

Why We Don't Fight

By Anonymous

Ever wonder what happened to the "T" and "I" in LGBTIQ? At a well known activist campus such as UNC-CH, one would expect even the most marginalized minority to stand up and speak out in the midst of so much ally support. So where are they? We know from simple statistics that there certainly are transgendered and intersex people on campus. So why don't they speak up and represent their community as their LGB-allies work so diligently to further their rights and access to resources on campus? Maybe the answer to that question lies not in what the LGB community is doing wrong, but rather what they are doing right.

As an intersex student entering UNC-CH, I was taken back with the level of awareness and understanding of the average student. Issues such as transgender identity and intersex, which may have seemed foreign at my previous university, are in the consciousness of even the most conservative students here, which is both a blessing and a curse.

While growing up I had my identity continually decided for me, first at birth, which I rejected at an early age and assumed a new gender that was for many years accepted by my family; and again during adolescence when my family discovered that I might turn out to be a lesbian if I was allowed to continue my current gender expression.

You see, in my family being gay was like a "gateway" sin, one that opened the door to drug abuse, promiscuity and crime. As such, it was decided a far better thing to turn me into a heterosexual through medical means than let me grow up to be a (dramatic pause) "Homosexual!"

So after many trips to doctors offices begging them to prescribe me hormones that would ensure that I develop into the appropriate sex (male), my mother finally found one that agreed. Isn't it amazing to what lengths and trials a family will put their child through to police sexual expression?

I tried hard to accept my new identity to grow up and be a man; but alas, changing sexes and genders is not so easy, especially when you are 14 and being forced into one that you do not identify with.

I guess all those feminist theories on the social construc-

tion of gender were right. How do you expect a young girl to change after years of socialization just because you gave her a little bit of testosterone? I think it's needless to say that it didn't work. I was a failure as a male. I could look the part but couldn't act it, so I left home in hopes of getting back to the person that was stolen from me, even if that meant me becoming a lesbian and dreaded scourge to my family and society.

So here I am today at UNC-CH, having transitioned back to what I feel is my true self for the second time. In all this, the most important bit of knowledge I can reflect upon in my experience of transitioning is an ever-present fear of being "read." In my own case, I felt this fear no matter what point I was in my life or current gender expression. Most of us simply want to blend in to society's gender system even though we realize how flawed it is. In part, I believe this comes from a sense of being "other" from our earliest recollections. I therefore reason that being transgendered or intersex is a transitory state to most, though I dare not speak for all. With that knowledge, however, we might better understand why we do not see more activism and participation by those who "blend in" so to speak. I can go shopping, to the gym, to dinner, movies - whatever I want - and the outside world would never know the difference because such issues aren't in their awareness. In contrast, if I walk into a room full of gay activists campaigning for transgendered and intersex rights, my anxiety toward my identity goes up. In their raised awareness, they might observe features that might allude to my past. I identify as female and not intersex despite that being what I am biologically. You see, the nature of the queer-rights movement is to identify outwardly, which I do in respect to my sexuality; but, in my gender, I am female, and the fear of being labeled openly or even in the minds of those who meet me as something in between pushes me into silence. Awareness, therefore, creates change within the mainstream population, but it has a cursed side for those of us who live within the realm of gender variation in that it makes it that much harder for us to live as we want: simply male or female.

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