

SOFFA Search Puzzle

Here's a puzzle for you....find all the words that we as SOFFAs hear most often and some words that we'd like to hear more often!!

Word List:

SOFFA
SUPPORT
POSITIVE
FTM
APPRECIATE
COMMUNITY
TESTOSTERONE
EMAIL
TRANSMEN
STRAIGHT
BUTTERFLY
GAY
SURGERY
TRANSGENDER
LOVE
FAMILY
HAPPINESS
CHEST
BRAVE
COUPLE
CONNECT
EXPERIENCE
BISEXUAL
CELEBRATE
BDSM
TOUCH
POLY
TRANSEXUAL
EROTIC
FRIENDS
BOUNDRIES
QUEER
REBIRTH
PARTNER
SAFE
FEMME
MARRIAGE
TRUST
RAGE
HORMONES
PAMPER
INTERNET

S	C	F	G	S	D	N	E	I	R	F	G	R	T	H	N	B	M	J	K	H	Y	U
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Your SOFFA VOICE

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Sept 1, 2000



*Hope everyone had a great summer
and an even better Fall!!!!*



FEATURED ARTICLE

AN EDUCATIONAL OUTING

~~by Scott

Here is the text of what I said in church last Sunday at our Pride service. I was one of four speakers. This is something that Les and I talked about a lot. Since Les is transitioning "on-the-job", so to speak, this was one way to ask everyone to accept him as he is and, at the same time, tell them about my end of things. The other reason was education, to get the concepts of transgender and transsexuality out there so that people are aware of them. I was completely okay with this through a month of refining this speech and the rehearsal on Saturday. When it came time to talk, though, my emotions rose clean into my throat. Afterwards, many people came up to me and thanked me and told me I was brave. I said that I didn't know how brave I was until I started to talk.

Good morning. K talked about being a straight ally. E talked about being a gay man. L talked about being a lesbian parent. I must be here to talk about being bisexual because that's all that's left.

Actually, I'm not. I am here to talk about the silent T at the end of GLBT. T is for transgender, a group we do not often hear about because there is no social venue, apart from the internet, where they can comfortably speak.

I can really only speak with second-hand authority on one aspect of transsexuality that is, in turn, only one facet of the universe of transgender experience. In explaining why I am up here, I am doing one of the worst things I can do to a transsexual: I am outing him, albeit with permission. This is something I will never do to any other transperson.

Les, my wife and partner of thirteen years and the mother of our children, is a transsexual man.

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COLUMN: VIEW FROM THE SOFFA

~by Joell Smith

Male Lust: Pleasure, Power, and Transformation. Edited by Kerwin Kay, Jill Nagle, and Baruch Gould. Harrington Park Press, 2000. \$49.95, hardback, \$24.95, softcover.

My partner picked up this book after seeing an announcement for it come over one of his FTM e-mail lists. We read essays out loud to each other in the car, and recommended stories to each other: "Have you read 'Finding My "Yes!" yet? I was thinking that might be how you feel. Read it, and tell me what you think!" We talked for hours about new concepts, about new insights into old concepts, and I think we are both learning more about the way he is now experiencing his sexuality—we have definitely learned more about communicating about sexuality!

The description on the back of the book says:

Male Lust: Pleasure, Power, and Transformation is a provocative collection of personal essays and poetry that explores the emotional realities of men's diverse relationships with sex and desire. A wide variety of topics and political perspectives are covered, including a discussion of remembering sexual abuse, celebrations of S & M, rants against pornography, and discussions of racism. Five of the essays are by women, and two essays are by transgendered men. This book reflects both gay and straight viewpoints and offers a positive sexual vision that moves far beyond the narrow messages offered in mainstream media.

A review by Pat Califia says, "The feminist sex wars triggered the creation of a huge discourse about the pleasure and danger that lust brought to women's experience. Until now, there has not been a parallel outpouring of personal stories and critical thought about eros from the male perspective."

The essays by transgendered men are Jamison Green's "In the Body of a Man," and Max Wolf Valerio's "Cock in My Pocket." Both are challenging, thought-provoking stories—and excellent reminders that most transmen have never experienced "female lust."

The book is divided into four parts, Challenges, Obsessions, Politics, and Inspiration. Some of the

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National SOFFA Coordinator:

Scott
FTM SOFFA FAQ web page:
<http://members.xoom.com/ftmsofaq/>
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Local SOFFA Coordinators:

-New York City: Natalie: Email: natalie@everest.hunter.cuny.edu
-Tennessee: Tracy: 615-431-9540; Email: WrkingGal@aol.com
-Minnesota: Beth: 612-376-7648; Email: kent0021@maroon.tc.umn.edu
-Arizona: Debra: 520-903-1421; Email: debra@hwr.arizona.edu
-Toronto: Kaia Kruus, 416-466-0235; FAX: 416-466-8812 ; Email: kaia@ca.ibm.com
-San Antonio, TX: Debra: 210-434-6044; (leave msg on answering machine); Email: debra@mac.hwr.arizona.edu
-Richard Brown in Delaware, (gay man, tg ally): Delaware: Richard Brown: 302-366-1805; Email: horned@sprintmail.com

We also have SOFFAs serving in regular positions:

-Lee Smith, Midsouth Coordinator, is a SOFFA and also the Online Outreach Coordinator:
PO Box 118, New Haven, KY, 40051
Email: STHRNBOZZ@aol.com or Alphavamp@aol.com
Phone: 502-549-3846

-Arlene Sandoval-Guerra is the Southeast Region Spanish-speaking Liason(ally): Latino/a Issues: (Se Habla Español) Email: sandoval@aol.com

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Imagine a year and a half long emotional roller coaster ride that takes place in the dark so you can't see when the next curve or dip is coming. The ride slows down occasionally so you think it's almost over but then the rails drop away and you're in free-fall again.

Why do I hold on instead of walking away? When I first asked myself this question my immediate response was that 1) I would not be better off, 2) Les would not be better off, and 3) our children would not be better off.

By staying, I won many such valuable insights. The next was that this dark roller coaster ride was not caused by my partner or his transsexuality. Les did not design this roller coaster. He just pulled the lever that started the ride. No, the scary parts of this ride came from inside me, from old hopes and new fears, and from uncertainty about the future, or in my worst moments, the certainty of a bleak future. I found that I had been measuring my success in life against the mainstream patterns of our society. That was not a pleasing revelation.

--Thinking about gender --

I'll bet that very few of you are unsure as to whether you are a man or a woman. I'll bet that very few of you are unsure as to whether your bodies are male or female. I'll bet that most of you think I just said the same thing twice. I want to stress that gender identity is as distinct from the sex of your body as your sex is distinct from your sexual preference. Your sex is a biological description of your body. Your sexual preference defines your attractions. Your gender identity is who you are. For most of us our gender identity is in accord with the sex of our bodies. For transsexuals, they do not match.

Around every transsexual is a cloud of confused partners, relatives, and friends. Our society does not provide any positive examples for this situation. Sitcoms do not qualify as positive examples.

Imagine that a transsexual confides in you. This person may be just starting the change or may have already completed transition. This person might be your co-worker, your doctor, your patient, your student, your teacher, your neighbor, someone you met at church, or a long-time friend. How would you feel if it was your sibling... your parent... your child? How would you handle it if, like me, it was your partner. What if it was someone that you found yourself falling in love with?

As I said earlier, transsexuals are only one facet of the transgender universe. A person who is intersex

is someone that has some male and female physical sexual characteristics or may physically lack some sexual characteristics. Apparently, about one in two thousand births are intersex to some degree.

Some people are quite comfortable in their assigned genders but need to express themselves by dressing in clothing intended for another gender. This city has only recently repealed the laws that made this illegal.

Some people embody both masculine and feminine traits or don't identify with either of the genders that our society recognizes. Have you ever seen a form with check boxes for sex that allowed "neither", "both", and "other"? These people have a very tough time expressing their identities because our language does not provide the vocabulary to do so. And yet, any attempt to categorize them as either-a-man-or-a-woman denies their inherent worth and dignity.

-- Our Story --

Les, our children, and I have been working through this process for a couple of years, now. We have had good help along the way. As private a matter as it is, it's certainly not something that we can do by ourselves. The people of this church -- members, staff, and ministers -- have been very supportive. The most common question people ask us is, "What can we do to help?" Since we say, every week, that "Service is our prayer" it is clear that we are in your prayers. What can you do? Accept it -- it's real -- and don't make a big deal of it.

The next most often asked question is some variation on "What does this mean for your marriage?" I don't think it's going to make a whole lot of difference. Surprised? I sure would have been, two years ago.

Les and I have deepened our commitment to each other and our family through this process. We have rekindled our ability to communicate deeply. We are looking forward to what our future brings though it clearly isn't the future we imagined thirteen years ago.

I hope that you will now be more prepared than I was should a transgender ever confide in you. This is especially relevant if your career is in health care, education, any form of counseling or therapy, or if it brings you into contact with adolescents. Please talk with me if you have questions. Thank you for listening and thank you for thinking. ♥

~~Scott is the national SOFFA liason for the American Boyz and maintains a FTM SOFFA FAQ web page <http://members.xoom.com/ftmsofa/> and can be reached at AnXYGuy@sprynet.com. Scott and Les have been married for 13 years.

essays that were most exciting and interesting for me were the ones where feminist straight men discussed their feelings of guilt and shame over their sexual drive towards women, and how they have been able to work through that. I also really liked essays that examined the relationships between war and sex, power and sex, violence and sex that our society has created. There were also several essays that reminded both of us that just because white males have more power in this culture, doesn't mean that the system doesn't hurt and damage them as well; that men need rescued from this system just as much as women do!

I liked these essays because they really spoke to me, where I am at in understanding where my lover is coming from, but there were lots of other ideas and relationships and lifestyles discussed in addition to the kind of "academic feminist" and hetero-sex stuff that I am probably weighting a little heavily here. There are many essays and poems about how sexual orientation, race, class, and religion all work in the complex system that is male sexuality. I certainly didn't agree with everything every author wrote-some of the essays were downright disturbing, in fact, including Valerio's. But even the difficult stuff has led to valuable understanding, and more good lessons in communication!

I have enjoyed this book, and treasure the conversations that it has stimulated with my lover. I'd recommend it for anyone who wants to know more about what men feel and how they think about sex. ♥

From the Editor

If you have any questions, comments, announcements, or submissions please send email to: soffausa@yahoo.com.

Or postal mail:
Jodi Burchell, editor
PO Box 1916
Smyrna, TN 37167

ANNOUNCEMENTS

~Anniversary

Jesse, we've been together for a year now. I need you to know how much I love having you in my life. You are my partner, my lover, my daddy, and my friend. You care for me. You believe in me. For these reasons and many more, you are so very special to me and I will always love you. ~Jodi

~NASHVILLE SUPPORT GROUP

The **Nashville TMen** is a newly formed support group for FTMs, those persons who are born female and are questioning their gender, and their SOs. Anyone within driving distance of Nashville is welcome to participate in the local activities. Future plans are to have periodic meetings as well as recreational activities. For more information, please send email to : writejesse@jessesmail.com. Or visit: [http:// nashvilletmen.tripod.com/NashvilleTMen/](http://nashvilletmen.tripod.com/NashvilleTMen/)

~~EMAIL LISTS

FTMSOS is a closed, support email list for SOs of FTMs. All genders, sexual orientations, and backgrounds are welcome to join. Check out the websight at: www.egroups.com/FTMSOS/ Or email FTMSOS@yahoo.com.

I'd like to invite all the straight-IDed wives/lovers/girlfriends of FTMs out there to join us on a new list called **NyteCafe**. The purpose of the list is to provide a relaxed, informal space in which ladies whose roots are in the heterosexual community can chat about the issues and concerns that are specific to them. To subscribe, email me personally at Nytflyer1@aol.com or Access ONElist site at <http://www.onelist.com>. Enter the name of the list, "NyteCafe" and then click on "join"

Several new lists have recently been formed for female-to-male transsexuals (FTMs) looking to date and establish intimate relationships and for those people looking to establish relationships with an FTM partner. These lists are located on the World Wide Web at www.onelist.com.

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COLUMN: FROM THE BROTHERS

GIVE THEM TIME

~~by Steven Bradford

I think that all FTMs have a rough life. They have issues to deal with that no one else could even conceive. And mostly, they do it secretly within themselves; scared no one will understand, scared that they will be ridiculed, and scared that they will be called a freak. I think of my own life as having been a difficult struggle in everything I've ever tried to do. But when I think back on my childhood, I can't believe how easy I had it. I had a loving mother who treated me as though I was the only person on this planet even though I had two siblings.

My mom is the greatest mom ever. I'm not going to say she's had an easy time with my transition. As a matter of fact, for years it was swept under the rug. My family was nice enough not to disrespect my feelings and avoided all pronouns. They never called me by that unmentionable name that was once printed on my birth certificate.

I was on hormones for two years before I ever uttered a word to my mother. Needless to say, once I did call her, she wasn't sure if it was a prank caller or not. She's been great through all the changes in me and very accepting. She just worries now if I'm happy, like any other mother would with their child. She worries if others will treat me right or try to hurt me in any way. I know that she's very proud of me and what I have made of my life. That feeling of total acceptance from her is priceless. I know I am a very lucky man to have her as a mother.

Unfortunately, my family life seems to be a rarity among other FTMs in the community. I know guys whose families refuse to accept them, refuse to allow them to remain active in family functions, and sometime refuse all contact with them. I just can't understand that reaction. I understand them being hurt and upset. I understand them not being able to understand. I even understand their inability to

The following special contacts are also SOFFAs:

-Legal Issues: Phyllis Randolph Frye, Esq: PRFrye@aol.com (lawyer and transwoman)

-Medical Issues: Dr Kathryn Thomas, Phd, RN: 410-625-1095; Email:

katesx@juno.com (gender therapist)

-Family Issues: Mary Boenke; Email: MaryBoenke@aol.com (parent of tg)

-Official Jewish Mother: Leslie Ann Alpert; Email:

fluffy@access.digex.net (ally)

If you think you'd like to be an AmBoyz local, regional, or SOFFA contact, see the American Boyz website, <http://www.netgsi.com/~listwrangler> for a "job description" and then contact national SOFFA coordinator,

Scott at: AnXYGuy@sprynet.com

or American Boyz's Coordinator-in-Chief, Gary Bowen, at: transman@netgsi.com.

American Boyz

American Boyz is a support and social group for people who were born female but who feel that is not a complete or accurate assessment of who they are and our significant others, friends, family, and allies (SOFFAs). Our membership includes Butches, FTMs, Transmen, FTV's, Gender Outlaws, Transexals, Drag Kings, Boychicks, She-Bears, Shapeshifters, Tomboys, Passing Women, Amazons, Intersexuals, Female Guys, Boss Girls, Transgenderists, Sirs, and our SOFFAs. We provide education, support, social events, newsletters, online forums, local meetings, political action, and a national conference.

To learn more about The American Boyz, send email to amboyz@iximd.com or check out the websight at <http://office.iximd.com/mailman>

*Or send SASE to: The American Boyz, 212A S. Bridge St., Suite 131, Elkton, MD, 21922
FAX: 410-620-2024*

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FTM_Dating is a list designed as a place where FTMs both gay, straight and bisexual can meet people (TG and non-TG) who are attracted to or open to the idea of dating or being a partner to an FTM. The list supports all orientations and all lifestyle choices including but not limited to polyamory, leather/BDSM, heterosexuality, homosexuality, bisexuality.

TG_Leather is a list focused on FTMs and their SOFFA's who are active in the leather/BDSM/fetish community. The list is open to top, bottom, switch, polyamory, FTMs, MTFs, third gender, intersexed leatherfolk and their SOFFA's and play partners. Discussion is on changes in leather identification with TG identification, places to play, meeting people who are TG friendly to play with, etc..

Transgenderedcouples is a list for TG people in relationships where all partners are transgendered and dealing with gender issues. It adds to other SOFFA groups such as FTMSOs, NyteCafe in being a place in which the unique issues that arise from both partners transitioning or dealing with gender ID may be addressed in addition to shifts in orientation that often accompany these types of relationships.

Already on the web for some time are two other more global TG dating lists:

- ◆ **Trans-personals**
- ◆ **Trans-dating**

Please check these out also (I do not moderate them so I can't speak for their content but want to make their presence known as well.)

Looking forward to seeing you there!

Zane Barlow

List moderator for FTM_Dating, TG_Leather and transgenderedcouples

~~Two Philadelphia groups:

We Transition Too
For partners of trans people
Meets in Philadelphia
2-4 PM, first Sunday of the Month
at Washington West, 1201 Locust St.

Also, the first hour of WeXist, a group for people assigned female at birth but do not solely identify that way is now open to SOFFAs. WeXist meets 6-8 PM on the second Friday of the month in Philadelphia at William Way, 1315 Spruce St.

~~SOFFA WEBSIGHT

There is a new websight out there dedicated to answering all those questions about being a SOFFA of a transman. Check it out at:
[Http://members.xoom.com/ftmssofaq/](http://members.xoom.com/ftmssofaq/)

~~FTM INTERNATIONAL

VISIT OUR WEB SITE! <http://www.ftm-intl.org>

SUBSCRIBE! The FTM Newsletter, published quarterly since 1987 and read in 17 countries, is the world's most widely circulated journal for female-to-male transgendered and transsexual people. Subscription rates are \$25 for a year (4 issues), \$50/year for professionals and institutions, \$15/year sliding scale.

ADVERTISE! Business card ads are \$100/year (4 insertions); quarter-page ads \$250/year; half-page ads \$500.

JOIN! Membership in FTM International is \$35/year for individuals, \$75 for professional/institutional, \$45 for households, and \$25 for low incomes. Members receive a newsletter subscription, voting rights, and publication discounts.

CONTACT US! For memberships and subscriptions: FTM International, 1320 Mission Street, #200, San Francisco, CA 94103; ph: 415.553.5987; e-male: TSTGMen@aol.com.

NEWSLETTER CONTACTS: Mail written and graphics contributions to FTM Newsletter, POB 34500, Philadelphia, PA 19101; e-mail to Ben at bsinger@CrtiPath.Org or to Garin at garin@aol.com; letters to the editors, e-mail to FTMImalebox@aol.com or mail to the Philly address; advertising: e-mail TazLikeU2@aol.com or write/call the San Francisco address

****Note:** Please send any future announcements to SOFFAUSA@yahoo.com. Announcements regarding email lists, support groups, and resources for SOFFAs are especially welcome!

Lessons My Mom Taught Me

My mother taught me TO APPRECIATE A JOB WELL DONE -
"If you're going to kill each other, do it outside - I just finished cleaning!"

My mother taught me RELIGION -
"You better pray that will come out of the carpet."

My mother taught me about TIME TRAVEL -
"If you don't straighten up, I'm going to knock you into the middle of next week!"

My mother taught me LOGIC -
"Because I said so, that's why."

My mother taught me FORESIGHT -
"Make sure you wear clean underwear, in case you're in an accident."

My mother taught me IRONY -
*"Keep crying and I'll *give* you something to cry about."*

My mother taught me about the science of OSMOSIS -
"Shut your mouth and eat your supper!"

My mother taught me about CONTORTIONISM -
*"Will you *look* at the dirt on the back of your neck!"*

My mother taught me about STAMINA -
"You'll sit there 'til all that spinach is finished."

My mother taught me about WEATHER -
"It looks as if a tornado swept through your room."

My mother taught me how to solve PHYSICS PROBLEMS -
"If I yelled because I saw a meteor coming toward you; would you listen then?"

My mother taught me about HYPOCRISY -
"If I've told you once, I've told you a million times - Don't exaggerate!!!"

My mother taught me THE CIRCLE OF LIFE -
"I brought you into this world, and I can take you out."

My mother taught me about BEHAVIOR MODIFICATION -
"Stop acting like your father!"

My mother taught me about ENVY -
"There are millions of less fortunate children in this world who don't have wonderful parents like you do!"

COLUMN: FTM LOVING FTM MEN

Transness & Leather community

~~By Arthur Freeheart

Leather and BDSM communities can be safe places for transgender women and transmen to explore the erotic aspects of masculinity. Community emphasis on careful pre-scene negotiation provides ready made opportunities to talk about gender desires.

'Consent', in most sexual contexts, is usually defined as having agreed to have sexual interaction. The 'consensual' in the BDSM communities' motto 'Safe, Sane, and Consensual' goes far beyond the standard definition. Most significant details of a BDSM encounter can be agreed upon beforehand. The participants can design an encounter in which all feel safe and respected as who they are.

There may be wider tolerance and acceptance of trans people in the Leather communities than in the 'vanilla' communities. The wider tolerance and acceptance is often rooted in the idea that transgenderism and transexuality are fetish interests; in transgenderists, transsexuals, and the people who lust after them.

The Leather community's 'different strokes for different folks' philosophy opens doors for trans acceptance. Crossdressing has a well-established niche within the world of kink. Body modification is seen as a specialized aesthetic. Chest and genital modification are accepted as part of the subculture to an extent. Playing gender roles other than that assigned at birth is seen in the broader context of role-playing.

Understanding that trans gender is more than kink or erotic specialization is often difficult for non-trans Leather people. They are usually open minded enough to be willing to be educated or remain benignly disinterested.

TMLeatherMen@egroups.com and TGleather@egroups.com are two on topic mail lists.

Any other resources or networking leads, send 'em in!
Feedback and comments...send 'em in. ♥

~~Arthur Freeheart is the American Boyz Gay/Bi FTMs & SOs liason

modify pronouns. I do not understand, however, how someone can isolate a family member and refuse to associate with them. Families are all about love. Since the time of birth, babies learn love from their families. How can anyone turn that love off because they can't accept someone for who they are? I would have been totally shaken had my family reacted that way. Those scars would have run so deep for me. I can only imagine how excommunicated FTMs must feel that receive that type of reaction. I will never know that feeling and I am very happy for that.

My mom came to visit my family and me a few months ago. Anna, my girlfriend, had invited her mother over to meet mine. I think Anna was a bit nervous about it even though she had intended her mother to know about me until I requested we keep that information between us. My mom walked over to me before she got there and whispered in my ear, "Does Anna's mom know?" I told her no and she said nonchalantly, "OK." My mom never faltered. She never missed a pronoun and I even overheard her talking about my younger half brother. She was referring to him as her youngest son. She never missed a beat and doesn't with me either. I can talk to her openly now and I tell her how I feel and how I have always felt. She tells me she's never seen me so happy and that she knew I was miserable for all those years. I never told her I was, she just knew. I thought I was putting up this believable façade to ensure her I was doing OK. She knew differently.

In one of our late night discussions, my mom talked about a documentary she watched and how badly it had upset her. It was based on the life and death of Brandon Teena. She cried all the way through it. She couldn't understand why he was murdered. If someone didn't agree with his lifestyle, she thought that they just shouldn't hang out with him anymore. Now isn't that a concept! It makes perfect sense to me.

My life now is perfect. I'm living as I should have lived if nature had been kind to me. My family is as normal as any other, albeit a bit silly at times, and treats me as though I have been male all my life. Sometimes I forget I ever had another life. It seems foreign to me and very forgettable. I like it that way. I always assume that every family will react as mine has. It wasn't easy for them in the beginning but we all had patience with each other and kept our love for each other strong. I hope that anyone out there reading this keeps that in mind. You have to give them time and be patient. I think if you do, the reward will be yours in the end. ♥