

July More Voices: Trans

Category: Trans

written by Paul Gross | July 1, 2024

Dear readers,

I adapt slowly to new things. I'm skeptical of new technologies, the latest fashions and the most recent fads. While I like to think of myself as progressive when it comes to matters of politics and social justice, the truth is my gut is often conservative about interpersonal matters and the stuff of daily life.

So in recent years, I've been astonished at the rapidity with which something that was invisible when I was growing up—a person changing their gender—has become commonplace.

Twenty years ago, when our daughters were pre-teens, my wife and I discussed how we'd feel if one of them told us that she was gay. Hey, we said to one another, we're liberal, accepting parents. It would be an adjustment, but we can handle that. We'd take a deep breath and embrace her.

Then something entirely different came on the scene. A congregant in our house of worship announced that they would be transitioning—an announcement, I should say, that was met with affirmation.

Then we learned that a couple of teens in the congregation weren't entirely comfortable with their assigned genders.

One day I listened to parents on a public radio program describing how their child had never fit in with their gender assigned at birth and, at less than ten years of age, told their parents in no uncertain terms that they wanted to transition.

Soon I was attending medical lectures about transitioning.

Then, several work colleagues shared that a child of theirs was transitioning.

It started to feel like an epidemic. Why was this happening? Why had it never happened before? Had these longings been there all along—amorphous and unnamed because they'd never been acknowledged as a “thing,” as something real and possible?

Recently, someone new joined the men's group that I'm a part of—a softspoken, bearded playwright who, after a few meetings, shared with the group that he was trans. I never would have guessed.

We've become friends, and he recently shared a play that he wrote about his life, including his coming of age and his transition. His family met his transition with every form of opposition one could imagine—incredulity, denial, opposition, hostility and rejection.

His story does have a happy ending as far as his parents are concerned, but it took years of suffering—for him and for his parents—to reach that higher ground.

It struck me that my task—being open and accepting of him—is easy. I didn't know him before. I had no prior expectations, the kind that any parent has of a child or that a friend has of a friend.

When I listened on public radio to the parents whose child made clear their wish to change genders, I was so impressed with the parents' ability to listen, open their minds and hearts to unimagined possibilities, do some research and come to accept and support their child.

Would I have done the same twenty years ago, or would I have treated my daughter's wish as the latest fad? Would I have viewed her wish to change genders the same way I viewed a wish for a tattoo—something to be fended off?

I'd like to think that I'd have risen to the challenge. But twenty years ago I didn't know what I know now. My thinking has evolved, although my conservative gut hasn't gone away.

And if tomorrow one of my daughters came to me and said, "Dad, we need to talk about something..." I'm sure it would still take some work for me to walk my talk.

Our July *More Voices* theme is [Trans](#). Tell us about your experience as a trans individual or as someone who has known, loved or cared for someone who is trans.

Share your story using the [More Voices Submission Form](#). For more details, visit [More Voices FAQs](#). And have a look at last month's theme: [Regrets/No Regrets](#).

Remember, your story should be 40-400 words. And no poetry, please.

We look forward to hearing from you!

With warm regards,

Paul Gross
Editor