



TEXAN FREAKS

AND THE

CLEMENTINE
VALE

POST-GENDER
REVOLUTION

In remembrance of Leelah Alcorn, Brianna Ghey, Nex
Benedict, and any transgender child whose future has
been robbed from them.

Special thank you to Patryk, Ari, and my boyfriend
Anderson.

Abstract

The 2010s were considered a time of “*gender revolution*,” particularly when it came to transgender minors accessing terminology and medical care. However, in hindsight, it appears this decade was more an exception, as care before and after the 2010s has shown to be incredibly restrictive. This wave of progress and decay has subsequently impacted an entire generation, and I was one of the many transgender youths who came out during the 2010s. Now, as an adult, I have begun documenting my activism as a transgender teen during that decade, and in this thesis, I dissect two visions of my youthful self: both the beauty of being out as a trans child, and the transphobia that was perpetuated against me.

To make sense of my story within the greater picture of trans history, here I conduct a series of transgender oral histories of those who have similarly been shaped by this era. Throughout these conversations, the option of medical transition, internet culture, and emerging forms of transgender love come to the forefront. As my generation and I have become adults, I have witnessed how these pillars of our community have been amplified. In light of this,

I argue for the importance of T4T (trans for trans) relationships, alongside a consideration of why and how the term *transsexual* has come into vogue over *transgender*. Ultimately, through these interweaving narratives, I am able to give meaning to both my own lived experience and also to the stories of the transgender people in my life I care for.

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Life in Transition



Myself pictured by Carolyn Van Houten in the San Antonio Express-News' *Life in Transition: Documenting the Lives of Transgender San Antonians* (2017).¹

¹ Vale, Clementine, "Life in Transition," interviewed by Lauren Carbua, Updated April 21, 2021.
<<https://www.expressnews.com/news/local/article/life-in-transition-transgender-san-antonio-16101791.php>>.

It's late 2016 and Trump is about to enter his first term. I'm 13 years old, and 2 years into my transition. The lights around me are bright, and I am being directed to look off to the side as I am being interviewed. With cameras pointed towards me, I speak in a timid and shaky voice: "I don't want to fight for my right to exist because I know who I am and I am real." Through my naivety and privilege, I still felt the plight of transgender people. The therapy visits insurance wouldn't cover, the backhanded remarks, the high cost of my puberty blockers. I learned to develop a thick skin pretty quickly. I was the only LGBT kid out in my middle school. I felt comforted and emboldened by going online. I'd binge videos of Jazz Jennings, Ash Hardell, and Jammidodger.² I would revel in the fact that there was this language and culture I could resonate with. I knew the cisgender heterosexual peers around me might not get it, but it was never for them in the first place.

My endocrinologist told me that I was one of the first youths that she had worked with and

² Ash Hardell and Jammidodger are both transgender Youtubers with, oftentimes, a following of young transgender people. Jazz Jennings is a trans rights activist that has been out since she was a young child. Her interviews have been reuploaded to Youtube.

that—because of my case—there was a more solid standard of care being put in place. My gender therapist had previously said I was the youngest transgender child with whom he had ever worked. For a while, I was the youngest trans person within my LGBTQ+ youth group. I have always found comfort as a trailblazer; dabbling in mysterious hormones, becoming one of the first students to change my school's guidelines for transgender teens, and being the first trans and queer person in many people's lives. It has also been incredibly exhausting. Whenever I had to deal with tough feelings regarding my treatment as a trans child, I would think to myself, *this is the worst things will get.*

In San Antonio, Texas, I was met with more curiosity than shame. People had crass things to say, sure, but more often than not people just wanted to know *why*. Why I so desperately craved dressing in girls' clothing. Why I needed to wear makeup, paint my nails, laugh, and talk in a feminine way even through a deep voice. Throughout the awkward adjustment period of changing my name openly or switching gym classes, the teachers treated me well for the most part. There was one teacher, a 70-year-old war vet named Mr. Killrain, who would pull me aside and say, "You

shouldn't have to deal with all this. You're a kid; let the adults figure it out."

A mere 6 days before I had come out, *Time Magazine* published *The Transgender Tipping Point*.³ Pictured radiantly on the cover was Laverne Cox, the star notably featured in *Orange is the New Black*. For myself, and seemingly for our mass media culture, this era of progress was most significantly marked by visibility. I felt it; I saw bookshelves filled with stories about *what I was* (shout out to *This Book is Gay*).⁴ I remember finding a Tumblr blog that rated various forms of trans representation, quickly becoming a form of scripture for me. As a child, I felt there was this promise of progression. I wasn't diagnosed with gender identity disorder, I was diagnosed with gender dysphoria—a subtle distinction that moved away from this being labeled as an illness.⁵

³ Kathy Steinmetz, "Transgender Tipping Point," *Time Magazine* (2014):

<<https://time.com/135480/transgender-tipping-point/>>.

⁴ *This Book is Gay* by Juno Dawson (UK: Common Sense Media, 2014).

⁵ Published in 2013, the DSM-5 replaced gender identity disorder with gender dysphoria as it moves the focus away from transgender people and onto gender related stress.

I vividly recall when *Obergefell v. Hodges* was decided on.⁶ I was at a sleepover with my friend, Kayleigh, whose family had taken me under their wing. We went on her family computer and saw the news. I was so overjoyed it didn't even feel real! On the car ride back to my home her dad said, "I doubt this is a day Clementine will forget." In retrospect, it was smoke and mirrors. Empty forms of exposure with limited protections and heavy medicalization. Regardless, I wouldn't take back this point in my life. I felt seen, more than I ever did in the Bible Belt. Both personally and broadly as a community it seemed like we were making tangible, material change. I desperately want to hold onto that feeling. I want to return to that point without the veneer of a neoliberal status quo. Even then, I have to reckon with the fact that "things don't change back... they just keep changing" (thank you, *Stone Butch Blues*).⁷

Within that same year of my interview, *National Geographic* also gave their perspective on the

⁶ *Obergefell v. Hodges* is the Supreme Court decision that legalized same-sex marriage.

⁷ *Stone Butch Blues* by Leslie Feinberg (Firebrand Books, 1993).

gender issue in “Gender Revolution” by Eve Conant. Though it mostly featured cisgender children across the world, the historic January 2017 article highlighted Avery Jackson. Avery was no more than 9 years old at the time, representing the growing number of transgender youth living freely in conservative states. I want to place emphasis on Avery’s case, as not only does her life show the acceptance trans youth once had, but also the degradation of transgender youth health care. As of 2023, Avery’s family started a GoFundMe to leave her home state of Missouri, which has banned care for all trans youth.⁸ Our current state of affairs has changed drastically, leaving our generation with whiplash.

I noticed it happening slowly. In between episodes of *Steven Universe*, Tumblr scrolling, and conversations at school, I would hear the beginnings of a new wave. The sentiment among students would become crueler. I became more aware of my surroundings. It started with the stripping of executive

⁸ “Moving Avery Jackson and family out of Missouri”, GoFundMe, updated June 25th, 2023: <<https://www.gofundme.com/f/moving-avery-jackson-and-family-out-of-missouri>>.

orders from the Obama administration.⁹ The protections granted to trans students using the restroom may have not had much impact in South Texas, however, I saw them as good signs nonetheless. Then came the bans. The military ban hit me hard, not out of support of the military, but what it implied culturally. A new science teacher had peered into my pre-algebra class and yelled out to my classmate, “Hey Sam! Did you hear you can’t join the military now?” As the class laughed, I just looked down at my feet and felt myself shrink a little.

While my interview was before the bathroom bans, it quickly became part of a larger story. Most of my cohort from the local LGBTQ+ youth group, Fiesta Youth, had been interviewed along with a trans elder. We put a face to who this legislation was affecting, and in doing so, the article was released in two parts. Our personal interviews were featured in the second part titled *Life in Transition: Documenting the Lives of Transgender San Antonians. Part 1: The Battle*

⁹ Ali Vitali et al. “White House Reverses Obama-Era Transgender Bathroom Protections,” *NBC News*, February 22, 2017: <<https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/white-house/white-house-reverses-obama-era-transgender-bathroom-protections-n724426>>.

documented the two dozen anti-trans bills that were being introduced in the Texas Senate. It primarily focused on Senate Bill 6, which would ban transgender people from being able to use the restroom of their choice. Thankfully, at the time, the bill did not go through.¹⁰

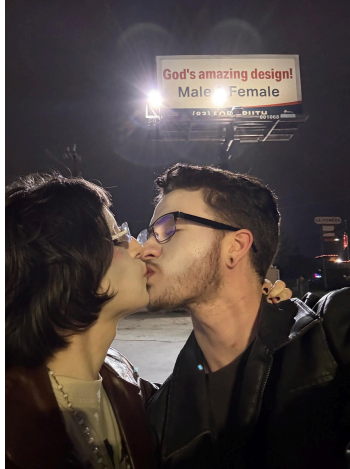
It's haunting reading it after almost 10 years. Anti-trans legislation was yet to have the amount of fear-mongering and supporters it needed to succeed, unlike what we see today. As of 2024, the original articles are no longer available on the *San Antonio Express News* website. Using the Internet Archive, I was able to find records of it. I feel as if that shows how easily transgender stories are being discarded. As for the article, it has featured many heart-wrenching moments; some of which being parents of trans youth pleading for the humanity of their children and a trans man recounting his rape in high school. Lou Weaver, transgender programs coordinator for Equality Texas,

¹⁰ Senate Bill 6, proposed in 2017, would have required transgender people to use bathrooms that match their birth certificates in both schools and government buildings.

put it plainly, “SB 6 is not the only thing we need to watch... These [bills] are the scary ones, folks.”¹¹

¹¹ Lauren Caruba, “Part 1: The Battle,” *San Antonio Express-News*, 2017:
<<https://web.archive.org/web/20170519162035/http://projects.expressnews.com/part-1-the-battle>>.

Trans for Trans (T4T)



Anderson and I, December 2024. Taken by me.

Max and Cori, 1998 by Mariette Pathy Allen.

Before I hit puberty I was always told I would be a “heartbreaker,” and honestly, girls loved me! They were my best friends, they had crushes on me, and there was never a time in my childhood when I didn’t have a girlfriend. However, there were always glimpses of my eventual attraction to men. When I was in kindergarten there was a 5th grader that would come and visit us. He was taller than me (obviously), had black hair, and the most striking blue eyes. I remember always clinging to him and pouting the moment he had to go away. At the time, I was working through these feelings I couldn’t make sense of. All I knew was that I needed to be close to him. Even now as an adult, my lovers overwhelmingly tend to be men with dark hair and either light blue or deep brown eyes.

I hit puberty while I was still attending my Catholic school at the Atonement Academy—a fitting name for what was to come. Having been segregated by gender, I was forced to be surrounded by boys I could never connect with. My homosexual attraction became unmanageable. I lusted after nearly every single boy in my class. I would attempt to hold their hands while in the gymnasium, only to be met with an immediate, “I’m not gay!” It was at this time that I would first become accustomed to hearing the word, “faggot.” My

name was synonymous with it and all of the boys would discuss my inclinations behind my back.

My gender has always been the focal point of my life, causing my sexuality to become something that lurked under the surface of my more immediate worries. When I first came out, I had said I was gay and genderqueer. This would mark the start of my flip-flopping. Over my life, I have identified with nearly every label. Straight, heteroflexible, bisexual, pansexual, bisexual again, lesbian, bisexual again, and now I've landed squarely at *heterosexual homosexual*. First coined by Pat Califia, a heterosexual homosexual is someone that is more attracted to the differences between them and their partners rather than the similarities.¹²

I'm a sissy, limp-wristed from the day I was born. I can't help being drawn to masculinity. However, I don't think my transition was what had complicated things the most. I think it's in part because I am Mexican-American. Now I will be the first to admit, I am incredibly white passing. I'm the palest out of my family and especially when I have no eyebrows and short hair there is nearly no sign of my heritage.

¹² Max Wolf Valerio, *The Testosterone Files*, (Seal Press, an imprint of Avalon Pub. Group, 2006), p. 49.

That didn't stop me from living in a machismo culture. I was the only boy on my dad's side of the family. I was nicknamed, "the prince," and I felt a lot of guilt in knowing I couldn't be the one to pass on the family name. Moreover, my older brother is actually a trans man and he would guilt me in my teens for never freezing my sperm.

Once I transitioned I was expected to conform to this idealized version of womanhood. If I didn't walk like Audrey Hepburn or talk in a soft manner, I would be called boyish. I needed to know how to cook and clean. More importantly, as a woman, I needed to hate myself and my body. I needed to find comfort in the arms of a man, have children, and continue living in Texas like a good little pansy. Now, I was told this reality in little parts. No one person told me all of this immediately. No single person is to blame, it is a fundamental failing of the culture.

I also would fall down this trap that many trans women run into. I felt like fucking cis men would make me more of a woman. Being able to see how much hairier they were than me, how much bigger their dicks were from mine, and how much stronger they were than me was almost like a high. It made me feel wanted and feminine. I desperately craved it. It was only after seeing *Euphoria* and going on one

particularly interesting mushroom trip that I totally reconsidered what my attraction to men meant.¹³ I would try cutting them out of my life entirely only to relapse in college. Sex with cis men became a source of great shame for me.

I've never been respected sexually by a cis man. Something I've been mulling over is the fact that even as a cis woman there is a power dynamic that comes with dating a man. He is automatically seen as the more capable, powerful party. When you're transgender you are seen as less than a cisgender person. You have to perform your gender to a T if you would like a modicum of respect. When you are a trans woman dating a cis man, it's like you're a cockroach. You're the scum of the earth and you are lucky if a cisgender man puts his rod in you. At that point it's more honorable for him to fuck a hot pocket. Even if you are accepted as a woman, *he* is the brave one for getting with you. The tolerant one, because ultimately he could get with anyone. There is also a pressure on the trans woman to explain herself, be patient with him as that *man* stubbles through the relationship.

¹³ *Euphoria* (2019-) is a television show that features a 17-year-old transgender girl named Jules. Throughout the show, she comes to terms with her attraction to women and her self-destructive sex with cis men.

It is through this shame and self loathing that I think of a lyric from Salvia's song *Hell*: "He cums and leaves. Nothing touches me. I'm so empty. Nothing happens to me, just my body." During my teens most boys would say something like, "You are the most beautiful girl I've ever seen, but you have a dick so that'd be kinda gay." Even when I did sleep with boys/men nearly all of them would later be revealed to be abusers and rapists. They used love-bombing tactics against me, but I was lucky that it usually lasted for only 2 to 4 weeks. The others were just incredibly fetishistic towards me. The most notable chaser I had the displeasure of fucking had a fixation on the medical aspect of my transition. He wanted to order an estrogen cream that would promote breast growth and he wanted to be the one to decide how large my breasts grew (he loved the idea of me having double-ds).

I can't have sex with or date cis women. I feel less like a woman for being with them. It doesn't matter if I am more feminine, petite, or shorter than a cis woman, I just feel like a degenerate. Not even in a fun way. For a while I would date nonbinary people with dicks. It scratched the itch of really wanting cock without the baggage that came with cis men.

Eventually, I craved the taste of artificial hormones and the thrill of being openly transsexual

with someone. That's when trans women came into focus for me. I idealized trans-lesbian relationships. I would watch *Gender Troublemakers* (1993) by Jeanne B. and Xanthra Phillipa on a loop. I would daydream about finding a love like theirs: offensive, cosmopolitan, unapologetic, and most importantly, completely and utterly feminine. I've been with a few trans women throughout my life, all at different stages in their transitions. What I've ultimately come to realize is that trans women also trigger my dysphoria. I am a woman, but I play with androgyny constantly. Being girlfriends with someone more feminine than me hurts. Moreover, an issue I tend to have when dating tgirls is that some compare their medical transitions to mine. I can't stand it. Our different timelines are not something I can control, but I feel both guilty and helpless to comfort them. So, unfortunately, my troublemaker dreams have been put on pause.

Trans men are something I have had to circle back to. I have had many negative experiences with trans men. However, that is completely outweighed by the community and camaraderie I have found with trans boys. I had dated a trans boy back in high school, but it was an unhealthy dynamic. Once I was in college, I started to find the same affirming feeling when I would have sex with trans boys that I had once felt with

cis men. The way I was grabbed, bitten, and used made me feel incredible. Even if my girl cock was the focus for the night I felt even more like a woman.

I think what draws me into being T4T is this act of scratching each other's genders. Being able to explore another transsexual that is so different from myself is a sensation like no other. Feeling a synthetic, rough, testosterone-filled body against my hairless feminized form is spiritual. Our paths are parallel and through being T4T I've learned to admire the hormones that have long brought me discomfort. In the words of Max Wolf Valerio:

The man/woman dynamic turns me on big-time.

Boy/girl like animals rutting. Basic.

Old-fashioned. Bipolarized.¹⁴

For me, gender roles and monogamy are a form of lifestyle kink. In fact, I think these rules have been so normalized that our society forgets what these parts of sexual/romantic expression can be. I love being a dainty woman who can't even lift a bag of groceries. It turns me on when I am around a man who is able to do the work for me, protect me.

¹⁴ Valerio, *The Testosterone Files*, p. 7.

While there are elements to my T4T relationships that are specific to my own experience, this is undeniably something that is becoming more common amongst younger transsexuals. I was lucky enough to interview an elder I have known personally, who will be referred to as M. M identifies as transgender man and he worked with young transgender adults for more than 10 years. I had first heard of him through word of mouth and my cohort was completely transgender with the exception of 1 or 2 individuals. In our conversation, M talked about the radical shifts in how this generation has been approaching transness:

I'm finding that lots of trans youth already have [dating] figured out or maybe not specifically. But, lots and lots of younger trans people are in relationships with other trans people. And lots of trans women are with trans women and trans men with trans men!

M is currently married to a transgender woman. However, that hasn't always been the case. In my conversation with him, we bonded over how, as a pansexual, M has dated people of various gender identities. In particular, he was in a relationship with a cisgender bisexual man before dating his wife. Once M

started dating another transgender person, it was time for him to make the switch:

Well, there's always that, "Who will love me?" Then once you get through that, it's like "alright who will I want to partner with? Who will I love?" [Being T4T] just makes sense. I can't imagine it any other way now.

In the past year, my perspective on family, marriage, and legacy has changed significantly. All of which has been impacted by interacting with queer and trans elders. It was through talking with M that I truly changed my perspective on marriage. I've gone back and forth on it, but he told me that as young trans people we shouldn't be afraid to try relationships out. That it's ok if marriages end, because ultimately we gain something from it. When we had the interview it was just about a week before the election. I could feel the tension as we spoke, uncertain about what would be taken away from us. Now there's the threat of same-sex marriage being revoked. With my lover and I's documents having discontinuous gender markers, I have been feeling the pressure to secure the right to a life together. [edit this section clem] Moreover, when dating a trans person I don't have to worry about explaining myself or even worse defending the

decisions I've made about my body. To quote Sasha Colby in an interview with FOLX Health: "Trans love is safe."¹⁵

My boyfriend, Anderson, is the only lover to understand me completely. We're both from San Antonio and were online friends throughout high school. We never saw each other in person, mainly because we went to different schools and he was very dysphoric. When I moved to Chicago we would only text briefly. Mostly we talked about getting hormones within Texas. It took 6 years for us to meet in person. It was the summer of 2024 and we had an instant connection. We would drive around in his Mazda and listen to 1980s goth music all while catching up. It was blisteringly hot outside, but we found refuge in coffeeshops and the local CD Exchange. We went dancing at Cream, the main goth club in San Antonio. In between heavy drinking and sweaty DJ sets we would go outside to smoke cigarettes. I would ramble on about how Chicago would turn him nonbinary and that he needed to move ASAP. That would be the last

¹⁵ FOLX Health (@folxhealth). 2025. "We are here for T4T love, always 💕" Instagram, February 9, 2022. <https://www.instagram.com/folxhealth/reel/CZxWq2drG RG/?utm_source=ig_embed&utm_campaign=loading>.

time I saw him during the summer and come the fall we would be official.

Only Southerners can understand each other. I felt like something was missing when I would date people from blue states or Texans that transitioned in Chicago. It was like my partners didn't understand an intrinsic part of myself or my complicated love for Texas. I need a true transsexual Texan to understand my ways. I need a Texan to understand why I'm so weird, empowered, and deeply damaged. Anderson has seen both the San Antonio and Chicago parts of myself. He sees me in my entirety. Anderson makes me feel like the woman I've always dreamed of. For my 22nd birthday, he splurged and bought me the Dior Lip Oil — I cried over it. I'm the kind of woman that deserves the finest of furs and the highest of heels. For my boyfriend to see that within me and to help me achieve that dream... It was something I've never experienced before. It's cliché, but when he visited me in Chicago for the first time my days felt vibrant. The colors of my dresses were deeper and the mood lighting in my apartment felt warmer. It helped that his point and shoot camera gave every photo a dreamy sepia tone. When I think of him reminded of a scene from *Stone Butch Blues*:

From that moment on I was her butch and she was my femme. Everybody knew it. So did we. We were both a couple of tough cookies, and together we felt unbeatable.¹⁶

¹⁶ Feinberg, *Stone Butch Blues*, p. 114.

Boy Dyke and Girl Fag

GENDERQUEER BOYZZZ

PRESENTS
'MONES FOR BOYZZZ

JANUARY 15, 1998, 7-9 PM

**FEATURING MAX FUHRMANN, JACOB HALE, MICHAEL HERNANDEZ, JUSTIN TANIS
AND DADDY LEE GIVING 'MONING BOYZZZ THEIR SHOTS**

What do you want to know about testosterone? Come let us tell you about our experiences & answer your questions. Thursday, January 15, 1998, 7:00-9:00 p.m., at private residence in Toluca Lake. For address or directions, contact Lee, Lenny, Jen, Joe, or Jeffrey at 818-

Calling all butches, hermaphrodites, FTMs, MTMs, MBFs, transmen, transboys, transbutches, transfags, transfagdrags, tomboys, boychiks, girlfags, drag kings, 2-spirits, metamorphs, shape-shifters, butch daddies, leatherdyke daddies, leatherdyke boys, leatherdyke masters--**GENDERQUEER BOYZZZ**--and our friends, significant others, spouses, families, and allies

Genderqueer Boyzzz is a Southern California social group primarily for and about people assigned female at birth or in childhood who have masculine self-identifications some or all of the time. This is a place where difference is treasured.

Meetings are always open: Everyone is welcome!

Mark your calendars:
Thursday, March 5, 7 p.m.: "BTN: Brandon Teena News"
A multimedia presentation by Judith Halberstam and Jacob Hale at California State University, Northridge. More information to follow.

Feel free to pass this information on to anyone who might be interested. For more information, contact Jacob Hale by phone at

1998 SoCal Support Group Meetup Flyer (found by
Instagram user @sexchange.tbt).¹⁷

¹⁷ SEX CHANGE DOT TBT (@sexchange.tbt). 2025.

"1998 SoCal support group meetup flyer." Instagram,
October 15, 2024.

<<https://www.instagram.com/p/DBKC2gwN2P5/?igsh=MWw5dnMwOTZ2eTBvcQ>>.

I live in constant contradiction to myself. As I've stated before I am a heterosexual homosexual, but I have been known to make out with the occasional femme at a party. I have now circled back to identifying as a woman, but I have spent many years finding ways to flatten my chest, dressing androgynously, and going by different pronouns. Through my expression and sexual experiences I have often blurred the lines between being seen as a twink, a genderfuck, and as a woman. Even during my teens when I was at the height of my femininity, there were still some discrepancies. I struggled to get my endocrinologist to give me higher doses of estradiol and spironolactone. She also outright refused to give me progesterone—in turn leading me to have the strange side effect of still being able to cum, but it would be completely clear. I had long dark flowing hair, a flat stomach, and softened skin, yet no breast development. This wouldn't change until I sought out care through Howard Brown Health at the age of 19.

While I transitioned young, I do identify with the label of *girl fag*. In short, I'm a girl whose been called a faggot and especially enjoys hearing it in bed. Past being well acquainted with the term, I think that as a transsexual woman much of my experience has

overlapped with certain types of gay men. I don't think I have a strong claim over my male homosexual roots, but I have had my Grindr days/weeks/months, I love my poppers, and I grew up consuming homosexual media. More importantly, I identify with faggotry as a form of deviancy. It was after watching *Bloodsisters* that I especially decided to appropriate the term for my own identity. As our culture shifts more towards conservatism in the face of theocratic fascism, I believe it is important to be raunchy and crass. We need to embrace our degeneracy, if we focus on palatability we lose! The only way that "normal" gay people have gained any rights has been because of the angry, so-called bad queers.

That being said—hetero porn did nothing for me as a teen. Lesbian porn (at the time) was way too slow paced and transgender porn was far too intense for me. The transgender bodies shown looked nothing like my own, often these girls would have big dicks and even bigger tits, and the way in which these girls would have sex was simply not what I was interested in. As a teen I also never saw depictions of transgender men in porn. So that left me with gay porn. The flat chested, hairless bodies of young men resonated with me. The contrast between these twinkles and the often rugged men that would overtake them fed deeply into my own

fantasies. I would often watch these videos with a slight confusion. I would wonder, *Am I fetishizing gay men?*

Regardless of my own sexual identity crisis, it didn't change the way the world saw me. To love me was a gay act in the eyes of the boys I fawned over. I feel as if I have walked hand-in-hand with homosexuality. It didn't help that I was unable to change my gender marker until I moved up to Chicago. Even now, I cannot change my Texas birth certificate. As a teen, I would use this to my advantage. I would frequently take nudes with my panties on, but topless. Legally I was male, and so it wasn't at all illegal for me to show my chest. There is also the issue of my girlcock and hole. I have irreversibly changed my sex, that is without a doubt. That doesn't mean the way I have sex hasn't also aligned with how cis gay male bottoms would have sex. The only difference is my more supple, soft frame and the fact that I am able to cum multiple times. When it comes to trans cruising spaces they also tend to take place where cis men would normally cruise. I have flowed in between these worlds as necessary.

My sex with transsexual men/mascs has been in total contradiction to the sex I would have with cisgender men. Sexually, I feel as if I am an equal. Even though I am seen as a woman, I am able to choose where a night will lead to. Especially now that I am

having sex with people closer in age to myself, there is also this level of curiosity and tension. There's the awkward start, the constant affirmations, and the moment of revelation when we find what works. Being in love with a transsexual man is a fundamentally different experience compared to being in love with a genetic man. There is a level of devotion, a deep seeded desire, that my cisgender lovers never quite reached. I attribute this to the fact that the transsexual men I partner with have roots in lesbianism. I have surrounded myself with many *boy dykes*, transsexual men who often align with a woman-loving-woman experience. There are certain sections of Max Wolf Valerio's *The Testosterone Files* that I feel fits this well. While Valerio is adamant that he does not resonate with lesbians, he states:

Susie Bright says that lesbianism is a language you learn. I know the language of that country, its nuances.¹⁸

For many of the boy dykes I've known, they have every physical attribute of a genetic: broad, hairy, a tough exterior. They also sometimes share the very masculine trait of being a little unaware of when a

¹⁸ Valerio, *The Testosterone Files*, p. 101.

femme wants them. What sets these men apart is the fact that they have the need to U-Haul in a way that cis men would never with me. There is an impish disposition to these tboys. They have a deep passion in their words. It is not uncommon to believe that a transsexual man is in love with you and when they are, those men have no shame in making it known. There is a genuine respect for women and appreciation for femininity that I do not see within cisgender men.

I have found these to be true with my boyfriend. Anderson is an immensely skilled writer. I have the most heartfelt notes in my possession and he is the editor for every work I create. Anderson is very attentive when it comes to hearing my thoughts on transsexuality and the nuances that come with that life. I know he will go on to write much more about his experience, but lately he has been telling me how he feels more like a butch than a man. For many transmasculine individuals I know personally, they continue to feel the need to be within lesbian spaces. As someone who has gone to both gay and lesbian events, I can say there is a feeling of security in lesbian events. Things are... looser. The dykes want more dykes! In any shape or form. It's something I've yet to see replicated within gay male scenes.

This observation is nothing new. Scholars such as Monique Wittig wrote about this phenomenon in her book *The Straight Mind*. Although Wittig has transphobic beliefs, I still feel like her reasoning resonates with most of the lesbians I know. The core of her argument is that “lesbians are not women” because to be a woman means to exist within the context of heterosexuality and patriarchy.¹⁹ ContraPoints in her coming out video, *Shame*, talks about how in the past she would “...cling to the reassuring conformity of heterosexuality, because there is a level of gender instability and deviancy that is inherent to homosexuality.” Moreover, she said that she “needed to go through the more 101 straight girl experience before attempting anything as difficult as that.”²⁰ As part of an interview with *Butch Is Not A Dirty Word*, Candace Hansen says that being a butch dyke and a trans person are “both slippery gender categories with

¹⁹ Monique Wittig, *The Straight Mind*, (Beacon Press, 1992).

²⁰ ContraPoints. “Shame | ContraPoints.” Video, 00:42:02, February 15, 2020.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K7WvHTl_Q7I>.

lots of overlap.”²¹ There is an inherent intersection between trans identity and lesbianism. Both revel in existing within an inbetween.

All lesbians, particularly trans lesbians, have to contend with a relinquishing of power. Mainly, as a result of bending these rigid expectations. One of the many hurdles for cisgender lesbians is in accessing adequate healthcare, as often the resources are centered around feminine, heterosexual women.²² For trans lesbians it is a complete dismissal of not only their gender—but their humanity. If someone is a trans feminine lesbian, then they are not “really a woman” or worse they are labeled as a predator. For a trans masculine lesbian, especially if they look traditionally male, they are expected to adopt a male heterosexual identity because “men cannot be lesbians.” This erasure of trans masculine sexuality is especially cruel as

²¹ Candance Hasen, “Butch Whispers: Candace Hasen,” interviewed by *Butch Is Not A Dirty Word*, 2025.
<<https://www.patreon.com/collection/115243?view=expanded>>.

²² Gina M. Masullo, “I’m A Breast Cancer Survivor. I Was Slighted And Belittled Throughout My Treatment.” *HuffPost*, August 19, 2023.
<https://www.huffpost.com/entry/queer-breast-cancer-survivor-treatment_n_64c9528fe4b03ad2b89b321f>.

transgender men have made it abundantly clear that they are both overlooked and denied community. Even past the murky waters of identity, all of our lived experiences are united in a fight for bodily autonomy. Whether it is for gender affirming care or access to contraceptives and abortion or all of the above.

When it comes to gay male spaces, in my experience, there is more red tape. This has the (intended) side effect of putting the trans people who navigate these settings at risk. There was one night my friends and I were attending a trans cruising event at Cell Block in Chicago. At first it went as expected, the dark room was packed and amazingly there were only a handful of gay men on the prowl. Interestingly, there was no security at the door. I wasn't feeling the atmosphere and decided to leave early on. Around that time I overheard someone tell the bartender that there was someone yelling in the dark room. Once I got home I received messages from my friends telling me the police had shut down the event. There are a few different rumors about what happened. From what the event organizers posted, the ex-business partner had made unwanted sexual advances and physically assaulted multiple trans people in the dark room. The ex-business partner was actually the one to call the

police. In a now deleted tweet, *Cell Block* made a statement:



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There are many issues with this statement. By phrasing what happened as “T4T violence” it effectively pushed the blame onto the trans people who were the real victims. Moreover, it hides who had actually caused the violence—a cisgender gay man. They chose not to reveal this fact and they then decide to still placate themselves as an accepting business.

²³ Cell Block Chicago (@CellBlockChi). 2025. “Before any rumors get started, yes, we shut the bar down early tonight over T4T violence allegations. We addressed the allegations and the instigator, and they are not allowed at the legendary Cell Block, which is a safe space for all.” Twitter (X), September 17, 2024, 12:52 a.m.

Though they may claim that Cell Block is a safe place to go, I know for a fact that the trans people who went felt betrayed by this iconic venue in Boystown. It took months for our community to find another venue suitable for cruising and even then it'll be hard not to worry about security. Ultimately, Cell Block is an example of when a gay male bar makes it evident what clientele they wish to prioritize.²⁴

Despite the anti-trans propaganda that asserts that lesbians feel attacked by the inclusion of transgender people in their spaces—lesbians are overwhelmingly supportive of transgender people. According to a survey done by *Just Like Us*, an LGBTQ+ youth charity, Lesbians are the most supportive of transgender people. Lesbian are the most likely to know a trans person (92%) and be supportive of trans people (96%).²⁵ As LGBTQ+ spaces have increasingly become centered around cis gay men, I think there is an interesting coalition forming among

²⁴ Yes, I really had to cite their ignorance in a footnote.

²⁵ *Just Like Us, Trans Day of Visibility: Majority of anti-trans adults don't know a trans person in real life*, (Just Like Us, March 2023), <https://justlikeus.org/news/2023/03/31/trans-day-of-visibility-ally-lesbian/>.

the queer individuals that have become politically unpopular. My friend Venus runs an event called Dyke Nite in San Antonio, Texas. Although primarily lesbian, it was an explicitly FLINTA event (Female, Lesbian, Intersex, Nonbinary, Transgender, and Agender). It was one of the first dates Anderson and I went on. On the surface we look like a straight couple, yet Venus wanted us to go. Partially it was because I had just invested in an electroshock toy, but also because she knew we would love the party. When Anderson and I went we were in awe at all the kinky, alternative queers. The darkroom was filled with instructional whipping scenes. I saw the crowd drool. Though I didn't interview my boyfriend, I asked him to write a bit about the experience:

My semi-introductory invitation to electrolysis followed soon after, leading me to a shockingly erotic exchange of intimacy. Each turn of the dial probed a stroke of gratification. The reciprocating auditory stimuli left me echoing the sounds of pleasure, which—though subdued—were plenty to fuel the pace. I began tracing the thin and delicate skin of the nipples, festering an insatiable hunger within me. The exchange felt overtly maternal, whether it be a Freudian-slip is beyond me. The latching of skin-to-skin curated an impermeable bond between my lover and I, finding myself as reliant on her as she to I.

I recall my nerves being at an all time high. For the first time in my life, those around me would be able to see how I indulge myself in sin outside of a secluded room. For a moment, I found myself mourning the authoritarian control I had held over my intimacy. Within the same fleeting moment, the crassness of sex for sex's sake became the driving force of the evening. Femininity pulls me in like a leash too (pleasurably) tight. I became magnetized to her.

Submitting myself as a service toy for pleasure followed soon after. Once I had acknowledged our limitations and preferences, we were able to play within the guard rails of deviancy. Sexual exploration, firsthand, has mimicked that of a love triangle between Damocles, the sword, and I. Dysphoria had made me adverse to temptation, femmes being my vulnerable Achilles heel.

I see glimpses of life as a butch when they give me their jacket, pay for my dinner, or give me the most gorgeous opal ring. Even as a trans person, I can only process the transmasculine experience through the perspective of a femme. It has taken me not only researching transmasculine thinkers, writers, and artists—but also meeting friends and partners where they are at in order to know how to do those I love justice. I have more patience and a greater ability to accommodate the butches in my life. I see now that

under the tough exterior, there's a soft dyke that needs to be recognized.

Transgender Vs. Transsexual

Transgender is the term used to describe a person whose gender identity differs from the sex the person was identified as having at birth. The word is an adjective, not a noun.

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Transsexual is a dated and often offensive term used to talk about transgender people. It is sometimes used in self-reference but may give offense when used by others. The term transgender is preferred.²⁶

²⁶ "Transgender vs. Transsexual," Merriam-Webster, accessed April 10, 2025, at <<https://www.merriam-webster.com/grammar/transgender-vs-transsexual>>.

Something that has gone unsaid through my writing is that I identify proudly as a transsexual. Not a transgender person, a transsexual. I want to emphasize this point because I haven't seen much formal documentation and theory about this label having a resurgence amongst younger trans people. I'm not too terribly surprised, however. Academia is a cisgender led field. As gender non-conforming people we have been systemically wronged by cisgender "experts" who force us to prove ourselves. For that reason, there are things I don't want to write about. Little secrets that should stay within the community. I hate how I must refrain in some ways, but I know my words will not stay within trans circles.

I haven't always identified this way. I was a true *tumblrina*, up to date on all of the contemporary queer discourse that was 2014.²⁷ Call me outdated, but I still think that there were valuable moments to be learned from that time. In my search for other trans adults who transitioned during that cultural moment I met Patryk. Patryk is a 27-year-old transmasculine from Poland. Patryk processed their identity through forums—the digital wild west that was the late 2000s Yahoo Messenger chat

²⁷ Tumblrina is slang for a politically left-leaning female user of the social media platform Tumblr.

rooms. Something that was common both in the United States and in Poland was how strict the trans people were in those group chats. It was mainly focused on transitioning as an adult with the goal of assimilation. There was a focus on being *transsexual* in the traditional sense of the word. In Pat's words:

So the people who call themselves transsexuals were like "I just want to be a normal man, I just want to be a normal woman. I never want to hear about trans people again".

Whether it was Tumblr or the mid-2010s being underway, I narrowly missed the need to be a transsexual in that sense. Through little lessons taught by Ash Hardell and the various other accounts I cannot name, I learned that an individual didn't need all the typical steps of a transition in order to be transgender. In fact I only heard of using the term transgender. Another friend in my life, Ari, came out around the same time as me. Ari is a 23-year-old transmasculine from Mexico City who later moved to Chicago. Ari actually was Tumblr and Instagram famous, quickly becoming a source of inspiration for other transgender teens. Through talking with Ari they echoed a lot of what I had heard at the time:

I would read online, “it's separating people by the amount of surgeries they've had,” or, “It's an outdated term from the 70s. It can even be offensive now!

One of the many videos I saw that confirmed this thought for me was *Super Cool Gender Education (Part 1)* by Ash Hardell featuring Jazmine K.²⁸ The 2015 video goes over various terms all about gender variance, covering everything from cisgender to trigender. In the section about the term *transsexual* (same word different spelling), Jazmine talked about the negative connotations of the label:

Many don't like this term though because it is thought to be really freaking clinical. Transgender is the same, but it's more socially accepted... I personally don't think I will adopt the term solely because I feel the term has been tarnished by the media. [It is a] term that the most uneducated minds would use as an insult.

I remember watching this exact video on my cheap Toshiba laptop, absorbing every word.

²⁸ Ash Hardell. “Super Cool Gender Education (Part 1)”. Video, 00:15:38, March 13, 2015. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=81-FEauK9II&list=P LjIGLYSe6iDxaIAsFhQ7eLoYlo35JNAKy&index=10>>.

Understanding all of this felt like second nature to me. There was another word I had heard sparingly, *transvestite*. If the word transsexual was insulting, transvestite felt sacreligious. It was a word I had only heard when searching for media representation of transgender people. I hadn't watched *Rocky Horror* at this point, but the song *Sweet Transvestite* was so legendary that even the politically correct parts of Tumblr still idolized the film.

In middle school my best friend Kayleigh and I would watch *Ouran High School Host Club*.²⁹ The entire show is centered around gender nonconformity. The main character, Haruhi, is female yet states throughout the show that they do not care about their gender or their presentation. Haruhi even pretends to be male in order to partake in his school's all-male host club as a way to pay his debt. There is another character in the show who is well known for their gender deviance—Haruhi's father, a full time drag queen and implied trans woman. In the show, however, the other boys refer to her as a transvestite. While I was in awe of the character, Kayleigh made a comment

²⁹ *Ouran High School Host Club* was a manga written by Bisco Hatori in 2002. It would later become an anime in 2006 and was written by Yōji Enokido.

about how gauche it was that they referred to her that way. Kayleigh is a cisgender girl, but her parents are politically active leftists who raised her right. It was actually her household that helped unpack my conservative upbringing. Still, through my stubborn ways, I remember getting in a tiff with her about it. Even though I knew all these terms were outdated, I found a level of power in them. Like etchings of a time gone past.

My perspective was confined to being a transgender teen in the mid-2010s. After marriage equality passed, I knew there was work to be done surrounding transgender legislation. However, I felt our community get comfortable. When I was interviewed in 2016, I shared the same consensus with many other participants: we are more than our transness. For myself, I mention how I'm "also an artist."³⁰ Ironic given how now the only thing I make work about is my gender. I find it disheartening to watch back on. In a way we used transgender in a similar way to the old conceptions of transsexuality: the

³⁰ Vale, Clementine, "Life in Transition," Interviewed by Lauren Caruba, *San Antonio Express-News*, 2017: <<https://web.archive.org/web/20240604100052/http://www.expressnews.com/transgender-life-in-transition/>>.

goal being to, at a certain point, leave being a trans person behind.

Looking back now I feel as if that line of thinking is a disservice to our community. I think the move away from being unapologetically trans, trying to compartmentalize ourselves to a neoliberal cisgender world, may have been our downfall. As an adult what I feel now is that my transness is all that I am. It's the parties I go to, the friends I have, the people I date, the way I spend my money. Especially now that there is such repressive legislation put on transgender people, it doesn't matter how good trannies we are—we will still be affected. Of course, I need to mention that around 2016 there was also discourse around transmedicalism. Transmedicalism is a subsection of the trans community that believes what we are experiencing is an illness and it heavily discredits nonbinary people (especially the ones that don't transition). They also tend to be the people who used the word transsexual in the old fashion sense of the word.

I don't identify with transmedicalistics for many reasons. For one, I was never convinced that being nonbinary was just "not a thing." During my social justice warrior years I had a document where I listed every culture in the world that has a third gender. There was also this narrative perpetuated by Blair

White that transgender children/teens should not be allowed to transition. During the height of her Youtube channel Blair had interviewed a detransitioner. In an attempt to seem like she was getting both sides of the argument, Blair posted “*I Transitioned at Age 10*” - *Talk w/ Trans Teen*.”³¹ Essentially, she back peddled a bit by saying that though she has been critical of minors transitioning, it might be the right choice for some of them.

Watching this as a transgender teen, I felt disgusted. The video was posted in 2020, a year before gender affirming care bans would start being passed. Obviously, now I have the foresight to know that many lawmakers and conservative grifters say that they would rather strip every child of the opportunity to transition than have 1 cisgender child fall victim to so-called gender ideology.

It was around this time that I saw more and more comments being made that transgender people were “sick” and that transitioning was a form of mutilation. It was as if these already regressive talking

³¹ White, Blair “‘I Transitioned at Age 10’ - Talk w/ Trans Teen.” Video, 00:13:08, May 16, 2020. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=zvgazwhNm48&t=39s>>.

points made by transmedicalists were being turned back against them. Another form of propaganda that emerged from this time was that sex is an “immutable biological state.” It is something that even the UK Supreme Court heard in November 2024 for a legal challenge put forth by Woman Scotland in order to not include transgender women in the 2010 Equality Act.³² Interestingly, cutting through all of the noise is once again the word transsexual. When talking to Ari, they mentioned:

I think I just started seeing a lot of trans art [use the word transsexual] or other trans activists using it once in a while.

Instead of its previous connotations, the term is quickly getting reclaimed as a politically useful and nuanced term. It was around 2022 that Ari and I both started identifying as transsexuals. Personally, I have found it to be more accurate when describing the sheer potential our biology has. While the term had been weaponized against nonbinary people in the past, Ari has found it to affirm their gender deviance:

³² On April 26th, 2025, the UK Supreme Court decided to exclude trans women from the 2010 Equality Act. Unbelievably dark times we live in.

*I started thinking about me and how I view my sex and my gender and my identity. I was like, “well, yeah, I’m transgender. Yeah I changed my gender, but I also shifted my entire sex.” And as a nonbinary person **I feel like my sex is a secret third thing.** My body is physically different from what you would consider “male” or “female”, right? So, my chest is flat. My clit is bigger than what you would consider “normal”, but I also don’t have a regular ass dick and balls. Also my uterus has been asleep for many years because I’m on T for so long. My body operates in its own secret third terms. So I feel like my sex is a big part of my non binary identity. And the term transsexual, it having the word sex in there, means I’m transcending my sex. I’m like, yeah, that’s totally me! That’s definitely what I’m doing here.*

Now, it is more commonplace than ever to see a younger trans person refer to themselves as a transsexual. One of the most notable examples is Alex Consani, 2024’s Model of the Year. In an interview with Harper’s BAZAAR she described her model walk as “confident, powerful, and transsexual.”³³ It’s not

³³ Harper’s BAZAAR. “Alex Consani Talks TikTok, Charli xcx, and Modeling Advice | Burning Questions | Harper’s BAZAAR.” March 20, 2025. Video, 00:08:03.

only the word transsexual for which I have seen a resurgence. Once outdated terms like *sex change* have also made a comeback as a response to anti-trans hysteria. The best case for this is Instagram user Sexchange.tbt, which is “AN ELITE ARCHIVE OF THE TWISTED TRANSSEXUAL MIND,” with over 29,000 followers.³⁴ Undeniably, this is a cultural movement. As even the Democratic party casts trans people aside in favor of a centrist point of view, our community has held steadfast in asserting that bodies are malleable and that transness will always prevail.

Even then, I am sure the trans people of tomorrow will find another term to fit their current needs. Perhaps transsexual will once again become offensive or maybe it’ll become the default term for our community. It’s something I love thinking about, it gives me hope for what might be ahead of us. When I talk to the trans elders I know personally, they always make a point to tell me that there will come a time when youth look to myself and my peers for answers. I

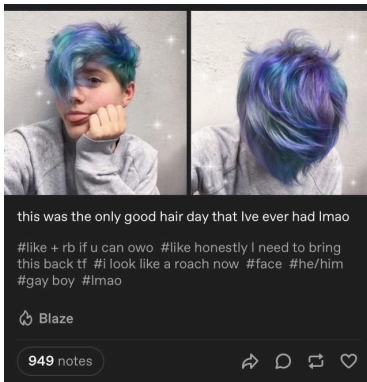
<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b2NOpKyeZV0>>.

³⁴ SEX CHANGE DOT TBT (@sexchange.tbt). 2025. “AN ELITE ARCHIVE OF THE TWISTED TRANSSEXUAL MIND.” Instagram.

<<https://www.instagram.com/sexchange.tbt/?hl=en>>

have a feeling they are going to both be pleased and unsettled by my sinful he/she ways.

Pushing the Pause Button



In order of left to right: Myself, Age 12 (2015).
Ari, Age 14-15 (~2016). Patryk Age 12-13 (~2011).

Lupron was my first love. Roughly every 3 months I would go to my endocrinologist's office and lay face down on the examination table. They would bunch up a part of my buttocks and slowly inject a very long needle into me. I would be sore for the next day or so, but it always felt so worth it. It was like I could breathe for the first time. I even remember the first day I was given my puberty blockers —July 17, 2015— it was the same day the *Steven Universe* episode *Friend Ship* aired. It took about 6 months of gender therapy and endocrinology visits before I was even able to get access to puberty blockers. Aetna, my insurance, put up every possible barrier to make sure I couldn't get the care I needed. Aetna only covered the first 3 weeks of the 6 months of the therapy I was required to do. I was even required to get a CAT scan in order to make sure there wasn't a tumor in my brain.

I was a part of the only generation of children in the United States to have both accessible information about transgender people and different forms of medical intervention. While media coverage and medical care for minors is heavily focused on puberty blockers, the reality is that very few youths that are diagnosed with gender dysphoria eventually go on to receive these medications specifically. Researchers from JAMA Pediatrics analyzed insurance claims from

more than 5 million patients ages 8 to 17. The claims all took place from 2018 to 2022. Even at a historical height ***less than .01 percent of all youth received gender affirming medical care.*** They also found that no patients under the age of 12 had received hormones.³⁵

It's hard for me to process the numbers sometimes. It makes me emotional knowing how unique my experience is as someone who got this care in Texas. I was a part of that .01 percent and now there is no child in my home state who can get that care. It also makes me think about the kid I used to be. When I was 11 for Christmas all I asked for was estrogen. I would even sing it to the tune of *All I Want for Christmas is My Two Front Teeth*. My gender therapist had to break it to me that there was no legal way I could get it at that age. When I look at that number, I also feel a rage. Prior to coming out I was supposed to receive puberty blockers due to my precocious puberty. I didn't need a note from a therapist. I didn't even want the blockers to begin with. My pediatrician said

³⁵ Carla K. Johnson, *Fewer than 0.1 percent of U.S. adolescents receive gender-affirming medications, report finds*, (The Associated Press, January 7, 2025).
<<https://apnews.com/article/transgender-hormones-puberty-blockers-youth-562cba3c3ae43e88d5144f7adb4efd7c>>.

my growth plates were merging too early and that they were going to give me my shots once I had gone through a bit of puberty. The only kids that receive puberty blockers and hormones “like candy” are cisgender pubescents.

I believe that puberty blockers and hormones should be over-the-counter medications, with the only restriction being that one must get bloodwork done every few months. Moreover, I think that trans preteens should be able to receive hormones at least by the age of 12. If a kid is old enough to go through a puberty they don’t like, they should have the option to go through the puberty they prefer at the same timeframe of their peers. As my classmates were growing breasts, having their skin softened, becoming women—I was essentially a neutrois. I had no development of any kind and it was so isolating. It also caused me to be greatly dysphoric, as even though I wasn’t going through a male puberty, I didn’t have any curves or reduction in body hair.

This is a system that works both in Thailand and in Mexico. Instagram user Alluring Skull, posted on April 8th, 2025 about how she was about to pick up progesterone and estrogen for her and her partner

with no prescription in Thailand.³⁶ The only restriction being the blood work I've mentioned. When Ari received the letter to get hormones, they didn't need to show it at the pharmacy. Instead, they asked for Testosterone and received it without any hassle. It is only because of fear mongering, along with the money that can be made by the restrictions, that the United States has yet to adopt this system.

The cost of Lupron was in the thousands. When my mom lost her job, we no longer had insurance, which means we were no longer able to pay for the puberty blocker. At the age of 12 I would start on Spironolactone. It was still quite expensive, but more affordable overall. It's part of the reason I'm so short. Currently, I only stand at about 5'3. Lupron was supposed to bring my height to around 5'9. It's one of the few "side effects" of the medication, which is why it is given to cisgender children whose growth plates merge too early. A part of me enjoys my short stature. I pass more because of it, with the added benefit being that all tboys I date are taller than me. What makes me

³⁶ Alluring Skull(@alluringskull). 2025. "Gay rights!" Instagram, April 8, 2025. <<https://www.instagram.com/reel/DIMOV9ixMty/?igsh=dHdzMGpreTVybTl>>.

a little sad is that any dreams I had of being a model were put to rest.

When I was 14, about to turn 15, I was finally allowed to receive hormones. Don't think it was so easy, though! Normally, I would have needed another 5 months of therapy. However, since I had been out for 3 and a half years, my visits were shortened to only 2 months. It was 2 months of nothing, hollow visit where legally I had to repeat over and over how much I loved being a girl and how I felt I absolutely needed to start estrogen. Throughout the whole process of transitioning as a minor, I needed to be 100 percent sure that I wanted to transition. If I had any doubts about my identity—I wouldn't receive the care I needed. There's something about the pressure of knowing yourself completely in order to meet guidelines that is so suffocating. Part of the reason why in my early college years I experimented so much was to see what parts of myself were my transness and what parts were formed in order to receive a letter.

I am the only transsexual individual I have ever met who has been on puberty blockers. Even the other young trans adults I spoke with, the young trans people I surround myself with, were either unable to receive them or were too old to get them by the time they came out. For Patryk, at the time in Poland receiving puberty

blockers and hormones were not possible while they were a minor. It was something he had to pursue the moment he turned 18. As a teen, he would have to bind and be at the mercy of the teachers around him who knew of his trans status. For Ari, his family wasn't supportive initially. It took years of family therapy before they were able to start their medical transition. By that time Ari was around 16 years old.

In my teens many of my trans friends didn't seek a medical transition. The ones who wanted to had a long journey ahead of them. I've had friends whose families said that they would kill them if they came out as trans. I've had friends who had to transition in secret. Eventually, when I became a young adult, I had younger trans people come to me to ask about care. As Texas tightened restrictions for minors getting care, I'd have to say something along the lines of "beg the clinic or wait until you're 18. I am so sorry." I should not have to say that I or any other trans person would kill themselves without this medication. It should be enough that it helps us feel more at home in our bodies. The reality is, though, that without this care I would not be alive today. As with every other person I have interviewed. As with every other transsexual person I have kept in my life.

After the Fall



But I'm telling you hold on, hold on. Tomorrow we'll be there. After the fall we'll be born, born, born again. After it all blows away.

"After The Fall," Klaus Nomi

I believe that all of our trans experiences are interconnected and what we are experiencing is deeply spiritual. During the twilight days of needing to have *Texan Freaks* finished I will be undergoing and recovering from my orchiectomy. It'll be on Easter Monday, April 21, 2025, that my little kitten balls are removed. Around the time I scheduled my consultation I found out that Dora Richter, the first trans woman to undergo bottom surgery, survived the rise of the Nazis. Originally it was believed that she had likely died in a concentration camp until 2024. Census records showed that she had fled to Czechoslovakia and later returned to Germany before her death on April 26, 1966. As I was watching Erin Reed announce this triumphant news I got a call from Howard Brown³⁷. In the call we went over how my provider was going to write a letter for my insurance in order to get my orchiectomy covered.

It may have just been a coincidence, but it struck a chord within me. Here I was learning about this trailblazer who got the surgeries she needed, survived a fascist regime, and even lived peacefully in

³⁷ Erin Reed (@erininthemorning). 2025. "Dora Richter Lived!!!!" Instagram, August 27, 2024.

<https://www.instagram.com/reel/C_L-D-Gy_Oy/?igsh=MTU3Z3I4cXBuaDF2cg==>.

the countryside. Within that same moment I was also receiving the same life line. While I got this news before the results of the election, I knew how it would turn out even if I hoped for it to be different. I knew how violent our country could get. Project 2025 was already a reality in the South. As far back as 2022, Texas started creating a list of trans people by tracking gender marker changes.³⁸ Porn is becoming more restricted, with Pornhub no longer being accessible in Texas as of March 2024.³⁹ August of 2024 was when they eventually removed the right to change documentation

³⁸ Lauren McGaughy, *Texas collected information on transgender drivers. It won't say why*, (KUT News, March 19, 2025), <https://www.kut.org/politics/2025-03-19/texas-transgender-drivers-license-data-collection>.

³⁹ William Melhado, *Pornhub suspends site in Texas due to state's age-verification law*, (The Texas Tribune, March 14, 2024), <https://www.texastribune.org/2024/03/14/texas-pornhub-5th-circuit-age-verification-paxton/>.

to begin with.⁴⁰ I had heard how trans women in Florida prisons were having their heads shaved, their hormones taken away, and I saw it as an eerie warning sign of things to come.⁴¹

I view this surgery as a way of making sure the puberty I have suppressed for more than 10 years never affects me. Testosterone, the hormone that I love in the tboys I keep in my life, would be a death sentence for me. My orchiectomy will ensure that I never need to know a male Clementine. I have been out as trans for half my lifetime. The life of a transsexual is all I have ever known. During the long bus rides I had to take during middle school I would look out the window and be unable to envision a life for myself. Now, as I take an even longer bus ride after my orchiectomy consultation I do. Even through all of the anxiety, I feel

⁴⁰ Pooja Salhotra, *Transgender Texans blocked from changing their sex on their driver's license*, (The Texas Tribune, August 21, 2024), <<https://www.texastribune.org/2024/08/21/transgender-texans-drivers-license-DPS/>>.

⁴¹ Erin Reed, *Federal Court Rules In Favor of Forcibly Detransitioning Transgender Inmates In Florida*, (Erin In The Morning, January 6, 2025), <<https://www.erininthemorning.com/p/federal-court-rules-in-favor-of-forcibly>>.

like the woman I've always wanted to be. I've made my 11-year-old self so proud and so happy. I'm so grateful. Throughout the process of researching and writing this paper my life has morphed and changed in ways I could not imagine.

There is a lot of tenderness in the moments until my orchiectomy. I can't shave down there if it's within 2 days before the surgery. I have to wipe down my entire body with an alcohol sanitary wipe the night before. I needed to quit smoking everything 6 weeks prior and I must stop drinking one week until the surgery. As I go under they will play *Fanfare/Don't Dream It* from the *Rocky Horror Picture Show* soundtrack. There is a lot of before, before, before. Throughout my life I have been frustrated by the fact I have no clue what lies ahead for me. I was at the mercy of my present, for better or for worse. Now, I feel like I have a good clue where the world is going. With Trump gearing up to deport US citizens, while also spouting anti-trans rhetoric—I am filled with more fear than I've been.

It is very strange to see the ways in which history has been echoing and reformed to fit this current time. Through it all I am somehow here, continuing to live. I do not pray to god. I pray to Claude Cahun and Dora Richter. Gender deviant

icons who survived the fascism that was inspired by the United States. Who fought the fuck back. This form of fascism is no longer hiding itself behind the mask of “democracy.” I am determined to see it come to an end. The current fear mongering over transgender people, immigrants, unions, and abortion *will* come to an end someday. The hatred that the United States has exported has inevitably come home. What it means to be an American will become narrower and narrower. Our country will become more isolationist until the system collapses in on itself.

In Part 1 of the article I was in, one of the trans rights activists, McBride, said that “Texas is on the front lines for the battle for trans equality right now.”⁴² I believe that the work of transgender activists in places like my home state will lead to the enshrining of protections for the transgender community on a national level. Texas may have the reputation of being a wasteland. Supposedly only the worst of this country live there, undeserving of the freedoms that civilized

⁴² Lauren Caruba, “Part 1: The Battle,” *San Antonio Express-News*, 2017:
<<https://web.archive.org/web/20170519162035/http://projects.expressnews.com/part-1-the-battle>>.

blue states have. I need everyone to understand *the South is not expendable*.

Whatever we allow as a country to happen in the South will come back to hurt us on a national level. According to the Williams Institute Texas has the second largest number of transgender people in the entire United States. The only state that has a larger trans population is California.⁴³ In the past few years I have seen how quickly Northern states are to blame and dehumanize the South. I'm not denying that these states helped the Trump administration. What I am saying is that through extreme forms of gerrymandering and voter suppression, kind communities in the south are being silenced. There are thousands of people who did not vote for a republican government, both on the state and national level. It is revolting to relish in the death and facturing of people who had no choice in where they were born or live.

There is a group known as Equality Texas that keeps track of the various bills that affect transgender Texans, it shows which politicians to trust on their

⁴³ Anderson Flores et. al., *HOW MANY ADULTS IDENTIFY AS A TRANSGENDER IN THE UNITED STATES?* (The Williams Institute, June 2016) <<https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Trans-Adults-US-Aug-2016.pdf>>.

website, and it has a Queer Texas crisis fund. It works together with other Texas activists groups since the fight for bodily autonomy is an intersectional battle. One such group is Avow which works towards securing abortion rights in the state. It is the kind of organization that simply does not have a counterpart to the same scale within states like Illinois, California, or New York. This kind of work should not be discredited. I trust their role in this political moment will only become greater as this administration progresses.

It may feel pointless to have hope in these moments. In fact, there have been many times I've lost it entirely. Still, to no longer see a time when this will all end is what this government wants. I didn't come out because I thought that this was going to be easy, none of us come out thinking that way. As transsexuals, we come out because there is no other option. Even if we have to fight every step of the way, it is better than being in the closet for a moment more. I have hope that I will see the day gender affirming care for minors comes back to Texas. I have hope that there will come a day that I visit Texas and I don't feel constantly on the verge of a panic attack. I trust that there will eventually be a Texas where transgender people can change their birth certificates again.

Dear Texas



My friend groups' graduation party, photographed by me
(2021).

It wasn't until I moved to Chicago, Illinois, that I realized how much I missed you. As a child, I would dream about moving far away, maybe to Los Angeles. As a teen I would look at the cows grazing just past the fences of my neighborhood and feel miserable. I only thought of you as regressive laws and people, sprawling highways, and endless fields. I never took walks around you, or if I did, I needed the allure of a joint to do so. Even before I moved, the summers were beginning to reach 110 degrees F. I still desperately wanted to be fashionable, so I would wear a bright red corduroy winter coat even if it meant getting a heat stroke. Everything was sunbleached. Most buildings in San Antonio were built in the 1960s to 1970s, giving everything a dull and outdated tone. There were also two big issues — I never liked TexMex food and I hated country music.

I get why my parents failed to connect with me as a young child. My mother did well all things considered. Even at the age of 3, my mother would hold me and reassure me that it was ok if I turned out gay. She would take us out to get our nails done. I would only get a clear top coat and the praise I got from the ladies in the nail shop would make me blush. They always commented on my long eyelashes. Mom would buy me Barbies and Polly Pockets. I played with

them for hours. At the time, my transsexual brother was in the Girl Scouts. I wanted so badly to trade decorative erasures and make bracelets.

As an adult, when I get Girl Scout cookies, I have a shouting match with the old version of my parents. I demand to know why they never let me join the Girl Scouts and why they ever thought throwing me in the Boy Scouts was the right thing to do. They tried to sit with my ways, but I think they couldn't get past the fact I was born a *boy*. My dad really tried to be with me, but he was working through his own machismo. We would try to go to the Boy Scouts meetings and the hockey games, but I would have a tantrum every time.

Texas, my dearest Texas, you are a place for being misunderstood — but also a place where people don't ask many questions. I came out young enough where I was pretty unclockable, especially by highschool. My transness was something I had the option to disclose, even if someone said they "noticed" I could tell it was bullshit. I never needed to speak with administration or teachers. Once I changed my name, that part of myself was invisible. I flowed through those years freely as a transsexual teen. The school restroom was a safe haven for me, stark contrast to what teens and young adults experience today. I never even made

work about my transness, which is funny in hindsight. My art magnet program was a hub of trans and queer teens that fully understood me. I remember feeling entitled to my girlhood. I really fought for my place at the feminine table, and by the time I was 16, I was getting real fiery about it. I think that's a gift you gave me, Texas. You forced me, sometimes lovingly, to be sure of myself.

Maybe that's not who you are anymore. You got the word out there, my motherland. You stoked the fear mongering. I look behind my shoulder now. I notice when middle aged women stare at me for too long in the bathroom. You are so big, bigger than Poland, and it makes me feel like I'll be trapped within you. Being a young adult and moving far from home is hard enough. As a young adult I am having to reckon with my nostalgia and finding sanctuary in a new state. Why did you take away my ability to truly come home!? I want to reside within you for more than a week. I want to be with my people. That's gone now. I stopped being a full Texan the moment I was forced to get my hormones in Chicago. The people controlling you took away my pediatric clinic's right to provide care.

I still crave the resistance that is transsexual life within your borders. The parties and the sex are better

on your land, my sweet Texas. The oppression and the thought that we are changing you gives way to sensuality. Somehow I'm funnier when I'm visiting you. In Chicago, I am an anxious wreck. Everyone seems larger than life, more boisterous than I. Things sometimes move too fast there. You move slow Texas. I can bring my fast paced mind to you and feel like an icon.

You were healing, my dear Texas, there was change on the horizon. Now, I have to get my mind out of the leather. The allure of *Lonesome Rose* or a warehouse club. If it wasn't your politics it would be climate change. I weathered the winter storm with you. My home had no running water for the first day and I had nearly no power for a week. Over 200 people died within you, Texas. I realized how unprepared you were for what the future will bring. How in a few decades the extreme cold and heat will destroy you. I love you Texas! I have hope for you and I am so unbelievably sorry that I'm not there right now. I hate myself for leaving, but I know I couldn't help you from within your borders.

Before I left for Chicago, I was supposed to do meth with a few friends of friends. I saw no future for myself. I had been dabbling with other substances long before that point. If I had stayed, I would've been no

help to anyone. I would've been another t-slur junkie, the exact breed you hate. There's so many ways I could've met my end with you, Texas. Luckily, I had the support and opportunities to prevent that. I just don't know if I can forgive myself for surviving. I live my wildest transsexual dreams while your trans kids of today are dying. Their pain isn't hypothetical to me. How is anyone supposed to live with that? I don't want to say goodbye. I want this to be a "see you soon," a "till better days." Will you ever let me have that? Will you one day open your arms and say I am deserving of a life with you?

Your southern belle,
Clementine



Photo by Anderson Ries (@mr03213 on Instagram).

Clementine Vale is a Chicago based writer, model, and artist. Born and raised in South Texas, her practice is centered around emerging forms of queer archiving and documenting the political decay that permeates the South.

For inquiries please contact clemmie.vale@gmail.com.
To view more work please go to clementinevale.com or
[@clemmies.cranium](https://www.instagram.com/clemmies.cranium) on Instagram.

