



American LGBTQ+ liberation from day 1 to Stonewall.

Written & produced by Devlyn Camp

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[queerserial@gmail.com](mailto:queerserial@gmail.com)

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For this episode, begin with posts starting July 20, 2020. (Click above.)

The original Mattachine Society jester logo is courtesy of ONE Archives at the USC Libraries.

This transcript includes text from real homophile-era publications, letters, organizational documents, et cetera. These texts contain **identifying terms** that may now be out of date.

HOST: **Thousands of years ago**, ancient Sumer. The Sumerians wrote the myth of humanity's creation at the drunken hands of the gods. Desperate to rest as they harvest the fields of the earth, the gods cry out to Enki, god of wisdom, for his assistance. He's resting, having just created everything. His mother Namma comes to him with the tears of the gods. Enki rolls his eyes and orders his mother and the other fertility gods to create beings to work the Earth. Along with Ninmah, the Mother Goddess and likely one of the first "Mother Earth" characters in human history, together Ninmah and Namma create humanity to pick up the hard labor the gods don't want to do.

Enki wakes up and hosts a huge banquet to celebrate humanity's creation, and all the old gods applaud Enki's wisdom in ordering his mother and Ninmah to create humans. What a smart man. Enki and Ninmah, once lovers, now drink together at the celebration. Ninmah is all-powerful, having once cursed Enki to a death that could only be saved by her kiss. Now, in a drunken challenge at the banquet, Ninmah tells Enki that despite him ordering humans to be created, any human she brings to life has their fate determined by her. She is the mother. Enki accepts her challenge.

ENKI: Whatever fate you decide, good or bad, I will improve it.

HOST: Ninmah builds a man whose hands are weak. Enki improves his fate by making him a servant to the king because he will not be able to steal. Ninmah builds a man who is blind. Enki improves his fate by giving him musical abilities and a life as minstrel to the king. Ninmah and Enki go on and on, building people they perceive as broken and positioning them as servants to the king. Ninmah eventually builds the greatest challenge, a person who must have no purpose at all: a being with neither penis nor vagina. Enki determines this being, this eunuch, will be the wise one who will watch over the king.

The date of this Sumerian story's origin is unknown, but the Sumerians, one of the first civilizations in the world, imagined this creation myth with consideration for people of variant gender. Which means they existed. They were given a place in the world, and this time an important one – just like Lord Varys. The Sumerians established a story that inspired many creation myths to come, including Adam and Eve in Eden, and the stories to come would often answer a question that never needed to be asked: How will the people with disabilities, the minorities, the women, the queers all serve their god? How will the queens, the minstrels, the jesters, and civil servants serve their king? For thousands of years humans passed down stories that defined our existence to serve a great god or a great king who is really just another man.

## Act 1

HOST: Okay, let's fast forward, 6,000 years or so. **England, 1770.** The **Chevalier D'Éon** is revered as a political exile from France. The Chevalier, the knight, had served under King Louis XV in his "King's Secret" spy service, but in an attempt to keep her temporary position as France's liaison to the English court, she blackmails the French crown with a collection of damning state secrets. During her exile in England, social circles hear rumors spreading that D'Éon isn't what she seems: the spy had apparently been raised as a man in order to gain a family inheritance, and she served the French king as a man, and came to England as her true female sex. Having already openly embraced her androgyny, D'Eon doesn't deny the rumors. She'll even admit to it in her autobiography. In 1777, the Court of the King's Bench in Westminster Hall agrees with the knight's new declarations that as an honest Christian, she shouldn't have to live a lie and she's legally declared a woman. Now 49 years old, she begins negotiations to return to France and hand over the government's documents she'd taken while serving as their spy. She agrees to never publicly present herself as a man for the rest of her life.

Restarting her life in France, D'Éon requests to join the French military and create an all-female battalion against the British in the 1778 American Revolution. The French government tells her to join a convent. D'Éon protests. She's arrested and jailed. Eventually, the Chevalier D'Éon returns to England to live out her life until 1810, when her great secret is revealed. Coming home, her roommate finds her body and D'Éon's obituary is printed. She had been assigned male at birth all along. She was raised as a male, not because of a family inheritance, but because she had a penis. The rumors that she was only raised as a man for inheritance were likely started by her and she tricked the governments into allowing her to transition publicly. The Chevalier D'Éon lived openly as a woman for 33 years.

D'Eon's gender variance is a social shock at the time, of course. There were betting pools on D'Éon's sex on the London Stock Exchange. But the books all prove she's not much of an abnormality. The colony of Massachusetts passed laws against cross-dressing nearly a hundred years before her French exile. The term "transgender" won't come into popular until the late 1960s or so, but one thing never changes: people we now call "transgender" have always existed.

Transgender historian Susan Stryker will write that, like all language, our understanding of gender doesn't come "pre-installed" in our brains. Biologically, we are born with capacity to express gender and language, but depending on the society we're born in – the when and the where a person lives – our genders can blossom in innumerable ways. Gender systems are cultural: Ancient rabbinical texts explain Judaism once recognized seven specific genders. During the colonization of the Americas, Spanish conquistadors recorded *mujerados*, "male women." Many indigenous American cultures include three or more social genders. In the modern United States, gender will be sorted by a male and female binary, but in different places and in different times, gender could be determined by the type of work a person does or what social standing they hold. And sometimes the reverse is true: The Chevalier D'Eon, in 1778, lost both her social standing and her work when she became legally recognized as a woman. The

French government essentially did what the Sumerian gods Ninmah and Enki did: A cost-benefit analysis of which bodies serve the government best. Which lives are most worthy? Over time, the governments determine that if you're queer in ways that make you unable to reproduce and contribute humans to the national workforce or military, you're useless. If you're a person of color, your labor is free for the government. If you're any combination of queer or color or physical impairment or you are past reproduction, you receive no privileges. The Chevalier had political connections and state secrets in her possession. She had leverage to transition. Most people, from the very beginning, were not so lucky...

The largest medieval map of the world still known to exist, the Hereford Mappa Mundi, was drawn in the **13<sup>th</sup> century**. It's a circle, with Jerusalem at the center, and all important locations scattering outward. Egypt, Mount Olympus, Scotland, Ireland, every known place in the world is within the circle, and just on the outside, living on the islands on the edge of the world, are the "monstrous races." Nude humans with double genitalia walk on the edges of the earliest portrait of the world under a Latin inscription reading "A people having both sexes; they are unnatural in many ways." The term "unnatural" in this context is unclear. Perhaps it means sexually. Perhaps it's connected to the person's turban, the only clothing they wear in the image. Either way, this person of non-Christian faith and non-traditional gender, and perhaps non-traditional sexuality, they live on the outskirts of the world. Hippocrates and Aristotle mused on these humans with doubled or ambiguous genitals. They saw spectrums of gender. Greek historian Diodorus Siculus described this identity sometime between 60 and 30 BCE through the mythological Hermaphroditus, child of Hermes and Aphrodite. Siculus wrote:

SICULUS: Hermaphroditus, as he has been called, who was born of Hermes and Aphrodite and received a name which is a combination of those of both his parents. Some say that this Hermaphroditus is a god and appears at certain times among men, and that he is born with a physical body which is a combination of that of a man and that of a woman, in that he has a body which is beautiful and delicate like that of a woman, but has the masculine quality and vigour of a man. But there are some who declare that such creatures of two sexes are monstrosities, and coming rarely into the world as they do they have the quality of presaging the future, sometimes for evil and sometimes for good.

HOST: For centuries following, people who had ambiguous genitalia are called hermaphrodites. The person on the edge of the medieval map and the Greek character are not specifically transgender: they are what we now call intersex. Intersex people are born with chromosomes, gonads, genitals, and/or sex hormones that don't fit with typical definitions of the male and female binary. They might have ambiguous genitalia, they might have both ovarian and testicular tissue. They might have a chromosome combination of XXY instead of XY or XX. Some people are born with what appears to be typical genitalia, but then puberty shows that their hormones or internal organs don't match their perceived gender. Some people live their entire lives without knowing they're intersex. About 1% of humanity is, and probably always has been, intersex. In the Victorian era, medical authorities begin using terms such as "true hermaphrodite" for a person with both sets of tissue, and "male pseudo-hermaphrodite" if they have testicular tissue

and female genitals. If they have the reverse, they're deemed "female pseudo-hermaphrodite." Records show stories of an intersex Vietnamese general in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and an intersex America who shook up an election when his status as a male was questioned. Herculine Barbin, an intersex person in 19<sup>th</sup> century France, wrote her memoirs, including the story of being forced by her government to change her legal gender from female to male. The memoirs were found by her bed after her suicide, and will finally be published over 100 years after her death. Her birthday, November 8, will one day be commemorated as Intersex Day of Remembrance. Until then, understanding of intersex and transgender identity is more fully explored as the first wave of feminism rolls through Seneca Falls...

Perception of gender roles is changing. For example: Amelia Bloomer, the first woman to operate, edit, and own a newspaper for women. In the **mid-19<sup>th</sup> century**, Bloomer explains that long skirts and intricate undergarments are forms of bondage that tie women down. Her push for clothing reform picks up shortly after the Seneca Falls Convention, and she writes in her publication that women should be allowed to wear loose trousers that gather at the ankle, a style which comes to bear her name: bloomers. The dress reform that came with feminism is the visual indication that gender role distinctions are changing. Though not long after that, Dr. Mary Walker, a Union surgeon in the Civil War, is arrested for wearing pants.

Meanwhile, known marksman Joseph Lobdell publishes his memoir, *The Female Hunter of Delaware and Sullivan Counties*. Joseph's book follows his hunting adventures, soured marriage to a man, and reasons for equal employment for women – the sex he was assigned at birth. In **1861**, Joseph Lobdell and Marie Louise Perry are married in Pennsylvania and spend their marriage in the woods. They hunt, they have a pet bear, and eventually, they are arrested for vagrancy and sent to jail. Later, Marie writes letters to the jail begging for Joseph to be set free, but it's too late: they know he was assigned female at birth. Wearing "dress not belonging to his or her sex" in public is illegal. In **1879**, Joseph Lobdell is locked in Willard Insane Asylum, where a doctor writes an article about the woman who—

DOCTOR: "considered herself a man in all that the name implies."

HOST: The article is titled,

DOCTOR: "A Case of Sexual Perversion."

HOST: Soon after, the newspaper prints Joseph's obituary. It's incorrect. Joseph hasn't died. They print another obituary again a few years later in 1885, but it's also not true. His wife probably thinks he's dead, but he lives until 1912 in the asylum. Still, other people pass, and get away with their secret.

An obituary is printed in the *San Francisco Call* for a different man in 1879. This one is true. One-Eyed **Charley Parkhurst**, renowned stagecoach driver of the Gold Rush-era West Coast, has died of tongue cancer. You might remember him from the San Francisco history episode this

season. Due to its bizarre nature, when this obituary runs in San Francisco, it's picked up by the *New York Times*:

AUDIO: 1870s typewriter

NYT REPORTER: Last Sunday, in a little cabin on the Moss Ranch, about six miles from Watsonville, Charley Parkhurst, the famous coachman, the fearless fighter, the industrious farmer, and expert woodman, died of the cancer on his tongue... When the hands of the kind friends who had ministered to his dying wants came to lay out the dead body of the adventurous Argonaut, a discovery was made that was literally astounding. Charley Parkhurst was a woman. The discoveries of the successful concealment for protracted periods of the female sex under the disguise of the masculine are not infrequent, but the case of Charley Parkhurst may fairly claim to rank as by all odds the most astonishing of all of them. That a young woman should assume man's attire and, friendless and alone, defy the dangers of the voyage of 1849, to the then almost mythical California—dangers over which hard pioneers still grow boastful—has in it sufficient of the wonderful. That she should achieve distinction in an occupation above all professions calling for the best physical qualities of nerve, courage, coolness, and endurance, and that she should add to them the almost romantic personal bravery that enables one to fight one's way through the ambush of an enemy, seems almost fabulous, and that for 30 years she should be in constant and intimate association with men and women, and that her true sex should never have been even suspected, and that she should finally go knowingly down to her death, without disclosing by word or deed who she was or why she had assumed man's dress and responsibilities, are things that a reader might be justified in doubting, if the proof of their exact truth was not so abundant and conclusive... He was in his day one of the most dexterous and celebrated of the famous California drivers... and it was an honor to be striven for to occupy the spare end of the driver's seat when the fearless Charley Parkhurst held the reins of a four or six in hand.

HOST: The headline in the *New York Times* obituary:

NYT REPORTER: "Thirty Years in Disguise. A noted old Californian Stage-Driver Discovered. After Death. To Be A Woman."

HOST: In Charley's place and time, he is able to pass as male. He has status and whiteness and so he has the opportunity to build some capital to support himself and live his life in peace. And he's not alone: soldier Jack Garland, also living in Southern California, and New York City politician Murray Hall are also found to be assigned female at birth upon their deaths. Like Charley Parkhurst, they were able to transition quietly, but forced to hide their secret until forced to reveal it in death. But again, these are white men with privileges to work with. If a person is transitioning to female, even with the privileges that come from being white, they would have the obligations of marriage and family, which of course would expose their trans identity. Men can work and travel, start somewhere new, depending on the time and place they live. Trans women often have a more difficult journey, even as new methods of transitioning become

available. Some cultures, throughout humanity's known history, have allowed people to change their gender because of that person's own dreams or visions. Other cultures, such as those at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, begin to allow people to change their gender with scalpels and syringes. These advancements do not come easily.

## Act 2

AUDIO: Crowd murmuring, gathering, taking their seats. Speaker clears his throat.

JAMES MARION SIMS: The fistula was an inch and a quarter long, transverse...

HOST: James Marion Sims, a physicist, addresses the New York Academy of Medicine, **November 18, 1857.**

SIMS: ...in the base of the bladder, with an abundance of tissue. Its edges were accurately adjusted, and I expected to effect at once a magical cure...

HOST: In 1845, while running what may have been the first women's hospital, he was presented with a woman who had a vesicovaginal fistula, a complication in childbirth.

SIMS: ...but greatly to my surprise and mortification it was a failure...

HOST: He became determined to cure the problem, which could only be done by experimenting. Dr. Sims called for enslaved women to experiment on. And like so many of their ancestors before them, the value of the bodies belonging to women of color with childbirth complications is determined, and 12 slave owners hand over 12 women.

SIMS: ...the same operation was tried on another case with a like unfortunate result...

HOST: Lucy, Betsy, Anarcha, and several unnamed others went under his knife, perhaps willingly to the extent that they wanted to be cured, but certainly unwillingly as his non-consenting property. Anesthesia was recently made available, but he used none.

SIMS: ...And after this, with various, and constantly varied modifications on others, till each one had suffered numerous operations, but all to no purpose. And thus I worked on, not for weeks and months, but for long weary years, before a single case was cured...

HOST: He tired his doctor's assistants until he had to have his patients assist in surgery.

SIMS: ...My repeated failures brought a degree of anguish that I cannot now depict, even were it desirable...

HOST: Until after 13 surgeries on Anarcha, he cured her vesicovaginal fistula.

SIMS: All my spare time was given to the development of a single idea, the seemingly visionary one of cure this sad affliction, which not unfrequently follows the fulfillment of the law pronounced by an offended God when he said to the woman, ‘In sorrow and suffering shalt thou bring forth children.’

HOST: “The woman” had a name — Eve. In sorrow and suffering, experiments on women of color made Dr. Sims renown as “the father of modern gynecology.” Through their horrifying sacrifices, through experiments that taught doctors to understand the complexities of a cisgender female body, modern medicine can begin to traverse the space between: from male to female, or female to male. As anesthesia becomes more popular and surgeries aren’t quite so horrifying, people begin to request them in order to cross the binary.

**Nearly half a century later**, Martha Baer is campaigning for women’s rights in Galicia when she’s censured and sent back home to Germany for using male body language. Back in Germany, Martha meets sexologist **Magnus Hirschfeld**. He’s the founder of the Scientific Humanitarian Committee, which researches sexuality and gender, and advocates for the repeal of Germany’s Paragraph 175 outlawing homosexuality. (Season 1, episode 1) Hirschfeld had seen Chicago’s underground queer subculture in 1892, he was fascinated by the trial of Oscar Wilde in 1895, and as he noticed so many of his homosexual patients committing suicide, he began his committee in order to study and advocate for queer people. Their motto: “Justice through science.” A German newspaper writes:

GERMAN REPORTER: Dr. Hirschfeld makes public propaganda under the cover of science, which does nothing but poison our people. Real science should fight against this!

HOST: While he studies gender and sexual variance, Dr. Hirschfeld gives trans people space to live in, surgeries they require, and hires them to work for him. Martha writes notes for Dr. Hirschfeld, relaying experiences growing up as a girl but feeling that inside, he was a boy. Dr. Hirschfeld and Martha Baer arrange for sex-change surgeries in **October 1906**, making **Karl Baer** one of the first people to transition their gender through surgery. Karl leaves the hospital that December with a medical certificate declaring his legal new gender. He and Hirschfeld turn his case notes into the somewhat autobiographical, somewhat fictional book *Memoirs of a Man’s Maiden Years*, published under the pseudonym N. O. Body. It later becomes a film, but no copy survived the Nazis.

With the precedent of Karl Baer’s surgical transition set, a doctor in the United States sees his opportunity to transition from female to male. After Alan Hart transitions and legally changes his name, he moves to Oregon and tells his local newspaper:

ALAN HART: I’m happier since I made this change than I ever have been in my life, and I will continue this way as long as I live. I have never concealed anything regarding my men's clothing. I came home to show my friends that I am ashamed of nothing.



HOST: He goes on to study tuberculosis by screening for the disease with x-ray photography. He also publishes books, one of which is an important study of x-rays and tuberculosis. The others are novels with transgender and gay themes.

Shortly after Karl Baer's transition in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Magnus Hirschfeld coins a new term: transvestite. There is no official term for people who cross the gender binary. Hirschfeld has seen these people in the homosexual bars of Germany, such as the Eldorado's drag shows. He's studied them in clinical settings, and of course he saw them in Chicago. Through his studies of gender variance, he's compiled information to publish a book in **1910** called ***The Transvestites: The Erotic Drive to Cross-Dress***. Hirschfeld writes about queer history, legal and social problems, and explanations through case histories. Many new terms are coming from many doctors. Havelock Ellis, an English doctor who works with Hirschfeld, calls this gender phenomenon a "sexo-aesthetic inversion." That term doesn't stick, and neither does his other term for it: Eonism, inspired by the French Chevalier d'Eon. Havelock Ellis writes that Eonism is the extreme embodiment of imitating and identifying with an admired object, such as a woman you love. He connects it with a defective virile sexuality possibly based in neuroses, though "a remarkably common anomaly...next in frequency to homosexuality among sexual deviations." Obviously we've advanced a lot in the last century...

The entire Hirschfeld story could be its own Netflix series, so let's move on. But, even outside that world, many more terms follow those studies. Another German researcher, geneticist Richard Goldschmidt, observes the sexual development of gypsy moths. Goldschmidt finds that they are born male, female, hermaphrodites, and also gynandromorphs – a none-of-the-above option. He calls this "intersex." Of course, eventually we won't even use "hermaphrodite," we'll simply use "intersex" to describe people born with any variation in sex characteristics that don't fit the typical definitions of a body in the gender binary. And the "none-of-the-above" option I guess would be "nonbinary" in 2020...?

By **1930**, German doctors have recorded several different procedures to allegedly correct intersex bodies. Like the enslaved women of color experimented on, intersex children are put under the knife and forced into either side of the male/female binary. This still happens in 2020.

Perhaps some of these surgeries are wanted. In 1932 a German gynecologist and obstetrician performs an intersex surgery with hormone treatment on a patient with both testicular and ovarian tissue and she even begins menstruating later. In other cases, such in Zurich in the early 1940s, several children have their clitorises amputated. While some operations are wanted or needed, other cases result in a child forced to one gender or another, not allowed to grow and discover a space between or choose their own gender. Mental health issues follow, obviously. Since the Sumerian creation myth 5,000 years ago, cisgender people have looked at our gender variant bodies and determined what our bodies mean to them – and they've often forced queer bodies into submission. As historian Susan Stryker writes, most people struggle to see humanity in a person if they cannot recognize that person's gender immediately. To them, it feels like an

encounter with something not-quite-human, something possibly monstrous. Sometimes this leads to a gut reaction: panic, disgust, hatred, violence. We should question the reaction. Stryker asks, why aren't more encounters with lesser known forms of gender met with wonder, delight, attraction, or curiosity?

One of the few doctors who met trans and intersex people with curiosity and a helping hand, Dr. Hirschfeld, goes on a world speaking tour in 1930. While he's away, Hitler takes power. Hirschfeld's Institute is destroyed by young students from the National Socialist League as they shout "Burn Hirschfeld!" They beat up his staff and burn the books in Opera Square. The Berlin police announce Hirschfeld's Institute of Sexual Research closed forever. Hirschfeld is out of the country on tour, actually avoiding the political unrest he saw coming in Germany. So an endocrinologist in the U.S. helps organize the American leg of his tour. **Dr. Harry Benjamin** had hung out with Hirschfeld at the Eldorado in Germany, and now works in New York and San Francisco. He's friends with Alfred Kinsey, of course, creator of the Kinsey scale. In **1948**, Dr. Kinsey has just published his study *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, which set forth Harry Hay and many others to become gay activists. Dr. Kinsey contacts his endocrinologist friend, Dr. Harry Benjamin in San Francisco about a child who "wanted to become a girl." He met this child, who was assigned male at birth, during the interviews for his Kinsey scale studies. Dr. Benjamin has never seen anything like this, and is immediately inspired to begin helping these people, the kind he recalls from the Eldorado in Germany, the gender variant. He rarely even takes payment. Through Kinsey and other doctors, Harry Benjamin begins to meet many patients considered to be transvestites. Many will transition. One will have the nation's full attention.

### Act 3

MUSIC: Willmer Broadnax

HOST: **November 5, 1945.** *Life* magazine reports,

LIFE REPORTER: From the moment she got off the train in California more than 30 years ago, **Lucy Hicks** liked Oxnard, and Oxnard liked Lucy. The town was newly rich on sugar beets, and its Chinese and Mexican laborers blew their pay nightly on light ladies, gambling, whiskey and opium. Lucy, a skinny, 6-ft. Kentucky Negro, decided to stay, set out to get a good reputation as a preliminary to getting a bad one. She began cooking for Oxnard's leading families. By the time she opened her first house of prostitution, off Oxnard's crib-bordered China Alley, her genius in the kitchen was the talk of the town.

HOST: Lucy Hicks is a caterer and a bordello boss. One night, the sheriff arrests her. Oxnard's leading banker shows up at the jail immediately to bail her out. He's scheduled a huge dinner party and without Lucy, the meal would be a disaster.

LIFE REPORTER: After that, for three decades, Lucy Hicks trafficked successfully in both sin and soufflé.

HOST: Oxnard population grows in this time. Lucy's bawdyhouse expands into a half-block of nice houses, well furnished with pretty paint and window boxes full of geraniums.

LIFE REPORTER: In Ventura County she became as well known as Oxnard's huge American Crystal Sugar Co. refinery. Lucy was the more spectacular sight. She wore bright, low-cut silk dresses from which her slatlike collarbones protruded, and she affected picture hats and high-heeled shoes. Her wigs were her pride—she had a long, black, wavy one, a short, straight, bobbed one, and for special occasions a shoulder-length bob in red.

HOST: Lucy is locally known to be involved in her bordellos commercially, not personally, as she continues to cook for Oxnard's socially elite. So elite that when President Roosevelt died, the newspapers print a paragraph written by Lucy in solemn mourning. She purchases nearly \$50,000 in war bonds, and gives money to the church, the Red Cross, the Boy Scouts, and other charities,

LIFE REPORTER: cackling happily,

LUCY HICKS: "Jist don't ask where the money came from."

HOST: As wartime laws shut down many bawdyhouses on the West Coast, Lucy's local fame and catalogue of town secrets kept her houses immune. In 1945, just before this *Time* magazine article, the Navy traces a case of venereal disease back to Lucy's business. They insist on entering the house to examine the women inside. Lucy tells them she's just the proprietor, but the doctor insists on examining her, too.

LIFE REPORTER: A few minutes later the doctor had news the like of which Oxnard had not heard since the San Francisco earthquake. Lucy was a man.

HOST: Mail comes pouring into *Time* magazine. The final line of their article, "Lucy was a man," is delivered like a punch line, pulling the rug out from under the reader. The reaction is brutal. Subscribers write in to nominate Lucy as *Time*'s Man of the Year 1945. *Time*'s editor writes that this story is one of "astonishment and embarrassment." 59-year-old Lucy and her husband Reuben Anderson are off to court. *The Afro-American* newspaper covers the case on **December 12, 1945** on their front page: "Night Life Queen Guilty of Perjury in Sex Case," along with an illustration of a woman standing beside a sign reading "Beware. Not what you think it is." Every female pronoun in the article is accompanied by quotations. Lucy is charged with falsifying marriage documents and defrauding government because she claimed her husband's GI benefits. The court argues that she's not legally married to him because she is a man.

PROSECUTOR: Do you often wear a wig?

LUCY HICKS: If I think I look better with a wig, I do.

PROSECUTOR: Mr. Hicks, was your first husband a man?

LUCY HICKS: Well, he's supposed to be.

PROSECUTOR: Mhmm. Do you have male sex organs?

HOST: Lucy doesn't answer.

PROSECUTOR: Do you have organs which are typically described as male?

HOST: Lucy still doesn't answer.

PROSECUTOR: What part of your body do you consider to be feminine?

LUCY HICKS: For one thing, my chest.

HOST: Lucy leans forward to the jury, revealing what the newspaper calls "a very masculine chest."

LUCY HICKS: I defy any doctor in the world to prove that I am not a woman. I have lived, dressed, acted as just what I am: a woman. It's only petty maliciousness that is trying to cause me heartache and harm. If they would devote the same amount of energy to local problems that are hurting the community it would be much better. I have lived a good life and a Christian life and though I am a Christian I reverence all religious faiths. I have lived a good citizen for many years in this town and am going to die a good citizen, but I am going to die a woman.

HOST: Five doctors declare her a man. Her defense attorney explains that Lucy Hicks Anderson has "hidden organs." They won't be able to know how those organs operate "until an autopsy after her death." Fortunately, this is not a story like those of Lucy's ancestors – she is not a woman of color experimented on for medical progress's sake. The attorney's theory foreshadows a future of medical invention aligning the "truth" of trans identity with the anatomical body of a trans person. The attorney's theory doesn't work, though. The jury finds Lucy guilty of impersonation and fraud. Her marriage is declared void. She serves time and 10 years probation as the court forbids Lucy from wearing women's clothing. She's kept in the men's section of the Federal House of Detention,

REPORTER 2: but has been wearing women's clothes because, prison officials say, he has no others,

HOST: the *Afro-American* reports in 1946. They cover Sargent Reuben Anderson's federal trial, in which he faces—

REPORTER 2: —a maximum of ten years in a Federal prison and top fine of \$10,000 not because he married another man—but because he had the Government send his male wife \$950 in allotment checks.

HOST: After Lucy and Reuben serve their time, they leave town and live quietly in Los Angeles. Oxnard's leading cook, confidante, philanthropist, and bordello boss dies in Los Angeles in 1954.

**Gender is a social role.** Despite her status and wealth, Lucy Hicks Anderson's class is still diminished by her race and her trans identity. When looking at social status, all intersections must be considered: race, class, culture, nationality and citizenship status, sexuality, assigned gender, disability, age, the list goes on. Just having money doesn't put you on top. Perhaps a white woman running a house of ill fame wouldn't have been singled out by the doctor in the strip search. She might not have even been stripped at all. In the case of Lucy Hicks Anderson, when her secret comes out, no one comes to help. Not even Oxnard's leading banker.

In the cases of the many women fortunate enough to come to the Langley Porter Clinic for a medical transition, help is eager is ready to begin. **Louise Lawrence**, a transgender woman, is working with Alfred Kinsey, introducing him to trans people to offer him their life histories, which Kinsey pays Louise to write up. And she works with Dr. Hirschfeld's endocrinologist friend Dr. Harry Benjamin, and **Dr. Karl Bowman**. Bowman has already had a long career, going back to medical work in World War I and testifying at the trial of Leopold and Loeb. Dr. Bowman now plans to host a psychiatric conference.

DR. BOWMAN: We have a very unusual case this morning.

HOST: Several doctors take their seats in a small medical amphitheater.

DR. BOWMAN: Last week, we met a young man who recently changed his name to "Barbara" by court order.

HOST: About three-fourths of the way up in the center of the amphitheater seating, Dr. Arnold Lowman's ears perk up.

DR. BOWMAN: Mr. Morris will give the psychometric details before the patient is brought in.

HOST: Mr. Morris stands at his seat in the audience, just in front of Arnold. Everyone turns to look at him, and Arnold feels as though everyone in the room is watching him. They know. Everything Mr. Morris describes about their patient matches Arnold's own transvestic history. This week's patient is brought out. Louise Lawrence enters the amphitheater. When it's over, Arnold lingers and approaches Mr. Morris, walks with him to his car, and they chat a while. Morris is trans, too, but doesn't say so. Arnold notices he has a photo of Louise with her address on the back. When his wife is at night nursing class, Arnold gets in his car and drives just a mile

and a half from his house on Prince Street to Louise Lawrence's house. Arnold knocks on the door, and thinks of a fake name to give.

LOUISE'S WIFE: May I help you?

HOST: His dad is Charles. He lives on Prince Street.

VIRGINIA PRINCE: Hi, I'm Charles Prince.

HOST: After years of misdiagnoses, Arnold finally sees something real. This Halloween when he dresses in feminine attire, Arnold won't be ashamed of it. He leaves the dress and gold pumps on as he reclines in the living room with his wife.

MRS. LOWMAN: Go get out of those clothes; you look ridiculous.

VIRGINIA PRINCE: I will in a bit, I'm reading the paper.

MRS. LOWMAN: You do this every year, Arnold. Halloween, New Years Eve—

HOST: Arnold sits up and swings his legs around the davenport.

VIRGINIA PRINCE: I will take them off when I get good and ready. You might as well know I like to wear the heels.

MRS. LOWMAN: Oh, nonsense.

VIRGINIA PRINCE: Dr. Bowman said to me— You know what, we have a busy weekend, let's talk about it on Monday.

HOST: Monday comes.

VIRGINIA PRINCE: I've already told Dr. Bowman at the Langley Porter Clinic. I sat down and began to spill out the awful news, that I liked to dress up like a girl. I hadn't confessed my guilty secret to anybody and as I had started dressing about age 12 and I'm now in my 30s, that means I've guarded it carefully for about 18 years. So I felt that I was telling him something pretty significant.

MRS. LOWMAN: What did the doctor say?

VIRGINIA PRINCE: When I got to the end he leaned back in his chair, put his feet up on the pulled out drawer of his desk, clasped his hands behind his head, stretched and yawned and then quietly said,

DR. BOWMAN: So what else is new? What's so unusual about that? There are tens of thousands more just like you, you're not so special. What you need to do is just learn to accept yourself as you are and enjoy it.

MRS. LOWMAN: I don't believe you.

VIRGINIA PRINCE: You don't believe it?

MRS. LOWMAN: I don't want to see it, Arnold. But if things get to the point where you just have to get dressed up, let me know so I can go into the back bedroom. And don't go out buying things, I'll buy them for you.

HOST: Over the next year and a half, Miss Prince takes over the house every two weeks. Even after their baby is born. Arnold starts a manufacturing business, taking occasional meetings in San Francisco. There, he gets dressed in his "femmeclothes" and goes to Mr. Morris's apartment. Morris is dressed, too, and they're joined by his girlfriend Betty. When Mr. Morris goes to a meeting, Prince and Betty hit the town. They check out the women's wear windows and discuss the hats, the shoes, the dresses. They hit the Top of the Mark. They drink and flirt with lonely Marines who try to pick them up. When it's all done, Prince drops Betty at home and catches a cab back to her hotel.

AUDIO: writing

VIRGINIA PRINCE: As I started to get undressed I also started to cry but not for any reason that I could think of. I got into bed and cried and cried, just racking sobs. It was very strange that I was crying my heart out and yet I didn't know why. It was about 4 a.m. before I dosed off into a fitful sleep.

HOST: The next day, while working around the city, Arnold carries a paperback to read on the buses to keep his attention off his mood.

VIRGINIA PRINCE: After all, 35-year-old men didn't just go about the streets crying.

HOST: On the train to Los Angeles, Arnold still can't sleep. He puts on a robe at 3 AM and walks to the club car to write Betty a letter.

VIRGINIA PRINCE: This was the first time in my life that another human being, knowing the true facts, had nevertheless treated me just like I wanted to be treated—i.e., like another woman.

HOST: Immediately after, Arnold confronts his father in a park in full dress, telling him everything.

VIRGINIA PRINCE: Finally we parted company and for one solid year thereafter there was not one word spoken by him relating to what I'd told him. He had a big rug in his head and he swept quite a pile of things under it and that's evidently where I ended up.

HOST: Meanwhile, Arnold's wife is seeing a psychiatrist who says Arnold is undoubtedly a homosexual.

VIRGINIA PRINCE: I got a call at work about 10 a.m. It was my wife who informed me that she was taking my son, the family silver, her clothes, etc. Since God and shrinks are always right, she took the advice and filed for divorce.

HOST: Arnold Lowman's family is socially prominent, so, months later, the divorce trial makes the papers. His name, his business, his transvesticism. By this point, Arnold is already dating someone else. The day after the story hits the papers, it's not like Lucy Hicks Anderson going straight to jail – Arnold takes his new girlfriend to the church dance.

VIRGINIA PRINCE: So what if I am a transvestite.

HOST: Back up in the Bay, Dr. Bowman, Louise Lawrence, and Dr. Benjamin continue their work. One is a legal case, with the court declaring that the genital modification of one of Louise's friends would constitute "mayhem," the willful destruction of healthy tissue. A surgeon can be criminally prosecuted for it. Gender confirmation surgeries cease in the U.S., except those done in strict secrecy. The Langley Porter Clinic continues their studies of gay men discharged from the military, some of whom are held in military psychiatric prison on the Treasure Island Naval Base. There, much research into homosexuality's causes under the California Sex Deviates Research Act of 1950, a state-funded program to cure. It allows for castration and hormonal experimentation on homosexuals. Dr. Bowman writes:

DR. BOWMAN: I have records of two males, both of whom have asked for complete castration, including amputation of the penis, construction of an artificial vagina, and the administration of female sex hormones. I also have two cases of females who have requested a panhysterectomy and the amputation of their breasts, together with the giving of male sex hormones, in the hope that in some way the clitoris may finally develop into a penis. Male homosexuals of this type are called 'Queens' and seem to differ markedly from the main group of homosexuals who are more nearly like the average man. Here we have an extremely interesting field for further investigation. We are therefore setting up a careful plan to study a group of these so-called 'Queens.'

HOST: Many queer soldiers who return from war are locked away, experimented on, forgotten. Some find good doctors, like Bowman and Benjamin, but only one soldier will be celebrated for it.



A lurid sex scandal at the trial of a wealthy playboy has run its course at the New York *Daily News*. The paper is eager for another sensational tale to grab their readers. Their next scoop has been lying on a reporter's desk for a week, and now, he decides, it's time to use it.

CHRISTINE JORGENSEN: In a sense, then, my notoriety was a matter of chance.

HOST: **December 1, 1952.**

REPORTER 3: Ex-GI Becomes Blonde Beauty

HOST: The New York *Daily News* announces the very first sex change, which as you know from the stories told here, is incorrect. However, the papers telling her story sell fast. She set off for Sweden, the only place she could get the surgery. Making a connection in Copenhagen to see family, she met Dr. Christian Hamburger, an endocrinologist. There, in Denmark, she began hormone replacement therapy and chose her name, Christine, in honor of her doctor. On September 24, 1951, Christine had her testicles removed. Two weeks later, she wrote to friends:

CHRISTINE JORGENSEN: As you can see by the enclosed photos, taken just before the operation, I have changed a great deal. But it is the other changes that are so much more important. Remember the shy, miserable person who left America? Well, that person is no more and, as you can see, I'm in marvelous spirits.

HOST: After some more transitioning, her story has hit the papers. *Time* magazine has run an article explaining various medical terms and "hermaphroditism." The *Chicago Defender* writes about her future career as an entertainer. They see her like the nuclear bomb, she's the result of many experiments, now perfected, now shaking the modern understanding of science. As the Cold War builds, the East-West binaries of past wars are concrete in American minds. A photo of Christine shatters binaries. She crossed borders. She removed Adam's rib and crafted Eve. She is proof of what a man can lose and still be whole. **Christine Jorgensen** can undo American masculinity with science. And now, she returns to America.

AUDIO: real audio of Christine Jorgensen greeting press at her return to America

CHRISTINE JORGENSEN: I'm very impressed by everyone coming.

REPORTERS: Christine! Christine!

HOST: The crowd pushes against the ropes that marked off a "quarantine walk" area that separates arriving passengers until their vaccination records are validated. Three or four men crawl under the ropes to get to her, one of them a friend who is taken immediately for a smallpox vaccination. Christine is pushed through customs and taken down a long hallway into a tiny pressroom full of reporters, photographers, and blinding floodlights. She's sweating under the

lights in that big fur coat, uncomfortable, rattled, tense. She smiles, not really knowing who she's smiling at. And then questions begin:

AUDIO: real audio of Christine Jorgensen greeting press at her return to America

REPORTER: Christine, are you happy to be home?

CHRISTINE JORGENSEN: Yes, of course. What American wouldn't be?

REPORTER: Have you been offered a movie contract?

CHRISTINE JORGENSEN: Yes, but I haven't accepted it.

REPORTER: Do you have any plans regarding the theater?

CHRISTINE JORGENSEN: No, I don't think so. I'm very happy to be back, and I don't have any plans at the moment. And I thank you all for coming, but I think it's too much.

*Some cut reporters' lines from Jorgensen's autobiography:*

REPORTER: Where did you get the fur coat?

REPORTER 2: How about a cheesecake shot, Christine?

REPORTER 3: How does it feel to be home?

REPORTER 4: Do you expect to marry?

REPORTER 5: Do you think Europeans understand sex problems better than Americans do?

REPORTER 6: What are you going to do now?

HOST: Christine is taken to an exit where a car is waiting. She asks to be taken to her sister's home on Long Island, but the staff of the *American Weekly* has set her up at the Carlyle Hotel in Manhattan to avoid press as their new exclusive series on Christine begins to run. She's annoyed, but sees that they're being followed by more reporters. She shouldn't go to family. They drive in circles around Manhattan, trying to lose them. Christine runs into the hotel, past the front desk, and into an elevator. The operator asks what floor. She doesn't know what floor.

CHRISTINE JORGENSEN: Just up!

HOST: She's waiting on the top floor in the hall to be found and taken to her room. Even though England is coronating a new queen, and an effective polio vaccine is finally coming, and the Korean War finally ended, a publishing industry trade magazine in 1954 will announce that Jorgensen, "had received the largest worldwide coverage in the history of newspaper publishing."

The *New York Times* announces "Miss Jorgensen Returns." Many papers follow:

REPORTER 1: Christine, by George!

REPORTER 2: Christine teeters on high heels, leaving the plane.

REPORTER 3: Chris back home, perfect little lady.

REPORTER 4: Christine conducted herself with dignity.

REPORTER 5: An artistically minded reporter who trailed her to the swank Carlyle Hotel, reported that Christine probably will not seek work modeling bras.

REPORTER 6: Jorgensen was no girl at all, only an altered male.

REPORTER 7: Judge Wonders is Chris Real George.

HOST: *New York Daily Mirror*, **February 18, 1953**:

REPORTER: Denmark Curbs Chris Surgery. A top-ranking medical informant said today the Danish government has turned down appeals from more than three hundred persons—over half of them Americans—for transformation operations. The informant, familiar with the series of treatments and operations performed on Christine Jorgensen, said the requests for similar surgery and treatment were denied because the Danish minister of justice had decided to limit treatment of future cases to Danes.

MUSIC: “Is She Is, or Is She Ain’t” by Gene the Charmer

#### Act 4

HOST: Across the U.S., whether or not Christine is making headlines, the subcultures of various gender variant people thrive. In Chicago, **Miss Major** is going to the balls, dressing up, and partying with friends. They work all year on their gowns for the South City Ball and the Maypole Ball. Queens save up to arrive in Cadillacs. It’s the event of the year. Like many of the women of color at the balls, Miss Major finds her hormones on the black market. She’s homeless. She’s been kicked out of two colleges for expressing her gender. She supports herself with sex work. In New York, **Carlett Brown** makes headlines herself in *Jet Magazine*, June 18, 1953.

JET REPORTER: A 26-year-old shake dancer and professional female impersonator announced plans to go to Europe in August for an operation to become a woman so that he can marry a U.S. Army sergeant. Charles Robert Brown of Pittsburgh told JET he has arranged with doctors in Bonn, Germany, for an operation that will make him female, so that he can marry Sgt. Eugene Martin, 24...

CARLETT BROWN: We’ll be married as soon as I am legally a woman.

JET REPORTER: If Brown’s plans are realized, he will become the first Negro “transvestite” in history to transform his sex... One doctor diagnosed his condition as due to the abnormal existence in his system of female glands, Brown says... He wrote to surgeons in Germany, Denmark and Yugoslavia, asking for help in changing his sex. He was informed that the laws of these countries forbade such operations on foreigners. Dr. Christian Hamburger of Copenhagen told him that if he gave up his U. S. citizenship, he could have the operation performed in Denmark.

CARLETT BROWN: I just want to become a woman as quickly as possible, that's all. I'll become a citizen of any country where I can receive the treatment I need and be operated on.

HOST: Jet soon after reports that Carlett Brown has announced her American citizenship at the Danish consulate. She plans to leave on a boat to Holland on August 2.

CARLETT BROWN: I regret leaving the United States, but after the Christine Jorgensen affair, the United States refuses to give an American citizen permission to alter his sex.

HOST: A photo appears in Jet of Carlett Brown, with her deadname, of her sitting up on a table showing her legs.

JET REPORTER: Charles Brown, 26-year-old male shake dancer who plans to go to Germany for an operation which will make him a "woman," shows friends in a Boston night club "correct technique" for displaying legs. Later Brown, who had hair set before visiting club, was arrested for wearing women's clothes, fined \$5.

HOST: Carlett is unable to raise the \$5 bail.

JET REPORTER: Charles Brown of Pittsburgh was picked up by police in downtown Boston dressed in a woman's coat-suit ensemble which he had purchased the same day... He added that he might work way abroad as a ship's mess attendant. Virtually destitute in Boston, Brown also admitted that he sold his blood for \$5 a pint to raise money for room rent and food, explained,

CARLETT BROWN: Things are awfully tough in Boston.

HOST: Four days after Carlett's planned departure for Holland, Jet prints a story explaining that she's postponed for facial feminization surgery.

JET REPORTER: Although he plans to have his sex changed, Brown will keep his ties with female impersonators. Said he:

CARLETT BROWN: I feel that female impersonators are being denied their right of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness when they are arrested for wearing female clothes—especially when they are minding their own business.

HOST: The press depicts Carlett Brown as the black Christine Jorgensen. But that role carries major economic, political, and social disadvantages. Carlett struggles to even afford her surgeries. And even if she can get them, it doesn't change her relationship to the police. On **October 15, 1953**, Jet reports one last time on Carlett Brown – that she's postponed plans to go to Europe indefinitely. She's ordered by the federal government to stay in the country until she pays \$1,200 owed in income tax.

CARLETT BROWN: I took a \$60-a-week temporary job as a cook at Iowa State College's Phi Kappa House to begin repaying the debt.

HOST: Meanwhile, the *American Weekly's* series of articles, which told Christine Jorgensen's story as "a desperately unhappy person with the fortitude to overcome a seemingly hopeless obstacle," is translated into 14 languages and printed in 70 countries. She tells her doctors in Copenhagen she needs—

CHRISTINE JORGENSEN: —as much good publicity as possible for the sake of all those to whom I am a representation of themselves.

HOST: Every story in the series is verified by Christine's doctors, in order to silence untrue rumors. The press continues to haunt her. She sells her family's home of 26 years in the Bronx to build a new one in Long Island. But people find that, too. They drive by, taking photos of the empty lot. One family even picnics on it. When the house is done, people start looking through the windows with binoculars. Christine and her parents sort through 20,000 letters, some from countries she's never heard of. Some are simply addressed "Christine Jorgensen, United States of America."

CHRISTINE JORGENSEN: I could only marvel at the ingenuity of the postal department.

HOST: Most letters are supportive or express interest. Some are hostile or obscene.

LETTER WRITER: If more people would face the brunt of the battle I am sure we would all live in a much more pleasant world.

LETTER WRITER 2: May God bless you for your courage so that other people may more clearly understand our problem.

LETTER WRITER 3: ...hundreds of thousands of people who look to Chris today as a sort of liberation.

HOST: Deep in the pile, is a letter that will change her life:

DR. HARRY BENJAMIN: Dear Miss Jorgensen:

These lines are written to you in the interest of some of my patients and naturally also of those whose emotional problem nobody understands better than you do. Frankly, I am worried over the effect your story and publicity may have in some instances. I had a few rather frantic phone calls and letters recently. Therefore, I would be grateful to you if you would tell me how you are handling the innumerable communications that undoubtedly came to you. Don't they all indicate hopefulness yet utter frustration? In my many years of practice of sexology and endocrinology, problems similar to yours have been brought to me frequently... Can I be of assistance? If so please feel free to call on me.

Most sincerely and earnestly yours,  
Harry Benjamin, M.D.

HOST: In Dr. Benjamin's research, he defines the difference between a transvestite and a transsexual more narrowly than Hirschfeld did. He writes that a transvestite simply wants to change their gendered clothing – their vestments. Like Virginia Prince. A transsexual requires surgery, he says. Like Christine Jorgensen. His definitions stick around for a long time. Later, Dr. Benjamin will serve as the medical advisor for Christine's vaginoplasty. Until then, she's just going to the DMV to renew her license—

REPORTER: Another step in her famous career.

HOST: —attending charitable fundraisers organized by friends—

GEN: Before, we knew her as a terribly shy, inhibited person, but actually what we saw was a new woman coming into a world of her own.

HOST: —and meeting celebrities such as Cole Porter, Danny Kaye, and Truman Capote, often at their request.

CHRISTINE JORGENSEN: I was flattered to think that I should be interesting and sought after, frankly charmed by the attention, and was guilty of some goggle-eyed celebrity-watching in return... there's no doubt that curiosity was the main reason why I was in demand socially... Recently, one of my friends, who was an interested bystander of the period, has said, "At the time, everyone in the world wanted to meet Chris, and damned near everybody did!" On the other hand, I knew that much of the curiosity and interest stemmed from the understandable fact that people were looking for answers.

HOST: And if they can't get answers, they make up their own.

REPORTER: The fellow who wanted to be his own girl—Christine Jorgensen.

REPORTER 2: Christine Jorgensen has treasury agents excitedly anticipating the surfacing of her income-tax report in the heap. Curious to know whether it was filed as male, female, or perhaps a joint return.

HOST: Songs like Gene the Charmer's "Is She Is, or Is She Ain't" poke fun at Christine.

MUSIC: "Is She Is, or Is She Ain't" by Gene the Charmer

HOST: Mass market paperbacks cash in, publishing *Half* by Jordan Park in 1953—

PULP MAN: What was his body's dark secret that made him neither man nor woman?

HOST: —and other trans-themed stories. A reissue of 1933's *Man into Woman* is printed, a biography of one of Hirshfeld's patients Lilli Elbe. Again, made into a movie.

CHRISTINE JORGENSEN: I was by then beginning to get an inkling of what to expect, not only in public, but of the adjustments I would be making from then on. Apparently, I was going to have to get used to the idea of being stared at and inspected. People were going to be interested and inquisitive, I decided, and I would just have to accept it as logical, if I was going to function in the world at all.

HOST: A letter from Denmark comes, informing Christine that she's been selected as the Scandinavian Societies of Greater New York's Woman of the Year. She agrees to attend the event of 5,000 guests because proceeds will go to many charities.

AUDIO: Christine Jorgensen receiving the award

PRESENTER: It's my great pleasure to personally present you with this citation here as a Woman of the Year for your contributions and advancements of medical science.

CHRISTINE JORGENSEN: Thank you very much, Dr. Berwyn. [sic?] I want to say I'm deeply touched by this honor that has been given to me tonight. But I fear that those who should have been with us and are unable to be here are the ones who are really responsible for my success. That's my doctors and my friends. Thank you again.

CHRISTINE JORGENSEN: I must admit that I was surprised and very moved by that honor. To me, my accomplishments had seemed to be of such a highly personal nature, insignificant to anyone but me and the Danish medical men who had contributed so much to my existence. To receive a public award for something that was a transition to normalcy seemed an undue recognition, but I was grateful for their acknowledgement and accepted it with pleasure.

HOST: A week later, she's appearing at Madison Square Garden to speak for a charity event. Though many network executives ban her from talk shows, she's still booking some television shows and many events. Jackie Gleason performs at Madison Square before she takes the stage to speak to 18,000 people.

WALTER WINCHELL: Ladies and gentlemen, meet Miss Christine Jorgensen.

AUDIO: audience applauds

CHRISTINE JORGENSEN: I know that I was nervous and frightened, but the brief speech I addressed to the audience was a simple expression of the honor accorded me at being invited, and the opportunity to be a useful citizen of New York City. Suddenly it was over and I walked offstage, followed by a deafening ovation, experiencing that peculiar excitement and stimulation

that I would come to know better later on. Although I still had one more large medical step before total fulfillment, I had started on the new life I'd looked toward, prayed for, and knew was rightfully mine. In more ways than one, I had come home at last.

HOST: Dr. Harry Benjamin wrote in the preface of Christine Jorgensen's autobiography, giving her credit for his research:

DR. HARRY BENJAMIN: Indeed Christine, without you, probably none of this would have happened.

MISS D: I suppose you've been admiring yourself all this time!

VIRGINIA PRINCE: Sure, why not?

HOST: Arnold Lowman's mother's new maid catches him dressing up for a party in his mother's velvet evening wrap.

AUDIO: phone ringing

HOST: One night, after much time spent together, the maid calls in the middle of the night.

VIRGINIA PRINCE: Hello?

MISS D: I just had to call you and tell you that I understand!

VIRGINIA PRINCE: You understand what?

MISS D: Why—why you like to dress up, I understand you now.

HOST: Arnold invites her over one night, waiting at the top of the stairs in full gown with the lights low. She enters, and as the door closes they step into the light. She has a new haircut for him, and Arnold has on a wig for her, which she's never seen before. They're soon married and building a house in Hollywood. Arnold makes friends with a minister named Lynn, who also considers himself a cross-dresser, and Arnold reconnects with Louise Lawrence and the other women in Southern California and the Bay Area. They start meeting to dress as women and talk.

VIRGINIA PRINCE: —a ratty little place in Long Beach... No sex, no orgy, no parading around out in the world... we could just all be girls together.

HOST: Sitting on the broken down sofa and living it up as often as they can over a few years, they slowly create the idea of putting out a magazine. They have several transvestite pen pal friends around the country, and they have Louise Lawrence's extensive address book, and of course her connection to Alfred Kinsey and Harry Benjamin. They put together a newsletter of



essays and poems printed on mimeograph paper. They call it *Transvestia*. It's likely the first political trans publication in the U.S., though the writers are careful to define their group as heterosexual men who like to dress up – not people we would now consider transgender women. However, because Arnold Lowman will soon choose a new name and eventually live as **Virginia Prince** for the rest of her life, it is relatively safe to assume much of *Transvestia* is written by trans women like Virginia Prince and Louise Lawrence. Unfortunately, the publication folds after just two issues. It's expensive and the writing is long-winded. But a few years later, Virginia can't stop thinking about it. She writes up a prospectus and sends it off to the old mailing list. She gets 25 subscribers at \$4 per person and builds a new magazine on that \$100. Her secretary helps her type it up and send it to an offset printer and 100 copies are made. In **January 1960**, shortly after the Cooper Do-nut riot, the new *Transvestia* is mailed out. Adoring letters fill Virginia's post office box. Her pen pal Bob-Barbara, who has advertising experience, helps her establish **Chevalier Publications**.

Despite operating in the same city as the riot at Cooper Do-nut, the men and women of *Transvestia* are likely unaware of the event in LA's Skid Row. Both groups are gender variant, but Virginia Prince's publication is mostly written by and for upper class white people. Like the case of Lucy Hicks Anderson, walking down a different intersection of trans identity brings it's own challenges and separation from other avenues. While Arnold Lowman risks her professional career and visitation with her son every time she goes out or publishes as Virginia Prince, other trans people risk denial of housing, refusal of medical care and social services, an inability to get a passport or ID. As Christine Jorgensen's body is held up as the ideal, the promise of rebirth and transgender freedom, she still represents the respectable, heterosexual, domestic white woman, passing as heteronormative. What many trans and gender variant people have in common is that they are not always as easily hidden in the ways that homosexuals might be. If they can't pass as cisgender in public — even if they're trying to but can't — they likely face violence and charges pressed against them. The world's long history of colonialism, racism, and sexism hold these social hierarchies in place against trans identity. The only way to access higher places in the world has been for people to bind their chests or find the right doctor, to become cis-passing and cross new landscapes of gender.

What makes a man a man or a woman a woman? How is your physical body related to your social role? These are questions a lot of cisgender people typically do not have to ask themselves. Queer people have been asking them (oftentimes quietly to themselves) for 5,000 years. Historian Susan Stryker writes, gender and identity are like gravity and breathing: seemingly simple but really complicated phenomena when you start breaking them down. Magnus Hirschfeld wrote that because every single person has a unique combination of sex characteristics, secondary sex traits like beards and breasts, erotic preferences, psychological disposition, and cultures they are raised in, there are more than 43 million combinations thus 43 million genders.

The stories of the innumerable trans people that have existed are only able to be told if they were recorded or found out, if they were experienced by a person who could write them down, if they were legible or translatable, if they were published, if they survived the book burnings, and if they were authorized and archived. What survives is just a whisper of our history.

The first U.S. riot of transgender people in the history books is at Cooper Do-nuts in 1959, and though they are disconnected from their trans siblings across town, and even more so from the conservative homophile movement in San Francisco, their fight in the streets of Skid Row is an indication of the riots to come that will bring all American queer people a new liberation.

Next week: episode 8 “Peddled Like Pornography”

*“Violence, law, and custom hold these social hierarchies [colonialism, racism, and sexism] in place...as one who can still stumble and fumble in my coalitional work in spite of my best intentions, I know I have a lot to learn from the accumulated centuries of experience-based wisdom, social critique, life skills, and freedom dreams that millions of people of color have developed for themselves to survive within colonialism and racism.”*

Susan Stryker, *Transgender History*