

## Transsexual womyn expelled from MWMF

By: Davina Anne Gabriel & Janis Walworth

WALHALLA, MI.-- Four postoperative male-to-female transsexual lesbians were expelled from the 18th annual Michigan Womyn's Music Festival (MWMF) by festival security staff on the third day of the event.

The four womyn, who had undergone sex change surgery from 2 to 14 years earlier, and a nontranssexual supporter attended the festival to raise consciousness among participants about the festival's policy of excluding transsexual womyn, and issues of gender in general.

Womyn opposed to transsexuals at MWMF attempted to silence them by destroying their educational materials.

One of the transsexual womyn was Nancy Burkholder of New Hampshire (see CPR, July edition), who had been expelled from the festival in 1991. She, and Davina Gabriel of Missouri, Wendi Kaiser of Maine, and Rica Fredrickson of Pennsylvania purchased tickets at the front gate without incident.

The next day, the five womyn set up a distribution table for literature and buttons and asked womyn who opposed the exclusionary policy to sign a petition seeking its repeal. The four transsexual womyn freely discussed their experiences as transsexuals with festival participants who approached the table.

On Tuesday and Wednesday, the five womyn did work shifts in the kitchen, at the medical and emotional support areas, and at the Sober Support tent. They attended concerts, ate meals, took showers, and shopped in the crafts bazaar with other festival participants, all without incident.

At approximately 4:30 p.m. on

Thursday, August 12th, Janis Walworth of Massachusetts, the nontranssexual member of the party, and Kaiser, who were staffing the literature table, were approached by two womyn, one of whom identified herself as MWMF security coordinator.

She told Walworth that the transsexual womyn were in violation of the festival's "womyn-born womyn" only policy, and that they must therefore leave the festival. Walworth replied that it was not clear that the transsexual womyn were in violation of the policy as stated since they all identify as womyn-born womyn.

The security coordinator indicated that some festival participants had complained about the presence of transsexual womyn at the festival, and asked security to remove the womyn from the land.

She went on to say that these womyn vowed to take matters into their own hands if security did not do so. Security felt it could no longer guarantee the safety of the transsexual womyn. They were even reluctant to assure Walworth's safety at the festival since she had been staffing the literature table and associating with the transsexual womyn.

The festival catalogue calls upon womyn who attend the festival to dialogue and listen to one another and explicitly states that "violence against womyn in any form is not acceptable in this community, on this land." However, no apparent action was taken against the womyn who threatened Walworth and the transsexual womyn.

The security coordinator pointed out that members of the party had been openly discussing their transsexuality at the literature table, thus alerting many womyn to the fact that there were transsexuals on the land. She implied that if they had not revealed their transsexuality to anyone, they would not have been asked to leave. In effect--"don't ask, don't tell."

The four transsexual womyn returned to their campsite and packed their belongings. They were delayed leaving the land by many womyn who stopped them to express their support. A contingent of leatherwomyn offered to guarantee the safety of the transsexual womyn at their campsite for the duration of the festival and strongly attempted to dissuade them from leaving.

The womyn set up camp across the road on National Forest land, and set up another literature table, along with neon pink banners proclaiming "Too Out To Be In!" and "Transsexual Womyn Expelled From Festival." Womyn came out from the festival to spend time with the transsexual womyn, express their support, and to bring food, flowers, and encouragement.

Festival participants who visited the transsexual womyn reported that sentiment inside the festival was overwhelmingly supportive of their participation in MWMF, and there was outrage at their expulsion.

Inside the festival, nontranssexual womyn helped staff the inside literature table, and Walworth conducted two sessions of a workshop entitled "Confronting Transphobia," as well as a workshop on gender and shamanism which had been scheduled to be presented by Gabriel.

On Friday evening Riki Anne Wilchins, a transsexual from New York City, flew in to present her workshop, "21 Things You Don't Say to a Transsexual." She chose to remain outside the festival with the four expelled transsexual womyn and conduct her workshop. Womyn who wanted to attend Wilchins' workshop agreed to move the location to the area outside the front gate. Approximately 75 womyn walked the mile to attend the two sessions.

On Saturday morning, the literature table inside the festival was left unattended

for a time. All literature, buttons, display racks, signed petitions, and completed survey forms were stolen. Also stolen were a donation can and personal property.

Also on Saturday, Walworth and Laura Ervin of Massachusetts, met with feminist author Kay Leigh Hagan who was acting as an official representative of the festival producers, Barbara Price and Lisa Vogel, and the security coordinator.

At that meeting, Hagan disclosed that the festival producers are the sole determiners of festival policy, and that she did not anticipate that they would change the anti-transsexual policy in the near future. ••

## THE GAY AGENDA

video comes to

### The Underground

By: Ken Constant

The controversial video, The Gay Agenda, will be shown at THE UNDERGROUND in Portland. The video, produced by the Christian right-wing, is being shown to church groups, city and state legislators, and anyone else they can get to watch it.

It's distorted depiction of "the gay life-style" is used to persuade these groups of viewers to support efforts to repeal and deny all gay civil rights and municipal protections.

Find out what lies and misinformation the Christian right is spreading about us. The video (approximately 30 minutes long), will be shown during the Equal Protection Lewiston fund-raiser at THE UNDERGROUND on Sunday, September 19th. It will also be shown at THE UNDERGROUND at 6:00, 8:00, and 11:00 p.m. on Monday, September 20th.

THE UNDERGROUND is located at 3 Spring Street in Portland. For more information, call me at 773-3042. ••

State-wide organizational meeting scheduled for September 12th, at *THE RAGE*, 123 Franklin St., Bangor. 947-1213. Noon to 4:00 p.m. This is in response to Concerned Maine Families' petition drive. (See front page) Car pool, spread the word. This is important!



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