

# Renaissance

Greater Philadelphia Chapter

May 2011



## About Us:

Renaissance is a non-profit organization devoted to support, education, and social integration for transgendered individuals, their friends, families, allies and supporters

## Greetings from Chapter Leader Rebecca

Welcome to the May 2011 Renaissance Greater Philadelphia Chapter meeting. Hopefully the monsoonal rains are over and we can all start wearing out pretty spring and summer clothes.

*Please save these dates for future Renaissance Meetings*

June 21, July 16, August 20

## Other Chapters



**Delaware Renaissance**, PO Box 5656, Wilmington, DE 19808; 302-376-1990; email: del@ren.org. Meets the second Saturday of each month at 8:00 pm.

**Lehigh Valley Renaissance**, PO Box 157, Trexlertown, PA 18087-0157. Meets the second Saturday of each month at 8:00 pm.

**Renaissance National** is in the process of reorganizing, and may be contacted at 987 Old Eagle School Road, Suite 719, Wayne, PA 19087

## Upcoming Events!

- **Esprit Transgender Conference, Port Angeles, WA** May 15-22 2011 [www.espritconf.com](http://www.espritconf.com)
- **Philadelphia Trans-Health Conference, Philadelphia, PA** June 2-4 2011 [www.trans-health.org](http://www.trans-health.org)
- **World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH)** September 24 - 28, 2011 at the Emory Conference Center Hotel Atlanta, GA [www.wpath.org/events\\_symposium.cfm](http://www.wpath.org/events_symposium.cfm)
- **Fantasia Fair Provincetown, MA** Oct 16-23, 2010 <http://www.fantasiafair.org/>
- **Eureka Enfemme Getaway (in conjunction with Dignity Cruise) Eureka, AR** Oct 29-Nov 3, 2011 <http://www.femmegetaway.com/>
- **Beauty at the Beach Rehoboth Beach, DE** November 2-6, 2011 <http://www.cdspub.com/batb.html>

## Recurring Events!

- **EVERY MONDAY Night T-Girls at Tavern on Camac** [www.transvamp.com/events](http://www.transvamp.com/events)
- **THE FIRST AND THIRD SATURDAY NIGHT OF EACH MONTH** Angela's Laptop Lounge [www.tgat2.tv](http://www.tgat2.tv)

# Esprit enjoys its freedom in Port Angeles

By Arwyn Rice - Article published May 17, 2011

For Peninsula Daily News

PORT ANGELES — Billed as the “Pacific Northwest’s premier transgender convention,” Esprit is in full swing this week, and the participants are happy to be back in Port Angeles.

Since 1990, members of transgender communities from Seattle, Portland, Ore., and Vancouver, B.C., have met each year at the Red Lion Hotel, and organizers don’t see that changing anytime soon. “The people are so nice, the view is wonderful and the Red Lion inn is great,” Esprit Secretary Karen Williams said.

Members of the Seattle-based transgender group Emerald City chose Port Angeles 21 years ago with some trepidation, Williams said. “It’s a logging town,” she said. “We were worried we might get beat up.”

The organization eventually decided to give the town a chance, and participants said they were pleasantly surprised by the reception. A few high school-age teens hooted and catcalled, but there were no major problems, she said. Today, residents openly expect the annual presence of more than 150 tall, deep-voiced, large-handed women.

“The way it is now, it’s open and accepting,” Williams said. “Everyone knows about it. It’s like the swallows returning to Capistrano.” Many similar conventions are held in large cities, often rotated among cities where members live.

At one time, Esprit organizers considered doing the same, but found compelling reasons to stay in Port Angeles. Williams said Port Angeles is big enough to support the convention, but small enough to seem contained — so that convention guests are less likely to wander off to other interesting events. While in Port Angeles, Esprit attendees take classes such self-defense, makeup, sewing, style and dance. But it’s the after-hours camaraderie at the Red Lion that is often what is most valuable, Williams said.

Trips to Hurricane Ridge, Victoria and a winery are offered for those who want to see what the area offers beyond the classes and activities at the hotel. There’s also shopping downtown, and many merchants’ welcome Esprit participants with special promotions and merchandise. A supportive Port Angeles has meant freedom for some guests who are unable to be “out” in their home communities. “I have an overwhelming desire to dress, to be that person I want to be,” Michelle said, “but to please society you have to have this facade.”

Michelle, who said she is completely closeted at home so she didn’t give her last name, organizes the Esprit fashion show. She visits stores in Port Angeles to provide a fresh, new look each year, expanding horizons long denied. “It’s so fun interacting,” she said. “Port Angeles has these great big welcome arms. “You can’t imagine how easy it is to be in this town.”

Port Angeles residents have also embraced one of Esprit’s offshoots, the transgender cover band, The Nasty Habits. The Nasty Habits is not a part of the convention, but members of the band are part of the community, Williams said. “On their own they rolled off into taverns,” Williams said. The shows serve as a bridge between the transgender communities, which attends the band’s performances in a show of support, while local residents who simply enjoy the music join in the fun. The Nasty Habits will perform at 9 p.m. Thursday, Friday and Saturday at Bar N9ne, 229 W. First St. “It’s a place to mingle,” Williams said. “We all like the band.”

# Lawmakers get Capitol Hill briefing on transgender equality issues

SDGLN Staff <http://sdgln.com/news/2011/05/16/lawmakers-get-capitol-hill-briefing-transgender-equality-issues>

May 16th, 2011

WASHINGTON — Transgender equality issues were discussed today during a Capitol Hill briefing held on behalf of the Congressional LGBT Equality Caucus.

The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and National Center for Transgender Equality (NCTE) sponsored a Capitol Hill briefing on key findings from the Task Force and NCTE's groundbreaking new report, *Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey*.

The study is the largest ever done on the prevalence of discrimination against transgender people. It reveals that transgender and gender non-conforming people face injustice in many places, including in school systems that promise to shelter and educate; in harsh and exclusionary workplaces; at the grocery store, at the hotel front desk, in doctors' offices and at emergency rooms, among other settings. Transgender people of color generally experienced the highest rates of discrimination in all areas of life.

Task Force and NCTE staff shared some of the startling findings of the report, including:

- Respondents reported alarmingly high rates of harassment and discrimination while in grades K-12: harassment (78%), physical assault (35%) and sexual assault (12%); 51% of those who were verbally harassed, physically or sexually assaulted, or were expelled because they were transgender or gender non-conforming, reported having attempted suicide.
- Direct housing discrimination — 19% reported having been refused a home or apartment and 11% reported being evicted because of their gender identity/expression.
- Double the rate of unemployment — survey respondents experienced unemployment at twice the rate of the general population at the time of the survey, with rates for people of color up to four times the national unemployment rate.
- Harassment, mistreatment or discrimination: 90% of those surveyed reported experiencing harassment, mistreatment or discrimination on the job or took actions like hiding who they are to avoid it.

Speakers at the briefing were Mara Keisling, NCTE executive director; Stacey Long, federal legislative director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force; Lisa Mottet, Transgender Civil Rights Project director at the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force; Jack Harrison, policy analyst, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force; and Owen Smith, a Maryland resident who experienced housing and employment discrimination on the basis of his gender identity.

## Transgender Etiquette

From phillymag.com <http://blogs.phillymag.com/gphilly/2011/05/12/transgender-etiquette/>

Posted by Natalie Hope McDonald on 5/12/2011



Thanks to a recent dustup between transgender performer **Justin Vivian Bond** and *New York* magazine, we began thinking about how to treat “trans” issues – both in the media and in our own lives. In many ways, the e profile on this extraordinary entertainer (very popular within the gay community) and the publication (yep, we have a copy on our nightstand) illustrates exactly what can go wrong when it comes down to something as “simple” as a pronoun.

Bond – a fixture on the downtown scene in New York – has always played fancifully with gender, especially when portraying Kiki as part of the fictional Kiki and Herb lounge duo who packed houses in cities including Philadelphia over the years (confession: we’ve seen Bond shows too many times to count and loved every minute of it).

The last concert in Philly was at gay-owned L’Etage where Bond captivated a room packed with men, women and plenty of Radical Faeries. The elegant singer also stayed around afterwards to chat with fans and sign a few EPs. It’s not what you might expect from someone who can sell out Carnegie Hall or who rubs elbows with the likes of Jake Shears and Sandra Bernhard. But for all the talent and poise, Bond is very down to earth.

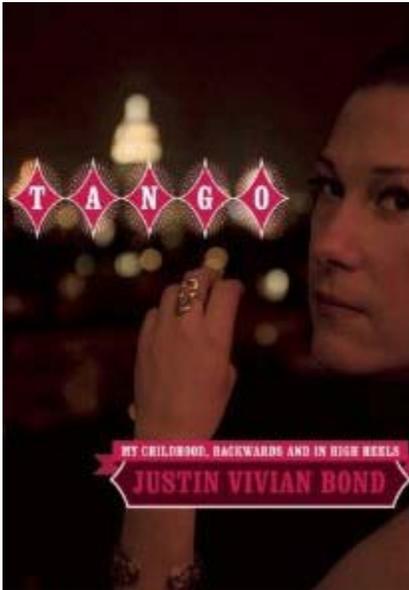
In recent years, Bond – who prefers to be described as a “v” rather than a “he” or “she” as a way to express gender identity – has taken to Twitter, Facebook and the microphone to share thoughts on what it means to be a transgender artist. It’s exactly what the world needs – even the LGBT world, which is not always as accepting of transgender people as one might hope. Bond’s own music is fused with honesty, humor, truth and a certain sad beauty that’s both poignant and affirming. From the singer and the songs we learn that in the same way sexual orientation can be a complicated business – the same goes for gender identity.

And while gay civil rights have made great leaps in recent years, the transgender discussion is really only getting started.

In Illinois recently, where same-sex civil unions will be legalized this summer, a group of transgendered persons have sued the state for failing to adjust their genders on birth certificates after sex reassignment surgery. And in Philly, transgendered people have been fighting for the right to *not* have their gender labeled on SEPTA

cards, which can often cause problems when the card holder does not look like the gender listed. The local transgender community has also battled law enforcement who, they say, stop and harass them on the street more than other segments of the LGB population. The Mazzoni Center is even asking trans men and women to share their stories with the center's legal services department.

And just this week Chaz Bono, the only child of Sonny and Cher, opened up about his gender transition in a new documentary – *Becoming Chaz*. He's been making the rounds on talk shows like Oprah and Letterman to discuss the film and start a new conversation about identity. And while his transition may sometimes make mainstream audiences squirm (cue the pathetic late night jokes and SNL skits), it's a pretty heroic step toward finding a bit of solace in what can only be considered ... "progress?"



In this latest "V Said, He Said," played out on the pages of a major metro magazine and on several social media sites where there's no shortage of commentary, Bond has taken exception (rightly so) to being called everything from a crossdresser, drag queen and transvestite to a one who "wishes" to embody both sexes. At one point the writer even refers to v as a "faux-noun."

This hoopla all comes on the heels of Bond releasing a solo CD called *Dendrophile* and an upcoming book *Tango: My Childhood Backwards and in High Heels* in September. Anyone who has paid attention to Bond's work over the years might notice that the artist has been very candid about being transgender, even as some of our gay and lesbian friends go so far as to question why transgendered people are part of the LGB "community." We've heard many progressive LGB people criticize transgendered people over the years, presumably as a way to somehow normalize their own behavior – as if there is such a thing as "normal" anyway.

But for the sake of our transgendered friends and readers, we hope to continue the conversation – respectfully so. We all possess an inner perspective about ourselves that doesn't always match up with what the world thinks of us. And for some, this can be especially trying.

So we'll leave it to the experts to set us straight. To quote Bond, "For the record, my ambition is not to be both sexes at once. I am both sexes at once. My ambition is to articulate who I am clearly and effectively. I am not a woman and I am not a man, I am not a crossdresser. I am a trans person."

## In Rutgers Suicide Case, Ex-Student Gets Plea Deal

By NATE SCHWEBER Published: May 6, 2011

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J. — One of two former Rutgers University students accused of spying on another student with a webcam just days before he committed suicide will be allowed to avoid a conviction if she continues to provide information about her co-defendant, prosecutors said Friday.



Molly Wei with her lawyers, Ruben Sinins and Eric Kahn, in court on Friday.

The former student, Molly Wei, pleaded not guilty to invasion-of-privacy charges in Superior Court here. Ms. Wei was admitted to a pretrial-intervention program, in which she must perform 300 hours of community service over the

next three years, testify at any proceedings, participate in counseling to deter cyberbullying and cooperate with the authorities. If she complies, the charges against her will be dropped.

The parents of the dead student, Tyler Clementi, who attended the proceeding, later said that they had advised the court to allow Ms. Wei, 19, to enter the program. But they said they favored harsher treatment for their son's roommate, Dharun Ravi, who has been charged with streaming live images of Mr. Clementi's intimate encounter with another man from a computer in Ms. Wei's dormitory room in September.

"We understand that Ms. Wei's actions, although unlawful, are substantially different in their nature and their extent than those against Tyler's former roommate," Tyler's father, Joseph Clementi, said outside the Middlesex County Courthouse.

Standing next to his wife, Jane, Mr. Clementi said that while Ms. Wei had made a bad decision "without regards to another person's privacy and dignity," she deserved another chance. "We hope that Ms. Wei will become a person who makes better decisions," he said, "a person who helps people and a person who shows kindness to those she comes into contact with."

Tyler Clementi jumped off the George Washington Bridge on Sept. 22, three days after Mr. Ravi and Ms. Wei were said to have spied on him. Prosecutors said Mr. Ravi used Ms. Wei's computer to activate a webcam in the room he shared with Mr. Clementi, and then alerted others to watch. Mr. Ravi is also accused of trying to spy on Mr. Clementi again two days later.

Mr. Ravi was indicted last month; the charges included a claim that he acted out of bias because Mr. Clementi was gay and that he tried to thwart an investigation. If convicted on a hate-crime charge, he could face 5 to 10 years in prison.

Mr. Ravi's lawyer, Steven D. Altman, said he welcomed the news that Ms. Wei would be required to testify in the case. "I think that's a very positive development, because anything that she is going to have to say is going to prove and show that whatever occurred was not done with any bias," Mr. Altman said. "It will further confirm that he is not guilty of anything."

Ms. Wei's lawyer, Rubin Sinins, said his client's admittance into the pretrial intervention program, was a good first step toward restoring her reputation. "We have said for seven months that Molly Wei has committed no crime," he said. "She is a fine, upright person."

Under the program, Ms. Wei must hold a job and stay out of trouble for three years, the longest term that can be imposed for a pretrial-intervention program. Both she and Mr. Ravi withdrew from Rutgers in October and are free on bail.