

Janetta



I thought I looked fabulous!

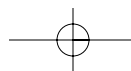
WHEN I WAS ABOUT THREE or four I can remember learning to ride a tricycle. It was a big blue tricycle. I was really angry because I thought my tricycle should be pink or red. I felt like my tricycle should be cuter and more feminine. I didn't want to ride it at all.

I used to dress up in my aunt's clothing when I was about eight or nine. It felt good. I would dress up in fur hats and fur capes and do these productions numbers. But that only lasted for a couple of times. Then they told me I couldn't do it any more. They said it was bad, and that next time I would get in trouble. That made me feel like I was bad and I was ugly. I just felt very bad and ugly. I used to always think about it and I didn't know why they would say that. I thought I looked fabulous!

I grew up knowing that I was a woman, playing a guy. I wanted to hurry up and get old enough so I could be who I really am. I used to have a lot of sadness because I knew that I wasn't who they were forcing me to be.



I did things to distract myself. Like I would hide in the closet and pile clothes on top of myself. I would just lay there and hide for hours and hours until I fell asleep. And I would be like "God, please let me hurry and grow up. Please let me grow up so no one can tell me that I can't be a woman." I grew up with a lot of sadness and a lot of hurt and a lot of pain.



There was a couple of times I made a decision not to wear female clothing based on the discrimination I received from society. After doing that a couple of times I realized that the misery of not being who I was was worse than just being who I am.

I learned to develop a thick skin

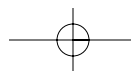
Even being stuck on the streets, feeling like prostitution was my only option, using drugs and alcohol to medicate, was better than hiding. As time went on I learned to develop a thick skin.

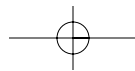
When I told my mom I was a woman she totally freaked out. She said "You mean your gay, right?" and I said, "No, I'm a woman." She said, "How do you know you're a woman?" I replied, "Because I know I am, and I'm going to be a woman some day!" My mom told me that I was being totally ridiculous! She said, "What are people going to think?" Then she went in my room and put up black curtains. She didn't even hang them up—she nailed them up! She threw a bed pan in there and told me not to come out of my room, not even to take a \$#!t! That made me really sad and hopeless, like I couldn't be a part of that family and I could never interact with that family. So I left.

Having a relationship with my family has taken a lot of time and work. It took a lot of explaining to them that referring to me as "he" is basically like profanity to me. It is like abuse to me. Everybody says they want to help me. The only thing I ask of them is to respect the fact that this is who I am. After a long hard fight we got past that. Partly because I stayed away from them for a long time. I couldn't see them. I told them "I can't be around you. I can't talk to you guys." When I am away from my family, not being referred to as "he", my life is better. I'm happier, more productive. So I stay in my circle, where people respect my gender. That's where my life becomes a better quality of life.

I'm not willing to compromise myself and my self-esteem to be with a man.

I have compromised myself a lot with guys who want to keep our relationship under the table. They want to sneak around, only can go out at night, keep it very secretive. I haven't been in a relationship for the past couple of years because these things are not acceptable for me today. I'm not willing to compromise myself and my self-esteem to be with a man. I truly like men—the masculine energy—but I'm not willing to compromise myself. I'd rather just be with myself.



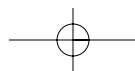


Being transgender is not a choice.



One of the things that makes me feels safe is surrounding myself with people that are loving and nurturing and embracing of the transgender community. There are some people out there that are very confident with themselves and very happy with themselves. They don't need to abuse or put certain groups down to feel good about themselves.

I want people to understand that being transgender is not a choice. It's like something inside of you that either you adhere to or you die. Or you live your life in complete misery. If you know someone that is transgender you should do the best you can to support them, even if that means staying away from them—moving out of their way—and allowing them to do what they need to do for themselves. Don't judge them. Understand that it takes a lot of courage—it takes BALLS—to be who we are!



I want to say to be *mindful*.
People deserve respect.

This is the **United States**.
We have all kinds of people here.

We're not that different.

If you see somebody that you think might be transgender you could get to know them.

Say hi to them.

Talk about your feelings.

Educate yourself.

Transgender people deserve to go out in public and interact in public. They deserve to go to the grocery store without being harassed, and gawked at, and made fun of. I think it is very rude and inappropriate when I see families with their kids stopping in the middle of the street to make harsh comments to transgender people. Those families don't know, their children might be transgender. We were all babies once. We were all perceived as boys, beautiful little boys. But then, something inside us over powered that—and this is the finished product: 36 double C's!

