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„Breaking stereotypes up“: My journey to ministering as a trans pastor

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- It was right after birth that I **„missed“** [1] **the first box: I wasn't baptized!** At that time, every other kid was baptized and thus belonged either to the Roman-Catholic church or to the Protestant/Lutheran church (= this are the two main denominations in Germany, the „real“ churches, the „normal“ churches). I didn't belong anywhere – and I didn't even know it (and I didn't miss anything [2]).
- My parents had left church and didn't teach me anything about religion or faith. So, when I grew up, it was much easier for me to deal with this topics – for others, leaving church might feel as a rebellion against your parents, whereas attending church might feel as agreeing with your parents. They way they thaught about church was a symbol of what they thaught about about their parents' lives. For me, **the world of my parents and the world of faith was two different „boxes“**. That helped a lot.
- It was also very early that I **missed** [1] **the box of being a „real girl“ or a „real boy“**. I knew that I wasn't one of the boys, but I also knew that I wasn't one of the girls. Again, I didn't miss [2] anything - this was just the way it was; it didn't feel wrong. (I didn't feel wrong!)
- Growing up, things became more difficult. **Growing up seems to mean growing into boxes**. This was how the world was presented to me when I was young:
 - As an adult, in your gender life your are either MAN or WOMAN.
 - As an adult, in your work life you wear either suits or skirts.
 - As an adult, in your family life you are either father or mother.
 - As an adult, you are supposed to make a career and to make money.
 - Nothing of this was of any interest to me. I thaught about becoming an artist, a truck driver, or to go insane (at least I would be „out of the system“ then).
 - Dying also was an option, but not really because I was suicidal, but because I really was curious about breaking the limits of my perception. I wanted to know what was „behind“ the scenes. That was much more attractive than becoming an adult!
- The world around me still **wanted to put me on track**:
 - For example, I was taken to a doctor to learn to stand in an upright, „straight“ (haha) posture (I never could stand upright as long as it would show my female breasts, but nobody – including me - understood what was going on.)
 - I was taken to a psychological test in order to find out what education and work-life would apply to me. I was such a clever kid and was not interested in any kind

of career. But the problem wasn't the work itself; my problem was the world that my work should be part of. I didn't see any way of making money in that world that would satisfy me.

- The world I saw was not a world of happiness, career, family life and satisfaction by making money or becoming famous or studying important things at a university. I just saw that in other parts of the world (in factories, on the streets, in hospitals, in other countries, on other continents) people were poor, hungry, ill, addicted, threatened, exploited, isolated, lonely and oppressed. **How can I live happily in such a world?!**
- It was in this mood that I became a Christian. Jesus really was the light of the world for me. And because I didn't have other plans anyway, **I asked Jesus to take my whole life – and to send me to people who never get told that God loves them.** (I never thought about becoming a pastor. Pastors always are patient, always have time for everybody's concerns, always have a smile on their face, always like to be with people, ... I am the contrary!)
- So, I started my career as a Christian missionary... or at least I tried:
 - I wanted to join a bible school – and failed: because females were supposed to wear skirts and I refused to do so.
 - I wanted to join mission organizations – and failed: because I just didn't fit. There was nothing I did really wrong, I just didn't fit. At least I managed to be the first woman in the Christian bookshop in London that was allowed to work in trousers. (MCC is one of my very rare experiences as a group that is not based on sameness, but really tries to acknowledge and value diversity.)
 - I wanted to join churches – and failed: I was expected to realize that homosexuality is a sin or an illness (by that time I still was a woman and by that time I was too much in love with too many women).
 - I desperately wanted to become a real Christian – and even with that I failed: Real Christians were having a quiet time (= reading the bible and praying) early every morning – I always fell asleep. Real Christians were given the gift of praying in tongues – I never was. Real Christians love Christian music – I didn't. Real Christians a) „naturally“ no sex drive, b) managed „happily“ to abstain from sex, c) had sex just for the responsibility of procreation, or d) were born to find their „one-and-only“ partner that was „made for them“ to live a life in a monogamic marriage. I didn't fit in any of these.
- So, after my Christian career had failed, I was led to people and places **outside of Christianity – and there I found what I had expected to find WITHIN Christianity:**
 - Feminism
 - fighting for the rights of refugees
 - seeking equality and freedom for all (instead of just seeking to participate in existing privileges)
 - organizing done by ourselves instead of us
 - ...
- Now, most of these people were **non-Christian or even ANTI-Christian.** And I began to understand why. The Christians we knew were either
 - a) living a privileged life like other privileged people did (many of them nowadays welcome gays and lesbians into their privileges), or
 - b) were even more conservative in their world-views (many of them still fight gays and lesbians).

- So, instead of going to church,
 - I toured Europe with my queercore-punkrock-band
 - I co-founded the „Drag Kingdom“ in Germany; a movement not just for Drag Kings, but for all kinds of people who had fun with a diversity of genders. For example, we gave parties where the crowd was so mixed that you couldn't tell a „normal“ majority“ from a different „other“ (regarding gender identities, but also sexual orientations, styles of clothes and looks, favourite music, age, education, class, ...).
- By that time, I felt **quite comfortable with the boxes that I fit and didn't fit:**
 - I wasn't a „normal“ woman? So what, I was a lesbian! :)
 - I wasn't a „normal“ lesbian? So what, I sometimes was a Drag King :)
 - I wasn't a „normal“ Christian? So what, God was everywhere! (Yes, I still kept on praying and trusting and considering myself a child of God.)
- Then I had my next outing, and this one was harder: It was not just an „outing as ...“, but also an outing „out of“ my comfort zone. I knew that changing my appearance to be a transman, I could no longer claim to be a natural part of the world of women and lesbians. That was hard, because **I never identified as a „man“ in the way what being a „man“ means** in most societies.

So, in 2000 I started with taking hormones and I had my female breast turned into a more male breast, but that's all I did. I didn't even change my official name (every document still runs under my female name).

By not doing the „real“ adjustments to become a „real“ (trans-)man, I again missed [1] the boxes – those of a man as well as those of most transmen.

- Then, in 2004 my band split. And I knew right away that it was now time for **MCC**. So I went to church again – and a time of healing began.
 - It was the first time that many of my ideas as an activist and as a Christian were not separated any longer.
 - It was quite confusing as well, because in MCC I found so many people and beliefs that didn't fit into my boxes of being „Christian“...
 - And soon I realized that it was again time to overcome a box; this time it was the box of my self-image: I was called to become a pastor. So I started the journey, and 6 years later I got ordained.
- There is one more box that opened for me: In 2009 I became a **parent!** We are three parents raising two kids (aged 4 and 6).

Now, with all these experiences I came to read the bible in a different way than people do with THEIR experiences. Let me quickly share some examples with you:

(bible quotes are from the King James Version):

- Genesis 1,27
(many read:) „So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; **MALE and FEMALE** created he them.“ (= Most people read: God created us as Male OR as Female.)
(I read:) „So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; **male AND female** created he them.“ (= I read: Yes, God created us as male AND female!)
- Gen 17,10-14

„Every man child among you shall be circumcised. (...) And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant.“

=> They are not „right“ until they changed their body. It's a surgical intervention that makes them who they are (in God's eyes). Sounds very familiar to me as a transgender!

- 5. Mose 22,5

„The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the LORD thy God.“

=> yeah, be bold and wear clothes according to your „real“ gender identity! :)

- 1. Kor 11,14

„Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him?“

=> oh yes, „nature“ is what FEELS naturally (as a result of the current culture and made by us, not by „nature“)

- Gal 3,28

„For as many of you as **have been baptized** into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there **is neither male nor female**: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.“

=> Wow, all Christians are gender queer! (Yet, there are not many who after baptizm say: „uh, I am baptized now, great! But wait – where is my gender gone?“ *hehe*)

I think ministering as a trans-Pastor is an exciting and wonderful ministry. Many of my experiences serve me well in being open to people with all kinds of histories and identities. I know the hurts and the liberation of being marginalized. I know that changes in life can happen. I know what people can become when they become who they really are, as God made them and God loves them. I know that it's not about being like each other, but about helping each other in being as diverse as we are created. It also helps me not to stick to one image of God, in many aspects. I know the power of convictions (sometimes helpful, sometimes dangerous) and of stepping into the unknown. I know what it means to „transform ourselves as we transform the world“, as we proclaim in MCC. I'm so thankful for my life journey.