

CHRISTIE ELAN-CANE

Clare (C) interviewing Christie (CH)

Extract 1: 00.12 – 4.46

NON-GENDERED IDENTITY

CH: My identity is non-gendered, and I have a campaign called Non-Gendered Fighting for Legal Recognition. I've been fighting for the social legitimacy that other people can take for granted for most of my adult life. Erm ... how I got to this point was that I was born on the 27th September 1957 and, as a young adult, I didn't realise that there was any alternative to male or female, because there were no cultural references ... that I'd heard of transsexuals and transvestites as they were called then, so I had some sort of trans awareness, but it isn't trans as you would think of it now. So I didn't really associate myself with that at the time and, running out of options, I felt that really I should identify as gay, or sometimes it was bi, but other times mostly gay it was, but still there was something that never quite felt right. In my career ... career wise I was ... I was quite ambitious and I was sort of open as gay at a time that most people weren't, and er ... I feel that I paid some sort of price for that, but er, it wasn't insurmountable and I was, in the ... by the mid '80s, I was able to have ... I had my own business. I ... bought a property and I worked as a DJ. I was ... things were going quite well for me at that time, and I fitted in very well with the fashions and things at that time and so I sort developed the same look that ... the appearance that I've still got to this day.

This was er ... going back to the mid-1980s. But there was ... it felt that to other people, it seemed like I had everything, but there was something still that wasn't right, and that ... the other thing that I felt that I couldn't discuss with anybody was that I felt a compelling desperate need to change my body, because I didn't ... I ... ever since puberty I'd not been able to come to terms with the body that I loathed, and that I would cover up, even in the summer. I felt something was profoundly definitely wrong, and ultimately I knew that I would have to have surgery. So, I set about looking for a surgeon and it took several years. Finally I was able to have the first procedure, a bilateral mastectomy, in 1989, at the beginning of that year, and then, after that I felt compelled to ... I felt that I'd started on a journey, and it immediately felt right, and it was something that I never regretted. The only regret that I had was that I was by then in my thirties and it had taken so long.

I wanted to go through the next stage which was to have a hysterectomy, which I had at the end of 1990. So there was effectively nearly a two year gap between the two procedures but after that I felt that I had ... and in so doing, bypassed the gender recognition clinics completely, and was able to achieve my ... my physical transition. But it was ... I felt that I'd completed that part of my journey but it was raising more questions than it answered. I was by then fairly sure that I wasn't gay. I wasn't ... I was ... did not really identify as stereotypically ... as bi. I didn't know what the hell I was except that I felt that I didn't feel that I was either male or female, and

I didn't realise that there was any alternative, but I knew that that was how I felt and that there was no ... erm, no alternative other than to just follow with how I felt and live my life that way.

Extract 2: 12.10 – 15.32

DECIDING UPON USE OF THE TERM NON-GENDERED. OPINION OF THE GENDER RECOGNITION ACT.

But I ... I went along the process of educating myself - first of all understanding that we're all intersex to a certain degree, that some people it's more apparent than others, but the problem is societies ... the Western imperial society and the cultural system that doesn't allow for identity, other than gendered identity, other than male or female ... I was identifying as third gendered and then someone ... I was giving, I was invited to give a presentation at Oxford University and during my speech someone interrupted and said "If you don't feel that you're male or female, then how can you be ... you say you're third gender? How can you be any gender if you're not male or female?" And I thought "Well, actually, you're right." So I changed ... I said "From now on let's forget third gendered, I'm non-gendered." That was 1998 and I've been ... non-gendered has been my key definition and I know that since then there's ... and with the internet a lot of people have come forward and a lot, there's been a lot of er, different terms. For me, non-gendered is the definitive term, neither male nor female in a gendered societal structure that recognises ... that has ... comprises two genders, male and female, for my definition of non-gendered is neither male nor female, and on that basis I'm fighting for a third space that could be in terms of non ... documentation that is non gender specific rather than saying non-gendered to be realistic, I'm fighting for documentation that is non gender specific, erm ...

I've been doing this with the assistance of the ... the Gender Recognition Act, I think was a disgusting piece of legislation. Really it was a very discriminatory piece of legislation and the trans people that were failed by that are suffering the consequences today, since this was incorporated into the Equality Act, 2010, and that's something that ... I worked with the people that pushed that through who were aware of the issues that I was trying to raise by then, because I was becoming more vocal, but were not interested. It's something that I won't forgive because it failed ... it failed me completely and it felt that the shutters were coming down. Any hope that I had that I would get somewhere were gone with the GRA and it failed for different reasons. It failed a lot of trans people, and with the Equality Act that we have now, we've got sections for race and faith and disability and age are all universal – the section for trans, in quotes "Gender Reassignment" is still this narrowly defined criteria that excludes non-gendered people. It excludes a number of trans people for different reasons. I think it's a disgusting piece of legislation, and it needs to go and be completely overhauled, and that's something that I'm working with others to achieve.

Extract 3: 29.06 – 31.44

X PASSPORTS

I will explain a bit more about the X passport. It was something that er, one of Simon Hughes' researchers found out about by, just by chance when we wrote to the Australian High Commissioner in London at the time, in 2005, 2006, and this High Commissioner responded that under the ICAO, the International Civil Aviation Organisation, which is a UN specialised agency they ... this organisation sets the standards for international er ... international standards for machine readable travel documents, passports and visas and there's four mandatory elements: Name, nationality, age and sex, and under sex, not gender, but sex, there's three characters that are permitted: M, for Male, F for Female, and X for unspecified, and I think the unspecified started originally during the ... during the war when Jewish people were being evacuated from Europe by the UN and they needed to issue a number of passports very quickly, and they didn't have time to establish the sex, so they were all issued as X.

But the X has remained and even before the ... even before the standards were ... the existing standards were drawn up in, I think it was, that was 2005, New Zealand it turned out did already have ... used a dash for non gendered specific passports. Although it is sex, but obviously it's a key identification document and so by saying it's ... by reading that as sex it still gives misleading ... since it is an identity document it does give misleading information if ... if ... it's implying through the addition of sex, a gendered role that is not er, that is not that person's identity. So for me non gendered specific X is not ideal but it's ... but it's, it was the best option and it means that I wouldn't be given an inappropriate gendered classification on my passport.