

Appendix 2

Supplementary Considerations: PrideHouse Report

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I Introduction: Identity matters

The purpose of this addendum is to offer some supplementary, and perhaps, corrective recommendations to the PrideHouse Literature Review. The literature review, while offering thorough coverage of Lesbian and Gay scholarly resources on street-involved youth, provokes as many questions as it answers. Particularly intriguing and yet troubling are observations arising from the review which flag the difficulty of accessing data on the situation of homeless youth who identify as transgender, of assessing the relative agency of youth engaging in survival sex and/or sex work (sometimes referred to as youth “at risk of sexual exploitation”) and of determining the character of the attachment of some homeless youth to gay, lesbian, transsexual, transgender communities, identities, etc, as well as the role of sexual minority status, and homophobia in the decision of some youth to leave home at an early age.

Whatever challenges thinking through the racial composition of street active queer and trans youth might entail, failure to address matters of cultural specificity and racial oppression in surveying the situation of homeless and street active sexual minority youth makes likely that a large percentage of such youth, who are first nations youth and youth of colour will be underrepresented or misrepresented by that survey. This in turn may contribute to the disidentification of some youth of colour and first nations youth with “white” lbtg communities and identities, a disidentification which is understandable given the normatively “white” representation of lbtg communities and identities. Munoz uses

disidentification to describe the psychic and social “survival strategies the minority subject practices in order to negotiate a (racially or sexually) phobic majoritarian public sphere” (Munoz, 1999, p. 4) Walters discusses the ways in which identity formation among sexual minority Aboriginal peoples is complicated by the colonization of consciousness and consciousness of colonization, both of which frequently take homophobic valences (Walters pp. 45-47, in Brown, 1997).

This supplementary report has two parts and three addenda. This section will begin by elaborating some concerns around the problems of inclusion and identity. Specifically, taking into account a set of normative exclusions and erasures that are the context for much contemporary work addressing sexual minority youth, it will ask what are the implications of refusing to accept their exclusion and erasure, for attempts to develop social housing for, *and with*, sexual minority youth. As will be apparent this entails taking seriously the obstacles to, and the importance of, listening to and working with the lived experience, practical expertise and cultural values of street involved youth. The second section will survey some recent efforts at developing housing for and with street involved people, foregrounding those projects that centre the experience and expertise of trans and queer street active youth.

I Problems of Inclusion and Identity

Granting Joan Scott’s argument in “Experience,” (1998), concerning the narrative construction of experience in relation to identity, it is important to consider that both homeless youth and adults working in a mentoring or service provider capacity inevitable experience material pressures and narrative desires which condition the kind of stories which can be told and be heard. This is not merely an academic problem, and has a particular relation to service delivery to transsexual and transgender

populations, in terms of the use of normative identity criteria, the medical diagnosis of Gender Dysphoria, to evaluate our suitability for receiving healthcare related to gender transition¹. For example, as Sandy Stone remarked in “The Empire Writes Back” (1991), clinicians in gender clinics have for nearly forty years maintained a situation in which approval for surgery, and hormones has traditionally been contingent upon the delivery of a fairly standardized lifescript and encouraged post-operative transsexuals to fabricate pre-transition histories in which our bodies were always already congruent with our gender identifications.² Trans people who are unwilling to deliver these conventional performances of transsexual identity have, until recently, found themselves unable to access transition-related healthcare, at least through the public healthcare system.³ This is only one of the more glaring institutional examples of what Namaste, Chase, and Rubin have identified as the systemic elision of the existence and the experience of transsexual, intersex and transgender persons in all most all areas of social life, ranging from the operating theatre where involuntary surgeries are performed upon intersex newborns to render them cosmetically male or female (Chase, 1998, p.197), to the exclusion of aboriginal crossdressing youth from the shelter

¹ The two relevant documents are the diagnosis of G.I.D. (Gender Identity Disorder) in the 4th edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the American Medical Association, and the internationally recognized treatment protocol for transsexual persons, the Standards of Care of the HBIGDA (Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association).

² Stone argues that the histories of transsexuals should be valued and retained rather than sacrificed in the service of camouflage and that our histories are categorically distinct from the histories of Genetics (non-transsexuals). Further her writing underscored the degree to which non-normative sex/gender positions had been, in 1991, conspicuously underarticulated in discourses of transsexualism and speculated upon the broad array of variously gendered and embodied subjects that might comprise a future non-normative gender polity. Modestly thought, this might have meant validating transsexualities that were also queer; more ambitiously, posttranssexualism might usher in a new gender for every girl and boy, as it were. (Stone, 1991)

³ Namaste’s research does show that during the nineteen sixties and seventies many transsexuals availed themselves of hormones on the street and transition-related surgeries on the black market. Though a testimonial to the resourcefulness of trans people facing institutional erasure and denial of services, this situation made transsexual and transgender people vulnerable to considerable healthcare risks, and unscrupulous practitioners. By the mid-nineties however, hormones at least, and some surgical procedures, have been available through a small number of medical practitioners whom are not attached to gender clinics, and less committed to the institutional regulation of transsexual and transgender bodies. (Namaste 2002; Namaste, 2000, pp. 198, 199)

system (O'Brien, cited in Namaste, 2000, p. 175) to the administrative erasure of transgendered people effected by “specific documents of juridical identity and civil status” (Namaste, 2000, p. 236).

In the area of LBTG activist scholarship, work which ostensibly takes trans people as its object has routinely done so in a fashion that obscures, erases or redescribes trans identities in the service of other agendas (Namaste, 2000, p. 23; Prosser, 1998, p. 55; Rubin, 1998, p. 276). Likewise there is a significant history of feminist hostility towards intersex, transsexual and transgender people and issues (Ross, 1995 p. 10; Darke & Cope, 2002 pp. 8,9). This situation is shifting somewhat, and there is a growing body of responsible and respectful feminist and queer social research on trans issues (Fausto-Sterling, 1993, 2000; Cross 2001; Darke & Cope 2002). Such research is generally identifiable through its respect for the self-identification (in terms of sex, pronominal use, name), chosen vocabulary and social priorities, the political specificities and autonomy of transsexual, transgender and intersex peoples.⁴

In the context of social service delivery the implications of not addressing routinized misrepresentation of trans and intersex folk, or of naturalized hostility towards us, is the alienation of trans and intersex population from the service provider, leading to a failure to access services on the part of the target population (Namaste, 2000, p. 177). According to surveys of shelter workers and policies conducted in Ontario by Ross (1995), Namaste (1997), Cope & Darke (1999) frequently trans people face the outright denial of social services (Ross, 1995, p. 10). Namaste offers the following quotation from an Ontario shelter worker: “We do outreach with street kids—that’s our mandate. We don’t serve them [transgender

⁴ For a fuller elaboration of guidelines for trans allies working on Trans Issues, see Hale 1997. For a partial glossary of trans and intersex vocabulary see Appendix A to this Report.

youth]. Well, I guess maybe some of the kids are like that [transgendered]. I don't know." (2000, p. 174) Namaste goes on to say that in her interviews with "representatives of agencies and shelters that work with homeless youth generally demonstrated an ignorance of transgender people..." even going so far as to coerce those trans youth who were allowed access into highly gender normative behaviour (2000, pp. 174, 175). When this situation is considered in conjunction with the commonly held assumption that trans and intersex issues are gender issues (i.e. feminist issues) or queer issues, without regard for the history of complicated and at times conflictual relations between many feminist and queer communities and transsexual and transgender communities, one can see where there is considerable room for trans and intersex youth to disappear.

At the same time, it is important to keep in mind the extreme overrepresentation of youth of colour and aboriginal youth among street active and homeless populations.⁵ In addition to the addressing actual (and quite diverse) material determinants of homelessness among First Nations youth and youth of colour, there are some particular challenges to be overcome in attempting to ascertain how many aboriginal sex and gender minoritarian youth and youth of colour may be street active or homeless. Brown makes a distinction between Aboriginal minoritarian sexualities that are cognate to homosexuality and lesbianism, and cross gender identities he specifies as "not-men" and "not-women" which have traditionally enjoyed a measure of tolerance in some First Nations communities (1997, pp. 9-14). However, Karina Walters quotes

⁵ A recent study by Christine Christensen & Leonard Cler-Cunningham for the Pace Society surveyed 183 Vancouver sex trade workers, highlights the overrepresentation of Aboriginal youth among street active populations:

Our youngest contributor was 15 and the oldest was 51. In an industry where youth is a commodity it's not surprising that over half were 24 and under... The average age of entry into the sex trade was 16.98. There is an immense overrepresentation of Aboriginal women in the street level sex trade (31.1%). According to the 1996 Census data from Statistics Canada, Aboriginals (North American Indian, Metis, Inuit) constitute only 1.7% of Greater Vancouver's population. Almost three quarters of the women had left their parent's or guardian's home permanently at age 16 or younger.

Laguna lesbian writer Paula Gunn Allen as suggesting that urban, acculturated Indians (gay, straight, and trans) have tended towards an internalization of Christian homophobia that negates a more traditional attitude of acceptance and respect towards two spirit people (Walters, in Brown, 1997, p. 49). This point is supported and developed by comments made by Mohawk transformed woman, multi-media artist, and writer, Aiyanna Maracle:

Not unlike colonialism in general, there has been a colonization of gender. In my research and my travels around the world and talking to Indigenous people I have come to term Indigenous perceptions of gender as *gender beyond male and female*...And for me this perspective has very much been at the heart of my transformation. During my transformation , I've had to reclaim and recreate a language to describe this...I am not a transsexual. And I am not a dyke—many brown/black women who love women find that the European notion of what lesbianism is doesn't fit...The term 'two-spirited' was coined in the US in the late '80s, and coming into popular usage by the early '90s was synonymous with gay and lesbian Natives, with no further connotation. The whole other rich social and spiritual context associated with these positions in Indigenous societies were dropped by the wayside...I believe in the traditional concept, these people whose gender was beyond that of male or female were among the keepers of the culture. (Maracle, in Cross, 2001, p.15).

All of which is only to say that for service providers the challenge in providing support to gender and sexual minority First Nations youth and youth of colour will entail remaining sensitive not only to their ambivalent identifications and disidentifications with “western” signposts of gay culture (Munoz, 1999, p. 4-8) but to

culturally specific articulations of cross gender identity and/or same-sex attraction that may or may not resemble queer or trans sexualities, genders or cultural practices.

A final, if no less pressing, concern has to do with the question of sex work and its relation to trans identities. Contemporary transsexual and transgender activists have articulated the importance of sex work to male-to-female transsexual identity and community, as well as the detrimental effect of anti-prostitute attitudes and laws upon male-to-female transsexual and transgender lives. Anti-prostitute attitudes and laws contribute to routinized violence against sex workers and systemic difficulties in accessing housing, healthcare, and other social services. This is especially the case with regards to First Nations Trans youth and youth of colour, who comprise “the majority of transsexual/transvestite prostitutes” (Statement by The National Committee on Prostitution, Transsexuality, and HIV, p. 3). Even as respect for the lived cultural contexts, expertise and experiences of sex and gender minority youth is necessary in developing social supports for those who are grappling with the challenges of homelessness and street involvement, so sex work needs to be recognized a legitimate form of employment which many trans people pursue, and questions of health and other conditions of that workplace addressed. In this context a commitment to trans positive service provision to street youth necessarily entails the adoption of a sex work positive model and at minimum, a commitment to ameliorating, if not contesting outright, the effects of criminalization on young trans peoples’ lives (Highcrest 1996; Statement by The National Committee on Prostitution, Transsexuality, and HIV, 2001 [see Appendix B for the attached report]; Ross 2002).

II Housing options and models

The Pride House initiative arises from a recognition of both the high number of sexual minority youth who are homeless and/or street active, and the particular challenges faced by lbtg homeless and street active youth. The last section was then, an attempt to deepen and complicate the picture of sexual minority street youth cultures, and to foreground the need for meeting youth on their own terms. One challenge emphasized was the large array of terminologies and identities youth may use to self describe, or more problematically, from which they might disidentify; another which I will only flag here, is that many sexual minority youth may not self describe as such, for any number of reasons. In developing housing options then, it may be worth considering how one makes positive spaces for sexual minority youth without making self identification as say, gay or lesbian, a requirement for accessing those spaces. The last section considered some of the particular ways in which a regard for the self identification and choices of street involved sexual minority youth is crucial to developing services which are relevant and accessible to youth. This section describes some housing initiatives that may provide useful models for developing housing options for, and with, sexual minority youth.

Housing Support and Transitional Housing

The bulk of sexual minority youth housing initiatives reviewed here function either to provide supports for homeless or underhoused lbtg youth, or they provide emergency or short term shelter. In Toronto the recently opened Sherbourne Health Centre provides some supports to homeless and underhoused gay, lesbian and trans people, operating an infirmary/recuperative care unit for up to 30 people at a time. Toronto's 519 Community Centre and Seattle's Lambert House provide similar sorts of support to homeless and street active sexual minority youth, through peer support groups, drop ins, skill building workshops, social service

referrals and advocacy, and free meals and social events.
(www.lamberthouse.org, <http://www.the519.org/>)

In terms of transitional housing for lbtg youth, there are not a lot of examples but there are some. San Francisco's Ark House opened in March of 2001. The facility, located in the Castro District, houses a maximum of fifteen queer youth, for three to six months at a time. Ark House Program Director Thomas Landry is quoted in an article on the GLAAD (Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation) website saying that two years of preparation were spent to ensure the integrity of the facility and to involve community members: "There were concerns that it would be a shelter and a flop house," he said. "That is not what we are about at all. We offer transitional living within a strict program. We are about taking youth from the street and stabilizing them." Ark House's services include case management, counseling and mental health support, money management, vocation and employment counseling, medical/primary care, and substance abuse services and prevention. Ark House is overseen by a Neighborhood Advisory Board as well a Program Director. ("San Francisco Opens LGBT Housing Facility" March 5, 2001; <http://glaad.digitopia.net/org/publications/lines/?record=2712>; for further details, contact GSerina@aol.com)

In the Seattle area, YouthCare/The Orion Centre operates a home for sexual minority youth transitioning off the streets. In their literature the emphasis is very much upon structured living, skill building, and fostering a sense of citizenship. Though not lbtg specific Youth/Care also operates an apartment building with eight two-bedroom apartments for 16 young adults ages 18-21, their "Home of Hope," geared towards more independent living for those whom have met their guidelines for successful living in one of their transitional facilities.

(http://216.167.41.106/Agency/Constellation_TL.cfm.)

Housing Registries and Placement Programmes

In Ottawa, Housing Help, a non-profit, charitable agency, devoted to assisting people find safe, affordable, adequate housing is working to build a Housing Registry for the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Community. These could include rooms, apartments and shared accommodation. This is however not a youth specific initiative.

(<http://www.housinghelp.on.ca/glbt.shtml>)

Toronto's SOY, Supporting Our Youth is developing a similar housing registry that is specific to trans and queer youth and which operates in tandem with their youth mentoring program. This program matches lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual or transgender youth with adults from the lbtg community. There are four kinds of matches: community mentoring, group mentoring, housing mentoring and non-profit housing mentoring. It is the later two mentoring programmes which are of interest here (www.soytoronto.org/mentor.html):

In Housing Mentoring, we arrange for a young person to live in the home of a supportive adult. The actual nature of the arrangement may vary; in some cases, youth may be paying all their own expenses, but getting support from the mentor in whose home they live. In other cases, the young person may almost be like a member of the mentor's family.

Non-Profit Housing Mentoring: We have secured a limited number of subsidized housing units in the non-profit housing sector. This housing is designated for youth who are matched with a community mentor and are in need of housing.

From Squats to Cooperative Housing

St. Clare's Multifaith Housing Society also stresses self-reliance, but recognizes the need for street involved youth to have considerable autonomy in the housing project initiated at 25 Leonard Street in Toronto (25 Leonard Final Report, 2002). The Society formed in response to the escalating homeless crises in Toronto, and organized itself initially around supporting a group of street youth who had been arrested for squatting an abandoned building at 88-90 Carlton Street. The C.C. gang was evicted in the summer of 1996 and proceeded to hold a protest squat in Nathan Philips Square, outside of Toronto's City Hall, and so came to the attention of the activist group, Toronto Action for Social Change, who initially raised bail to secure the squatters' release and then worked with them to develop a vision of what the youth considered viable housing. It was out of this exchange that T.A.S.C. formed the Society with the aim of "open[ing] up buildings to house people without threatening neighborhoods" (2002). St. Clare Society advocates co-operative housing arrangements over hostels and public housing units. The latter result in isolated "economic ghettos, while St. Clare's model allows residents to "blend into" the community. According to the Society's Rev. Brian Burch, "co-operative housing in refurbished buildings appeals to street kids because it allows them to retain their sense of community" (2002).

One thing came through loud and clear in our discussions with kids living on the street; many of them don't like the shelters. They don't like the rules, the staff or the other residents. As one community worker recently said "You can build all the hostels you want, but the kids won't use them." The problem is not shelter. Rather, it is ensuring that the shelter provides the other things kids get from living on the streets or in a squat. They want security and community. Rarely do

street kids live on their own. Street kids usually live in self-governing groups that have their own rules and structure. (Burch, 1998)

Our first challenge is to create a space which the kids will accept and use. Getting street kids to feel comfortable with St. Clare's is only the first step. The real challenge is keeping them off the streets. From our experience working with these kids, we know that peer role models are the most effective way to change the life-script that the kids are living. The greatest sources of help are young adults who were living on the streets themselves until recently. These young adults have been able to get a job (or welfare), and a place to live. They are coping with society and all of its pressures. Many of these young adults know the kids on the street, and to visit them in the squats. They provide a positive role model and show that it is possible to get your life together and get off the street. St. Clare's has a comprehensive approach to youth homelessness. Our program includes drug education, life skills training, job placement, and permanent housing. (Burch, 1998)

In the spring of 1997, TASC raised \$100,000 in pledges to purchase a vacant building at 414-418 Jarvis to house street kid communities, but their bid wasn't accepted. They later successfully bid upon 25 Leonard and have converted it to affordable, self managed housing with very little funding—though some support was garnered through Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), which gave TASC a \$20,000 grant through its Homegrown Solutions Initiative (2002).

The housing will be managed by a multi-stakeholder co-op. This is a special type of co-op which allows a

specific number of directors to be elected from predetermined interest groups. There will be three stakeholder groups represented on the board: St. Clare's (as the owner of the land and building) will elect one-third of the board, community members from the local neighbourhood will elect one-third of the board; and the residents of the project will elect the remaining directors. Anyone living in the neighbourhood is eligible to join and attend meetings, but only one-third of the directors can be from the community. This structure allows the community to have a significant, but not a controlling voice, and provides for meaningful participation by the residents. Most importantly, this model ensures that the management of the housing will be accountable to the local community and the project's residents. (Burch, 1998)

Though 25 Leonard is not a lbtg specific housing initiative it is an excellent model of how community allies and service providers can work with street involved people to create affordable, cooperative housing, and it is a model that is currently being emulated by those, including many queer and genderqueer youth activists, who are attempting to convert the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty's 2002 Popesquat (1510 King Street West, Toronto) into affordable housing. Though evicted after some three months occupancy, in the fall of 2002, former residents of the squat are in the process of forming a charitable corporation, "Norm's House" (on the model of St. Clare's Multi Faith) and are working with OCAP to find a way to secure title to the building at 1510 King Street West.
(<http://www.ocap.ca/popesquatbroadsheet.html>)

The involvement of queer and trans youth activists in this project is unsurprising given that in 1999, "Making Money" a study by the Shout Clinic suggested that 30% of Toronto's estimated 4000

homeless youth are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, transgender queer and questioning⁶ (Shout Report, 1999). Over-representation of sexual minority youth on the street is consistent with studies done in other large North American cities.

Concluding Remarks

This supplementary report began by elaborating some concerns with matters of inclusion and identity, particularly addressing the problematic implications of social research that participated in the normative exclusions and erasures that represent sexual minority communities as more or less “white” and primarily “lesbian and gay” in their constitution. Given that such representations do form the context for much contemporary work addressing the needs of sexual minority youth, it attempted to take some preliminary steps in the direction of refusing to accept such exclusions and erasures, and to suggest the necessity of taking seriously the obstacles to, and the importance of, listening to and working with the lived experience, practical expertise and cultural values of street involved youth. The second section of the report went on to survey some efforts at developing housing for street involved people, giving emphasis particularly to some less than conventional projects that work, by working with street involved youth rather than upon their behalf. Finally it is important to note that despite some successful models (St. Clare’s Multi-Faith Housing Society, SOY’s Co-operative Housing Mentoring programme), this report fails to address some of the most

⁶ Other findings include:

- 31 percent reported having engaged in some sort of sex work, whether it be prostitution, stripping/massage or Internet/phone sex, at least once
- 36 percent said squeegeeing and panhandling were their main money makers, followed by crime or selling drugs (19 percent), social assistance (18 percent), paid employment (17 percent) and sex work (10 percent)
- 45 percent reported that a primary barrier to getting work was lack of an address or phone number to put on an application
- 40 percent of kids now on the street have spent time in foster homes
- 59 percent of females and 39 percent of males claim to have suffered physical abuse, and 40 percent of females and 19 percent of males claim to have suffered sexual abuse.

(Shout Report 1999)

significant barriers to developing housing supports for sex and gender minority youth, in particular, the criminalization of prostitution, the systemic devaluation of the lives of First Nations peoples in the core institutions of Canadian society--including social service providers--and other forms of extreme racism.

Addendum A

A primer in Trans Terminology

(from "soc.support.transgendered," with the permission of forum moderator, Diane Wilson;
<http://www.firelily.com/gender/sstgfaq/terms.html>)

transgendered, TG, T*, trans

an umbrella term including just about anyone who acts or thinks in a manner not socially approved for the gender assigned him or her at birth. T* is a computerish abbreviation for all the variants of trans-whatever: TV, TG, TS. "Trans" is a newer term that avoids the frequent misunderstanding between the meanings of "transgendered" and "transgenderist."

transgenderist, TG

One who lives in the social role opposite that of the sex assigned at birth, but who does not intend to have surgery, and may not wish to take hormones. Note that the term overlaps somewhat both with transgendered (although it is rarely used in this fashion) and with transsexual. It most commonly refers to MtFs, as FtM surgery remains much less accepted. Note that to refer to someone as "transgendered" does not in any way suggest that they are, or should be, transgenderists.

transsexual, TS

One for whom the sex assigned at birth is incorrect; some take hormones, some will have surgery to correct the genitals. "Preop" or preoperative transsexual refers to one who has not had SRS (q.v.); "postop" or postoperative to one who has. "Non-op" transsexuals have not had SRS, and have accepted that for a variety of reasons (including health-related, financial, relationships, or other things) they will not be having SRS in this lifetime.

transvestite, crossdresser, TV, CD

One who dresses (for any of a number of reasons) in clothing appropriate to the sex opposite that assigned at birth, but whose gender identification generally remains that of the birth-assigned sex. "Transvestite" is sometimes regarded as an epithet or as too clinical.

intersexed

An intersexual is someone for whom the process of biological sex differentiation has been non-standard.

SRS [GRS]

Sex Reassignment Surgery [Gender Reconciliation Surgery, Genital Reassignment Surgery]. The surgical process of creating a phallus or vagina; also, sometimes used to refer to "upper" surgery--mastectomy or breast implants. Colloquially, a "sex-change operation."

HRT

Hormonal Reassignment [or Replacement] Therapy. The medical process of inducing changes in the body by taking hormones appropriate to one's gender identity. For detail, see the hormone FAQ.

transition

Sometimes used to refer to the whole process from the end of denial to whatever the culmination may be; most often encountered as a synonym for going full-time.

full-time

Going full-time, or living full-time, in the social role of the sex opposite that assigned at birth. Required by the SOC before surgery, and in that context may be referred to as the **real-life test (RLT)**.

F->M, FtM, F2M

Female to Male crossdresser, transsexual, etc. Alone, TS is usually implied.

M->F, MtF, M2F

Male to Female crossdresser, transsexual, etc. Alone, TS is usually implied.

SOC, HBIGDA SOC, ICTLEP SOCM

Standards of Care. The usual reference, and the most widely followed guidelines, are the Henry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association "Standards of Care: The Hormonal and Surgical Sex Reassignment of Gender Dysphoric Persons." The International Conference on Transgender Law and Employment Policy has also created and published a document called Standards of Care.

Addendum B

Statement for Social Service Agencies and Transsexual/Transgendered Organizations on Service Delivery to Transsexual and Transvestite Prostitutes

Statement prepared by the National Committee on Prostitution, Transsexuality, and HIV, Vancouver, March 2001.

We are a group of transsexuals with a history in prostitution who have been involved in a national meeting on issues related to transsexuality, prostitution, and HIV. Since the mid-1990s, we have all been active in setting up, developing, and evaluating community-based programmes for transsexual and transvestite prostitutes.

Through our work we have identified several areas of concern related to the administration and orientation of programmes for transsexual prostitutes. We feel these problems exist both in agencies that have transsexual-specific programmes as well as organizations that have a significant transsexual clientele, but no formal transsexual programme.

Attitudes towards prostitution make up the first problem. The second problem has to do with agencies using transsexual and transvestite prostitutes for expansion.

There is a prevalent conception of prostitution -- within transsexual organizations, and social service agencies -- as inherently negative. Prostitution is seen as a "last resort" for individuals who have addictions, who have low self esteem, people who were sexually abused as children, and stigmatized as gender variant youth. Specifically with regards to transsexuals, prostitution is seen as the only occupation available to transsexuals because of social marginalization. For example, social service workers will make a statement such as "Transsexuals are forced to work on the street to pay for their surgery." Without always knowing it, social service workers are constantly trying to "save"

transsexuals and transvestites from prostitution whether in the short or the long term. Exit programmes and "job retraining" programmes for prostitutes represent attempts to get transsexuals and transvestites out of prostitution in the short term. Efforts to remove transsexuals and transvestites from prostitution in the long term are often more subtle: for example, transsexual organizations accept prostitutes in "theory," but often hope that transsexuals will get out of prostitution and go back to school. They do not currently support transsexuals and transvestites who work as prostitutes: in practical terms, while these organizations may have workshops on transsexuals and employment, they do not organize activities for transsexuals who work as prostitutes on their working conditions. These transsexual organizations will often invite lawyers to speak about legal questions concerning transition on the job, but will not invite lawyers to speak about prostitution and the law.

We as a committee see prostitution as a valid form of employment and an integral part of many transsexuals' cultural identity. We deplore any attempt to "save" transsexuals from the "evil" of prostitution. We find these attitudes actually contribute to the marginalization of prostitutes from society, as well as the problems transsexuals have with self-esteem, addictions, the high prevalence of HIV amongst transsexual prostitutes, and isolation. We find it especially ironic that non-prostitute transsexuals espouse such negative attitudes of transsexual prostitutes when we consider that a history of transsexuality is a history of prostitution. Transsexuality and prostitution have been welded together in many cultural and class contexts. Historically, transsexual prostitutes engaged in personal, political, and community struggles which have created a social climate in which individuals can change sex more easily. Yet this history has either been forgotten, has not been reclaimed, or has even been silenced. Currently, transsexual prostitutes engage in intimate and sexual relations with tens of thousands of men in this country. This activity contributes to greater openness, appreciation, and understanding of transsexuals

in a huge segment of the population. Yet this political contribution to changing social attitudes is unacknowledged and vilified. Non-prostitute transgendered people are too busy celebrating recent passage of human rights legislation to recognize the labour of transsexual and transvestite prostitutes.

These negative attitudes towards prostitutes have dramatic ramifications in relation to the second issue we identify, namely that social service agencies have the potential to use transsexual and transvestite prostitutes for expansion. At the present time, there is both documentation and common knowledge of some of the problems transsexuals and transvestites, and even more specifically street involved transsexuals/transvestites, face in accessing health care and social services. Since the mid-1990s, certain agencies have applied this knowledge in a concrete way, designing programmes targetting this population. We do applaud these initiatives, but we see social services as businesses, which, like all businesses, think in terms of money and administration: expansion, getting grants, creating jobs. In some instances, this drive has the potential to be primarily motivated by administration and money, not necessarily the needs of the transsexuals and transvestites designated to be "clients" of the agency. For example, there have been many attempts at starting transsexual specific programs without proper evaluation. The rapid development of transsexual/transvestite specific services over the last 5 years has also mean that as transsexual/transvestite prostitutes, we have not had a chance yet to sit down as a community and evaluate where we've been, where we are and where we need to go. A lot of social workers and social service agencies, with overly excited non-prostitute transgendered activists and community workers, jump on any opportunity to start anything anytime at any cost.

To address these problems, we think that a thorough consultation with transsexual and transvestite prostitutes is in order, as opposed to a "broad based" consultation with "transgendered" people. The latter rarely put transsexual

prostitutes at the centre of the endeavour, and inevitably result in misrepresentation of the issues of transsexual and transvestite prostitutes and an overrepresentation of the concerns of transsexuals who are on computer listserves. Furthermore, such work needs to ensure that people who currently work as prostitutes are consulted, not just individuals who are ex-prostitutes, or "rehabilitated" prostitutes. If this consultation contacts a wide diversity of transsexual/transvestite prostitutes, the information will be gathered from prostitutes who are not primarily white and who may not have English as a mother tongue: these are the majority of transsexual/transvestite prostitutes, especially in Canada's three largest cities : Toronto, Montréal, and Vancouver. If such individuals do not make up the majority of the people contacted, the consultation is unacceptable.

With respect to negative attitudes concerning prostitution, we would like to reiterate that transgendered and non-transgendered community organizers and social service workers should start investing their money and energies in priorities deemed relevant by prostitutes rights' activists. They need to listen to what prostitutes rights activists in Canada have articulated for over two decades now. Organizations and workers should prioritize:

- * the recognition and validation of prostitution as a legitimate form of employment
- * supporting and lobbying for the decriminalization of prostitution, including the repeal of the pimping laws, which are regularly used to stigmatize and criminalize the personal relationships of prostitutes
- * the condemnation of laws which criminalize youth of whatever age involved in prostitution
- * supporting people who want to work as prostitutes; to provide them with the resources needed to work safely; to go where they work to offer these services
- * in service delivery -- counseling, street outreach, referrals -- to have the courage to include full discussion on the working

conditions of prostitutes. This work would include prices, hours and places to work, specific working conditions, work options (different places to work, taking a break from prostitution).

Conclusion

We have outlined two problems in terms of service delivery for transsexual/transvestite prostitutes – negative attitudes towards prostitution and the potential for agency expansion. We have also given some concrete suggestions for workers and agencies to counter the negative attitudes and practices towards prostitution. We hope you will incorporate these reflections as part of a broader commitment to progressive programme and policy development related to transsexual and transvestite prostitutes.

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Viviane Namaste
Mirha-Soleil Ross

National Committee on Prostitution, Transsexuality, and HIV,
Vancouver, March 2001.

Appendix C

Report Bibliography (with some additional LBTTG, Sex Work and Housing resources)

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