

Personal Statement
By
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Diversity and experience: In my world those words rise to a new level of meaning. From high school drop-out to an MBA, from a war-time veteran to a confirmed pacifist, from bankrupt to a millionaire, from a child to a parent, from a committed married person (22 years) to twice divorced, and from a man to a woman – I am, or have been, all of these. I am a 48-year-old transsexual woman with a history and life experience that transcends labeling.

Although I should not be evaluated or judged exclusively on the basis of being transsexual, it is a characteristic that is usually unique in other people's experience and thus tends to command considerable attention. I was trained by society to wield "male privilege" only to abandon that privilege in pursuit of a more personally honest identity as a woman, despite the obvious and not so obvious challenges such a change entailed. Because of this change I became intimately familiar with discrimination and the pain it causes, particularly as it resulted in the loss of everything I held dear: my family, my home, my friends, and my job. I have also overcome other hurdles placed in front of me: I changed gender (something that is fundamental to our trite concept of identity) in the workplace, I was denied health insurance merely by the fact that I am transsexual, and as a woman I was forced to take a 30% cut in pay. I have stood in fear-induced indecision in front of a public restroom, along with many other hurdles both of greater and of lesser significance. As I should not be judged by the single measure of my transsexualism, neither should transsexualism be judged exclusively by the trials it presents. To be transsexual, at least in my experience, means to truly know one's self and to be willing to be honestly introspective. Out of that introspection and honesty comes an amazing strength of identity and commitment to purpose. I know who I am, I know where I've been and I know where I'm going. Moreover, like the proverbial Phoenix, all that was lost was found anew and made even stronger. My children, once on the brink of being denied access to me by the courts, are now young adults with whom I have wonderfully loving relationships; my career rebounded and

exceeded all hopes and expectations; I live in the home of my dreams with my loving family; and my life is filled with friends and supporters.

Aside from the obviously profound effect being transsexual has had on my life, it has provided me great opportunity to witness how people can judge others on the strength of a single characteristic, often to their detriment. And, fortunately, it has provided me with an opportunity to educate others and to assist others through the frightening maze of bigotry, hatred, and fear that all too often surrounds a person's journey from one sex to another. I have appeared on national television ("20/20" and the Discovery Channel's "Transgender Revolution"). I have walked the halls of the US Congress and met personally with Senators and Congressmen from around our country. I was a founding director of the national organization "Transgender Officers Protect and Serve," an organization focused on outreach, education, and timely intervention on behalf of our membership of Transgendered police officers, fire-fighters, and military personnel. Through these efforts and others less public, I have personally helped people keep their families together, retain their jobs, and find peace with themselves and those around them.

I have had a rewarding and diverse life independent of being transsexual. I dropped out of high school at 16 years old and joined the US Navy Submarine Service on my 17th birthday. That experience provided me with extensive overseas travel and exposure to many other cultures (for example, I lived in Japan and the Philippines, each for more than a year) as well as a tremendous appreciation and thirst for formal education. I returned from the Navy to attend college where I earned an undergraduate degree in Accounting while working full-time. Ten years later, in the midst of a career and while helping to raise 3 children, I again returned to school (evenings and weekends) and earned an MBA degree from the University of Colorado. While discussing experiences, I must also write about a career that spans 25 years and incorporates spectacular failures as well as successes, and which culminates with architecting the sale of a company in what Fortune magazine ranked as one of the "Top 5 VC backed deals of 2002." That sale provided me with the means to "retire" from one career to begin a second – as an advocate, activist, attorney. This career included the long hours of work associated with "paying one's dues" as I developed the necessary proficiency in my chosen profession; it included the varied experiences of hiring and firing

employees (it also included being hired as well as being fired (the latter related directly to my being transsexual)); it included managing our company through patent and trademark protection lawsuits; it included raising capital in private debt and equity transactions as well as public stock offerings. The diversity of my work experience is further illustrated by the range and type of companies I worked for over my career: they include a multi-billion dollar telecommunications giant (where I was a middle manager), to an international CPA and consulting firm (where I was a senior manager), to an Inc. 500 “Fastest growing privately held company” (where I was the Chief Financial Officer).

I have seen much change in my lifetime (this is perhaps an understatement!). In addition to the changes I’ve undergone in my personal life, I have also lived long enough to have experienced the ‘60s, ‘70s, and ‘80s, most of the events of which will, for many law school applicants, be simply readings in a history book. As these are a real part of my personal history they have helped to form the nucleus of my interest in the law and civil rights. This first-hand experience has also provided me with a broader understanding of the concept of the law as a living thing that changes over time in response to cultural and environmental conditions. It is my belief that I can combine my knowledge, my experiences and my education in the law to help foster even further change toward the benefit of the marginalized and disenfranchised of our society.