

# Who we are

We are a group of transgender people seeking to create a world in which all of us are free from imprisonment, police violence, racism, and poverty. We do this by building community between those of us on the inside and those of us on the outside. Through this newsletter, we aim to support the members of our community who are locked up by sharing resources and information and showcasing our creativity and resilience.

We want your contributions! Please submit artwork, stories about your experiences, complaints, ideas for change, commissary, poetry, thoughts on resources or articles you'd like to see published, anything

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If you want to contribute please include exactly how you want to be credited (if you want to be anonymous or not, or use a nickname, whether it's OK to say the facility you are/were in). Your legal name and ID number will never be used. If you want to subscribe, please also send a letter asking for subscriptions!  
When addressing letters, please address to DMV Trans Circulator, not a specific name.

# DMV Trans Circulator

Issue 5

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## Updates!

- We wanted to let you all know, that we do not run on a membership basis. If you want to receive our newsletters and/or want to contribute to the newsletters, just send us a letter in the mail! And of course spread the word, tell any and everyone you know!!
- We've heard from one person already about complaints they have where they are staying. Some of these concerns include not getting appropriate clothes, being harassed, being denied medication or having access to medication take longer than it should, and other transgender-specific concerns. If you share any of these and feel comfortable expressing them to us, please write us a letter telling us. We are trying to get hold of essential people to help y'all out, but having more people share their concerns will strengthen what we have to say.
- We are planning an outreach day that will happen by our next issue. We are hoping to talk to more people on the streets, see how they feel, and get more support!
- On Wednesday May 29th, 2013, there will be a public event called "A Glimpse of the Prison Industrial Complex from the Inside" where formerly incarcerated people will get up on stage and testify about their experiences of abuse, neglect, and brutality being incarcerated in prison in front of an audience of people at a restaurant in DC. Word has gotten out about our newsletter outside of the LGBT community and the organizers of this event want to hear from transgender people behind bars. Help expose the harm that incarceration has on our community of transgender sisters and brothers. If you would like to participate, please send your testimonies to us by May 25th and please specify how you want to be credited (your name or a fake name, do you want to include the institution you are at). Members of the newsletter will read your testimony out loud at the event if you so desire.

## Whats - N - A Label?

The mind can't react without a label. Try to envision a thought, ideal, concept, person or thing? Any mental vision you will conjure evokes a label. When one dares to be different indicating that they don't associate one's self with a label! Can that be only abstract thinking? Being human is a label. When you attempt to now associate with a label, do you inadvertently label? Yet in the moment of an epiphany we marvel at this marvelous thing called life. Then and only then do one recognize a state of being within ourselves, our special existence.

We are spiritual beings continuously evolving. Such trivial matters as genders or sexuality are minute, seemingly irrelevant. We are initially liquid. Born under water via two substances i.e. a sperm and egg. Through an evolution that is constant [change] we become the phenomenal beings we are. Life's experiences contribute towards who one becomes. Yet who we become isn't completely who we are. The deeds we do, as opposed to what we utter with mere words are of most importance. Let our actions overshadow mere words or a like of them. Whats-N-a label?

Submitted by Imani

## Brandi's Bulletin

The one thing that I've been thinking about lately is how life happens.

The one answer I keep getting is everything has a process. This happens to be a fact that I still struggle, very much with. I am the kind of person who wants it all at this moment. I don't want to wait until tomorrow... what's the point? That's what my mind tells me. Some call it crash dummy....But I've been sort of seeing how that works and I am amazed at the way it's revealing itself to me. Sometimes you just have to wait and the wait is well worth it.

As a transgender woman I struggle with insecurities that sometimes control my life. I sometimes feel worthless and unhappy with myself and I come up with all of these superficial thoughts that will help me to feel better, but it never does. All it ever does is add more stress to the situation because a thought is just a thought and in order to bring that thought to life, there will be a process. Another stumbling block for someone like me...I come to the end of it all and I find hope—the one thing that allows me to look at things in a realistic way and begin to understand that I can make my dreams come true. I can do what ever it is I set my mind to do. I just have to gain the patience to go through the process, so I've been telling myself lately to get out of my own way and the more I tell myself this, the more I achieve.

Be strong, my trans family. Be there for one another. Make someone know that they have a friend in you and always show love.

I have a good friend who shares the idea that love is the answer to all. I truly believe this and I love you!

*Brandi's Bulletin is a regular column by one of our founders, Brandi, a self-identified black trans woman.*

## Letter to the Editors

"I really need to hear and to have support from other transgender females who are locked up and who are going through the constant struggle of being here in the system. And also dealing with the disrespect from officers and other staff. I really want to let all girls know you are not alone. Be who you are and enjoy your life and know that you all are not forgotten or alone."

--Submitted by Ms. Tamara Denise Dunkley

"The virtue lies in the struggle, not the prize"

--Submitted by Ophelia De'lonta

“Food for Thought: Is Goodness an innate behavior, or a learned behavior?”

--Submitted by Imani



Photo of Dayshawn Barnes, from Project Empowerment interview

## Interview with Dayshawn Barnes about Project Empowerment

### *What was your experience going through the training part of Project Empowerment?*

My name is Dayshawn Barnes. I've been living my life as a transsexual sister since 1989. I graduated from high school and had some experience in college. But as my experience becoming transgender, I started going out, you know I started getting into things, selling my body and doing things that I shouldn't be doing because I always had educational skills, so its not like I never had a job. I don't blame noone but myself because I knew right from wrong. But in the process I ended up getting in trouble, ended up doing 7 years in prison. So, after 2010 I came home from prison. I had come home from prison and not been working in a work environment for the 7 years I was in and the extra 6 or 7 years when I was not working. So, a lot of experiences I had, I didn't have no more and now that I'm coming home I had a record.

And so with a record, my name wasn't changed at the time, looking like a woman, and then putting in an application and then writing down work experience and at the time I couldn't say I was working really because that was a lie, so I had to put down that I was incarcerated. So, putting that down, agencies decide to look at that as "oh, you're bad", regardless of knowing what you did time for.

March of last year we went down and I signed up over at Project Empowerment, where you had to go through and make sure your urine is clean, and sit there and do the intake and whatever and if everything comes back they'll put you in the program, so I started the program May 18th. So it was very successful--- its a program where you start working there, you go to class for three weeks and they teach you life skills, job readiness, how to go into interviews, and it was a very nice class that you had to go through before you graduated.

### *It was all transgender women?*

It was all transgender women, we had one trans guy his name was Tammy Brown, and most all of them was transgender women and we was in a class by ourselves at that time. We all went through and we all completed it and like I said they taught us life skills, job readiness and as you're going through it they ask you what type of job you'd like to have, you give them three jobs that you really want to go to. Well me myself I wanted to do parks and recreation, I wanted to do anything doing home health care dealing with elderly people, and I put in restaurants. So after I graduated with the Mayor and everything, I got my certificate and they had sent me out to a nursing home but when I got to the nursing home they wanted me to do maintenance

work and I was like "wait a minute, I look like a woman, I don't think I want to do maintenance work." So I went back to Project Empowerment and they sent me out to Family Crisis Center. So I did that for 6 months through Project Empowerment. At the time, during the 6 months, you had the opportunity- Project Empowerment pays you \$8.25/hr, low subsidized pay even though its not full pay, it's something, you know coming from where I came from, to make \$8.25 I was blessed you know what I'm saying so a lot of people might look at it like thats not nothing, thats not minimum wage, but it is something, it was very uplifting.

So Project Empowerment was beautiful, you know. But the thing with Project Empowerment is that with a lot of girls that are in the streets really don't have that mindset of ok the rules are you have to be there 8:30 in the morning, you can't come in jeans and tennis shoes, you have to wear office clothes, you've got to be there from 8am to 5pm. They give you an hour break or whatever but you've got to really *want it*. Because a lot of people, not just the girls, a lot of people are in the program just to get the benefits and when the benefits are over they don't want to deal with it. You know you've got to really want the job because it places you at whatever type of job you want to be placed at and you have to go into that job and *fight for it!* It's not like you can come in and they're going to automatically give you a job, you have to fight for it. When you get home from prison, or if you're off the streets, and you really want something you've got to fight for it. We still have to fight for our position because of *who we are*. You know what I'm saying, you can get your name changed but you've got to be who you are and if you don't do that you're not going to succeed. The program is out here to help you, but you've got to really want it. So, I really wanted it and I think I did that and I'll tell anybody that's going through the program or went through some of the things I went through, or if you didn't go through the things I went through, and you think you want to get a job, try to go through Project Empowerment, try to go through T.H.E., try to go through H.I.P.S. to organizations that are really going to try to help you do something. But the news is, you've got to really want it! That's the whole thing about anything you go through, you have to really want it. If you don't want it or you think everything's going to be given to you, its not going to pan out. So that's what the girls really need to learn, everything's not given to you, you have to work for things in life and it feels good to be able to come home and be able to work for the things I've got. Right now I'm in the process of finding a new job but I learned a lot I learned writing skills, I learned office skills, I learned how to present myself to people, I learned a lot of things.