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- HOME
- CLASSIFIEDS

- THE LATEST
- EXPRESSWIRE
- EXPRESSBLOG

- NEWS

- VIEWPOINT
- EDITORIAL
- LETTERS
- BITCH SESSION

- LOCAL LIFE
- EXTRA

- BITCH SESSION

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## EDITORIAL

### Stanton trans bias case shows Largo city officials need educating

The right man for the job is a woman

By [BARBARA J. RUBIN](#)  
Friday, March 23, 2007

SURE IT'S SHOCKING. Some would say freakish: A man who wants to be a woman.

Or, in the words of Largo, Fla., City Commissioner Mary Gray Black, "Causing distraction and work disruption." Black was reacting to news that Largo City Manager Steve Stanton, who heretofore has had solid job performance reviews, was actively pursuing gender re-assignment surgery to eventually become Susan Stanton. So it was, suddenly Stanton ostensibly becomes unfit to keep his \$140,000-per-year position.

In truth, city commissioners and others just need a bit of education, that's all. Then they can work in concert with Steve and, ultimately, Susan.

What's happening is that these officials lack an understanding of a psychiatric classification known as gender-identity disorder. Those with GID, more commonly referred to as transgender, believe they were born into the wrong gender, and their goal is to reconcile the incongruence by becoming who they were born to be instead of "adapting" to what will make society feel comfortable.

In the case of someone like Stanton, reconciling his inner feelings and outward appearance is not something that will necessarily affect job performance. Any disruption will not come from Steve, or even Susan for that matter. It will come from uninformed co-workers and citizens. It's important to stay focused on who here is really confused, or at least uninformed.

It is clear by Stanton's own disclosure: He is an individual, one of thousands around the country, and tens of thousands around the world, who have "come out" to themselves, their families and co-workers about their need to reconcile their gender conflict. Some do it by taking hormones, some with cosmetic surgery, others with breast augmentation or removal, others with surgical transformation of their biological sex organs into those of the opposite gender. Still other transgender individuals undertake all of these steps.

AND THERE ARE, of course, other individuals who, fearing job loss, or loss of family or general societal ostracizing, never venture courageously toward the change they so desperately long for. Likewise, and so sad to say, many with GID who lack support from family, friends and society even take their own lives instead.

But in truth, all a transgender person wants to do is reconcile his or her gender identity, and once and for all blend into society as the gender they believe they were born to be — not call attention to themselves, as Commissioner Black suggests. He or she wants to remain that same good parent, that exemplary employee, family member, neighbor they were the day before the paper plastered their name in the headlines.

**Barbara J. Rubin** is an Atlanta-based psychologist who has worked extensively with those affected by gender-identity disorder. She can be reached via this publication.

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As typically happens in the lifecycle of sensationalized stories such as the one about Steve Stanton, whether he is permitted to regain his position as city manager or not, he will forever be credited for helping to create a dialogue among city leaders and the community of Largo — nationally, even — about what it means to be transgender. Stanton is asking folks to judge him on the merits of his employment skills, and in doing so, allow themselves to be educated and understand Steve's motivations to become Susan.

AS WITH OTHER feared and misunderstood groups such as blacks, Jews and gays, it will take one person at a time stepping out into the light, being visible to his or her community, to help demystify who and what they are. It will take each of those individuals and their own sometimes painful scenarios to educate us and correct our collective misinformation.

Stanton is indeed quite a city manager whether he is permitted to return to his prior post. Look at how he's managed to put gender identity in the city's headlines. Now is the time for his friends to rally behind him and for transgender individuals everywhere, but especially those who live in the Pinellas, Hillsborough, Pasco area, to join Stanton and "come out" to even just one person to keep this important dialogue alive.

Employment opportunities will no doubt be abundant for Susan Stanton. Who would not want a professionally capable, loyal, courageous, truthful, well-reasoned risk-taker on their team? May the next headline soon be about the astute employer who will say, "the best man for the job is the one who had the courage to say, 'I am endeavoring to live openly and truthfully, even if that includes reconciling my gender.'"