Trans - What does it mean?

Trans (transgender, trans-identified) is the term most often adopted by those who cross gender boundaries in one or more ways: presentation (e.g., clothing), role, behaviour, or identity (as female, male, or other). It includes:

- **Transgenderists** - gender identity does not match birth-assigned sex
- **Transsexuals** - gender identity does not match birth-assigned sex; usually desire sex reassignment
- **Intersex** - mixed sex characteristics at birth
- **Cross-dressers** - presentation is associated with the “opposite” gender some, or all of the time
- **Third-sex** (bigendered, pangendered) - identity is both male and female, neither male nor female, or a combination of genders

As far back as I can remember, I felt different. I was criticized for desiring to dress in ways associated with my non-biological gender and for “acting” similar to the opposite birth gender.

~ Transgender Youth Survey
Frequently Asked Questions

Why don't I know any trans people?
You probably do - you just don't know they are trans. Most trans people do not disclose or express their true gender; however, a growing number are coming out and insisting on having their rights respected. There are trans students, staff and faculty at Queen's.

Are there both male and female trans people?
There are likely equal numbers of female and male trans people; but, because transsexual men (female-to-male) "pass" more easily, they tend to be less visible than transsexual women. Similarly, there seem to be fewer female-to-male cross-dressers, as it is more acceptable for women to wear "male" clothing.

Aren't transsexuals just lesbians and gay men who can't accept their sexual orientation?
Sexual orientation differs from gender identity. A trans person may be heterosexual, lesbian, gay or bisexual. Often trans people who are heterosexual are assumed to be same-sex oriented by those who focus only on biological gender cues.

Who are cross-dressers?
The majority of cross-dressers are heterosexuals who are comfortable with their gender and sexual identities. People cross-dress to shed their usual gender role or for performance (drag queens, drag kings). As noted above, female-to-male cross-dressers tend to be least visible.

We’re born naked, and from there it’s all drag. ~ RuPaul
Discrimination

*Transphobia* refers to negative attitudes and behaviour towards those who do not conform to conventional conceptions of gender. Trans people, lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and their supporters are typically the targets of transphobia. It is pervasive in mainstream culture and results in people being rejected, harassed, assaulted, even murdered because they do not adhere to gender norms. Trans people are denied access to a broad range of services, including medical care and social services. Transphobia, heterosexism and sexism are closely linked, with each reinforcing gender stereotypes and roles.

It’s not only people who intentionally transgress gender who get into trouble. Eventually the gender system lets everyone down. It seems to be rigged that way. Sometimes, even with all the time and effort we put into obeying the rules, we get hurt. We can get badly hurt by being a real man or a real woman. ~ Kate Bornstein

What is Queen’s doing?

The rights of trans people are protected by human rights codes and the Queen’s Harassment/Discrimination Policy. *Gender identification* is a ground of prohibited discrimination in our policy. The Transgender/Transsexual Policy Group has been working to increase trans accessibility in residences, employment and campus services. Because of the discrimination shared by gender and sexual minorities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans groups have evolved on campus.
What can you do?

- Educate yourself on gender and trans issues
- Watch films, read books, attend a workshop
- Identify your own gender biases: what’s your stake in maintaining rigid gender roles?
- Challenge transphobic remarks and jokes whenever possible
- Incorporate gender diversity and trans issues into your curricula and class discussions
- Invite trans speakers for seminars, workshops, films and discussion groups
- Support local trans events and activists

The problem with transexual women is not that we are trapped in the wrong bodies. The truth is that that is a fairly trivial affair corrected by doctors and sharp scalpels. The problem is that we are trapped in a society which alternates between hating and ignoring, or tolerating and exploiting us and our experience.

~ Riki Anne Wilchins
For More Information

Visit our web page at www.queensu.ca/humanrights and click on TG/TS Policy Group. Or check out these resources:

At Queen’s

Coming Out, Living After Discussion Group
comingoutdiscussiongroup@yahoo.ca

Education on Queer Issues Project - 533-2725
http://www.myams.org/sic/equip.asp

Human Rights Office - 533-6886
http://www.queensu.ca/humanrights

Positive Space Program
http://www.queensu.ca/humanrights
posspace@post.queensu.ca

In the Kingston Community

HIV/AIDS Regional Services - 545-3698
http://www.hars.ca

Kingston Pride Committee
http://www.kingstonpride.org

Out in Kingston Web Site
http://www.outinkingston.org

Books, documents and videos are available at the Stauffer Library and the Human Rights Office
The Internet (all preceded by www.)

- Gender Education and Advocacy - gender.org
- International Found. for Gender Ed - ifge.org
- Intersex Society of North America - isna.org
- PFLAG - pflag.org
- Trans Family - transfamily.org

Films (available at local video stores)

- Transamerica (2005)
- By Hook or By Crook (2001)
- Almost Human (2000)
- Hedwig and the Angry Inch (2000)
- Flawless (1999)
- Boys Don’t Cry (1999)
- All About My Mother (1999)
- Ma Vie En Rose (1997)

Documentaries

- Transgeneration (2005)
- Gender Euphoria (2003)
- In the Flesh, In the Heart . . . (NFB, 2000)
- Southern Comfort (2000)
- The Brandon Teena Story (1998)
- You Don’t Know Dick (1996)

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I’m a Black, gay performance artist – man enough to let his woman shine and woman enough to let his man roar.

~ Craig Hickman (in Feinberg)
