



JUST FOR US

FOCUS ON GENDER

Vol. 16 #2
2004

BY & FOR PEOPLE WITH LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL AND TRANSGENDER PARENTS

BEING ONLY MYSELF

by Dakota Fine



"I just think it must have been so difficult," she said. "What's that?" I respond, fully clued into that which she is referring, despite my feigned incomprehension.

"You know... growing up without a father figure and all, I just think it must have been hard for you as a boy without a man to relate to."

Elyse is my first cousin once removed, who lives in a cramped apartment on the upper west side of New York City. My cousin is divorced and has two children, Jake and Lexie, 12 and 10 years old, respectively. They live with their cats and clutter, making do with what I affectionately refer to as their "corner kitchen" – a compressed nook in the living room/dining room miraculously endowed with a sink, oven and refrigerator stowed into an area about the size of a small shipping container.

"I guess it all depends on what you're used to," I say, "isn't it hard for you? I mean it can't be easy raising two children as a single mother in New York City?"

I think it was at this point that my cousin began to sense the irony of her assumptions. People, especially family, feel like somehow they have the right to pass judgment on my upbringing because it was so untraditional. They don't expect you to turn it around on them, and the conversation doesn't feel quite so urbane when they catch it on the come around.

Invariably though, as the male child of two lesbian mothers, I am most frequently probed with regards to the lack of a father figure in my upbringing, as if the children of lesbians might deal with the predicament differently than other children. I wonder whether my cousin would have phrased herself differently if she had been talking to a child whose father had passed away prior to birth?

So what was it like for me growing up as someone of the male gender in a household where the overarching vibe was decidedly female? At times it was challenging. My

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ADULT SONS OF GAY FATHERS SPEAK ABOUT GENDER

Orson A. Morrison, Psy.D.



At the age of 3, my mother and father divorced related to my father's coming out as gay. Although separated, both my mother and father

played significant roles in raising me. I often wondered about the impact this family situation had on my own developing masculinity and sexual identity. Now a psychologist, I had the amazing opportunity to study and interview other adult sons with gay dads in hopes of illuminating our often unheard and misunderstood life stories. My goal was to really get to know the subtleties and complexities that often get lost in traditional experimental research. I deeply appreciate the honesty and willingness to share of the men I interviewed. Here are some of the highlights:

Some men talked about the characteristics they share in common with their fathers:

"...I think we're very similar around being nurturers ... my dad was definitely a nurturer and he cooked for me almost every night growing up, from scratch.he would always hold my hand when I was a kid when we were talking....a lot of physical contactIt was this very active love and I definitely feel like I learned a lot about how to do the really practical parts of love from my dad..."

Other sons talked about the differences between themselves and their fathers:

"...I don't know if there are many similarities. I can be a little bit passive and reticent like my father, but I have much better communicative skills, and can talk better than my father. We have different tastes. I don't like jewelry.... My father wears different types of clothes; it's masculine wear but it's not my style. In behavior, I don't know if there are much similarities in behavior."

"...Well, it's funny but in a way he is more typically masculine than I am...You wouldn't think he was gay
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FEMALE TO MALE, NOT FEMINIST TO MISOGYNIST

by Jesse Carr



Over the last few years my lesbian moms and I have gone through a difficult coming out process together: in the fall of 2001 I came out to them as transgender and one year later I started taking testosterone. Most people assume that since my parents are lesbians, it was easy for them to understand and accept my own 'queer' identity. On the contrary, my lesbian moms probably took the news harder than anyone else in my life. Many lesbians have been slow to accept transgender people in their communities, organizations, or women's spaces – MtF transfolk are treated as suspicious trespassers, while FtMs are thought of as butches who sold out to their internalized sexism. The lesbian community that I came of age in rarely acknowledged or discussed the lives of trans people, and, as I found out, viewed the topic with some amount of confusion, disgust, and anger.

know what to do. She dreamt that she should keep her child and that it would be a girl. I am her first and only daughter- her little girl. It never bothered my mom that I was a tomboy, or that people often couldn't tell if I was a boy or a girl; she didn't care that I came out as a dyke or that some of her friends labeled me as a baby
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When my mom – an unmarried lesbian in her last year of college – became pregnant with me, she didn't

INSIDE SPECIAL FEATURES

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- Highlighting Trans Families 4-6
- Kids Club Contest 15



LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Welcome to the Gender Galaxy

Dear Friends,

One of the things I have always valued about

COLAGE is our unique creativity and expressions around gender. It's not uncommon for us to strut our stuff in drag at a LGBT Family Dance, work in alliance with transgender folks and organizations, or enjoy gender-bending in our daily lives or on stage through theater and drama. Attempting to capture just a fraction of this creative energy while sparking fresh dialogue among COLAGERS, with our families, and in our broader communities we present this issue of *Just For Us* focused on the topic of Gender.

This topic is crucial:

- BECAUSE people are discriminated against based on their gender presentation and COLAGE is committed to ending all forms of discrimination;
- BECAUSE many political questions and decisions that affect us and our families are based on limited cultural and societal assumptions and narrow understandings of gender;
- BECAUSE the experiences of youth and their Transgender parents need more visibility and support within our community and society as a whole
- BECAUSE too many LGBT organizations don't really think about what the "T" means or how they can serve gender-variant folks in their work;
- AND BECAUSE many COLAGERS learn different

gender norms from our parents and face questions and criticism about our gender development. Some COLAGERS actively seek to transcend and offer alternatives to our current binary model of gender and thus challenge gender norms and restrictions.

For most of us, our gender is integral to our lives, even if we're not always thinking about it consciously all the time. The prevailing "wisdom" wants us to believe there are only two gender options, masculine and feminine, which are presumed to be totally different and opposite from each other. When our parents, peers, or even we deviate from this binary system the whole world can seem to be turned upside down. Since joining COLAGE I've learned several different ways to think about, understand, and describe what gender means.

What I've decided is that a person's gender is very personal and fluid—it can change—and can be expressed in many different ways by a single person over their lifetime. It is also fluid from person to person - there are as many genders as there are people on this planet. My friend Dylan Vade thinks there's a gender galaxy, which means there could be as many forms of gender as there are stars and planets. Another friend of mine thinks there shouldn't be any genders.

Conversations about gender often raise more and more questions as we explore both society's and our personal relationships to gender. Ask yourself: Do you have a gender? Is your gender identity affected by having one or more queer parents? Who decides what gender you get to be or how you're going to express your gender? How has that changed over time? Does your gender relate to your biological sex, race, religion or ethnicity? How? Why does it matter so much?

Move from the personal to the political and imagine...how would the world be different if you weren't told from birth how to act, what to buy or what interests to have based on your assigned gender? What if doctors, and parents, teachers and bathroom door signs, clothing stores and toy stores didn't tell us where we belong and how we have been labeled?

I know I have found the theme personally relevant. As I've read the articles and submissions of my fellow COLAGERS I've been reminded of many gender-defining moments, such as the time when I was 5 and got my ears pierced. I ran out of the beauty parlor in pain from the first ear piercing and didn't want to return to get the left ear done. My mom warned me, "If you go to school with only one earring, you may be teased." When I was 10, played soccer, had very short hair and wore Adidas sweat-suits, people thought I was a boy. I was angry then. Why couldn't people understand that girls could play soccer and have short hair too! Today I like when people are confused by my gender presentation because they are forced to get to know me beyond whatever idea they have about my gender.

Hopefully the articles within this issue of *Just For Us* will spark dialogue with yourself, and with your family, friends and community about the roles that gender plays in all of our the lives. Welcome to the gender galaxy - you're in good company here!

In celebration,

Beth Teper
Executive Director

COLAGE

MISSION

COLAGE ENGAGES, CONNECTS, AND EMPOWERS PEOPLE TO MAKE THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE FOR CHILDREN OF LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, AND/OR TRANSGENDER PARENTS AND FAMILIES.

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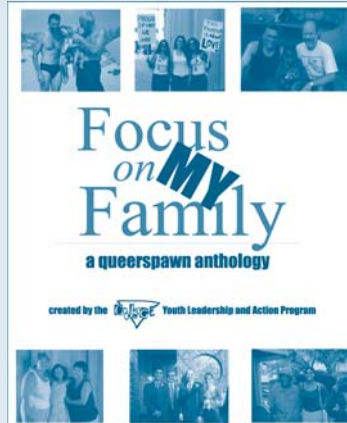
FOCUS ON MY FAMILY: A QUEERSPAWN ANTHOLOGY

COLAGE is thrilled to announce Focus on MY Family: A Queerspawn Anthology, a brand new literary collection of writing, art and poetry by youth with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender parents.

This literary collection was edited by the COLAGE Bay Area Youth Leadership and Action Program which brings together youth ages 14-22 with LGBT parents to gain leadership skills and to engage in activism projects that raise awareness in their community. This year the youth gave public presentations to hundreds of peers and adults in Bay Area schools, community groups and policy makers' offices in addition to creating and editing the Focus on MY Family anthology.

"Focus on MY Family provides a powerful, beautiful and creative response to homophobic groups such as Focus on the Family that lead the fight against our families. In a time when there is heightened attention and debate around LGBT families opportunities

such as this to actually hear from the youth in these families are critical to countering misinformation and changing public opinion," says Beth Teper, COLAGE Executive Director.



"Focus on MY Family is an opportunity for those of us that actually know what it's like to have an LGBT parent to share our side of the story," adds Bevan Gerber-Siff, age 15 who is the son of two lesbian moms, a contributor to the anthology, and a participant in the YLAP program.

Suggested donation is \$5 per copy of the anthology. (Please contact COLAGE for information about bulk orders.) COLAGE is also developing a discussion and resource guide to accompany the collection which will be debuted late Fall 2004.

For more information about Focus on MY Family, or COLAGE, please call COLAGE Program Coordinator, Meredith Fenton at (415) 861-5437 x.102 or email her at Meredith@colage.org

Being Only Myself, from p1

parents and I did not see eye to eye on many issues, we still don't. Sometimes, I achieve personal development through spending my day in front of the television watching baseball and playing pool. The louder my belches, the better. And my bedroom was once filled with the likenesses of scantily clad models. My adolescence became increasingly anti-social as I substituted male bonding in place of dinner and a movie with the mommies. Throughout much of my adolescence I spent time sponging my high school buddies' most obnoxious, overtly male behaviors in an attempt to make myself deliberately insensitive. It worked, I do a great impression of a real chauvinist.

This description accounts for certain aspects of my male gender identity, which I developed at least in part through osmosis from other boys my age. Before you pity me for the deplorable role modeling I endured, ask yourself if this is really that different from the experience of any boy going through adolescence.

I must admit however, there were some stark differences. When I came home at night and exhibited my new adapted behaviors in the crudest manner possible, I was caustically reminded to be more respectful of women. And as I ate my dinner, my parents took the time to lecture me on the

principles of integrity, which was their way of teaching me that mimicking my peers was a way of disowning my individuality. In the stereotypical fashion of mothers all over America, my parents urged me to be only myself.

My family may have been irregular, but please do not correlate irregular with unhealthy. In all truth, there are millions of children all over the United States who grow up in families that are not made up of one mother and one father, not just LGBT families. The right wing agenda to "protect the sanctity of marriage," adversely affects all children, by embedding in children a feeling of normalcy that can only be associated with a married mommy and daddy. Not only does it disenfranchise anyone whose parents are not married, it encourages discrimination and misunderstanding.

And yes, parents will have an impact on the formation of a child's identity and opinions, I suppose. My gender identity encompasses more than just an assertive, confident demeanor. Women are almost always startled by my acute sensitivity, and are shocked by my facility in the kitchen. I don't know if this is related to gender, but I do feel different from other men, I feel like I have a decidedly epicene advantage.

Remarkably although I was raised by a pair of females, and was significantly impacted and mentored by many males (both adult and adolescent), I came to forge my own manhood through what I would describe as some sort of genetic blueprint.

If I am an appropriate gauge, children raised in LGBT families are not at a loss to find appropriate role models of all genders. It is my experience that children with gay parents are raised in environments where they are encouraged to be themselves, and reminded that they are loved no matter what (imagine that!). If children from LGBT families press the envelope with regards to gender roles therefore, we should be commended for being outspoken and provocative thinkers. We are progressive minds forging all types of new identities everyday, and "no, it wasn't horribly difficult," although at times it was challenging. I bring out the best in people by giving them the same support my mothers gave me. It is downright exultant to be different, individual, myself.

Dakota Fine was raised in San Francisco by two mothers, Lucy and Shuli. He recently graduated from George Washington University with a B.A. in International Affairs and served on the COLAGE Family Week Staff in Provincetown, MA.

When Laurie Cicotello was 14, her dad came out as transgender. Cicotello recalls her experiences with her father's therapist, a noted gender specialist, in this excerpt of a previously published interview. Special thanks to For Ourselves: Reworking Gender Expression (FORGE), whose publication *Connectivity* generously gave COLAGE permission to reprint.

Connectivity: Did you find the therapy helpful?
Cicotello: No! It made things much worse for me. She explained that my dad was going to go through puberty, and that her puberty was far more important than mine. She told me to expect my dad to start wearing my clothes and make-up.

I didn't want my dad wearing my clothes and make-up! So I quit wearing make-up and I began to gain weight so that my clothes wouldn't fit her. What that therapist said to me about her puberty being more important than mine was very damaging. It's taken me a lot of years to pull out of that aspect of it.

Connectivity: Did she do anything positive for you?
Cicotello: She did give me good information about the trans community and the various types of trans people, and what changes my parent would go through. She did also help me get in touch with another daughter of a transperson who was about my age, and we started Teenage Kids of Ts - TAKOTS. It was a group that met at the Gender Identity Center of Colorado for awhile...

Connectivity: What did you do with these other kids?

Cicotello: A couple of them had always been in trouble with the law, and I really started to figure out that the kids of trans parents a lot of times are just crying out for attention by doing crazy, weird, stupid things. I did it when I was 18, trying to get my dad's attention. You crave attention from your mom and dad so much you'd even get into trouble. When that doesn't get their attention, you take it a little further and a little further....

Connectivity: Could therapists help promote conversation?

Cicotello: One of the biggest complaints I hear from parents is, "I took my kids to therapist G, who knew nothing about trans issues, so I ended up teaching therapist G about trans issues." My question is, "Why aren't you talking to your kids directly? Why are you educating a therapist to educate your kids?"

One thing that definitely gets overlooked many times is that there may be other problems going on. A lot of times the therapist doesn't take into account

all the other issues that are going on in the family; they just focus everything on the trans issues. If the therapist my dad took me to had been more inquisitive about me, she would have found out that I'd been sexually molested a few years before and had already developed something of an eating disorder, but those were never brought up. Then you slap this whole thing on me that my dad's going to wear my stuff...it was all about my dad and my dad's problems. There was no talk about communication skills or family skills. There was never family therapy with me and my mom and dad present. In fact, while I was going to the therapist, my mom didn't even know that I knew about dad.

Connectivity: Does it help when kids of trans parents talk to other kids of trans parents?

Cicotello: The kids tend to go into hiding. It's really difficult for me to find other kids of trans parents. I feel very connected to the parents; that's whom I've mostly seen at the conferences. But I feel very disconnected from the children. I would love to find more of a community, so we can talk about the issues. So often whom I hear from is the parent: "I just told my daughter about me and she's throwing up. Now what do I do?" or, "I have a three year-old; how do I raise him to accept my transgenderism?"

Connectivity: What can a parent do to help?

Cicotello: Kids in this community are invisible. When I go to [trans] conferences, I almost become the celebrity of the conference because no kids come. The trans parents are hurting so badly over the loss of their kids. Yet, they've kind of screwed it up. From the perspective of MTF parents, what I see

a lot of parents doing is charging after their kids saying, "Wait, wait, read this pamphlet!" and the kids are like, "leave me alone!"

The problem is that everything revolves around the parent being trans. A lot of times there's so much self-centeredness in all of this, so much narcissism. They can't even see their families for what they are. All the attention that should be going to the kids is instead going to the trans parent. The parent thinks every conversation with the kid is their big opportunity to get the kid to understand their transness.

If you really want your kid to be your kid again, put away your issues and talk about what they're doing. What's going on in their lives? Do something that shows the kid that your whole life doesn't revolve around your transgenderism.

Laurie Cicotello was the original co-founder of Teenage Kids of Ts - TAKOTS - and has spoken widely at conferences and to the media about children of trans parents. She currently serves on COLAGE's national Board of Directors and is the editor of the Lexington, NE Clipper-Herald newspaper.



Girls will be boys will be...coloring book

TRANS FAMILY RESOURCES

www.transparency.org TransParentcy's mission is to offer support to Transgender Parents and their family. They have extensive resource lists on advocacy, anti-hate, civil rights, custody, family, family law, legal

www.lasimpson.org/PARENTS.html Links and information for transsexual parents and families. Although some of the links are outdated, most lead to a range of resources, from families' personal web pages to national activist and advocacy groups.

www.firelily.com/gender/sstgfaq/family.html "Frequently Asked Questions" addressing the needs and concerns of friends and family of transgender folk. There is a long section addressing transpeople and crossdressers' children, with a focus on coming out issues.

www.transfamily.org TransFamily is a support group for transgendered and transsexual people, their parents, partners, children, other family members, friends, and supportive others. They provide referrals, literature, and over-the-phone information on all transgender issues. TransFamily also offers email lists for transgender parents, transgender youth, children of transgender parents, and families with transgender members.

www.forge-forward.org For Ourselves: Reworking Gender Expression: an education, advocacy, and support group focusing on FTM trans people and their significant others, friends, families, and allies.

www.colage.org/kids/kids_w_trnsqndr_prnts.html For COLAGE's Trans Family resource page.

PARENTAL TRANSITION; PERSONAL TRANSITION

by Kalle Applegate

I loved being a girl and now a woman. I still wonder: is it tradition or instinct that makes me love pink and red, beautiful hair and flower scented soaps and shampoos? I had never questioned it, and had always felt comfortable in my body and my sex. When my mother told me that my dad wanted to be a woman I was not surprised. My father never seemed comfortable in her body as a man, never liked hanging out with men as a male, and had a hard time among women because she had to suppress her feminine personality in order to fit in and act "normal". While my gender had always felt natural physically and instinctively, my father wasn't as fortunate.

Recently, my father, who is an architect, pointed out that as a woman on job sites, the male carpenters are especially careful and take extra time to explain the construction process to her. Having over 30

years of experience as an architect, she is already well aware of this information. After she shared this, I started noticing similar incidents in my own life. For example, at work, my male co-workers and clients open doors for me. As the host of a client meeting, I would expect to open the door for them; however my male clients often appear temporarily puzzled if I actually act and open the door.

Is it stereotypes and expectations of women such as these that make society more constricted and less open to change and transition? My experience with my father's transition has helped me realize that we have to make changes as individuals before society can evolve and accommodate diverse and untraditional needs. For me this has meant overcoming individual hesitation regarding what is comfortable because it is common and what is comfortable for me

personally. I witnessed my father deciding that being a woman is more comfortable for her personally even though it may not be a common choice. Similar decisions play a smaller but still important role in my life. I realize that in my traditional mindset, opening doors for men made me feel manly. However, now I am opposed to the concept that a woman opening a door makes her manly because that is a traditional stereotype. She is merely being a strong, assertive woman despite what gender stereotypes might say. And for me, I know that I am a woman and nothing will make me feel otherwise.

Kalle Applegate attends the University of Washington where she studies communications and history and plays on the water polo team. She is the daughter of a transgender parent who participates on the speakers bureau of PFLAG Seattle.

ACTIVISM IN MASSACHUSETTS - A COLAGE youth shares how she helped gain marriage equality in Massachusetts.

MARRIAGE EQUALITY

When we found out that the Falmouth/Bourne Representative (the state representative for my county) wasn't for gay marriage we spent one Saturday at the Falmouth library asking people to sign postcards supporting equality to send to our Representative. With Linda, my mom's partner, I spent some time at a grocery store trying to get signatures but then we met up with my mom and Courtney, my sister, at the library. My brother, Ben, went to the Post Office with 2 other guys that were helping us. We stayed from 10:00a.m. to 3:00p.m., getting signatures. On that day alone we got about 150 signatures in support of marriage equality!!!!

Courtney and I got picked up from school one day. We thought we were just going to the Patriots Parade after winning their 2nd super bowl! Instead, we were also going to be doing some political advocacy work. We visited the State House to talk to some of the State Senators. We wanted to know who was for gay marriage and who wasn't.

One great meeting was with Matt Patrick, which was really cool because he didn't treat us like we were infested with germs like some other Senators and Representatives did. He met with us in person to share his reasons for deciding how he'd vote. We told him about the things we have to go through and how we really are just a "normal" family!!!!!!

Rebecca Faria, 12 years old, lives with her siblings and lesbian moms in Pocasset, MA.



Becca (right) with Beth Teper at Family Week

RAINBOW PRIDE

by Maddy Lawson

Long, long time ago maybe no-one would
have cared.

Today only a few of us are brave enough
and dared,

To break out of the mold set by a thousand
years gone past,

But someday this will change, don't let our
parents be the last.

Doesn't matter what race or sexuality,
We all should be equal in this age,
don't you agree?

No-one here is weird or gross,
They rock this great big Earth!
If some guys don't want to know,
They just don't see our worth!

Doesn't matter what race or sexuality,
We've started fighting to achieve
total equality.

Maddy, who is 12 years old, wrote this poem during the creative writing workshop at Provincetown Family Week which she attended all the way from England with her lesbian "mums."



MY PARENT JUST CAME OUT AS TRANS...NOW WHAT?

by Monica Canfield Lenfest

I was 16 years old when my dad told me that she was becoming a woman. Then, she handed me a pamphlet about being transgender. At the time, I wanted a pamphlet for me. Listed below is some advice for other children with transgender parents:

Tips for Kids with Transgender parents -

First of all, you are not the only kid with a transgender parent. We may be spread out, but we do exist.

The Internet is a good resource for connecting with other children. (Also see the Trans Families resources listed on page 4). Contact COLAGE about their pen pal program. Check your local LGBT community center to see if there are other KOTs in your area.

Think about people who you can talk to about your parent's transition. You may be nervous about your friends' or classmates' reactions. That's okay. Talk to close friends and other people you trust.

You can talk to a therapist or counselor, which will help you understand your feelings about the situation. If you don't feel like your therapist is helping, talk to your parents about seeing someone different.

Ask your parent questions. Let them know if you are confused about something. You can also tell them when you don't want to talk about it. Remind them that you are dealing with their transition in your own way.

Your parent is going through a major life change, which will probably be their main focus for a while. If you want or need something, ask.

As they explore their gender identity, your parent's appearance will shift. It can feel strange to see them transition. You might feel sad that your parent looks and acts differently than they used to. Remember, this person is still your parent.

Your parent will probably change their name and ask to be called by a different pronoun. This might be a big challenge at first, but with practice, it gets easier.

Be aware that your parent may be trying to pass in public. They will probably be quite sensitive about how they are being perceived. Respect their vulnerability. Be careful about the way that you refer to them - in name and when using pronouns.

Your parent is going to change, which might be scary for you. Remember, despite all of these big changes, s/he is still your parent and will always love you.



Monica Canfield Lenfest recently became a facilitator for the COLAGE Boston group and graduated from UMass Boston. She wrote her honors thesis on the social experiences of children of transgender parents.

Adult Sons, from p1

or effeminate by talking with him...I think I'm a little more effeminate than he is..."

Several men spoke about their fathers as gender-role models:

"...As far as my gender identity, he gave a pretty stereotypical male role to follow and, to a lot of extent, I followed that..."

"...body image, is a place where I got really screwed over by gay male culture... They were all to a certain extent gym queens and extremely body conscious and although my dad never sort of said anything about my body, I definitely had eating issues as a kid...I was super self-conscious about being fat..."

Some sons struggled with being effeminate:

"...I definitely have more effeminate characteristics just in mannerism and...other aspects... especially when I was younger. I mean...that's something you get beat up on the playground for...(laughs) 'cause it's viewed as a weakness if you're not the big kid or you're not the most athletic and so...it was always something I tried to hide and I definitely wasn't comfortable with it..."

"...I always felt a little more feminine than other boys...Maybe that's because society at large has such a narrow view of what males are... I remember being teased a lot as a kid...other guys used to call me "fag" and stuff like that..."

It was common for these men to feel confused about how to label themselves, how to integrate their culturally queer heritage with, for some, a heterosexual orientation:

" It was really loaded for me that I might be straight...I definitely grew up with a lot of fear of straight people."

"...I struggle with it everyday. I'm really sort of in tune with...with a lot of things except with how to label myself...(laughs)... I'd like to label myself, as gay when it's suiting... and I can't label myself straight 'cause I'm totally queer. So, (laughs) I don't know. Like, I'm stuck..."

As adults, most of the sons feel comfortable with their gender identity:

"...I really feel comfortable in my masculinity...I don't consider myself to be the most masculine person on earth...I don't consider myself to be the most feminine person of earth... I enjoy both sides of the spectrum. I love feeling masculine. I love doing things that are assigned to the overall stereotype of masculinity, and I also like partaking in things that are feminine..."

The insecurities about masculinity that some sons revealed seemed to be heightened by the fact that their fathers were gay. In order to cope with the fear and anxiety they experienced about effeminacy and homosexuality, some sons overcompensated or

suppressed parts of themselves to avoid the perception of homosexuality. This manifested itself in attempting to portray to the world the image of heterosexuality and hyper-masculinity, pursuing many sexual relationships with women, playing sports, and making fun of the less popular boys. Some talked about suppressing the creative, or more feminine parts of their personalities as well as their sexual impulses and desires to avoid the anxiety that surrounded the issues of sexuality and masculinity.

One of the most unanimous positives that sons mentioned in the interviews was that as adult men, they were thankful for the diverse 'male modeling' they were exposed to as children and adolescents. In many ways, they were freed from North American society's very narrow concept of maleness and masculinity. Several men revealed in the idea that they had become multifaceted adult men with a broad range of traditional male and female attributes and interests as a direct result of having a gay father.

Although there is much more to say and write about the stories of these 10 sons, I hope this gives a flavor of the many different experiences, attitudes, and ideas sons of gay fathers have to talk about.

Orson is the co-chair of the COLAGE Board and adjunct faculty at Chicago School of Professional Psychology. Originally from Toronto, he now lives in Chicago with his wife. Contact orson.morrison@sbcglobal.net for his full study on adult sons of gay fathers.



SPAWN TALK

by Abigail Garner

Seeking Menstrual Wisdom from Dad

It's a common question: How do kids of gay and lesbian parents "cope" when they do not have a parent of their own gender to guide them through puberty?

This question puts our families up for comparison not with real straight families, but with the fantasy of how straight families communicate. For example, an adolescent daughter with gay dads and no mom is supposedly missing out on walking along the beach with an all-knowing female parent who can commiserate with her whenever she has that "not-so-fresh" feeling.

Reality check: Teenagers in all kinds of families avoid talking about puberty, sex, and sexuality with their own parents. Why? Because they are their parents! Instead, many teens seek out older siblings, trusted family friends, or too often, ill-informed peers. I'm excused from addressing the clichéd motherless-puberty question for myself, because I've always had a mother in my life. Still, I didn't want to seek her out for the walk-and-talk on the beach. Mom repeatedly assured me that I could ask her anything about sexuality. While I appreciated her openness, the intense anticipation my mother had for how closely

we could bond through her "been-there" wisdom just added to my anxiety.

Getting my period was not some beautiful rite of passage that bonded me to other women. It was just a big mess that I couldn't run away from. After a few traumatizing months of wildly unpredictable periods which I was concealing from my mother, I turned to my father. He had no firsthand knowledge by which he could compare or judge - he could only try to demystify womanhood for both of us.

He started to do his own research among female friends and co-workers. He must have come off as incredibly genuine in his quest, because they were willing to share their menstrual histories with him. "You know Joan, in my department?" he'd tell me, "She used to be a runner and she says back then she only had a few periods a year. But when she did, she bled buckets. Buckets!" This horrific visual was oddly comforting. Sure, I felt out of control, but someone else had had it worse and lived to tell about it.

One of my dad's stereotypical male traits is to avoid asking for directions at all costs. It disrupts the illusion of never being vulnerable. But when it came to raising a daughter, he could not even bluff his way through; he had to reach out to others. I believe that this worked to my advantage during my menstrual monsoon season. Mom, on the other hand, was so

confident about her own coming-of-age memories (which I was pretty sure came complete with a Disney soundtrack) that it seemed like she had already determined how it was "supposed" to go for me. For her to seek outside guidance in my time of turmoil would have been the female equivalent of admitting to the clerk at the gas station that you can't find your way back to the Interstate.

Self-appointed critics of our families fixate on the "problems" we face when our parents are the "wrong" gender for raising a boy or a girl. But the problems arise only when families try to uphold the myth that parents should be our sole source for advice and support. Any of you who are grateful for that cool aunt or hip family friend you turn to instead of your parents know what I mean. Sooner or later, everybody needs to stop and ask directions.

Abigail Garner, 32, is the author of Families Like Mine: Children of Gay Parents Tell It Like It Is (HarperCollins 2004). Her website is www.FamiliesLikeMine.com.



Girls will be boys will be...coloring book

CHAPTER UPDATE

COLAGE New Orleans is the newest COLAGE chapter down south. Our first meeting was held in March of this year and attended by many enthusiastic families, unified in our excitement that a group like COLAGE was actually a possibility in our area. This event was an emotional experience for everyone involved with tears of happiness and excitement shed by some. As a part of this meeting we planned our first chapter event, a picnic at a beautiful park in April. The kids were thrilled about this new group and couldn't wait for the next event, a "make your own pizza" party and space walk. There were 11 kids at this event and they all worked with their parents to make pizzas. While we baked them, the kids jumped and had a ball until it was time to eat. In June we had our "cool pool" party, our biggest turnout yet, with a total of 16 kids and two new families. It was

incredibly exciting for all of us to have grown so much in just 3 months. In July we hosted a toot-toot train extravaganza, which was again another huge success. We plan on having our first annual "Entire Family August Event" where immediate family can join our group and show their support for their loved ones. In September, we will be at New Orleans Pride to host an information booth and march in parade. We are excited about all of the enthusiasm for our new chapter and feel that we will continue to grow and have a positive impact in our community.

To get involved with COLAGE New Orleans, contact Dale Liuzza at daleliuzza@colage.org or (504) 301-4767

members of COLAGE New Orleans at a recent event





SPEAK OUT

Has having LGBT parents affected your experience of gender? Do you feel like you are more free to express/explore your own gender because you have LGBT parents? Do you feel more restricted?

I think that having lesbian moms has affected my experience of gender by letting me dress and act as I want because they're fine with whatever I do. They know how to do that because they are lesbian and they are free to do what they want with their gender.



I think that if I were to have had straight parents they would have had more rules of what a boy or a girl should be and do and wear because they think straight is the way to go and for them that means get married to a boy or a girl and act like what they think a boy or a girl should act like.

I think that kids should decide who they want to be and act like. I think that there is a boy inside every girl, and a girl inside every boy.

Sometimes people think I'm a girl because I have long hair, but I'm a boy. It's kind of scary when people think I'm a girl. I believe I am breaking the rules of gender.

Carlos Benson Martinez is an almost-ten-year old who lives in Arlington, MA with his lesbian moms. He attended Family Week in Provincetown this summer where he played the role of John Kerry in the 9-12 skit, spoke about his experiences with gender at the Town Hall Meeting and had a great time!

To me, gender means identification. My mom is a transgendered person. It's weird having another dad, but I'm happy. One thing that has changed about her is her voice. It's deeper now. I never really asked how her life was as a woman. I would really like to know. I didn't know a lot about him as a woman and I'm learning about him as a man. But he is more happy now as a man. That's all that counts.

Now that I'm seeing my mom as a man, some things have changed in my life. First of all, I can't call him mom any more. If people heard me call him mom, it might make them wonder, "Is that kid losing his mind?" It's hard to explain my so-called "dad". Other kids can say their moms are caterers or secretaries. For me, my mom is a man working as a web master in a bookstore. Before she became a man, I was told she was a teacher. I don't know if his jobs are affected by transitioning or not.

I used to be a kid with straight parents, now I am a Queer Spawn. However, now that my "dad" is with a woman, sometimes it feels like they are straight, but technically they are not. My "dad" isn't happy with this "gay people can't get married"



thing. Neither am I. A lot of people are angry, gay and straight, that LGBT people don't have equal rights. When I see LGBT people, I see normal people. I believe I can make awesome changes in gay people's lives. I believe that first, we should give them equal rights just like straight people. In the words of Thomas Jefferson, "All men are created equal". Therefore, LGBT people should be treated equal to straight people all over this country.

Cody lives in East Alton, Illinois. He is in 6th grade and attended Family Week in Saugatuck this summer.

I looked up the definition of Gender in the dictionary, and what it said was not quite what I expected. It defined gender as: the behavioral, cultural, or psychological traits typically associated with one sex. To me this couldn't be more wrong.

For three years of my life I had a Mom and a Dad, but for the majority of my life I was raised by two dads. One might think that being raised by two dads, I would have more male gender interests, but that is just not true.



Some of my interests are painting, American girl dolls, painting my nails, shopping and taking care of my many pets. Someone could

say that these are all girl interests. But I also like to play softball/baseball, basketball, football, and watching any sport I can on television, and not wearing dresses unless I have to. Someone could say that these are interests that would only be associated with boys.

But I don't think my interests have anything to do with me being a girl, or being raised by two dads. I think I would have had these interests in any family. My interests are my interests, because I am who I am.

Don't get me wrong, my dads did help me alot in increasing my knowledge of all the things I like. But that is because they are great parents, not because they are two dads. They never made me do girl things because I am a girl, or boy things because they are boys. They just helped me become who I am, and I love them for it.

Becca Lazarus is 10 years old and lives in Windsor, CT with her gay dads. After attending her second year of COLAGE activities at Provincetown Family Week, she (with help from her family) started a brand new COLAGE group, COLAGE Connecticut.

Olivia is getting ready to show the neighborhood how to fix a flat.



Girls will be boys will be... coloring book

COLAGE Programming at Family Week 2004

SAUGATUCK & PROVINCETOWN

HIGHLIGHTS

Once again this summer, COLAGE was thrilled to be a part of two exciting Family Week events sponsored by the Family Pride Coalition. During these fun-filled weeks, COLAGE provides extensive social, recreational, educational and peer support programming to youth ages 9-18 from diverse LGBT Families. With a volunteer staff comprised entirely of adults who share the experience of having one or more LGBT parent, Family Week is a time that is inspiring, empowering, and most importantly fun for everyone.

This year we were excited to be able to display *That's So Gay: Portraits of Youth with LGBT Parents* in both MI and MA. This travelling exhibit highlighting the voices of COLAGE youth was enjoyed by parents and youth alike.

We also expanded our youth programming at both events. In Saugatuck this included the first-ever scavenger hunt, two workshop tracks for youth, the first-ever activism and public speaking training, and a fantastic Show and Tell event showcasing creative writing, drama, art and pottery presentations and an interpretive dance.



Chillin' in Saugatuck



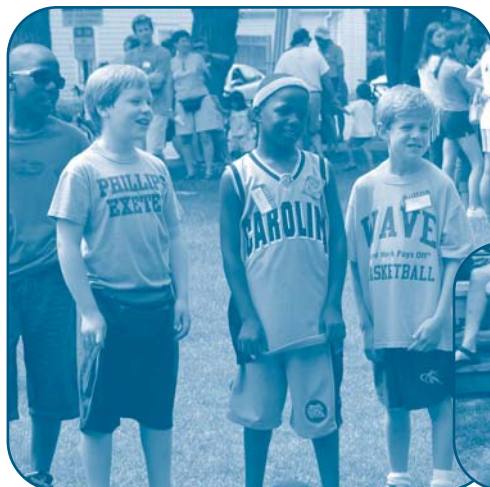
COLAGers compete in the Saugatuck Scavenger Hunt



Alexis and Troya enjoy the dance



Gabby shares her thoughts on the Teen Panel



COLAGers gather at the bagel brunch



Tesha models her COLAGE Tie-Dye

The victorious COLAGE Kickball team celebrates



photo by Nancy Farra



Eva shares her poetry at Show and Tell

photo by Jenny Laden

Cat shows her COLAGE and Wisconsin pride with COLAGE intern Kelly



photo by Jenny Laden



new COLAGE friends at Ptown

SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR FACILITATORS & VOLUNTEERS

Without you, youth programming at Family Week would not be possible!

- Christine Bachman, MA
- Monica Canfield-Lenfest, MA
- Jesse Carr, PA
- Ember Cook, CA
- Ruby Cymrot-Wu, MA
- Kelly Densmore, CA
- Rob DeVoog, NY
- Doug Fenton, NY
- Meredith Fenton, Coordinator, CA
- Dakota Fine, DC
- Sol Kelley-Jones, WI
- Jenny Laden, NY
- Matt Levi, IL
- Whitney Moses, CA
- Danielle Silber, MO
- Hope Steinman-Iacullo, NY
- Beth Teper, CA
- Andrea Wachter, CA

GENDER 101

by Jesse Clark and Jess Carr

GETTING STARTED

Most COLAGERS have had to make up definitions at some point in our lives, trying to describe our families to teachers, friends, medical providers, and even each other. Just as family variance often breaks the rules of how to speak and think about families, gender variance confuses some of our basic understandings about how to perceive and speak about each other.

COLAGE has put together this list of tips and definitions related to gender issues. This list is meant to start and assist communication; not to offer definitions that are fixed or final. As with many words and terms, different people will have varying definitions and understandings based on their own experiences and identities. Hopefully this provides a good start point for more discussion and self-understanding.

SEX VS. GENDER

Gender is not the same thing as sex! And 'sex' in this context does not mean sexuality or sexual orientation. **Sex** is based on your body- on a combination of what hormones are in your body, what body parts you have, and what physical characteristics (hair, height, voice) you possess. Because sex is usually divided into categories of male or female, intersex folks are largely invisible to society. **Gender** refers to behavior and physical characteristics that are culturally connected to a certain sex. Gender also refers to **identity**, whether you perceive yourself as masculine or feminine, somewhere in between, or outside of these categories entirely and **expression**, how you convey yourself to others. These parts of your identity are independent of each other- you can be masculine-identified with a male body or female body. And you can be gay, straight or bisexual whether you are a masculine boy, a feminine girl, a tomboy, a girly-boy or whatever!

TRANS TERMINOLOGY

The term **transgender** is used in so many different ways that it is almost impossible to define. Some use it to refer to people whose gender identity and/or expression does not match with their sex. Some use it to describe a gender outside of the man/woman binary. Some use it to describe the condition of having no gender or multiple genders. Other possibilities include people who perform genders (e.g. cross-dressers, drag performers) or deliberately play with gender as well as being gender-transcendent in other ways.

Transsexual people perceive themselves as a gender or sex that is different from the one they were assigned at birth. Many transsexual people seek hormones or surgery to make it easier to live as members of the gender or sex they identify as. **FTM** is used as short hand for female-to-male transsexual, **MTF** for male-to-female.

Genderqueer is an increasingly popular term used by people who feel their identities don't easily fit into a male/female binary. Maybe a genderqueer person feels they are both male and female, or neither one, or flexibly transform between expressions or identities. It is a term used by people who redefine or play with gender, who refuse gender altogether, and/or who bend/break the rules of gender and blur gender boundaries.

Intersex people naturally (that is, without any medical intervention) develop primary or secondary sex characteristics that do not fit neatly into society's definitions of male or female. Many visibly intersex people are surgically mutilated in infancy and early childhood by doctors to make their bodies conform to society's definitions of normal.

OTHER WORDS TO KNOW...

Gender Identity: A person's sense of being male, female, or other gendered. The phrase gender identity "disorder" originated in psychiatry, and commonly refers to individuals who want to or have changed sexes or genders.

Gender Stereotypes: Societal, cultural, and mental templates we all have for how each sex should look, dress, and act.

Gender Baiting: Taunting intended to harass or humiliate an individual because they are perceived as insufficiently masculine or feminine. Gender Baiting is related to **transphobia**, the mistreatment, discrimination, and oppression faced specifically by transgender and transsexual people.

Gender Binary System: An idea and system that makes everyone fit into one of two categories: male-assigned and masculine or female-assigned and feminine. This system gives power to people who follow gender norms at the expense of gender variant, transgender and intersex folks.

DEFYING & REDEFINING GENDER

We invite you to take this opportunity to make up and discover your own definitions of gender. Consider the questions below (inspired by and adapted from the *girls will be boys will be girls will be...coloring book*). Answer them yourself, share your exploration with friends and family.

How do you define Gender? How many genders are there? What would the world look like without gender? In what ways do you feel confined or restricted by your gender? In what ways do you feel liberated or empowered by your gender? Was the gender assigned to you the one you feel most comfortable with? What privileges do you or don't you have due to the gender you've been labeled? Do you feel forced to act in certain ways because of your parent/s', religion's, teachers', coaches', and/or peers' views or understanding of gender? What happens when you don't act or express your gender how those people expect you to? How do you react to people whose gender varies from the norm?

For answers to these questions, think about them often during your daily life, approach situations with these ideas in mind, and be open to answers you might not have expected.

Again, this list is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to learning and developing language to talk about gender. To learn more and continue the discussion check out some of the resources listed on pages 4 and 11 in this issue of *Just For Us*.

RESPECTFUL LANGUAGE

- ✓ Use pronouns preferred by intersex or trans people. Do not ever call them "it" or "he-she" unless they actually identify themselves as such.
- ✓ It is generally considered rude to ask someone about the shape of their genitalia, and this is also true when you are speaking to an intersex or trans person. Do not ask about their medical diagnosis or surgical status merely out of curiosity.
- ✓ Intersex and trans people, like everyone else, come from diverse backgrounds. Make sure that you are not just learning about the most privileged within intersex and trans communities. Avoid reinforcing racism, classism and other oppressions when learning about or advocating with or for these communities.

EXPLORING IDENTITIES AND LEARNING MORE

If the articles in this issue of *Just For Us* have sparked your interest in learning more about gender and/or exploring your own relationship to gender, the following resources are a good starting place:

My Gender Workbook. Bornstein, Kate. From living without gender to thwarting the gender police, from uncoupling the sex/gender puzzle to finding out what you really think about yourself and others, this is the perfect starting place for gender exploration. Routledge, 1998.

Gender Shock: Exploding the Myths of Male and Female. Burke, Phyllis. The author, a lesbian co-parent, explores the many myths surrounding our rigid gender system. Anchor Books/Doubleday, 1997.

Znet's Gender Watch A collection of articles, essays, internal and external links relating to gender, sexuality, sexism, feminism, queer politics and struggles. www.zmag.org/genderwatch/genderwatch.cfm

API Wellness Center See their site for an article on issues of transgendered Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. www.apiwellness.org/v20/tg/tgtestimonial.html

Bodies Like Ours provides peer support and information for people born with a body that's different. www.bodieslikeours.org

THE PERSONAL IS POLITICAL- Small Actions that Challenge the Gender Binary!

Children, youth and adults with LGBT parents often are at the forefront of challenging gender stereotypes whether it's through our personal gender expression or our commitment to justice for all people. Here are some small actions that you can take to transcend gender stereotypes:

- Be visible (out) as a child of LGBT parents/guardians and celebrate your gender
- Campaign for gender-neutral bathrooms in your area. For ideas visit www.pissr.org
- Try breaking out of your own gender role
 - Wear drag for a day (not just to perform at a LGBTQ event)
 - Participate in an activity usually associated with the "opposite" sex
 - Try going by different pronouns than you usually use
- Write and perform a play about gender with your friends
- Create art, poetry, stories or non-fiction that express your gender identity, your ideas about gender or your feelings about gender roles and stereotypes
- Throw a drag ball - donate the proceeds to COLAGE or another group that works for transgender rights and gender equality!
- Give a child (or adult) the [girls will be boys will be...COLORING BOOK](http://www.girlsnotchicks.com/gwb.html) (available at www.crimethinc.com and www.girlsnotchicks.com/gwb.html)
- Contact COLAGE for additional copies of this gender-themed issue of *Just For Us* and distribute them amongst your peers
- Talk to people on buses, online, at restaurants, in elevators (be safe!)

about what you've learned - encourage them to join you in overthrowing the gender binary system!

EARNING THE "T"

Encourage your local/or favorite LGBT organization to fully embrace the "T" in their name; don't just give lip service to supporting transgender people!

A clear example of this is LGBT advocacy work for legislation on local, state, or federal levels which promote non-discrimination policies (in housing, the workplace, health care, schools, etc.) that only include sexual orientation, and therefore do not cover the rights of transgender and other gender variant folks. Such non-discrimination policies can be crucial in providing protection to our parents in their jobs, homes, and communities—which of course affect us—as well as protecting COLAGERS from harassment in our schools. You can respectfully contact advocacy organizations, share the importance and impact of non-discrimination policies on you and your family and remind them to include transgender family members when they are working for LGBT rights.

RESOURCES FOR ACTIVISM

Many folks with LGBT parents have faced harassment and/or discrimination in our schools, jobs, and communities; frequently this prejudice is the result of a combination of gender baiting, homophobia and transphobia. Besides COLAGE, the following groups are just a few that can connect you with activism efforts to advance the rights of all people regardless of gender identity or expression:

Gender Public Advocacy Coalition works to end discrimination and violence caused by gender stereotypes by changing public attitudes, educating elected officials and expanding legal rights. www.genderpac.org

National Center for Transgender Equality is a social justice organization dedicated to advancing the equality of transgender people. www.nctequality.org

Intersex Society of North America (ISNA) is devoted to systemic change to end shame, secrecy, and unwanted genital surgeries for intersex people. www.isna.org

Gender Education and Advocacy (GEA) focuses on the needs, issues and concerns of gender variant people in human society. www.gender.org

The Sylvia Rivera Law Project (SRLP) works to guarantee that all people can self-determine our gender identity and expression, regardless of income, and without facing harassment, discrimination or violence. www.srlp.org



2nd Generation

A SPECIAL SECTION ABOUT QUEER AND QUESTIONING KIDS OF LGBT PARENTS

DATELINE DAN

By Dan Cherubin



From Girly Boy to Pathetic Butch: A Second Generation Journey of Gender

There are two statements that are often repeated to me. One comes from other kids of LGBT parents. They say that coming from this type of family gave them the opportunity to question their own definitions of gender and sexuality. The other comment comes from the general public. They tell me it must have been easy for me to be queer since my mothers were lesbians.

I can't really say that either one of these really applied to my life. The questioning of my own gender was not because of my parents. My mother didn't come out until I was a teen. And I knew my sexuality was not the "norm" from a very early age. At age 5, even though I didn't know what gay

people did together, I knew I was one of them. And I'm guessing a lot of other people did, too.

I was pretty much the classic "sensitive sissy boy." I hated sports, I cried often and I had rather exaggerated mannerisms. As much as I was called "faggot" by lots of kids, I was also often asked if I was really a girl. Even my then-closeted mom often chided me for acting "like a girl." I was told by all around me that whatever I was doing was WRONG.

I didn't ask to question my gender, that task was thrust upon me. And my mother was having her own issues, so it wasn't exactly easier for me. I had relationships with women, and attempted to act more "manly." It didn't work. But I also tried acting more like a woman, which I thought was expected of me. That was a disaster. There is some assumption that one has to act more like the other sex when one is in a same-sex relationship. And that, my friends, just isn't true.

When I got older and truly owned my sexuality,

when I was so comfortable with myself I allowed myself to BE whatever I wanted, I found myself acting more like a "real man" than I ever thought necessary or possible, and not in any forced way. I stand and cheer as the NY Rangers pummel their opponents. I roll my eyes when my boyfriend cries during Yentl. I actually identify with people on Jackass. And I cannot accessorize to save my life. This takes no effort on my part. It is just who I am.

This is not to say I don't still have some of those non-traditional gender qualities one associates with queer men. But there is never any doubt in my mind that my gender is male. It always has been. And no one could tell me that except myself.

Dan Cherubin is a 2nd Gen gay man who lives in NYC. He works as a librarian, and admits that he has cried during certain movies.



Girls will be boys will be...coloring book

Join the 2nd Gen Chat List- an online community for 2nd Gen COLAGErs of all ages. For info and new and improved 2nd Gen resources visit www.colage.org/kids/2nd_generation.html

Female to Male, from p1

butch. Yet, both of my moms were thrown into a mixture of panic, grief, anger, and guilt when I came out as trans to them. They blamed themselves for what they saw as me rejecting my body, and they railed at me for what they saw as rejecting womanhood. They worried that what I was doing was anti-feminist, that testosterone would permanently alter my personality and political beliefs, and that transitioning was a reactionary path that would reinforce gender binaries. I would be man-identified and receive male privilege. The feminist woman they raised had turned out to be...well... a man!

Some women who call themselves feminists think that they need to erect a border around "woman," and imagine that they have both the right and the ability to judge who can come and go from this walled city. But

feminism as I learned at home was never supposed to be interested in building more walls around sex and gender, it was supposed to be interested in tearing them down. And most trans people I know, though diverse in our identities and experiences, are on a path towards understanding and living in our bodies, feeling positive and healthy with our gender and sexuality, and addressing the effects of violence and trauma in our lives- all feminist ideas.

Women, lesbian, gay, and bi people need to be protected from a lot of things these days - discrimination, hate crimes, war, racial profiling, and poverty just to name a few. They/we do not need to be protected from trans people. In fact, trans people have significant common cause with women, LGB people, and people of color, particularly when it comes to issues such as

complete and affordable health care, sexual violence, hate crimes, and job discrimination.

As a child I tried to hide who my moms really were, and during my young adulthood they tried to deny who I really was. Today I proudly call myself a trans-man, and a trans-feminist. My moms and I proudly call each other family. I am working hard for social change, based on values of self-determination, economic and racial justice, and sexual liberation. I might be the only person in the family with large quantities of testosterone in my bloodstream, but I'm still a radical feminist queerspawn, just like they raised me to be.

Jesse Carr recently moved into an apartment with a hot tub. He now happily commutes from his new hot tub in Alameda to the COLAGE office in San Francisco, where he works as an intern.

FUNPAGE

Dress Up Your Own Gender-Bending Character!

Create a drag queen or king! Or simply see the hundreds of gender combinations that these paper people, as well as real people can express simply by changing their clothes.

You can use the clothes and accessories pictured here as

a starting point, then add your own! Feel free to color in your characters and make up stories about them.

You may want to take this page to a copy shop and enlarge it so that the character, clothes and accessories are easier to cut out.



Girls will be boys will be...coloring book

Clothes have no gender.

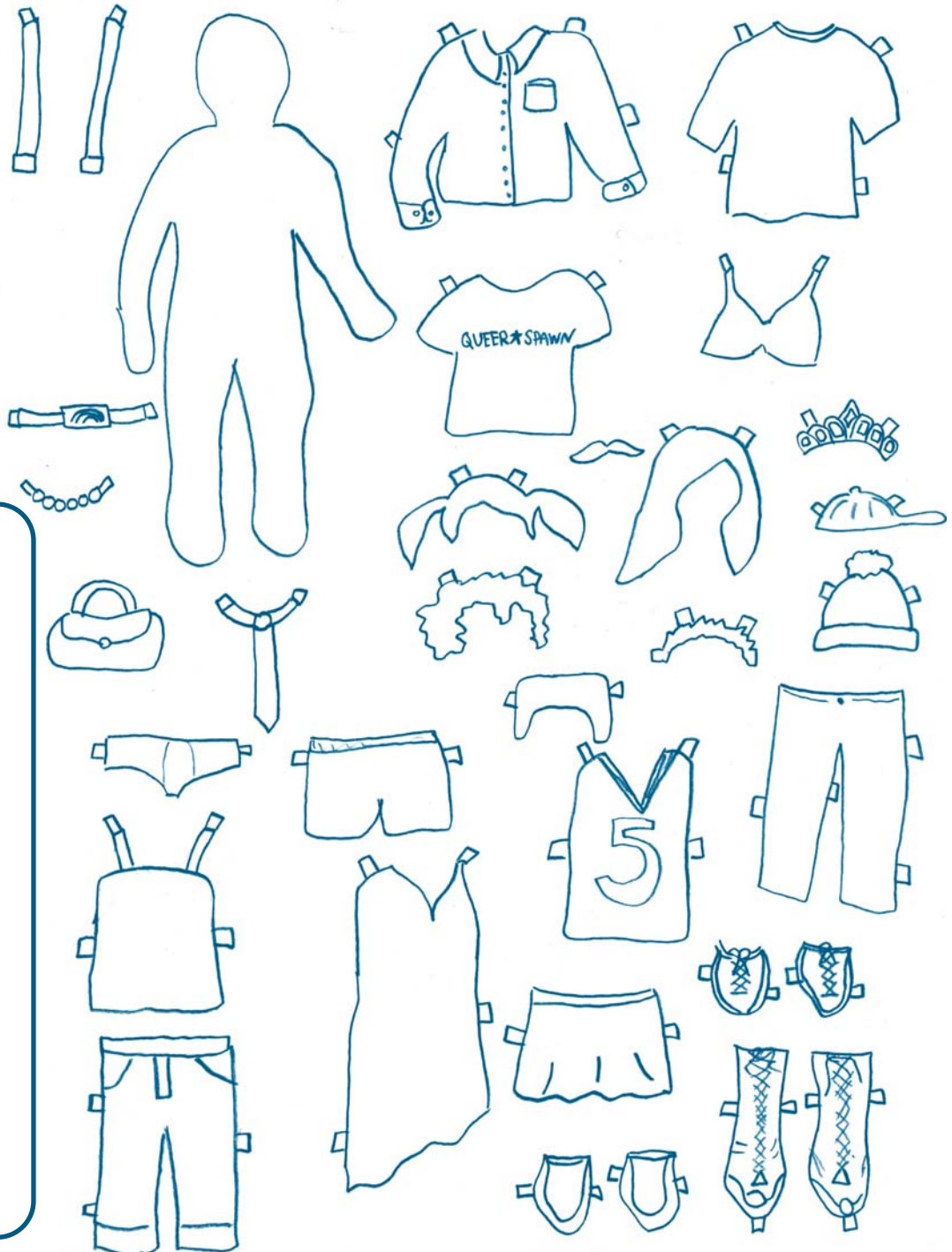
COLAGE CONTEST:

Invent and dress your own favorite gender-bending character! Tell us about your character: What is their name? Who's in their family? What kind of family do they belong to? Tell us a story about them! Send your creation or a photo of it and its story by **Dec, 15, 2004**.

Mail to Just For Us, c/o COLAGE, 3543 18th Street #1, San Francisco, CA 94110. COLAGERS sending in an entry will receive a prize and we'll feature some of the characters you create in an upcoming *Just For Us* or on the COLAGE website.

Questions?

Email jfu@colage.org



THANK YOU!

On behalf of the children, youth and families whose lives have been touched by your contributions, COLAGE thanks all our members, donors, funders and supporters. We couldn't do it without you!

Donors and funders listed below made gifts April through August 2004.

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Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this list. Please contact Beth at 415-861-5437 Ext. 101 or director@colage.org if we've listed you incorrectly.

We look forward to acknowledging the many gifts we receive in our next issue of Just For Us. To make a donation in support of COLAGE's ongoing work for equality and justice, please use the enclosed envelope or donate on-line at www.colage.org/join.

COLAGE Receives Generous Member and Foundation Support

Together we surpassed our goal by \$4,000! Over 200 of you rose to meet the Evelyn and Walter Haas Jr. Fund's \$20,000 challenge, helping COLAGE raise a total of \$34,000 new dollars towards our work for justice with people who have LGBT parents and families. Children, youth, parents, grandparents, extended family members, educators, and friends all pitched into the effort. Gifts ranged in size from \$10.00 to \$1,000. Over 100 of you are brand new donors to COLAGE; over 100 of you gave more generously than you ever have before.

The Logan-Woodward family and Anonymous families each pledged \$5,000 and inspired participants at Family Week in Provincetown to double their combined gift. Youth and families responded generously by donating over \$18,000 to COLAGE.

Dan Dyer & Benjamin Hu hosted an Olympics-themed house party and selected COLAGE as the beneficiary of their \$10 door charge. They raised their highest amount ever—\$1066.00 to help COLAGE further distribute and display our *That's So Gay* exhibit and CD which they viewed earlier in the summer.

Thank You and Congratulations!

Special Membership Incentive

The first 25 individuals or families who contribute \$120 or more to COLAGE will receive a complimentary copy of *Families Like Mine: Children of Gay Parents Tell It Like It Is* by Just For Us contributor, Abigail Garner. This limited offer is made possible through our collaborative outreach efforts with Harper Collins and the author.

Please use the enclosed envelope or donate on-line at www.colage.org/join.html.

COLAGE NOTES



LEE DUBIN MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

Each year COLAGE and the Family Pride Coalition award scholarships to undergraduate college students who demonstrate their ability and commitment to affecting change in the community. Join us in congratulating the 2004 awardees.

Rohan Barrett - Chicago, IL Rohan is a junior at University of Illinois-Chicago, studying math education and political science. He has been involved with the Point Foundation, About Face Theatre, and other projects in the gay and lesbian community. Rohan, whose biological mother dies when he was nine, was forced to leave Jamaica because of his sexuality. In the U. S. he was taken in by a friend's lesbian parents, of whom he says "they have helped to turn me around from a suicidal gay teen to a productive gay individual who understands both himself and others... I now consider them part of my family. They have been through thick and thin with me."

Jess Dugan - Cambridge, MA Jess is a sophomore at Massachusetts College of Art in Boston, majoring in photography. Growing up in the south with two lesbian mothers, and later identifying as first a dyke and then a transgender person, Jess has been active in combating homophobia for many years. Jess says "I have learned a



tremendous deal from my experience growing up in a queer family. I have learned beauty and how to look for it everywhere. I have learned how to be different and be proud, and I have learned to fight for equality across lines of race, age, sex, gender, religion, socioeconomic class, location, identity, etc. I have learned through oppression what it feels like to be less than, and I have committed my life to ending that feeling for all people everywhere... Most of all, I have learned what it feels like to love and be loved, and to always know that no matter how rough the world may get, I always have a place that I can call home."

Emory Burks - Minneapolis, MN Emory, a freshman at Boston University, was involved in her high school's GSA, band, and theater group. Emory has also worked with Out 4 Good as a peer educator, and at a neighborhood peace garden. Emory says "When I first told my parents I was bisexual, my mom's first response was 'Welcome to the club.' I then told her I was transgendered. Her response was not quite so quick, but when she told me that she'd help me shop for a prom dress if I wanted, I got the feeling I was one of the lucky ones... my parents are easily the most open, supportive, and compassionate people I have ever met."

Rebecca Pfeifer-Rosenblum - El Cerrito, CA Growing up, Rebecca says that "overcoming the obstacle of coming out as a daughter of lesbian parents to my friends and teachers made me more confident in myself." She's never been shy about who her family is; at the age of seven, she "stood on the schoolyard explaining the process of in vitro fertilization to a group of fascinated second graders." She has been going to a summer camp for alternative families since she was three, and now works at the same camp. Rebecca has been involved with Jewish Youth for Community Action and has done a weekly radio show called "Fruit Salad," at her high school.



MEET COLAGE'S SUMMER & FALL INTERNS

Jesse Carr is a 22-year-old transsexual menace who grew up in central (rural) Pennsylvania with his lesbian parents. He likes to solicit corporate sponsorships for non-profits by day, but smashes the state on evenings and weekends. Jesse recently graduated from Oberlin College and is completing both the summer and fall internship with COLAGE. "I believe strongly in the value of community, resistance and pride and have been very excited to find these values at COLAGE and in broader queerspawn communities."

Jesse Clark is a 20-year-old junior at Hampshire College in Amherst, MA. She interned at COLAGE this summer thanks to a grant from Hampshire's Reproductive Rights Activist Service Corps. Jesse is a queer femme ally with straight parents who likes to make art and giggles a lot. "My expectations and hopes for this internship were met, and exceeded! I learned about what COLAGE does, how a non-profit works, and became more confident in my abilities."



Kelly Densmore, back to intern for a second time, is originally from a small town north of San Francisco, and is now a fourth year student majoring in Women's Studies at UC Santa Cruz. Kelly, age 21, has a lesbian mom, a straight dad, a stepmom, a brother and two stepbrothers. "I loved working and spending time with the youth at Family Week in both Saugatuck, MI and Provincetown, MA. The youth are so inspiring and have taught me so much this summer. I look forward to staying involved with COLAGE through the new South Bay Chapter in San Jose, CA."



Christopher Connelly was born and raised in Akron, Ohio. He currently attends Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio where he is working on a degree in Cultural and Interdisciplinary Studies,



focusing largely on Peace Studies. "Being queer, I feel extreme concern for the direction in which the rights of queer people are going in this country. As a fall intern at COLAGE, I am excited to learn more about doing advocacy on social justice and anti-oppression issues relating to families with queer parent(s)."



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For a complete list of COLAGE groups, go to www.colage.org/groups.html

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Chapters are autonomous local groups that affiliate with COLAGE and are self-run. We strive to keep updated on local contact information. If you have difficulty reaching the contact listed please let us know. Thank you.

Want to start a chapter in your community? Have questions? Please contact COLAGE at 415-861-KIDS or email colage@colage.org.