role that he has learned how to play very successfully, but has outgrown years ago, whether it be the gorgeous 'number' role or the twittering little boy of thirty.

Gay roles in the whole of society are designed by fear. Just as we act in straight society out of fear that they will discover us, we react with each other out of fear that we will discover ourselves also.

It is no small wonder that from out of this self straight-jacketing, many gay men develop a real hatred for men, just as many straight men hate women because of the roles they must act out. Because we are forced to live in a society that condemns us as half-men, many of us feel that we must become men and a half. This means to shut out all of the real tenderness and sensitivities associated with femininity. Gay life is a gay drag when it forces a man to reject most of himself and only leaves him a shell or role he must show in order to live with the reality of our situation: that we are all outcasts.

We must reject what straight society has straight-jacketed us with and form our own life as real people not merely the old male chauvinist roles left over from a dodo society. It's very simple, men. It's just a matter of getting together or falling apart.



Joan Bird is free!

LNS Photo

# OH' HAPPY DAY!

by Bob Kohler

On Monday, July 6th, Joan Bird was released from the Women's House of Detention after being held for fifteen months in \$100,000 ransom.

About five o'clock that afternoon I was standing on the corner of Sixth and Greenwich rapping with Steve and Bob, who were hawking COME OUTS. Bob was trying to convince us that he had just sold a paper to Afeni Shakur who then went "down that way". We were kidding him about being a Celebrity-hawker when I happened to glance "down that way" and saw a crowd of Women in front of The House of D.

When we reached the prison a young Woman I recognized from the Panther Defense Committee ran up and threw her arms around me shouting: WE DID IT! WE GOT JOAN OUT! (When GLF donated \$500 to the Panther Bail Fund we were asked if it was specifically to go toward Joan Bird's release. We said that decision was

up to them. Standing there hearing the shouts of WE WANT JOAN and PEOPLE'S POWER IS THE PANTHER'S BAIL I found myself hoping it had.)

While we waited, chanting and shouting, a pot-bellied slob next to me started muttering, "A goddamn shame, that's what it is." Just my luck - there must have been over two hundred people there and I end up next to Harry Hard-hat without his headpiece! I was about to say, politely, "Fuck you, you lousy Rat-humper!", when he added, "Keepin' that poor girl locked up in there all that time!" It just goes to prove that you can't lose 'em all!

Afeni Shakur appeared in the doorway and cried: "She's coming!" Shouts of POWER and wild applause greeted Joan Bird as she emerged, calm and smiling. Joan Bird is a slight Woman, smaller than I had thought. (Another myth laid to rest: all giants aren't tall!) She embraced her parents, Mrs. Shakur, and some of the Women from the Women's Union who had worked so tirelessly for her release. Then, while Panther men cleared a path, she crossed to the other side of Greenwich Avenue. Facing the prison, she raised her fist and cried POWER to the Sisters jammed against the barred

windows. The deafening roar that answered her declaration must have shaken the cornerstones!

I watched Joan Bird drive away and wondered what it must have been like for her those past fifteen months. The closest I could come to a personal comparison was the twelve months I had spent in a hospital, which was no comparison at all. Among other considerations, I was White, I was a Man, and I was waiting to die while Joan Bird was fighting to live.