



HOT SEAT QUESTIONS ABOUT TRANSGENDERED PEOPLE

Short, snappy answers to all those irritating yet inevitable questions reporters like to ask us

What is “transgender” supposed to mean?

Transgendered people are those who have gender identities, expressions or behaviors not traditionally associated with their birth sex. As an umbrella term, transgender includes male-to-female and female-to-male transsexuals, male and female crossdressers, and others with unconventional gender expressions.

Aren't transgendered people just flamboyant homosexuals ?

Some are gay, lesbian or bisexual, but most transgendered people consider themselves to be heterosexual. However, transgendered people are often perceived as gay, and thus are discriminated against in similar ways.

Aren't transgendered people sexually perverted ?

Transgendered people are no more sex-driven than anyone else. Most transgendered people express their gender difference in order to be who they are, and do not connect their gender expression or identity to their sexuality or sexual orientation.

Aren't transgendered people mainly prostitutes and shoplifters ?

Transgendered people are mainly law-abiding, hardworking folks who pay their taxes, own homes, and support their young children and aging parents. Some are doctors or lawyers, and some are sex workers or thieves. All transgendered people, however, suffer unfairly from society's pervasive stigmatization of them. Judging them on that basis is like judging other minorities using common negative stereotypes.

National Office:
P.O. Box 65
Kensington, MD 20895

West Coast Office:
5245 College Ave, #142
Oakland, CA 94618

Southeastern Office:
P.O. Box 33724
Decatur, GA 30033

What makes a transgendered person want to change sex ?

Very few transgendered people actually go through sex reassignment surgery (SRS). Only transsexual people do this, and many of them cannot afford the costs of these surgeries. Most transgendered people do not want to change their anatomical sex, but many modify their bodies by taking hormones or by undergoing various cosmetic procedures.

Aren't transsexuals just men who want to be women ?

There may be just as many transsexual men and people born with female bodies who feel their gender identity or expression is masculine. The Female-To-Male (FTM) half of the transgendered community ranges from stone butch lesbians and passing women to transsexual men, who go through hormonal and surgical transformation of their bodies.

Isn't a "man in a dress" just out to solicit sex from other men ?

Some are. Most aren't. Many crossdressing males are heterosexual, married men who are faithful to their wives. This common misconception is due to the media's mislabeling of any man who appears crossdressed in public as a gay prostitute. Most crossdressers are simply being themselves and have no interest in having sex with other men.

Aren't transgendered people just drag queens ?

Some are. Most aren't. Drag queens and kings crossdress as performance art. It's a common mistake to confuse drag queens and kings, who receive a great deal of media attention, with those who crossdress for gender identity reasons. Drag performers, whose flamboyant personas are part of their acts, practice the art of female or male illusion. Many do not self-identify as transgendered.

Isn't being transgendered just another deviant lifestyle ?

Scientific research and the self-reports of transgendered people suggest gender identity is innate. Transgendered people are born with gender identities that simply don't match their physical sex. They don't choose to be transgendered. Being transgendered is neither a choice nor a "lifestyle," and thus cannot be considered immoral. Transgendered people may have choices to make with respect to how to manage their condition, but this in itself is not indicative of deceitfulness or psychological disorder.

© 2001 Gender Education and Advocacy, Inc.

GEA is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the lives of all gender variant people regardless of their social identities