

A Handbook on Discussing the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival for Trans Activists and Allies



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written & edited by **Emi Koyama**
as seen in the *Bitch* roundtable on Michfest

Preface

The controversy surrounding the “womyn-born-womyn” (i.e. no transsexual) policy at the Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival have long troubled and paralyzed many people in women’s and trans communities. This handbook is an attempt to bring newcomers to the debate up to speed on what the issues and arguments are, and to present baseline factual information upon which these discussions take place.

Of course, the author/editor of this handbook is partial to this debate; I participated in the “roundtable” for *Bitch* magazine (issue 17, summer 2002) on this topic, in which I not only strongly supported the inclusion of transsexual women in the Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival, but also criticized any attempt to draw clear, unambiguous boundaries where they are bound to be arbitrary. While I continue to feel strongly about this position, I am making an attempt to represent the opponent’s positions fairly and accurately in this handbook (for example, by including actual documents distributed by the festival which explain its positions) because resorting to “straw person” tactic is not constructive nor effective way to engage in dialogues with those I disagree. It is my hope that readers would reach their own *informed* conclusions by reading this handbook.

Many of the documents I included in the historiography section of this handbook have been written or produced by people other than myself (obviously). I am making my best attempt to obtain permission to reprint them when it is appropriate (I am assuming that press releases, open letters, etc. are by definition reprint-able) and to credit their originators, but if there are any problems with the way I included these documents, please contact me at emi@eminism.org and I will address our concern as promptly as possible.

The on-line version of this handbook contains many of the longer documents and other materials I could not include in this handbook, as well as updates made to the archive after the publication of this handbook. If you have a web connection, please visit the web site of “Michigan/Trans Controversy Archive” at <http://eminism.org/michigan/>

Lastly, I would like to appreciate everyone who gave me their permission to reprint their materials, and everyone whose lives and visions inspired mine.

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Basic Information

What is Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival?

Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival’s web site states: “Michigan is a festival that brings together the artistic, political and personal expression of womyn from every generation, from urban and rural communities, from different cultures, ethnicities, countries and beliefs.” The weeklong festival takes place every summer on the 650 acres of private land in Hart, Michigan. Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival is produced by We Want The Music Company (WWTMC), a for-profit corporation registered in Michigan.

What is the “trans” controversy about?

Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival holds the policy that only “womyn-born womyn” are allowed to enter the land, meaning that only those who have “lived their entire lives as females” can participate in the festival. To put it more blatantly, the policy is intended to exclude transsexual people, whether they are male-to-female transsexuals (trans women) or female-to-male transsexuals (trans men). Many in the trans communities as well as queer and women’s communities feel that this policy is oppressive, although their proposed alternatives may vary.

Note that many transsexual women actually feel that they have always been women, albeit misidentification by others, and thus feel that the phrase “womyn-born womyn” should include them. For the sake of clarity, this handbook will use “womyn-born” only in quotation marks.

Are all trans people excluded from the festival?

It depends on how you define “trans,” but a simple answer is no. Some non-transsexual women, including butch women, bearded women, drag king performers, and others call themselves *transgender* because they do not fit into the society’s definition of what a woman should look/act like. There are no rules excluding these people so long as they have lived their entire lives as women—in fact, some of the performers identify as “transgender” even as they uphold the policy that excludes transsexual people. It is only transsexual people—who have been raised as a member of one gender but live (or wish to live) as a member of another—that are excluded, because they are viewed as having lived as a male

(in the case of trans women) or living currently as a male (in the case of trans men).

On the other hand, an environment that excludes transsexual people is not safe for many “transgender” women, as their legitimacy as women are constantly challenged by those who suspect that they might be transsexual. Many women with ambiguous gender presentation report being harassed or threatened by other women while on the land.

Genderqueer people and others who identify as neither male or female are also excluded under this policy even if they were raised as girls. In 2000, several “trannie boys, boydykes, FTM’s, Lesbian Avengers and young gender-variant women”—who were not transsexual women—were evicted from the festival for their refusal to identify as “womyn-born womyn” either because they no longer identify as women, or in solidarity with other trans people.

How does Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival enforce this policy?

It doesn’t and it can’t. In fact, the festival instituted a policy of *not* questioning any individual’s gender presentation in order to prevent harassment against transgender women who otherwise qualify as “womyn-born womyn.” The festival’s 2001 handout states: “We ask all Festival-goers and staff to honor our commitment that no womon’s gender will be questioned on the land... Butch/gender-ambiguous womyn should be able to move about our community with confidence that their right to be here will not be questioned... We also have a commitment to run the Festival in a way that keeps faith with the womyn-born womyn policy, which may mean denying admission to individuals who self-declare as male-to-female transsexuals or female-to-male transsexuals now living as men (or asking them to leave if they enter).”

Some transsexual women including Davina Anne Gabriel, the editor of now-defunct newsletter, TransSisters, view this intentional absence of enforcement mechanism as a de facto acceptance of post-operative transsexual women. Others feel that this policy—which they compare to the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy regarding gays and lesbians in the military—is not enough, and continue to attend Camp Trans to protest transsexual people’s exclusion from Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival.

How did this controversy start?

Nancy Burkholder wrote: “In 1991, a woman was expelled

from the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival on suspicion of being a transsexual. This incident brought to light an unpublished policy that MWMF was for non-transsexual women only... News of Nancy [Burkholder]'s expulsion and the [existence of] anti-transsexual policy shocked many festival goers... The 1992 MWMF brochure included a statement that "MWMF is a gathering of mothers and daughters for all womyn born womyn," meant to exclude transsexuals."

"At the 1992 festival, a small group of women (including at least one transsexual) set up a literature table to provide information about gender issues, posted "gender myths" in the portajanes, gave away buttons asking "Where's Nancy?" and raised questions, listened, and talked to women for hours. Four workshops were offered about transsexualism and about MWMF policy. Security women were questioned about whether they would expel a transsexual. A survey was conducted to find out what participants thought about including transsexuals. Nearly three-quarters of respondents thought transsexuals should be welcome. Survey results were sent to festival producers and a response requested, but none has been received."

Camp Trans and Other Actions

When was the first organized protest at Michigan Womyn's Music Festival?

It was in 1992, a year after Nancy Burkholder was expelled from the festival. Burkholder wrote: "At the 1992 festival, a small group of women (including at least one transsexual) set up a literature table to provide information about gender issues, posted "gender myths" in the portajanes, gave away buttons asking "Where's Nancy?" and raised questions, listened, and talked to women for hours. Four workshops were offered about transsexualism and about MWMF policy. Security women were questioned about whether they would expel a transsexual." Boycott of the festival has been discussed early on, but activists decided "it would be far more effective to show up and make our voices heard."

In 1993, four transsexual women including Burkholder returned to the festival with non-transsexual allies to "conduct scheduled Festival workshops and outreach to

other attendees,” but were once again thrown out by the festival security. “Still determined to conduct their workshops, they camped across from the main gate in the woods of the National Park. Over 75 women attended the workshops and more than 200 women stopped by to offer their support. Camp Trans was born.” (from the press release for a Camp Trans 1994 fundraiser)

What exactly is Camp Trans?

In 1994, transsexual activists and their allies officially held Camp Trans across the road from the entrance of Michigan Womyn’s Music festival. Camp Trans 1994 and featured workshops and readings by Leslie Feinberg, Jamison Green, Minnie Bruce Pratt, and others. This was the last Camp Trans (except for a small three-person demonstration in 1995) before it was revived as “Son of Camp Trans” in 1999 by Transsexual Menace and GenderPAC.

As Camp Trans attract younger and more queer- and genderqueer-identified people in addition to transsexuals, the character of Camp Trans itself has changed. A press release from GenderPAC states: “the stars of Camp Trans [1999] were the Chicago Lesbian Avengers who, in support of an inclusive MWMF went toe-to-toe with angry lesbian-separatists intent on harassing the trans-contingent out of the festival grounds. The Avengers provided moral and physical support of the activists, escorting them through the grounds and engaging in group shouting matches with indignant separatists.”

Riki Anne Wilchins said: “The big change was that five years ago at the original Camp Trans, it was transsexuals struggling with the Festival. But this year it was young, radical lesbians struggling with other lesbians. After one shouting match, I thanked one of them for her outspoken support, and she responded, ‘I wasn’t supporting you. If you’re not welcome, I’m not safe here either. This is my issue, too.’” In other words, Camp Trans is no longer simply about including transsexual women; it is about resisting gender oppression within women’s communities.

What is the goal of Camp Trans?

The stated purpose of Camp Trans back in 1994 was to “to promote an understanding of gender from a variety of perspectives and to address issue of disenfranchisement in the women’s and lesbian communities,” but some transsexual activist involved in it report much narrower

scope, which is to have the festival to allow, if only in de facto, post-operative transsexual women to enter the land. Inevitably, this difference in priorities and strategies lead to a division within trans communities. Organizers of the 2002 Camp Trans state: “our mission is to educate the attendees of Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival about the ‘womyn-born-womyn only’ policy with the end goal of broadening that policy to include ALL self-identified womyn.”

What are those debates within trans communities about?

Some openly criticize GenderPAC’s confrontational tactics as well as its effort to advocate for pre- and non-operative transsexual women (and possibly other trans and genderqueer people) to enter the festival. Davina Anne Gabriel did when she wrote: “[The festival] has a perfectly legitimate reason for excluding preoperative MTF transsexuals... However, allowing postoperative transsexual women to attend would not result in such consequences. I hope that this will someday become its official policy. The actions of groups like ‘Son of Camp Trans’ only further impede this goal.”

In the summer 2000, a group of known transsexual activists (Beth Elliott, Anne Lawrence, Gwendolyn Ann Smith, Jessica Xavier as well as Gabriel) released a statement condemning Wilchins as “anti-feminist and ultimately oppressive of women, both transsexual and non-transsexual” for advocating for the inclusion of pre- and non-operative transsexual women, suggesting that only women without a penis (i.e. non-transsexual women and post-operative transsexual women) should enter, lest the safety of these women would be compromised. They were criticized by yet another group of trans activists and allies for their racism and classism. Read Emi Koyama’s paper, *Whose Feminism is it Anyway?* available from Eminism.org for more information about this debate. [Full disclosure: Emi is the author and editor of this handbook]

What other form of activism has there been to change the policy at Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival?

In 1999, some trans activist began taking another strategy: contacting musicians who headline Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival, asking them to take a stand against anti-transsexual policy by either boycotting the festival or making public statements. Many musicians declined to publicly declare their positions, although some did respond. Most

notably, The Butchies and Mr. Lady Records and Video released a public statement in defense of the festival: “We strongly believe that transgendered/transsexual people are an important part of the queer community and that they face an enormous amount of opposition... Based on our discussions with Lisa Vogel, the main organizer, we know that the MWMF started as a separatist event for womyn born womyn and we personally still feel the continued need for that kind of space and event... We don’t think that our support of the trans communities and womyn born womyn communities are in direct contradiction to each other.”

Over the next couple of years, trans activists and allies across the U.S. have staged many actions at the shows of the Butchies and other musicians that support the anti-transsexual policy of Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival by distributing fliers that raise awareness of transphobia within queer and women’s communities and confronting musicians who profit from supporting an anti-transsexual institution. All actions have been peaceful so far, except in one incident a trans activist was assaulted by a fan of a band being protested.

Responses to Anti-Inclusion Arguments

The policy is about embracing womyn-born-womyn, and not about excluding trans people.

When an action or a pattern of actions negatively impacts a particular community’s rights disproportionately, it is considered discriminatory regardless of the intention. This is the exact same argument feminist legal experts have successfully used to confront “glass ceiling” and other subtle and often invisible barriers to women’s empowerment in some landmark court cases. Because “womyn-born-womyn” policy has “*disparate effect*” (which is a legal term to describe this legal precedence) that are harmful to transsexual and genderqueer people, it needs to be considered discriminatory regardless of the festival’s intention.

Isn’t the festival like a private party? If so, it should be left up to them to decide who to invite.

First of all, it is not a private party. In addition to being a

product of a for-profit corporation (which I assume means that expenses are deducted from taxable income), the festival is a “*public accommodation.*” The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission defines public accommodation as “a private entity that owns, operates, leases, or leases to, a place of public accommodation” which includes “a wide range of entities, such as restaurants, hotels, theaters, doctors’ offices, pharmacies, retail stores, museums, libraries, parks, private schools, and day care centers.” Only “private clubs and religious organizations” are exempted.

This is not to say that the discrimination against transsexual people is illegal. The federal Americans with Disabilities Act specifically excludes transsexuality (gender identity disorder) from coverage, thanks to the anti-choice, anti-gay Senator Jesse Helms; the State of Michigan has not adopted the non-discrimination law that protects trans people, although several Michigan cities including Ann Arbor have passed trans-inclusive civil rights ordinances.

Regardless, this debate is not about whether or not women’s festivals have the legal right to discriminate against transsexual people; it is about whether or not it is right and feminist to do so. Any argument for or against trans inclusion at women’s festivals should be based on our feminist principles rather than on some legal loophole created by Jesse Helms.

The policy simply says that the festival is for a specific kind of women, rather than telling trans women that they aren’t women.

Taken from the “general information” part of the festival web site: “Michigan is a festival that brings together the artistic, political and personal expression of womyn from every generation, from urban and rural communities, from different cultures, ethnicities, countries and beliefs. That diversity is authentically expressed in every part of the Festival... It is a rare and precious space in time where we enjoy the dazzling celebration of everything female.” If the festival insists that this “authentic” “diversity” of “everything female” does not include transsexual women, how is that different from telling transsexual women that they aren’t women?

Besides, a women’s festival’s excluding a whole class of women simply because of their membership in that particular subgroup of women seems ridiculous. It makes much more sense if supporters of the “womyn-born-womyn” policy said, point-blank, that trans women aren’t welcome

because they are phony.

The festival about celebrating the shared experience of being raised as girls, which transsexual women do not have.

The “general information” page above does not state anything about the “shared experience of being raised as girls.” Besides, if the “diversity” of the festival participants “is authentically expressed in every part of the Festival” as the site claims, I would expect that women at the festival do not really share the same experience even if they were all raised as girls, because other factors, such as race, class, nationality, ability, etc. play a huge part in how one experiences girlhood. Being transsexual does affect how the child experiences her childhood as a girl (who was mistaken for a boy), but there is nothing to say that its impact is more profound than other factors that make one girl’s experiences different from another’s.

Inclusion of someone who has lived part of their lives as men would threaten the safety of women’s land.

While men’s violence against women are more prevalent in this sexist society, women are capable of abusing and violating other women also, as it was made evident by an increasing number of reports of woman-to-woman domestic violence and sexual assault in recent years. By equating the absence of men (and transsexual people) with safety and their presence with danger, we further trivialize and invisibilize the suffering of many women who are battered by their female partners, including women who were raped or battered while on the land. If we were to make the festival a safe space for all women, we need to stimulate more sophisticated dialogues about safety and accountability and to build structural remedies to prevent abuse, rather than relying on the myth of the safety of women.

Women who are survivors of abuse would be traumatized or triggered if they see people or body parts that look like men’s while being on the land.

There are infinite number of ways that someone could be triggered, and therefore each survivor is responsible for determining for herself how to avoid or manage her triggers. When members of the dominant group believe that they have the right to get rid of the minority group solely because of their own fear, such as when white aircraft passengers

request Middle-Eastern passengers to be removed from a flight because the presence of Middle-Eastern people make them feel uncomfortable or unsafe, it is called an undeserved sense of entitlement and it needs to be challenged. If the festival insists on removing certain group of women because of their genital structure or other physical characteristics reminiscent of male violence and domination, it must also tell white women to peel off their skin.

Aren't transsexual women (and men) already included as long as they do not publicly identify as transsexual?

No. They are still not welcome, although the festival wisely chose not to interrogate anyone based on their appearances (lest they would end up harassing many butch-looking womyn-born-womyn). Festival owner Lisa Vogel said: "Here's what we say: What womyn-born womyn means to us is women who were born as women, who have lived their entire experience as women, and who identify as women" (*Bitch: Feminist Response to Pop Culture* Issue 17, Summer 2002).

If transsexual women were to be included, how can you keep men from gaining entrance by pretending to be "pre-op" transsexual women?

Theoretically, men can already enter the festival by pretending to be "womyn-born-womyn" because of the festival's policy of not interrogating anyone about their gender, just like some transsexual women and men enter the land the same way already. There will be no additional risks of invasion even if transsexual women were to be included.

Women don't have a real institutional power in this society. Why do trans activists only target a women's festival?

It is not true that Michigan Womyn's Music Festival is the only issue or the most prioritized issue for transsexual activists. Where were you when we were at the city hall fighting for our right not to be fired simply for being trans? Where were you when we were lobbying to get the medical community to pay attention to our health concerns? Where were you when we were protesting the mall for arresting us for using the restroom like everybody else? Where were you when we gathered to mourn the loss of yet another transsexual victim of hate-motivated murder? And where were you for all those years that we were fighting against the repression of everything queer or gender-variant?

Still, Michigan Womyn's Music Festival is important not just because of what it provides for one week of the year, but because it is a place where women gather from across the country (and beyond) who are active in their own communities. By affecting change at Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, transsexual activists and allies hope to impact many other women's organizations and services in these local communities.

Who's Who? of the Michigan Debate

BITCH AND ANIMAL

Feminist punk-folk duo responsible for "Pussy Manifesto," a call for "a spread-it-yourself revolution born inside the eggs of us all." Bitch and Animal play at the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival despite the fact that Animal identifies as transgender, as someone who falls somewhere between boy and girl. S/he said to a Toronto alternative weekly, "I just want [protesters] to look at who's playing there - it's not anti-trans!" Then he makes a curious analogy: "If the KKK... asked me to play their music festival, I'd play it in a second, just to have that opportunity to educate them. This is the same thing." Interesting.

BARRETO-NETO, Tony

Female-to-male trans activist who founded Transgender Officers Protect/Serve in 1995. Tony entered the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival in 1999 and took shower inside, inadvertently exposing his surgically transplanted forearm, which was made to appear like a penis. This is considered to be the origin of the myth that "men walked around the festival exposing themselves" (which has no concrete eyewitness reports beside Tony's story itself). Some Camp Trans participants questioned his entering the festival since he is now a man, but he defended it because he has "paid the dues." He says: "I have gone to jail and paid with the same body I had surgery on and, by God, I have paid with my blood and my soul and with all too many friends who've been lost because womyn didn't have control over their bodies... I lived the fear and the tragedy and the pain, the ecstasy, the joy, and the beauty of it all and you can never take that away from me."

BURKHOLDER, Nancy

In 1991, Nancy Jean Burkholder was attending Michigan Womyn's Music Festival for the second year when she was asked by another attendee if she was a transsexual woman. She answered honestly "yes," which was reported to the festival security, leading up to her eviction from the festival ground. This incident drew attention to the festival's unwritten rule against transsexual women on the land, and became the rallying point for trans activists' protests against the "womyn-born womyn" policy.

CRABTREE, Sadie

Editor of Strap-On.org, a "progressive, queer-centered, sex-positive, girl-friendly online community." Since its founding in November 2000, the site has become the place for trans activists and allies to strategize and discuss over how to organize around the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival. Sadie also wrote the petition in support of trans activists protesting Buchies shows when there was a backlash. In early 2002, hardware maker Snap-On Tools, Inc. threatened to sue Strap-On.org for infringement of its trademark and unfair competition, which is pretty silly.

DOBKIN, Alix

Legendary lesbian folk singer whose 1973 album (with the late Kay Gardner), *Lavender Jane Loves Women* swept through the women's communities and marked the beginning of the women's music movement, from which Michigan Womyn's Music Festival emerged. While her lesbian-feminist commentaries published in *Windy City Times* are often criticized for being transphobic (see *Passover Revisited*, for example), she stopped over at Camp Trans in 1994, issued a joint statement with Riki Wilchins, and has not since returned to the festival for reasons unknown to anyone but herself.

FLANAGAN, Beth (a.k.a. BethX)

Trans activist who came up with the strategy of challenging "womyn-born womyn" policy by lobbying musicians and record companies to pressure the organizers of the music festival. If top-notch musicians stop supporting the policy and start refusing to play at the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, the argument goes, the festival will be forced to change its policy to remain attractive to its fans. Several of the Michigan musicians have since canceled their performances or declared their opposition to the policy

during their shows, and some, like The Butchies, openly stated their support for the policy, while most avoid making any statements at all.

GABRIEL, Davina Anne

Transsexual woman who had been the editor of now-defunct newsletter, TransSisters: The Journal of Transsexual Feminism. Gabriel participated in the protests against “womyn-born womyn” policy in the early 90s with the goal of persuading “the organizers to change the festival policy to allow postoperative - but not preoperative - male-to-female transsexuals to attend.” Later she turned critical of Camp Trans when it began advocating for the rights of “pre-operative” transsexual women to be allowed to participate in women’s communities, calling it “misogynist.” The 2000 statement she co-wrote urged both festival organizers and protesters to end the confrontation by treating “post-operative” transsexual women just like any other women while continuing to exclude “pre-operative” transsexual women. The statement was harshly criticized by another group of transfeminists.

LAMM, Nomy

Self-described as “a badass fatass jew dyke amputee, performance artist, writer and activist.” Nomy Lamm has been the staple of punk, feminist, genderfucking culture of Olympia, Washington since her undergraduate days at Evergreen State College. When the confrontation between trans community and feminist punk musicians intensified after a petition condemning trans activists for non-existent “violent protests” against other musicians was circulated, Nomy wrote an alternative “trans inclusion” petition, in an attempt to bring both sides together.

LESBIAN AVENGERS

Group initially founded by Maxine Wolfe, Sarah Schulman and others involved in ACT-UP in New York City to promote dyke visibility and pride. Chapters were created across the nation, although they remain independent of each other. Chicago, Boston, Washington DC, Philadelphia, and several other chapters of Lesbian Avengers have openly criticized the Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival for its transphobia, and participated in Camp Trans.

OLSON, Alix

Hip, feminist spoken-word artist who has been touring nationally and internationally for the last several years. Alix

has performed at both Michigan Womyns Music Festival and Camp Trans, although she has not made clear where she stands on the issue, possibly in fear that she would anger some of her fans regardless of what she would say. Apparently, she has been feeling “confused” and “conflicted” for several years straight. Her 2001 debut CD, “Built Like That,” includes a poem that pays tribute to “transgender ancestors,” although it is not clear what she is willing to do to challenge transphobia.

VOGEL, Lisa

The founder and producer of the Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival and the owner of its production company, We Want The Music Company (WWTMC). Vogel was barely 19 year old and inexperienced at the time she started the fest, but managed to transform it into the most successful and Olargest women’s festival in the nation with the help of co-producer Barbara “Boo” Price and others. She has always maintained that the festival is intended solely for “womyn-born womyn,” which means “women who were born as women, who have lived their entire experience as women, and who identify as women.”

WILCHINS, Riki Ann

Long-time “gender activist” who is the founding executive director of GenderPAC. Wilchins’ group, Transexual Menace, took over the planning of Camp Trans in 1994, 1999, and 2000, during which her use of confrontational tactics and post-identity politics were criticized by both festival organizers and conservative transsexual activists like Davina Anne Gabriel. Even more transsexual activists felt betrayed when in 2000 GenderPAC shifted its focus from specifically transgender issues to general gender (inclusive of women’s, queer, and intersex) issues.

WILSON, Kaia

Co-owner with Tammy Rae Carland of Mr. Lady Records and Video and a member of the band The Butchies. A respected figure from the legendary dyke punk-rock band Team Dresch, Kaia’s open support for the transphobic “womyn-born womyn” policy came as a shock to many. She has stated that, while she supports trans inclusion in queer movement/space, she does not think that women’s movement/space need to include trans women, as if all trans people belong to the separate gender of “trans” - a direct negation of many transsexual people’s identification.

Historiography of the Michigan Debate

Results of 1992 Gender Survey at Michigan Womyn's Music Festival by Nancy Burkholder (April 1993)

A total of 633 surveys were collected. There were about 7500 women at MWMF, so this represents a response rate of approximately 8.4%. The survey asked, "Do you think male-to-female transsexuals should be welcome at Michigan?" *Yes* responses to this question numbered 463 (73.1%) and *no* answers totaled 143 (22.6%). Twenty-seven surveys (4.3%) had indeterminate responses such as "I'm not sure" or did not answer this question. The margin of error is 3.8%. Given these results, the chance that the majority of 7500 MWMF participants believe transsexuals should not be admitted would be less than 1 in 100,000. This calculation assumes that our sample was randomly selected, which it certainly was not. However, even if half of the *yes* answers are attributed to the bias of the sample and eliminated from the calculation, there is still a better than 999 in 1000 chance that most Festigoers would welcome transsexuals.

Reasons given for including transsexuals were:

- They are women (90)
- They identify as women (67)
- They have made a commitment to womanhood (38)
- They have been through enough (35)
- We should not oppress others (32)
- They have chosen to be women (26)
- We should be inclusive (30)
- We should not judge an individual's choice (20)
- They can benefit from the women's community (19)
- Internally they are women (17)
- They are oppressed as women (11)
- They are living as women (11)
- They share women's goals and perspectives (10)
- They are not threatening (10)
- We should encourage diversity (8)
- We cannot determine who is transsexual (8)
- Gender is in the mind (8)
- They have given up male privilege (7)
- They deserve our support (7)
- Their condition is not their fault (7)

- We can learn from transsexuals (6)
- We have no definition of “woman” (5)
- Legally they are women (4)
- We should all unite (4)
- Their socialization is not so different from ours (3)
- They have been no problem in the past (3)
- It’s behavior that’s important (3)

The reasons Festigoers gave for wanting to exclude transsexuals (with numbers giving these responses) were:

- They are not women (23)
- They are not women-born women (16)
- They make others uncomfortable (15)
- They have been socialized as males (12)
- They have had male privilege (10)
- They think like men (8)
- They have male energy (7)
- They have penises (6)
- They have different life experiences (6)
- They are biologically men (5)
- People shouldn’t change their sex (5)
- They have not been girls in the patriarchy (4)
- They are oppressors (4)
- They behave like men (4)
- They have not been oppressed as women (4)
- They are too feminine (3)

In both the above lists, multiple responses were recorded when respondents gave more than one answer. Responses given by only one or two people were omitted. In answer to the question, “What is the best way to determine whether an individual is a male-to-female transsexual?” there was a considerable range of opinion:

- Ask them (50)
- Trust them to be honest (39)
- Don’t know (26)
- Announce the policy clearly (21)
- Check their genitals (18)
- There is no accurate way to tell (14)
- Driver’s license or picture ID (9)
- There is no dignified way to tell (9)
- Self-identification should be sufficient (9)
- We shouldn’t try (8)
- Surgery should be complete (5)
- By their behavior (4)
- Genetic testing (3)
- Birth certificate (3)

Written exam or questionnaire (3)
Medical certificate (3)

In addition, two each were in favor of interviews, having a friend vouch for them, and intuition. One each endorsed a doctor's physical exam, a medical/psychiatric history, testosterone levels, and bone structure. Overall, the survey results indicate that there is a great deal of confusion and disagreement about the locus of gender, the relationship between gender and sex, the definition of woman (or womon), the meaning of woman-born woman, the nature of transsexualism, who MWMF should be for, how an anti-transsexual policy should be enforced, and who is the victim and who the oppressor. The results strongly suggest that the majority of Festigoers would support a "no penis" policy that would allow postoperative male-to-female transsexuals; that they want the policy to be unambiguously stated and well publicized; and that they oppose invasive verification of sex.

Results of the questions that asked about *female-to-male* transsexuals have not been tabulated in detail, but 80% of respondents were against their inclusion.

***Festival Womyn Speak Out* by Lisa Vogel & Barbara Prince,
MWMF (November 1993)**

Some letters have been printed in the press in recent weeks regarding the womon-only policy at the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival as it relates to transsexuals participating in the event. We would like to clarify our policy and explain the circumstances which brought it to light this last August.

In the simplest of terms, the Michigan Festival is and always has been an event for womyn, and this continues to be defined as womyn born womyn. We respect everyone's right to define themselves as they wish. It's unfortunate that our choice to offer the Michigan Festival as an event for womyn-born-womyn is being construed by some as a position on the merits of people making individual choices on how to live. We only mean to define who this event is for. We hold dearly our right to make this determination and in the same regard we believe that is the right of every other womyn's institution and community to define these issues depending on their own particular needs and concerns.

We regret that the circumstances at this year's festival may have been a result of a lack of current public information on this policy. We think it is understandable that our priority would not be centered around who our event is "not" for, and we have deliberately refrained from placing our

focus in that direction, though we have always been definite about our policy when asked.

When it was clear this summer there was a known transsexual man attending the event, the festival security staff dealt with it as respectfully as possible. We provided local housing at our expense, offered return airport transportation, and refunded the festival ticket. Though the letter to the press represents Festival security coordinators have been represented in a derogatory manner, these womyn took much time and care to make sure this difficult situation was dealt with as considerately as possible.

It may be valuable to know that the Festival working community processed this issue in meetings after the event, and it is clear from those discussions that the group of womyn who come together to create this gathering supports this Festival policy. Though everyone was passionate about the issue and held caring feelings for all sides of the experience, it still was the overwhelming consensus that the intention of the Festival remain an event provided for womyn only.

In the bigger picture of "Michigan," we feel very good about this 16th Festival, and we are back to work making plans for the 1992 Festival. Our primary commitment is to keep our focus and energy on womyn and on presenting the best week of womyn's culture and community that we know how to create.

Lisa Vogel
Barbara Price
Producers, Michigan
Womyn's Music Festival
Walhalla, Mich.

***The Joint Statement by Alix Dobkin & Riki Ann Wilchins
(July 1994)***

We, Alix and Riki, come from overlapping communities, difficult to define, especially among ourselves. We believe that Lesbians and transsexuals understand that changing old assumptions and making new definitions is far from simple. We also know that it's easier to lash out at each other than to do the hard work of creating autonomous, satisfying lives and communities in which to make a place for ourselves. But we want to do it anyway.

By being ourselves and creating our own lives, Lesbians and transgendered peoples challenge a rigid, destructive and archaic gender system. By defying this system we learn

to convert fear into anger which makes us dangerous not only to the system but also to ourselves when, instead of confronting powerful institutions of sexual control, we attack and try to control each other. This helps neither Riki nor Alix, who sometimes agree and sometimes disagree, but nevertheless recognize that we will each benefit by treating each other with respect and by cooperating to create mutually acceptable common ground.

To this end, we jointly affirm the importance of dialogue for all those who have an interest in the Women's Community: Lesbian, Separatist, feminist, transgender, S/M, transexual, bisexual and all others. Given our exceptional and outrageous diversity, it is paramount that all parties be encouraged to express their views within an atmosphere of mutual respect for divergent beliefs and concern for each others' well-being.

Alix Dobkin

Lesbian entertainer, writer, and educator

Riki Anne Wilchins

The Transexual Menace,

The Committee to Free Nancy Now

Passover Revisited by Alix Dobkin (April 1998)

Challenges to women-only space are as old as women-only space itself. We've seen its many forms and heard its many tongues. Some people still wonder, "What's the big deal about a man going to a women's concert?" or, "What difference could one man make?" "Men need to learn about feminism," they insist, and, "Boys are not 'men' and should be freely allowed into women's space." For over 20 years now, men have declared themselves "women," manipulated their bodies via experimental surgery, and then demanded the feminist seal of approval from survivors of girlhood.

Passover is about liberation. It's about not being slaves. Slavery requires uninterrupted access. The Jews in ancient Egypt tried everything they (and God) could think of to be free, but were finally forced into the desert to get away from the Egyptians. But where can women go to escape men?

Whereas: When women figured out their personal and global relationship to men and then conferred value upon their own lives, it was called "feminism"

Whereas: When women focused their heart's desire upon women, it was called "Lesbianism"

Whereas: When Lesbians became political, and when

feminists became personal, it was called “Lesbian-feminism” and came immediately under siege

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT: Lesbian-feminism, like freedom, must be constantly re-invoked, restored, and defended!

If you think about it, patriarchs do not enjoy rebellion any more than Pharaoh did, and men will act exactly the way he acted. That is, they will do every possible thing to perpetuate their rule. Pharaoh dispatched recognizable armies to pursue the Jews who found refuge beyond Egypt’s reach. But man’s shadow extends everywhere, and we must abide always in the land of our master. A world in which even recognizing, let alone naming, his forces becomes half the battle, made particularly difficult by sisters and brothers mobilized and outfitted to fetch us back.

Memories of a millenium reeking with the most brutally effective penalties devised by man fester deep within women’s bones to infect the very molecules of women’s being. Logical and compelling as our analysis of patriarchy is, not one of us truly escapes.

Nor do we escape those centuries of training to nurture and put others before ourselves. Three decades of Lesbian-feminism cannot hope to dismantle the terrible, unrelenting lessons daily reinforced and re-programmed. No wonder then, that few will go the theoretical distance, let alone follow through with perilous ethical choices. Especially when seduced by attractively less rigorous, more comfortable alternatives.

Those sly old fellas who wrote the book on punishment, intimidation and bribery did not log eons of dominion for nothing. The second wave of Lesbian-feminists momentarily took them by surprise by appropriating the age-old battering rams to use as props. Fresh scare tactics were essential to turn a generation of “Lesbians” and “Dykes” against each other, so the philosophical reference point, “Separatist”, was at once targeted as the replacement of choice and issued to their special forces. So effective was it, that to this day, otherwise disobedient Lesbians fall all over each other distancing themselves from that paralyzing label. “Bra burning” and “Man-hating” were likewise invoked to terrorize would-be renegades (although the term “woman-hating” is rarely applied, even to known misogynists).

When that failed to wipe us out, they tried “racist,” and when Separatists of color protested being made invisible, not to mention the racist assumption that only white women were able to live independent of men, our accusers reverted to “divisive” and “exclusionary.” The very same Rich-

White- Men- Who- Rule- The- World- Inc. know that subtle distortions designed to tickle our best instincts and trigger our sense of justice might inspire well-meaning folks to do their nasty job for them. It's the way skewed jargon like "equality" has been used by racists to destroy affirmative action in California's higher education.

Remember when "politically correct" started appearing in progressive vocabularies? I do. And when "Gender Studies" started replacing "Womens Studies," "reverse" was fixed onto "sexism," and useful concepts like "diversity" and "inclusion" mutated before our eyes into weapons to sabotage women's autonomy and set us up, within our own ranks, for the kill.

As we remember the ancient history of Jews escaping from Egypt, we should also remember the recent history of "women-only" space. and during the Passover season, while visions of liberation dance in our heads, while Jews and Lesbian Separatists alike enjoy our hard-won riches and congratulate ourselves for withstanding these ageless assaults, it behooves us to remember that the old lessons still resonate, and that exclusive women's territory is still radical as hell.

Open Letter to the Organizers of the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival by Lesbian Avengers of Washington, D.C. (July 1998)

Dear Sisters,

The Washington, DC Lesbian Avengers want to thank you for the tremendous impact you have had on our community. The Michigan Womyn's Music Festival has been an annual source of pride, sisterhood, self- discovery, music, gossip, sexual energy and fierce networking. Without it we might never have heard some of the musicians who have given us the strength to go on in the fight against oppression or sung us the clues about how our sexuality worked. Your efforts have touched the lives of many womyn in our community who have never had the opportunity to go to the festival by raising the visibility of new bands, by giving our sisters a space to meet and gain energy from each other and by spreading zines, cool jewelry and movement issues all over the country as womyn return to their homes.

We write not just to thank you for your work of the the past and present but also to urge you on to the work of the future. As a group and as individuals we feel that your "womyn-born-womyn only" policy is unnecessary, arbitrary and harmful to our community. The Lesbian Avengers here in DC have benefited from the inclusion of transgendered

peoples in more ways than we can count. Our mission statement is clearly trans-inclusive and welcoming. Trans members and allies have brought vibrant energy to our marches, actions and meetings. They have broadened the discussion and opened minds to the fluidity of gender. Together we hope for and work towards a community free of gender oppression, whether aimed at lesbians, butch dykes, transsexuals, the ambiguously gendered, the inter sexed or those who want the freedom to explore their own choices and possibilities.

Until the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival brings about a public change in its transphobic policy, we will not be visiting the Land. This is not a call for a boycott, but a plea to our community to refuse entrance to no womyn-identified person. Our vision is of inclusion, of freedom of choice, of personal strength and public joy in the diversity of our community. Please let us all enjoy the music together.

The Statement by The Butchies & Mr. Lady Records and Video (November 1998)

Dear folks on the Chainsaw Message Board,

Firstly, This is not a press release, simply a public statement. All other comments being debated on this board were personal emails used for public debate; a practice we deplore and will never tolerate or willingly participate in. Kaia wants to say she cannot respond to everyone's individual emails to her, please let the following Butchies / Mr. Lady statement speak for her.

We, Kaia, Alison, Melissa and Tammy Rae, want to say that we support and advocate for the rights of transgendered/transsexual people, and the need for trans inclusion and representation in the queer rights movement and communities. We also understand that the issues facing transgendered and transsexual folks often differ widely from that of lesbians, gay men and bisexual people; this difference needs to be honored, supported and celebrated. This is, obviously, a really complicated and important issue that needs to be discussed and urgently addressed. We strongly believe that transgendered/transsexual people are an important part of the queer community and that they face an enormous amount of opposition. We would never want to hurt anyone and if we have for that we apologize.

The history of the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival is, like the feminist and queer political histories, a complex one. There have been many mistakes as well as extremely important steps. Based on our discussions with Lisa Vogel,

the main organizer, we know that the MWMF started as a separatist event for womyn born womyn and we personally still feel the continued need for that kind of space and event. There are no gender checks at the festival and there are a huge contingent of people who organize, staff, perform and attend the festival who identify as transgendered. If you have questions and/or disagreements with the festival's policy we have been told that the staff is available to address these concerns.

Though we do not necessarily agree with or defend the actions of all individuals involved in organizing and securing the festival—we do believe in and support the 24 years of hard work and commitment to growth that the festival has represented to us. Simultaneously, we believe in, support and will work to bring about spaces and events for both coalition building and separatism within transgendered, transsexual, queer, lesbian, gay male, bisexual and womyn communities. We don't think that our support of the trans communities and womyn born womyn communities are in direct contradiction to each other; our support of one does not diminish the support of the other they are both equal in our hearts. We are not each others enemy but rather intricate components of a large powerful and beautiful mass of queers who must resist participating in cannibalizing one another.

We hope that this clarifies our position, we offer it with respect and hope it is received with the same. We are going into the studio for the next 3 weeks and therefore won't be able to participate in the format of this discussion cuz we won't be around a computer or at home during this time.

Sincerely and much love,
The Butchies and Mr. Lady

Transsexual Menace Calls for Protest by Clare Howell, GenderPAC (June 1999)

The street action group Transsexual Menace announced today that "Camp Trans," the educational event across the road from the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival (MWMF), will be held Thursday, 12 Aug 99, through Sunday, 15 Aug 99, to contest the festival's "womyn-born-womyn" only policy. The policy has been used to exclude trans-identified women or evict those discovered on Festival grounds.

The original Camp Trans was held in August 1994, two years after attendee Nancy Jean Burkholder was forcibly expelled from the event by Festival Security for being transgendered. Festival owners then retroactively announced the "womyn-born-womyn only" policy, effectively barring

trans-identified women from attending.

Two years later, 30 activists gathered to hold the first Camp Trans across the road from the Festival's main gate and conducted 3 days of workshops. Hundreds of festival attendees came out to attend.

As the country's largest and 2nd oldest, the Festival continues to act as a model for women's music festivals across the country who evict or deny entrance to scores of trans-identified women each summer. Like MWMF, such events quietly enforce their policies with as little publicity as possible. Their policies are not displayed on web-sites or literature, effectively keeping transgender women out while keeping attendees unaware.

Said Riki Anne Wilchins, one of the Camp Trans '99 organizers, "Our purpose is to focus public attention on the fact that these exclusionary policies are still very much in effect."

S/he continued, "Five years have passed, and while the whole queer movement has embraced inclusiveness and diversity, MWMF still wants to act as the Gender Police, judging who is 'woman enough' and who is not. This is a policy that cries out to be challenged."

Planners of "Son of Camp Trans" are asking supporters to join them peacefully and camp across the road from the Festival gates Thursday evening, August 12th. They plan to quietly march to the Festival Friday morning, declare themselves transgendered, and ask to be admitted.

Continued Wilchins, "We're calling on everyone -- Menace members, Lesbian Avengers, Riot Grrrls, stone butches, diesel dykes, high femmes, intersexuals, transfags and faggot-identified dykes, FTMs, genderbenders, gender-blenders, transwomen, leatherdykes and dyke daddies, passing women, drag kings, and gendertrash of all descriptions. Being gender-different is not just a 'trans right,' it's a woman's right too.

"When the owners know that gender-difference is no longer about 'them' but about 'us,' when they know there is solidarity, then this policy will fall. Discrimination against any woman must always be contested."

No Penis on the Land: Michigan Womyn's Music Festival Expands Policy by Clare Howell, GenderPAC (August 1999)

In four days of intense confrontation, dialog, and negotiation, a dozen gender activists from Transexual Menace, the Lesbian Avengers, and Transgender Officers Protect & Serve (TOPS) last weekend successfully challenged the Michigan

Womyn's Music Festival's (MWMF) exclusionary entrance policy of 'womyn-born-womyn-only.' MWMF, the nation's largest festival of its kind and the second oldest, adopted the policy in 1991 to exclude transsexual women. It was first used to eject Nancy Jean Burkholder eight years ago. The first Camp Trans was held in 1994 as an educational event across the road from the festival's main entrance to protest the policy. Thirty activists staged two dozen workshops for festival-goers, hundreds of whom came out to hear speakers including Leslie Feinberg, Jamison Green, and Minnie Bruce Pratt.

At this year's event, 4 openly trans-identified activists approached the main gate Friday morning, identified themselves, and asked to enter. All were sold tickets, and 3 MTFs and one FTM entered the festival. Faced with pre-operative transsexuals and at least one post-op FTM, festival coordinators enhanced their vague "womyn-born-womyn only" policy to include "no penises on the land," and the FTM and MTF voluntarily left. To the festival's credit, owner Lisa Vogel put out a statement saying that there would be no "panty checks" to enforce the policy, and encouraged attendees not to question any women's right to be there.

But the stars of Camp Trans this year were the Chicago Lesbian Avengers who, in support of an inclusive MWMF went toe-to-toe with angry lesbian-separatists intent on harassing the trans-contingent out of the festival grounds. The Avengers provided moral and physical support of the activists, escorting them through the grounds and engaging in group shouting matches with indignant separatists. Said Camp Trans organizer and attendee Riki Wilchins, "The big change was that five years ago at the original Camp Trans, it was transsexuals struggling with the Festival. But this year it was young, radical lesbians struggling with other lesbians. After one shouting match, I thanked one of them for her outspoken support, and she responded, 'I wasn't supporting you. If you're not welcome, I'm not safe here either. This is my issue, too.'" Her sentiment was echoed by a growing chorus of women who took up the cause as their own.

There were no fewer than four different interactions. The first, an intense, spontaneous 3-hour confrontation in the packed food service area Friday at supper-time began with the Avengers surrounded by angry separatists and ended well after dark. This was followed by a meeting of festival staff and gender activists at Camp Trans Saturday morning, an impromptu workshop Saturday noon, scheduled on-the-fly, which drew over 200 women, and finally a workshop held in Camp Trans by the popular young lesbian punk-rock

group Tribe-8, whose members are renowned for cutting up dildos and openly identifying as gender-queer during their stage act.

In a broad show of support, over four dozen festival attendees donned black Transsexual Menace tee-shirts, wearing them all over the festival. Many were verbally harassed by separatists who assumed they were transsexuals. On the last day, three young festival employees were fired by management for wearing their Menace Ts while on duty at the main gate.

Festival Reaffirms Commitment to Womyn-Born Space by Lisa Vogel, MWMF (August 1999)

The 24th annual Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, held August 10-15th, brought more than 5,000 womyn and children together for an inspiring, rejuvenating week of performances, workshops, and community. This year's Festival was also the site of an action organized by the group Transsexual Menace.

When WWTMC, the organizers of the Festival, learned that Transsexual Menace planned to hold a "Son of Camp Trans" event across the road from the Festival grounds, producer Lisa Vogel issued the following statement:

"We do not and will not question any individual's gender. The Festival is an event organized by, for and about womyn. Our intention is for the Festival to be for womyn-born womyn, meaning people who were born and have lived their entire life experience as female. We ask that the transsexual community support and respect the intention of our event."

On Friday, August 13th, six individuals and a group of supporters from "Son of Camp Trans" approached the Box Office and requested tickets to enter the Festival. They proceeded with the full knowledge of the intent of the Festival to be a woman born woman space. In keeping with Festival values that no woman's gender ever be questioned on the Land, the Box Office workers did not question anyone's gender, and sold tickets to the six individuals when requested. Those individuals then entered the Festival.

"As commonality organizers, we operate from a position of trust, expecting that people will try to do the right thing, rather than policing people to catch them doing the wrong thing," says Vogel. "We do not and will not question any individual's gender. We hoped that the Transsexual Menace organizers would honor that trust and respect the intention of this event."

The Son of Camp Trans activists proceeded from the

Front Gate Box Office to the outdoor, communal showers in the RV camping area. They took off their clothes and it was apparent to the womyn in and near the showersthat two of the Son of Camp Trans activists were anatomically male. The word began to spread that there were men on the land who had shown their penises in the showers. A member of the Son of Camp Trans group stopped by the teenage girls' discussion group at the Community Center and engaged in explicit discussion about the clinical aspect of sex change operations. The group later began selling Transsexual Menace t-shirts outside the Main Kitchen area, attracting attention and complaints (sales of products and services outside of the Crafts Bazaar is not permitted out of respect to the crafts-womyn who go through a selection process).

As the Son of Camp Trans activists made their way through the site, increasing numbers of Festival participants became aware of and expressed concerned about their actions. Festival organizers focused on rumor control and safety of everyone involved. The Community Center, Oasis peer counseling area, Staff Services and Security/ Communications crews all worked hard to ensure the flow of accurate information and provide constructive opportunities for the expression of the full range of thoughts and feelings generated by these events.

A number of spontaneous gatherings developed where participants discussed and debated the presence of the Son of Camp Trans activists and their actions. Volunteer facilitators helped to structure discussions so that various viewpoints, including those of the Son of Camp Trans, could be heard. The Son of Camp Trans activists scheduled a workshop session for Saturday at noon in the workshop area, and various Festival participants announced their intention to hold community meetings at different locations on Saturday.

In response to confusion and concerns among Festival participants, organizers distributed 2,000 copies of the following statement on Friday evening, August 13:

Festival Update on "Son of Camp Trans"

There has been an event called "Son of Camp Trans" organized across the gate from the Land to protest the Festival as an event organized by, for and about womyn born womyn only.

The Festival is womyn's space, something that is rare and precious to most of us. We also define that further as woman born woman space, meaning a place for people who were born and have lived their entire life experience

as female. This is our public statement to the Camp Trans Organizers, and we asked that they, and other members of the Transsexual community, respect those wishes.

We are aware that some individuals associated with Camp Trans have not respected the Land as womyn's space. We know that many of you are angry about this, and have questions about whether this is a change of festival policy. There is no change in Festival policy, politics or intention regarding womyn's space. We too are angry that this has been disrespected, and we are dealing with it now the best we can. We want you to know that we always have been and always will be committed to the Festival as womyn's space.

We want to caution all of us on two things. First, the Festival does not and will not question any individual's gender. This is basic to the environment of trust and freedom that the fabric of the Festival depends upon. Many of us move about a world that questions our femaleness every day. This is not an experience that we want any single womon to have on this Land. Please do not perpetuate this by approaching any womon to question her gender.

Secondly, there are over 5000 womyn here. Let's not allow a few individuals to define and absorb all of the incredible womon energy of our event. This is an event about womyn, not about people who do not respect womyn's space. Let's continue to build the powerful community we create year after year. This is why we are here.

On Saturday morning, several Festival staff members met with Transsexual Menace organizers at Son of Camp Trans. Festival organizers reiterated the intention of the Festival as a womyn-born womyn space, and again asked Son of Camp Trans participants to respect the Festival community's intentions, and the two anatomically male individuals agreed not to reenter the Festival grounds. Transsexual Menace and Son of Camp Trans organizer Riki Anne Wilchins declined to respect those wishes and entered the Festival, participating in discussions and the workshop, and attending performances.

In response to the presence of men on the land, several Festival participants chose to leave the Festival earlier than planned. Others expressed appreciation dismay that Festival organizers had not done more to prevent men from entering the Festival. Others voiced support for changing the womyn-born womyn intention. Many expressed appreciation for the statement issued by organizers and the way the events had been handled.

"This was a challenging experience for many of us," says Vogel. "For the last 24 years, the Festival has been like a

petri dish, a laboratory of ideas and expression that have influenced and been influenced by the many communities and cultures that flow into and out of the Festival.

“We recognize that the Festival and Son of Camp Trans symbolize and express divergent views on the larger gender discussion that is going on in lesbian and gay communities. We support this larger discussion and value and respect the transsexual community as integral members of the broader queer community. We ask that they in turn respect womyn born womyn space.

“We believe that individuals and organizations who are committed to disrupting or destroying womyn-born-womyn space are acting with ignorance and complete disregard for the legacy of misogyny and sexism that still pervades our daily lives. Just as many Womyn of Color express the need for ‘room to breathe’ they gain in Womyn-of-Color space away from the racism that inevitably appears in interactions with a white majority, womyn born womyn still need and value that same ‘room to breathe.’

“We are saddened and angered that political energy is being directed at tearing down womyn’s space, instead of at the external institutions that still concentrate power and control in patriarchal hands. We believe that the Transsexual Menace’s political action at the Festival was meant to disrupt and undermine the very fabric of the Michigan community, and the womyn of Michigan are understandably upset at the level of disrespect expressed through the action.

“We remain united in our commitment to the Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival as womyn’s space. This is basic to the power and philosophy of what brings womyn from around the world back to Michigan every August. This is the experience we are committed to celebrating at next year’s 25th Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival.”

Lesbian Resource Center opposes Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival exclusion of Transsexual women by Seattle Gay News (September 1999)

In August, the Lesbian Resource Center received a letter from the Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival (MWMF) explaining that their “intention is for the Festival to be for womyn-born womyn, meaning people who were born and have lived their entire life as female.” While stating that they would not question any individual’s gender, MWMF asked that the Transsexual community, including those at Camp Trans who oppose this exclusion, “support and respect the intention of our event.”

The board of directors of the Lesbian Resource Center voted at its August board meeting to stand in solidarity with Transgender and Transsexual women and their allies who insist that it is time for MWMF to discard this exclusionary, painful policy. We agree with Riki Anne Wilchins' 1999 Pride statement that, "the identities and politics we create to represent and ultimately contain us are more simple than we are. Because the truth is, most of us do not make our lives along the straightways and thoroughfares of identity. We build our homes at the intersections, where many kinds of oppression meet and intersect and overlap."

The mission of the LRC is to "advance the status of Lesbians by combatting all forms of oppression and by promoting empowerment, visibility and social change." Exclusion of Transgender and Transsexual women oppresses all women, and tears the fabric of community we struggle to build and live within.

The LRC joins Wilchins in asking the MWMF and all women "Will you let your heart grow smaller so it holds only your own hurts and problems, or will you let it grow larger, so it holds those of the people around you and those standing beside you?"

Plea to Bands that play Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, Their Fans and Labels by BethX (December 1999)

I'm sure most of you have heard about the recent situation regarding the Michigan Women's Music Festival.

This message has a few purposes, the first of which is a general plea to the people who attend, the bands that attend and the labels that support these bands.

The second is a more direct plea towards Mr. Lady Records, the Butchies and their fans.

As you know, the Michigan Women's Music Festival has a policy of denying the entrance of anyone who is not a woman-born-woman. This definition excludes transgendered people. This policy is transphobia in its most insidious forms. It divides the women's community into "real women" and "kinda-women" and wastes valuable resources that could be used fighting for things that benefit all women.

It needs to end and it needs to end now.

In previous years, many different forms of protest have been tried, from Camp Trans (www.camptrans.com), to the Lesbian Avengers "Protest-in-a-Box" to attempting to enter the festival-only to be removed-to talking with the organizers.

The problem with all of these tactics is that they relied on the goodwill of the organizers to change the policy. We've

been relying for their goodwill for what is now Michigan's 25th year.

This year, I propose we no longer rely on their goodwill but rely on their need for the one thing that keeps MWMF going, our financial support.

What you can do as an Individual: I am asking all people who would normally attend or attempt to attend to do a few things this year.

- Send a tally of how much you would normally spend (including entrance fees and granola lesbian pottery that you would buy from vendors) to WWTMC Box 22 Walhalla, MI 49458 with a note stating this is how much you would have spent if you went, but until the policy is rescinded, you have no intention on setting foot on the land.

- Do not attend and let MWMF know why you plan on not attending. If you want to make the trip out there, plan on going to Camp Trans. Email riki@camptrans.com to let her know you plan on attending.

- Boycott all bands that play this year. A person's actions speak a hundred times louder than words. By playing the festival, bands lend support to the policy. If you wouldn't spend money on homophobia or sexism, please do not spend it on transphobia.

What you can do as a Band:

I'm asking all bands who intend to play this year to immediately call up the organizers and tell them that as long as the policy is in effect, you will not play.

It's really a simple statement that you will stand in solidarity with your sisters and will not support transphobia in any form. I know attempts to change it from the inside have been tried, but it is fairly obvious that they have not worked and that the organizers of MWMF will not change things without a reason to do so. Removing yourself from the performers list will give people a reason not to go and the organizers a reason to change the policy.

Basically, if you wouldn't play a place with a "No Lesbians Allowed" policy, please, take a stand with us and do not play a place that has an "Only Certain Types of Women Allowed" policy.

What you can do as a Label:

It's simple. Do not sign bands that play this year. You wouldn't sign a band that supports all the other *isms and *phobias, don't sign bands that through their actions support transphobia.

These are all relatively simple statements to make in support of making this policy end. They take little effort and send a message to the organizers of Michigan that transphobia will no longer be tolerated.

Now, on a side note, I am making a plea to the fans of the Butchies and Mr. Lady Records. The boycott instituted over the summer because of statements made by Mr. Lady Records is tearing apart our community. It is hurting bands on the label, and is taking up valuable resources.

I am asking Butchies fans and fans of other bands on Mr. Lady to email them at mrlady@mindspring.com and request that they enter a dialog with the organizers of the boycott, using a 3rd party moderator if needed. In a showing of good faith, we will immediately cease the boycott when dialog begins.

This is a chance to mend fences. I hope that they will take this opportunity to do so.

Open Letter to Lesbian Connection re Son of Camp Trans **by Davina Anne Gabriel (January 2000)**

This is in response to the renewed controversy regarding transsexual attendance at the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival sparked by the aptly named group "Son of Camp Trans." This controversy was initially created by the expulsion of Nancy Burkholder from the festival in 1991.

I helped to organize and participated in a series of actions protesting the festival's "womyn-born-womyn" only policy in the four years (1992-1995) following Nancy's expulsion, and was the only transsexual woman to both organize and participate in all four actions. I was also the founder, editor and publisher of *TransSisters: the Journal of Transsexual Feminism*.

Our stated intent from the very beginning was to persuade the organizers to change the festival policy to allow postoperative -- but not preoperative -- male-to-female transsexuals to attend. The reason that we advocated only postoperative admission was that we believed that the vast majority of the women who attend the festival would support the inclusion of postop, but not preop, MTF transsexuals, and we intended to respect the wishes of the women there. This belief was subsequently confirmed by a survey we conducted in 1992, and by numerous discussions held at workshops conducted at the festival.

The primary reason that these actions were discontinued after 1995 was the concerted effort by Riki Anne Wilchins to both put herself in charge of them and to force us to also

advocate for the admission of preoperative MTF transsexuals. Soon after the 1995 action, I dropped out of all involvement in the “transgender movement” in disgust because I saw that it was increasingly moving in a very hostile and belligerent direction of advocating that women who don’t want to have to see a penis at a women’s festival should just get over it. Also, I felt that the festival had moved to a de facto policy of allowing postop transsexual women to attend; and while I would have preferred that this be the festival’s ex officio policy, I was willing to settle for a de facto policy if that was the price of keeping persons with penises out of the festival and keeping people like Riki from exploiting our actions.

I was deeply saddened and disturbed, but not surprised, to learn that Riki had finally achieved her phallogocentric objective of putting penises in women’s faces that she has long been advocating and working toward. I regard this as confirmation that I was correct in my assessment of the “transgender movement” when I dropped out of it, as well as of my claim that Riki is deeply misogynistic -- a claim which has been highly disputed within the “transgender movement.” Riki’s actions remove all doubt of the veracity of my assertion.

I was at least somewhat gratified to learn that the preoperative individuals whom Riki persuaded to expose themselves at the festival were eventually persuaded to not re-enter the festival after meeting with Lisa Vogel; and I hope that they have also come to realize just how much they were exploited by Riki in order to further her own insatiable ego trip.

Several letters have characterized not allowing anyone who identifies as a woman to attend the festival as “transphobia.,” which it most surely is not. I can say that it is not with such assurance because I happen to be the person who initially coined the term “transphobia” back in 1989, and I challenge anyone to find a prior useage of this term. When I coined this term I certainly did not intend it to refer to the desire to not have to see a penis at a women’s festival.

Other women have claimed that the process of gender deconstruction inevitably leads to a position of having to allow anyone who identifies as a woman to attend the festival. This is also not true. One woman made the assertion in the previous issue that “Gender deconstruction means precisely that people are to be responsible for claiming thier own gender identity, and are not to rely on others to define it for them.” This statement is nothing but self-serving balderdash. The objective of any kind of deconstructionism is

to distinguish between what is socially constructed and what is not; it is not to arrive at whatever preconceived conclusion that one wishes to arrive at.

I was also quite disappointed to learn of the support provided to “Son of Camp Trans” by the Lesbian Avengers; and have come to realize that they are simply another organization that is more concerned about playing that tired old discredited “more-radical-than-thou” game than they are with the legitimate concerns of women at MWMF.

MWMF has a perfectly legitimate reason for excluding preoperative MTF transsexuals; that is, that allowing them in would also open the door to drag queens and anyone else who just wanted to enter. However, allowing postoperative transsexual women to attend would not result in such consequences. I hope that this will someday become its official policy. The actions of groups like “Son of Camp Trans” only further impede this goal.

Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival Affirms Womyn-Born Womyn Space by Lisa Vogel, MWMF (July 2000)

The Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival is the largest and longest running womyn’s Festival in the United States. This week-long camping event in Northern Michigan celebrates womyn’s culture, community and ingenuity. With over 6,000 womyn attending annually from every U.S. state, Canadian province and over 30 other countries, the Festival acts as a petri-dish in which the popular discussions of the lesbian community are incubated. For 25 years Michigan has been in large part defined by the politics that are woven into the infrastructure of this city of womyn in the woods. The hallmark of Michigan has always been its creation of separate, self-defined and deeply honored womyn’s space.

From its earliest days, the Festival was described as “A Gathering of Mothers and Daughters for Womyn-Born Womyn” (1978 promotional flier). Now in its 25th year, the Festival continues to claim the right and the responsibility to state clearly that the Michigan Festival is intended for womyn-born womyn. This is defined as individuals who were born as womyn, and have lived their entire life experience as womyn, and currently identify as womyn.

The Festival has always been home to many womyn who would be considered gender outlaws, either because of their sexual orientation (lesbian, bisexual, polyamorous, etc.) or their gender presentation (butch, bearded, androgynous, femme - and every combination or permutation in between). The essence of the Festival is that it is one week a year that

is by, for and about the glorious diversity of womyn- born womyn.

It is a powerful, uncommon experience that womyn enjoy during this week of living in the company of other womyn-born womyn. There are many opportunities in the larger world to share space with the entire queer community, and many spaces that welcome all who define themselves as female. In the year 2000, the queer community represents such rich diversity that there surely is room for all affinity groups to enjoy separate, self-determined, supportive space if they choose. The queer community is strong enough to hold our incredible diversity with mutual respect and support.

There are many divergent viewpoints on the larger gender discussion happening in the queer community. Many of the womyn essential to the Michigan Festival are leaders and supporters in trans-solidarity work and the broader LGBT movement. The Michigan Womyn's Music Festival supports this larger discussion, and values and respects the transsexual community as integral members of the broader queer community. We call upon the transsexual community in turn to respect and support womyn-born womyn space.

Festival Affirms Womyn-Born Womyn Policy: A Handout distributed at MWMF (August 2000)

Welcome to our 25th Anniversary Festival! For one week a year, the Festival provides a space for us to gather as womyn who were born as, and have lived our entire life experience as womyn. This is a rare and precious community that we share for this week, and as Festival organizers we feel that one of the important ingredients in this community is that we have shared our entire life experience - however varied that may be - as womyn. The hallmark of Michigan has been its creation of separate, self-defined and honored womyn's space.

We recognize that there is great diversity of opinions and feelings on this issue. Ours is a community built upon feminist principles; we believe that we are big enough to hold our diversity of opinion with respect and love. The Worker Community has been in discussion during the weeks prior to the Festival opening, acknowledging the diversity of opinion that exists on this issue while maintaining our passionate commitment to open communication, respectful dialogue and unity as a womyn's community. To maintain the focus of our Festival week, we offer the following guidelines to the community as we move into a positive and powerful celebration of womyn's space at our 25th Festival.

1. The Festival is womon-born womon space. That means it is an event intended for womyn who were born and who have lived their entire life experience as female - and who currently identify as a womon.

2. We ask the transsexual community to respect and support this intention.

3. We ask all Festival-goers and staff to honor our commitment that no womon's gender will be questioned on the land. Michigan must remain a space that recognizes and celebrates the full range of what it means to be a womon-born womon. Butch/gender-ambiguous womyn should be able to move about our community with confidence that their right to be here will not be questioned.

4. We also have a commitment to run the Festival in a way that keeps faith with the womyn-born womyn policy, which may mean denying admission to individuals who self-declare as male-to-female transsexuals or female-to-male transsexuals now living as men (or asking them to leave if they enter).

5. We ask that womyn attending the Festival trust the worker community to be the ones to follow up on the bottom line issues outlined here. We further emphatically ask you to not question any womon's sex on this land. Last year some butch and gender-ambiguous womyn had their right to be here as womyn questioned - that is not acceptable on this land. We understand how the CampTrans action in '99 provoked this response - we also know as a community we cannot afford to go there again this year. Please trust that everyone who is on this land is a womon-born womon.

6. Just as we call upon the transsexual community to support womyn-born womyn space, we encourage support and respect for the transsexual community. As a community, we in Michigan are committed to fighting prejudice and ignorance of all kinds; we do not want to see transphobia fostered here or anywhere. Claiming one week a year as womyn-born womyn space is not in contradiction to being trans-positive and trans-allies. In the year 2000, the queer community enjoys such rich diversity. We believe there is room for all affinity groups to enjoy separate and supportive space, and also to come together in broader alliances to fight prejudice that affects all of us. We are strong enough to hold our incredible diversity in mutual respect and support.

Thank you for your good open hearts and minds. Let's have a great Festival!

The Michigan Women's Music Festival and Transsexual Women: A Statement by Transsexual Women by Beth Elliott, Davina Anne Gabriel, et al. (August 2000)

As the Michigan Women's Music Festival approaches its 25th anniversary, two women once again appear determined to engage in actions that are inconsistent with the wishes of the majority of Festival attendees: festival organizer Lisa Vogel and gender activist Riki Anne Wilchins.

Ms. Vogel shows no signs of relenting from her long-standing position that post-operative male-to-female transsexual women are not welcome to celebrate women's lives and bodies at the Festival alongside other women. Vogel's womyn-born womyn policy also prevents non-transsexual festigoers from sharing that celebration with the transsexual women who are their friends, lovers, and allies. Ms. Vogel is clearly out of step with most Festival attendees. In a survey conducted inside the 1992 festival, respondents indicated by almost a 3-to-1 majority (73%) that they had no objection to including transsexual women, as long as they had undergone sex reassignment surgery. In the last eight years, pro-inclusion attitudes appear, if anything, to have increased.

For her part, Ms. Wilchins appears ready to advance her long-standing belief that the Festival should welcome any persons who "live as women" - regardless of the length of time they have done so, the extent of their commitment to a female identity, or the appearance of their genitals. Last year, Wilchins and her allies brought a pre-operative transsexual woman and a post-phalloplasty female-to-male transsexual man into the festival, in a misguided protest against Vogel's policy. In doing so, Wilchins deliberately violated the wishes of most festigoers, that the Festival be women's space and a "penis-free" zone. Her confrontational tactics denied festigoers their right to assemble on their own terms, on private land, in a safe space. She appears poised to employ those damaging tactics again this year.

We, the undersigned transsexual women, find both Vogel's and Wilchins' positions to be untenable, anti-feminist, and ultimately oppressive of women, both transsexual and non-transsexual. We urge Ms. Vogel, Ms. Wilchins, and their allies, to reconsider their positions, to refrain from physical confrontation, and to respect what appears to be the consensus of the festigoers regarding transsexual women's inclusion in the Festival.

We believe it is time for the Festival to welcome transsexual women on the same basis as any other women.

We also believe it is inappropriate for transsexual women who have not undergone sex reassignment surgery, or for male-bodied/male-identified persons, to enter or request to enter the Festival. Women, transsexual and non-transsexual, deserve the opportunity to gather together in a safe space, free of male genitals. Bodies do matter. Male genitals can be so emblematic of male power and sexual dominance that their presence at a festival designed to provide safe women's space is inappropriate. People with male genitals who enter the Festival risk offending and oppressing other attendees; we urge them not to do so.

We acknowledge that a post-op only/no-penis policy is not perfect and will not please everybody. While support among Festigoers for such a policy is overwhelming, it is not unanimous. Moreover, this policy cannot address issues of race and class: specifically, the exclusion of women, especially women of color, who are not able to afford sex reassignment surgery. This is simply the best and fairest policy possible, one that balances inclusion of transsexual women with legitimate concerns for the integrity of women's culture and safe women's space. It is important to affirm that womanhood is a matter of more than anatomy alone. The Festival has proven this over the years, and so have the lives of transsexual women committed to women's culture and community. Confrontational tactics dishonor our sisterhood and have no place here.

We agree with Ms. Wilchins that freedom of gender expression for all people is important. But, as feminists, we also believe it is important to acknowledge the reality of sex differences and of how they structure human society in critical ways. The Festival is a feminist event that celebrates femaleness, and the love and creativity of the sisterhood of women. We resent anyone attempting to co-opt it for a competing purpose. We resent anyone confronting our sisters in a disrespectful way, or suggesting we share Ms. Wilchins adversarial relationship to the women's community. She should find a different party to crash.

Beth Elliott
Davina Anne Gabriel
Anne Lawrence
Gwendolyn Ann Smith
Jessica Xavier

A Transfeminist Response to “A Statement by Transsexual Women” by Nicole Storm, Liby S. Pease, et al. (August 2000)

We, the undersigned transsexual and intersexed womyn, friends, and allies, acknowledge the contributions Anne Lawrence and other signatories to “The Michigan Women’s Music Festival and Transsexual Women: A Statement by Transsexual Women and their Women Friends” have made, and continue to make, to the transsexual womyn’s community. However, we must protest the tone and content of this Statement, which she and others are currently circulating regarding the controversies of transwomyn’s and intersexed womyn’s inclusion at the Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival. This statement may be specifically directed at people attempting to participate in MWMF, but we find that the implications of it reach far beyond this one festival, which in itself we see as almost irrelevant.

We find especially troubling the following passage from the Statement, regarding the festival’s “no penis policy”:

“Moreover, this policy cannot address issues of race and class: specifically, the exclusion of women, especially women of color, who are not able to afford sex reassignment surgery. This is simply the best and fairest policy possible, one that balances inclusion of transsexual women with legitimate concerns for the integrity of women’s culture and safe women’s space.”

To acknowledge the struggles of the poor womyn and womyn of color among us in one sentence, then in the next sentence call excluding them the “best and fairest policy possible” falls on our ears as a cavalier dismissal of the most vulnerable among us. We feel that the issues of womyn’s culture include the culture of poor womyn and womyn of color, including poor transsexual and intersexed womyn, and that the author(s) and signatories of the Statement, however unconsciously, are framing the debate in blatantly classist and racist terms. It is objectionable to us to suggest that surgical procedures beyond the means of many are a proper price of inclusion into womyn’s culture.

We also feel the need to state that this “no penis” policy falls on intersexed womyn as well as transsexual womyn, and that these womyn are being ignored in this debate. As intersexed people face extreme forms of patriarchally-generated social and medical abuse in their daily lives, we can scarcely find a more poignantly feminist cause than the right of intersexed people for self-determination.

We can only read the following passage from the Statement with the utmost irony and shock: “Male genitals

can be so emblematic of male power and sexual dominance that their presence at a festival designed to provide safe women's space is inappropriate."

The irony for us is that it is the utter lack of economic power that prevents so many from acquiring the much desired female genitals presumed to be anti-emblematic of such power and dominance. This inability to avail themselves of reassignment surgery has resulted in violence, sometimes fatal, against poor transwomyn and transwomyn of color countless times. Furthermore, these womyn have often been denied protective services other womyn take for granted, such as police protection and emergency shelters, prior to being assaulted, and medical services afterward. To suggest that these most at-risk members of the womyn's community represent a threat to womyn's safety merely by their presence strikes us as sadly ludicrous and infuriating at the same time.

Some of us agree with Riki Anne Wilchins' tactics, others of us don't. Our objection is to the racist and classist aspects of this message, and also to the presumption that the Statement represents the one true feminist perspective on the matter, calling almost any conceivable dissent from their position "anti-feminist".

In another passage from the Statement: "The Festival is a feminist event that celebrates femaleness, and the love and creativity of the sisterhood of women. We resent anyone attempting to co-opt it for a competing purpose."

The author(s) characterize the inclusion of transwomyn for whom reassignment surgery is beyond reach as a "competing purpose". If those who presume to speak for all womyn will only recognize the legitimacy of post-operative transwomyn, then they are saying that womynhood can be bought, and we find this concept loathsome beyond belief. It should also be noted that white middle and upper-class womyn have historically silenced complaints of racism and classism by womyn of color and poor and working-class womyn by arguing that anyone who complains about racism and classism within feminism must be "attempting to co-opt" feminism. Is it really feminist to attempt to silence womyn's voices in this manner?

We feel that the impact of this Statement by Lawrence et al goes far beyond MWMF, which is also beyond the means of many, and is in many ways beside the point. Indeed, the implications of this attitude reach beyond the trans and intersexed communities and into the lives of poor and working class womyn and womyn of color everywhere.

“Michigan Eight” Evicted over festival’s “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” Policy by Camp Trans (August 2000)

Eight young attendees, variously identifying as trannie boys, boydyke, FTM, and lesbian were evicted from the Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival (MWMF) this Saturday evening after they refused to meet the Festival’s “womyn-born womyn only” policy. The eight were members of an ad-hoc Chicago group called the “Camp Trans Planning Committee” and the Boston and Chicago chapters of the Lesbian Avengers.

More than 60 gender activists from these groups plus members of Transsexual Menace, supportive attendees, and renowned activist Dana Rivers gathered across the road from the Festival this year to do outreach and education on what they viewed as a discriminatory policy being unfairly applied.

Said one, “Half the women in there are butch, boy, or, or FTM identified and wouldn’t be able to say they were ‘womyn-born womyn’ if asked.”

Past evictions had focused narrowly on transgender women and the eight’s expulsion marks the first time the “womyn-born womyn only” policy has been used against trannie boys, boydykes, FTM’s, Lesbian Avengers and young gender-variant women. It was widely viewed by most observers as turning a new page in the escalating conflict over the policy’s application.

As thousands of attendees looked on during dinner in the Festival’s huge dining area, the young activists held aloft signs declaring themselves a variety of identities, including “boy,” “FTM,” “intersex,” “drag queen,” and “transwoman.” When they called for diners to join them in a public show of support, more than three hundred stepped forward to stand with them for almost an hour before Festival Security arrived to evict them.

Security escorted the eight to the Main Gate, cut off their attendance wristbands, refused their request for refunds, and expelled them from the grounds.

Their action was a direct challenge to Festival owner Lisa Vogel’s latest attempt to clarify the policy widely criticized as vague and misleading: a flier handed out at the entrance which threatened that any attendee who “self- declared” as an FTM or MTF transsexual or otherwise not being “a womyn-born womyn” would be refused a ticket and face involuntary expulsion.

The new statement was viewed by many as amounting to “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,” and indeed, at noon on Friday as four police officers apparently summoned by the Festival watched on amid scores of attendees, one transgender women who

openly identified herself was denied entrance while several others who did not identify themselves were allowed to buy tickets and enter. By prior agreement, none were among those who held signs and risked eviction.

But all were from among sixty mostly-young gender activists with names like Casey, Gunner, and Jack who variously identified as boyz, andros, trannie boys, lesbian, bi, FTM, girlz, boychick, femme, stone-butch, or simply “queer” who held a series of workshops and discussion groups on the “Don’t Ask Don’t Tell” gender policy. This year’s “Camp Trans” culminated in a live music show with lights, sound, and stage set up by Chicago-based “Camp Trans Planning Committee.”

The Festival’s first expulsion occurred in 1991 when attendee Nancy Burkholder and a friend were both forcibly evicted after she identified herself in a workshop as a transgender woman.

Since then, in 1993, ‘94, and ‘99 gender activists, Avengers and members of Transsexual Menace have camped out on public property across from the Festival’s Main Gate to hold “Camp Trans,” this year more inclusively also called “GenderCamp 2000.”

Said one activist, “Vogel’s policy towards transsexuals is now the same as the US military’s towards homosexuals. But ‘Don’t Ask Don’t Tell’ only works when the target group collaborates by remaining silent. Well, we aren’t silent. We don’t identify as ‘womyn-born womyn’ -- we don’t know what it even means or why it should be used against us or our trannie friends.”

Eight Activists Kicked Out of Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival by Chicago Camp Trans Planning Committee (August 2000)

On Saturday, August 12, members of the Boston and Chicago Lesbian Avengers, members of the Chicago Camp Trans Planning Committee, and others not affiliated with any organization were told to leave the Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival for self-declaring as a myriad of identities that do not fall under MWMF’S definition of ‘womyn-born- womyn’. These activists were joined by nearly 300 supporters in an action Saturday at MWMF’s main dining tent protesting the “don’t-ask- don’t-tell” policy that is used against transsexual and transgendered attendees. A flier passed out to the attendees early in the week stated that if any person “self-declared” (came out) as a “male to female transsexual or a female to male transsexual (living their life as a male)” they

would be denied a ticket or asked to leave the festival.

This policy states that if a transsexual person, regardless of surgical/hormonal status or specific gender identification, comes out about their identity in any fashion, they are not allowed to participate in the festival. No one else at MWMF is asked to be in the closet. A double standard is constructed for those who do not abide by a strict binary gender system. While any participant is encouraged to celebrate subversive sexual orientations, bodies, experiences, and expressions, transpeople are not given these same rights to exist as a whole person on the land.

On Saturday, hundreds of activists and supporters gathered in the main dining area to put the 'no transsexual' policy to the test. They held up hand-made signs reading "MtFs Join Us!", "FTM's Are Here", "Trannies Join Us!", "T*Boy!", and signs from non-trans identified allies reading "Stop Don't Ask Don't Tell", and "End Binary Gender!". These signs were held to not only show support for the inclusion of transsexual women at the festival; it was directed at the festival coordinators forcing them to make a decision would they allow the self-declared trans activists in, or would they truly enforce their policy, become the policing force on the land, and kick them out?

After the security guards refused to respond to the action, once again ignoring trans existence on the land, several activists approached the security guards, asking for a chance to discuss. Initially, the response was negative, but after the activists began declaring their identities, some which were in conflict with the "womyn-born-womyn" only policy, a discussion began. One by one, the activists declared their identities and forced the security guards to act. The first activist self-identified as a female-to-male transsexual, and was asked to leave the land. S/he responded that s/he would not leave voluntarily because his/her identity should be welcomed on the land and her/his identity did not conflict with the intentions of MWMF. The activist was then told to leave after clarification of her/his statements, and to wait for an escort off the land. After that incident, activists lined up to self-declare their identities, and were each told to leave the land. Because they refused to stay in the closet any longer, eight Michigan Womyn's Music Festival attendees were kicked out of the festival. Don't Ask Don't Tell was now the law of the land.

Michigan Womyn's Music Festival Celebrates 25 Years of Commitment to Womyn-Born Womyn Space by MWMF (August 2000)

For the second consecutive year, the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival was targeted by a small group of activists calling themselves "Camp Trans Y2K" (CTY2K). Operating from a makeshift camp across the road from the Festival's front gate, CTY2K caused small disruptions of the Festival through a series of planned actions. These actions and the Festival's response are described below.

On Friday, August 11th, a group of about 25 activists from CTY2K approached the Festival's front gate, after being joined by a small group of festie-goer supporters. The response team of Festival staff represented a mix of butch, femme and other womyn across a gender-identity continuum, most of whom are active in trans-ally work. The development of this team and its position followed several weeks of dialogue in the worker community on the issue, along with advance preparations with key crews.

The team met the group at the gate and distributed copies of the Festival's policy statement, which included a request that the transsexual community respect and support womyn-born womyn space and provided explicit notice that individuals who self-declared as male-to-female transsexuals or female-to-male transsexuals might be denied entrance or asked to leave. Riki Anne Wilchins, a Camp Trans organizer who self-declared as a male-to-female transsexual during the 1999 Camp Trans action and caused significant disruption to last year's Festival, was denied entrance at the gate at that point.

At the request of Festival staff, only those activists seeking to purchase Festival tickets (approximately 8 individuals) then proceeded to the Box Office. At the Box Office they individually declared themselves as having various gender/sex identities and challenged the Box Office to sell them tickets. Presentations included: "I'm a dyke but I don't consider myself a woman. Will you sell me a ticket?" "I was born a woman but I'm a boy. Will you sell me a ticket?" "I'm a transgendered woman. Will you sell me a ticket?" "I'm a drag queen trapped in a woman's body. Will you sell me a ticket?"

Each declaration was met by the same response from Festival staff: "This event is intended for womyn-born womyn: womyn who were born as and lived their entire life experience as womyn. We're asking you to respect that intention." When invited to enquire further about each

individual's gender or sex identity, Festival staff reiterated the festival's policy against questioning anyone's gender. Despite all of the other self-descriptions, no one clearly or unambiguously self-declared as a male-to-female or female-to-male transsexual at the Box Office and all who requested tickets were sold them.

The group proceeded into the Festival but did not attract significant attention or support. Activities were limited to passing out zines and other literature and briefly positioning a banner in front of the Night Stage area during the evening show.

On Saturday, August 12th, CTY2K members and supporters gathered at 5:00 pm outside the Main Kitchen. Stating their intention to demonstrate in a peaceful, non-confrontational manner, the CTY2K members stood in a cluster with signs declaring various gender identities and called out for trans-allies to join them. Others talked with passers-by, handing out stickers and literature and encouraging festie-goers to come out to Camp Trans for a concert and dinner later that night. Although there were a large number of festival-goers in the area (for dinner or en route to the Acoustic Stage), the demonstration attracted relatively little interest or support.

After about an hour, the CTY2K group changed their approach. Moving towards and surrounding five Festival staffers in a tight cluster, a group of 30 - 40 activists repeated the same kind of statements that several members had made at the Box Office the previous day. One by one many in the group declared some form of gender identity and demanded to know if the Festival was going to make them leave. Festival staff repeated the same information as they had provided the previous day and refused to question anyone's gender despite provocation to "look down my pants." At this point, several of the activists switched from their original gender declaration (e.g. "I'm a transgendered boy") and began declaring themselves as female-to-male transsexuals. In one case, an individual declared as "a male-to-female transsexual and a womon-born womon."

During this process, when an individual declared that s/he was transsexual, Festival staff sought clarification of what had been said, and then asked that individual to leave. The CTY2K activists demanded to be forced to leave. When Festival staff stated that they would not be physically removed, the activists demanded to be "told" to leave, rather than asked to leave. Festival staff, speaking only to the specific individuals who had self-declared as transsexuals, then told those individuals to leave. Then, at the request

of the protesters, and to prevent disruption to the flow of 3,000 womyn who would soon be leaving the Acoustic Stage, Festival staff provided an escort to the Front Gate.

The small group that remained at the Main Kitchen continued to argue and attempt to provoke further confrontation, but soon lost energy and disbursed. The individuals being escorted out, and their supporters, continued to cause a disruption as they traveled through the Festival, shouting misrepresentations of their and the Festival's actions. In addition to becoming more verbally provocative, the group's action disrupted pedestrian and Festival vehicle traffic, and generated feelings of ill will towards the Festival among some festie-goers.

Along the route to the Front Gate, CTY2K activists claimed they were all being "evicted" - despite the detailed process of determining who was and wasn't being asked to leave at the Main Kitchen - and the process of self-declaration and confrontation began for the third time. Festival staff made it clear along the route and at the Front Gate that the Festival was only asking those individuals to leave who had self-declared that they were not womyn-born womyn and they were either male-to-female transsexuals or female-to-male transsexuals currently living as men. Ultimately the wrist tickets of 4 individuals were removed. Their money was not refunded, consistent with the Festival's policy that no refunds are provided after July 6th which appears in all promotional materials and was reiterated during the Main Kitchen process.

In response to a request from CTY2K activists for an opportunity to make their viewpoint known directly to Festival representatives, Festival staff agreed to post a meeting time and place by noon on Sunday in two locations on the land.

On Sunday, August 13th, Festival staff posted a flier agreeing to meet with and listen to the viewpoints of CTY2K at 7:00 pm at Camp Trans. At 7:00 pm, Festival staff arrived at Camp Trans to find only one activist remaining who said they did not want to represent the group.

What's next...?

The Michigan Womyn's Music Festival remains clear and firm in our commitment to maintain the Festival as womyn-born womyn space. Just as white allies are asked to respect womyn of color only space, we ask the transsexual community to respect womyn-born womyn space. Supporting womyn-born womyn space is no more inherently transphobic than supporting womyn of color space is "racist." We refuse to be forced into false dichotomies that equate being pro-

womyn-born womyn space with being anti-trans.

Michigan has always been home to womyn-born womyn who represent every point along the continuum of gender identity: from butch to femme and beyond butch and femme, including many who consider themselves transgendered. We remain committed to providing space for womyn-born womyn to gather in celebration of our diverse identities as womyn-born womyn.

***What's a Festival Without a Controversy?* by MWMF (August 2000)**

For a quarter century, the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival has been a magnet for the debates and disputes of the larger feminist and lesbian communities. This year was no different, as the Festival was the scene of a protest demonstration by a group of activists calling themselves "Camp Trans Y2K" (CTY2K).

The hallmark of Michigan has always been its creation of separate, self-defined and honored womyn's space. A flier developed through weeks of dialogue in the worker community and distributed to all festival-goers stated, "For one week a year, the Festival provides a space for us to gather as womyn who were born as, and have lived our entire life experience as womyn. This is a rare and precious community that we share for this week, and as Festival organizers we feel that one of the important ingredients in this community is that we have shared our entire life experience - however varied that may be - as womyn."

CTY2K activists expressed their opposition to the Festival's womyn-born womyn focus from Forest Service land across the road from the Festival's front gate. On Friday and Saturday, August 11 - 12, a group of about 25 activists entered the Festival and caused a series of small disruptions.

Festival staff - representing a mix of butch, femme and other womyn across a gender-identity continuum, most active in trans-ally work - met the group at the gate and distributed copies of the Festival's policy statement, which included a request that the transsexual community respect and support womyn-born womyn space and provided explicit notice that individuals who self-declared as male-to-female transsexuals or female-to-male transsexuals might be denied entrance or asked to leave.

Despite provocation from the activists throughout the two days, Festival staff held firm to their commitment that no one's gender or sex would be questioned on the land. If an individual clearly self-declared as a male-to-female or

female-to-male transsexual during the course of the protest action, they were asked to leave. As a result of this clearly and repeatedly articulated policy, the wrist tickets of 4 individuals were removed. Their money was not refunded, consistent with the Festival's policy that no refunds are provided after July 6th.

"Michigan has always been home to womyn-born womyn who represent every point along the continuum of gender identity: from butch to femme and beyond butch and femme, including many who consider themselves transgendered. We remain committed to providing space for womyn-born womyn to gather in celebration of our diverse identities as womyn-born womyn," says Festival organizer Lisa Vogel.

"It saddens me that the young womyn we used to call 'baby-dykes' are now growing up questioning the validity of the very concept of being female. Many of us growing up, myself included, struggled fiercely with the limited societal definition of what being a 'woman' meant. That's why we created this Festival --- as an exploration and celebration of the full range of how we are and all we can be as womyn. We refuse to see "woman" turned into a dirty word or defined as an out-dated construct.

"The Michigan Womyn's Music Festival remains clear and firm in our commitment to maintain the Festival as womyn-born womyn space. At the same time, we stand as allies with the trans community and refuse to be forced into false dichotomies that equate being pro-womyn-born womyn space with being anti-trans.

"We believe the greater queer community is strong enough to support separate space for all affinity groups. There are times all oppressed communities need separate spaces, even away from their allies. The Festival community learned this in the creation of a separate and honored Womyn of Color space. We call upon the transsexual community to respect and support the community at Michigan, which by its very definition is separate space for womyn-born womyn."

Response to the Violence Against The Butchies and Le Tigre
by Rachel Carnes, Radio Sloan, et al. (October 2001)

We, the undersigned, speak as artists and performers who directly or indirectly have been called on to make a statement against the "womyn-born womyn" admissions policy at the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival. Some of us have been asked to make a public statement against the Butchies and Le Tigre on the grounds that, by playing the festival, they

and their supporters are unilaterally transphobic.

The focus of this letter is safety. It is written and signed with love, honor, respect, and support for our trans community, and in hopes of making a safe space to talk shit out and work together towards real trans inclusion in the big queer team. Regardless of our individual feelings and opinions on MWMF entrance policy and the tangled mess of issues around it, collectively we find the present climate of discussion to be unsafe. The Butchies and Mr. Lady have been verbally attacked, endlessly harassed and physically threatened. Bomb scares, death threats and prankcalls are not figures of speech. This kind of violence (and the trickledown name calling, gossip, misquotes and hate talk) is sick and intolerable. There can be no productive dialogue between people who are being physically and psychologically threatened and those who are threatening them.

A united stand against violence is our only hope of moving on to real issues of trans inclusion in both the queer and women's movements. We support the Butchies' statement as one of the many voices among us. We support the voice of one who opposes them as another. As members of a divided community, we demand willingness to bridge and rebuild.

We encourage candid disagreement, forthright opinions, and positive conflict tempered with patience and respect. We want questions and dialogue rather than answers and one-liners. As a community of people who are queer, pro-queer, trans, and pro-trans, we agree to disagree.

We sign this statement as an act of nonviolence. We will not tolerate any form of violence against women or transfolk or queers. We support and believe the Butchies and Le Tigre when they tell us they have been served death threats. We support our trans community in struggling to be heard. We support our queer community in working out their shit, but we do not support protesters who choose violence as their message medium.

Rachel Carns (the need)
Radio Sloan (the need)
Dvin Kirakosian (the need)
Emily Kingan (the haggard)
STS (the haggard)
Tami Hart

An Open Letter in Support of Protesters by Sadie Crabtree **(October 2001)**

We, the undersigned, stand in support of the nonviolent protesters of the Butchies and other artists who have stated that they support the policy of excluding transsexual women from the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival (MWMF).

We support these actions because they are nonviolent, focused on education, outreach and visibility rather than intimidation and fear.

We support these actions not because we wish to defame these artists, but because we want to educate others about transphobia, and inform consumers of the positions of the political bands they support.

We support these actions because we dream of a world in which transphobia (along with all other forms of bigotry) is not acceptable—and, as activists and allies, we are making that world happen.

We respect and appreciate the contributions that these artists have made to lesbian and feminist movements. By supporting bigotry against transsexual women, however—even if they do not acknowledge that it is bigotry—they leave very vulnerable women and lesbians out of their advocacy, and actually advocate against them.

We support women-only spaces, and recognize the importance of the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival. We know that each year, thousands of women are empowered and energized by that space. We also know that victimized transsexual women are routinely turned away from shelters and rape crisis centers, and that empowered women return home from MWMF to run those shelters. Changing MWMF is not the end of our effort, it is a beginning. We speak first to our sisters, because if our own family will not stand with us, we can never hope to win acceptance and respect for transsexual women from the rest of the world.

We recognize that the irresponsible actions of a few of those opposed to our work, like the recent assault of a nonviolent protester at a Le Tigre show, are not representative of the actions and ideals of all those who disagree with us. We hope that those who do not share our goals, and those to whom our work has been deliberately misrepresented, would have the same respect for us.

We ask Mr. Lady Records to stop portraying the radical, queer, feminist activists working on this issue as violent, homophobic, and misogynist. Such slanderous rhetoric does not end violence, but fuels it, and endangers nonviolent activists. As protesters and supporters of protesters, we

assert that we have never been witness to, or participants in, threats or violence against any of the protested artists.

We notice that whenever transsexual women do activism on their own behalf, even by the most peaceful methods, their activism is called “violence.” The same scrutiny is not applied to the methods of non-transsexual women, even when their methods of protest are identical. The characterization of transsexual women as violent, loud, and pushy, in order to imply that they are similar to men, is a weapon of bigotry that has been used against transsexual women for decades.

We again ask the Butchies, Le Tigre, other women-centered and queer bands, and all those with the power to create change, to support all women and lesbians, and to stand with us in opposition to the exclusion of transsexual women from the Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival.

MWFM Trans-Inclusion Petition by Nomy Lamm, Rachel Carnes, Sadie Crabtree, et al. (November 2001)

We, the undersigned, call for a peaceful re-evaluation of the Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival’s “Womyn-Born-Womyn” policy (hereafter referred to as “the policy”), with the ultimate goal of including all *self-identified* women. We recognize that this change has been in the process for a number of years, and that emotions run high on all sides of the issue. We believe the difficult transition will happen through dialogue of many kinds, through positive outreach and education, peaceful protest, and the building of trust among women on the land.

We are artists, musicians, activists, writers, and community organizers within the queer and women’s communities. Many of us have attended the MWFM as performers, workshop leaders, workers and paying festival-goers. Others of us have not, either because we are not allowed to, or in protest of the policy. We want to change the policy because we love the festival, because we value the tradition of womyn- only space, and because we feel it is time to expand the definition of “womyn” to include transsexual and transgender women. We do not consider trans-women a threat to our safety or identity. We recognize the many voices of trans-women as an integral part of the spectrum that makes up our community.

We have experienced trans-inclusive women-only space, and we believe that self-definition is adequate “proof” of one’s gender. We do not believe that a trans-woman’s legal status or ability to “pass” should determine whether or not she is

allowed on the land. Many womyn have expressed concern that, if the policy were to change, there would be no way to keep men from “dressing up like” women and coming to the festival. We believe the best way to avoid sabotage is to minimize suspicion and infighting, and insist that trans-women are *womyn* and are naturally included in the festival. Many of us have had to face discrimination and harassment because of our gender expression, and we see the scapegoating of trans-women as part of the same cycle of violence. Whether we’re harassed because we “don’t look like women” or we “look like we’re asking for it,” it’s all a part of the same sexist, gender-rigid, patriarchal system that we are trying to resist.

We express our deepest compassion for all people who have suffered under sexism, whose bodies and self-conceptions have been traumatized by male violence and control. We honor and respect the struggle to create and maintain womyn-only space, and recognize that many womyn are instinctively and understandably protective of that space. Some womyn on the land have complained that trans-women’s voices and bodies are triggering for them, because they look and sound “like men.” We believe that, while the presence of trans-women may be triggering for some people, this is a prejudice that can be overcome by building relationships and learning to empathize with each other’s experiences. Many of us have also been accused of being “too manly,” and we know that trans-women are also targets of violence, harassment and rape. Furthermore, we challenge the idea that womyn-only space is inherently safe; we know that women have been raped and children have been assaulted on womyn’s land. We say this not as an accusation, but as a gentle reminder. The inclusion of trans-women on womyn’s land does not bring in a “dangerous element;” what is truly dangerous is a climate of fear, distrust and bigotry that causes us to dehumanize each other.

We challenge essentialism and encourage our community to greet this challenge with courage and creativity. We sign this letter in honor of those who have gone before us in the history of womyn’s struggle, who have risked their lives for the rights of future generations. We believe that gender, identity, and coalition politics have become integral themes in shaping women’s lives and communities, and that our strength is indeed in our diversity. We feel that to open the festival to ALL women, whether assigned at birth or self-identified, is to open our hearts and minds to a greater understanding of, and compassion for, our selves.

Count my name among those who advocate for the inclusion of trans- women at the Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival.

Signed,

1. Nomy Lamm (Sister Spit/The Transfused), Olympia WA
2. Rachel Carns (The Need), Olympia WA
3. Tami Hart (solo artist), Portland OR
4. STS (The Haggard), Portland OR
5. Sadie Crabtree, (Strap-on.org editor), Washington DC

Bitch Roundtable: A Bonus Track

In late 2001, editor Lisa Miya-Jervis of *Bitch* magazine approached me to do a one-to-one dialogue with someone who supported “womyn-born womyn” policy over email. The format was that we would both write a short statement illustrating our views, then respond to each others’ comments, and continue exchanges several more times. Lisa intended this to be a new format to discuss something that are as emotionally charged as this topic.

The problem was that my opponent never responded to my initial opening statement, and eventually dropped out of the dialogue. It’s possible that she just got busy unexpectedly, but it could also be the case that she didn’t know how to respond to what I wrote, because my reasoning for supporting trans inclusion are different from those expressed by Nomy Lamm petition above, for example.

Since this format did not work, Lisa chose instead to do a more conventional face-to-face roundtable, where my opponent cannot abruptly disappear. Because *Bitch* did not use my initial opening statement, I chose to include it in this handbook.

* * * * *

My name is Emi, and I am an activist involved in many issues, particularly around domestic violence, sex workers’ rights, and intersex issues. In addition to having all those backgrounds, I am an Asian dyke, sometimes identifying as genderqueer but more often as “slut” as far as the gender identity goes. I have never attended Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival or Camp Trans for economic and medical reasons (I have disabilities which make camping very difficult), but I have felt both positive and negative

impact of the Festival in feminist/women's spaces that I navigate locally, including within the anti-domestic violence movement.

For me, the notion of women-only spaces evokes a particular blend of comfort, strength, and warmth as well as fear, pain, and disillusionment that is not like anything I have experienced in the society at large. I realize, though, I had not always felt this way, like when I was first awakened to feminism as a first-year college student volunteering on the local rape crisis line. Back then, things were simpler: not only did I believe that I could finally feel free, safe and respected in a women-only space, but I craved such a place, a haven from the pervasive male dominance in the society.

Needless to say, I was naive. I quickly learned that women-only spaces are not as safe or free as I had expected, but are rife with the same old racism, classism, ableism, and even internalized sexism acted on by women against other women, and became more selective about whom I consider my "sister." That is not to say that women-only spaces are the same as the rest of the society, because I think there are several important differences. On the positive side, feminist-inspired women's communities have afforded me the language and frameworks for addressing these violence and oppressions that occur among women. And I would be lying if I said I did not feel even a little bit safer or respected by other women than by men, even though these women can also act out violence and oppression toward me (or I toward them).

But there are also very different kinds of fear and pain that I feel are unique to women-only spaces that I could not find a word for until recently. Here is what I mean: When men act out their misogyny toward me or toward other women, it is a very horrible experience, but at least I have other feminists to validate my feelings. There is no fantasy that this world is safe for women, and I feel empowered through fighting back together against the violence and oppression against us. But when I go into women-only spaces, there are so many fallacies that claim how safe, liberating, and egalitarian these spaces supposedly are that it makes me feel crazy and invalidated for feeling hurt by other women. And when I try to confront other women for their racism, classism, ableism or other oppressions, I frequently get attacked, which is not much different from what happens when I try to address sexism outside of these spaces, except that I am accused of being divisive and left without the support of other feminists that I generally count on for my survival.

Ideally, I want women-only spaces to be a place where we can address ways in which we end up enacting various societal hierarchies among ourselves regardless of our intentions. Of course, there is nothing wrong with enjoying music, celebrating

our collective strength, or just plain having fun, but it should not happen at the cost of women marginalized due to multiple oppressions. One of the common mistakes made by people organizing women's spaces is that they assume that women-only space is safe because sexism is the most damaging of all oppressions for all women, and therefore women should feel safe in a women-only space. As Cherríe Moraga pointed out two decades ago, "[t]he danger lies in ranking the oppressions. The danger lies in failing to acknowledge the specificity of the oppression."

We need to start from the acknowledgement that women-only spaces are not necessarily safe. The myth of safety perpetuates the invisibilization and denial of domestic violence and sexual assault that occur between women, as well as ways in which white women have power over women of color, middle-class women have over working-class women, able-bodied women have over women with disabilities, etc. Instead of using the myth of safety to justify the exclusion of trans people, we should be using the trans inclusion debate as an opportunity to examine myths we hold about our communities and ways they privilege a certain group of women over others.

So what policy should a women-only space have regarding the entrance of trans people? My answer to this question is to leave it ambiguous because world is full of ambiguities. I think it would be enough to say "this space is for women" and not privilege any particular interpretation; privately, of course, there can and will be multiple interpretations, which is as it should be. The problem is not where the boundary is drawn, but the fact that some people insist on drawing a clear, unambiguous boundary where there could not possibly be one.

Gloria Anzaldúa wrote: "A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary... the prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants... Do not enter, trespassers will be raped, maimed, strangled, gassed, shot. The only 'legitimate' inhabitants are those in power, the whites and those who align themselves with whites. Tension grips the inhabitants of the borderlands like a virus. Ambivalence and unrest reside there and death is no stranger." While Anzaldúa was mainly discussing the physical borderland created by the Mexico-U.S. border, trans people are also "raped, maimed, strangled, gassed, shot" as a result of the society's attempt to enforce an unnatural boundary.

I sincerely believe that, if we insist on drawing the national boundaries along the Rio Grande, dividing the region into the U.S. and Mexico, the people who have come from this region have the right to cross the borders freely at any time with or without documents. I also believe that if we insist on creating

gender-specific spaces under the faulty binary view of genders, those who are marginalized and erased by the same faulty binary system have the right to be on whichever side of the line they want to be at any given time in order to maximize their safety and comfort.

This does not mean that I feel comfortable or safe with all or even majority of trans people who might enter the space under the non-policy that I advocate. But I do not feel comfortable nor safe with many other women either, and I have learned to live with that whether or not I like it. It is time for those fortunate people who have felt perfectly comfortable and safe within women-only spaces to examine their unearned privileges, and recognize that their perceived comfort and safety came at other women's expense.

If it were only about a music festival, I would not be compelled to criticize it as much as I do. However, transphobia is a big issue that face women's communities (as well as the rest of the society) everywhere, and so are racism, classism, ableism, etc. I criticize the women-born-women policy not only because I believe that trans people can make better judgment about which spaces they should access than clear and unambiguous policy would, but also because I feel that sentiments and rhetoric used to justify the exclusion are racist, classist, ableist, etc. in that they rely on the myth of safety and the women's universal victimization under the patriarchy.

Other Resources

Web Sites that Support “Womyn-Born Womyn” Policy:

Michigan Womyn's Music Festival
<http://www.michfest.com/>

Lesbian.com
http://www.lesbian.com/news/mich_intro.html

Web Sites that Support Trans Inclusion:

Camp Trans Official Site (not updated since 2001)
<http://www.camptrans.com/>

Camp Trans Chicago Planning Committee
<http://www.angelfire.com/emo/joshisahottie/>

Strap-On.org Activism Page
<http://www.strap-on.org/mwmf.html>

Message Boards that are Generally Supportive of “Womyn-Born Womyn” Policy:

Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival Forum
<http://www.michfest.com/ubb/>

Ms. Magazine Bulletin Board
http://www.lesbian.com/news/mich_intro.html

Message Boards that are Generally Supportive of Trans Inclusion:

Strap-On.org Messageboard
<http://pub118.ezboard.com/bpseudochainsaw>

TechnoDyke.com Forums
<http://www.technodyke.com/forums/>

ButchDykeBoy Message Board
<http://pub82.ezboard.com/bbutchdykeboy5326>

Academic Articles about the Controversy:

Cvetkovich, A. and Wahng, S. (2001). “Don’t stop the music: roundtable discussion with workers from the Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival.” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 7:1, 131-151

Kendel, M, Devor, H., and Strapko, N. (1997). “Feminist and Lesbian Opinions About Transsexuals.” in Bonnie & Vern Bullough & James Elias (Eds.), *Gender Blending* (p. 146-159). Amherst, NY: Prometheus.

Koyama, E. (2000). *Whose feminism is it anyway? The unspoken racism of the trans inclusion debate*. Web site
<http://eminism.org/readings/transfeminism.html>

Mainstream Media Reports about the Controversy:

Dougher, S. and Beck, B. (2001). “Trans America.” *Willamette Week*, October 10, 2001.

Finkelstein, R., Koyama, E, et al. (2002). “Fest in distress.” *Bitch: Feminist Response to Pop Culture*, issue 17, summer 2002.

Taormino, T. (2000). “Trouble in utopia.” *The Village Voice*, Septemer 13, 2000.

Wiltz, T. (2001). “XX marks the spot.” *The Washington Post*, August 16, 2001.

Camp Trans welcomes you...

The four transsexual women who were expelled last year from the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival are back. This year, we're carrying across the road from the festival with our friends and supporters to express our continued opposition to the festival's anti-transsexual policy, the covert statement of it in the festival brochure, the festival's insistence that it is for all women, and the producers' presumption that they can define our gender.

To promote an understanding of gender from a variety of perspectives and to address issues of disenfranchisement in the women's and lesbian communities, we are offering workshops, performances, fan and games, and even food! We hope you'll make time in your festival schedule to come out and visit us, participate in our events, help us out, or just hang out.

Don't miss:

- Leslie Feinberg updating the Sisterhood
- Minnie Bruce Pratt reading from her latest book
- Transsexual versus nontranssexual volleyball
- Fabulous Celtic music by Beyond the Pale
- So you want to grow a beard: female-to-male urges
- The separatist viewpoint on changing sex
- West Coast comedian Mimi = Freed
- The inside scoop on transsexuals in the military
- The first-ever transgender weenie roast
- The only woman expelled from the festival twice
- What they don't show you on *Geraldo*
... and much more

Schedule (see reverse) subject to change (who isn't!). Check for updated schedules at Camp Trans or on the literature tables at One World.

We have made our space as accessible as possible for people with disabilities. We will try to accommodate you in whatever way you need. Deaf participants: We have one woman who can do some signing but if you can bring an interpreter out with you, please do.

We have received endorsements from: ACT-UP member Ann Northrup, Amber Hollibaugh of the Lesbian AIDS Project, Bog Hanson of the Gay and Lesbian Antiviolence Project, author and actor Kate Bornstein, (*Gender Outlaw* and *The Opposite Sex is Neither*), Donald Suggs of the Gay and Lesbian Antidefamation League, performance artist Holly Hughes, poet Cheryl Clarke, Betty Dodson Videos, Susie (Sexpert) Bright, teacher and author Gayle Rubin, author and activist Leslie Feinberg, Tam Duane of the New York City Council, Executive Director of the Lesbian and Gay Community Center of NYC Richard Burns, activist and author Minnie Bruce Pratt, the Imperial Court of New York, the Lesbian Avengers, the Garden State Gender Coalition, Visibility in Pride, the New Jersey Lesbian and Gay Coalition, and the Greater New York Gender Alliance.

1994 Camp Trans Flier

Editor/Author

Emi Koyama is a third-wavin' feminist activist, writer, performer, and organizer synthesizing wide variety of issues and analyses as survivor activism, intersex/disability activism, sex workers' rights, transfeminism, harm reduction, and multi-issue anti-oppression work in general. She is the program assistant of Intersex Society of North America, and the community board chair of Survivor Project.

As a performer, Emi produced and performed at the Northwest version of Intercourse: A Sex and Gender Spoken Word Recipe for Revolution and Sluts Against Rape: An Evening of Performances to Reclaim and Celebrate Our Bodies and Sexualities, and will be touring with the Sex Workers' Art Show National Tour.

Emi's articles and commentaries can be found in her neurotically vast personal web site, www.eminism.org, and have been (or will be) published in *Bitch*, *Fireweed*, *Women's Studies Quarterly*, *GLMA Report* (Gay and Lesbian Medical Association), and several anthologies, not to mention her numerous 'zines.

Emi lives in Portland, Oregon, where she hosts monthly Sex & Gender Open Mike and is putting the "emi" back in feminism since 1975.

About Confluere

Confluere: The Network of Independent Activists & Artists for Social Change is a publicity alliance of third wave feminist activists, artists, and others committed to progressive social change through public education, mobilization, and artistic expression. Basically, we are a "speaker's bureau" without the bureau, meaning that each speaker/performer books her or his own schedule, but we chose to share our resources and contacts in order to reach a broader audience. In addition to launching the collective web site promoting the Confluere network, we will begin mailing brochures and distributing our information at conferences by the end of the year.

Our speakers and performers are available to present and/or perform at universities, community events, and wherever the people are. Many of us are especially experienced in speaking on issues around gender, sexuality, and sex (feminism, queer/LGBT activism, intersex, sex work, etc.) as they relate to students and activists today, but we are involved in many other movements and are committed to integrating the analysis of race, class, ability, nationality, and other systems of inequalities and

injustices into all of our presentations.

Our speakers and some of their expertise are:

Leslie Bull (poet, ex-junkie ho): street prostitution, whore revolution, prisoner family, survival, poverty issues.

Diana Courvant (founder, Survivor Project): transsexual rights, queer domestic violence, disability politics, writing erotica as activism, anti-racism for white allies

Qwo-Li Driskill (founder, Knitbone Productions: A First Nations Ensemble): First Nations, Two-Spirit identities, anti-oppression work, queer and trans people of color, writing as resistance, mixed-race

Thea Hillman (board member, Intersex Society of North America): poetry/spoken-word, writing as activism, application of “coming out”, sex positivity, intersex

Emi Koyama (program assistant, Intersex Society of North America): domestic violence organizing outside of the shelter system, queer domestic violence, working-class sex worker feminisms, intersex

Nomy Lamm (_The Transfused_): fat oppression and capitalism, queerness and disability, punk rock queer feminist art and activism, body politics

For more information about Confluere or to inquire about inviting Confluere speakers/artists to your campus or community event, please feel free to email info@confluere.com or visit <http://www.confluere.com>

Confluere Publications is the ‘zine publishing and distribution arm of Confluere. Following titles (and more) are available from us:

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Introduction to Intersex Activism: A Guide for Allies by Emi Koyama with Intersex Society of North America

Feel Me by Leslie Bull

Turtle and Gorilla by Leslie & Stacey Bull with the Family

Transfeminism: A Collection by Emi Koyama

Teaching Intersex Issues: A Guide for Women’s, Gender & Queer Studies by Emi Koyama & Lisa Weasel

Instigations from the Whore Revolution: A Third-Wave Feminist Response to the Sex Work “Controversy” by Emi Koyama

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“There are only two kinds of lesbians. Those who have been to the Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival. And those who shave their body parts.”

— Shelly Roberts, in *Robert’s Rules of Lesbian Living* (1996)

“Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish us from them. A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants. Los atravesados live here: the squint-eyed, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulato, the half-breed, the half dead... Do not enter, trespassers will be raped, maimed, strangled, gassed, shot. The only ‘legitimate’ inhabitants are those in power, the whites and those who align themselves with whites. Tension grips the inhabitants of the borderlands like a virus. Ambivalence and unrest reside there and death is no stranger.”

— Gloria Anzaldúa, in *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987)

“Here’s the way I think of it: If the KKK... asked me to play their music festival, I’d play it in a second, just to have that opportunity to educate them. This is the same thing.”

— “Animal” of Bitch and Animal, in *Now: Toronto’s News and Entertainment Weekly*, July 25, 2002.

Confluere Publications
c/o Eminism.org
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