

My name is Enkhriimaa. I'm 22 years old. I graduated the Humanities University in 2007 majoring in international journalism. I have always been interested in all things womanly since very childhood. I'd wear my mother's dresses and stand in front of the mirror, imagining myself as a woman, feeling frustrated that I was not born a woman, feeling sad when my aunts would tell me that I would be a pretty girl if I was a girl... My childhood was spent surrounded with violence and discrimination. I had withstood all the nasty pranks and verbal jabs coming from my schoolmates who called me "a girl", "a female", "a hermaphrodite". It was difficult to relate to boys as I would look at them through my girl's eyes, so I always played with girls instead and made friends with girls. I have a stepfather. He's a music teacher by profession but years he spent working as a teacher are few. He would always get drunk and beat me and my mother. Because I think of myself as a woman, I can't change my clothes in front of others because I am shy. I've always been this way and still am. The fact that my stepfather never understood and scolded me "You're always playing coy and changing clothes behind things like a girl" and made me undress in front of him stayed as a stain in my heart. He would verbally abuse me that I was a good-for-nothing-homo and would even make me wash his back while bathing and make me shave his pubic hairs... How ashamed and scared a ten-year old girl will be if she was made to shave a man's pubic hairs? It's a pain I've gone through many times. Although my mother would always try to protect me and quarrel with my stepfather over his calling me "a girl", till today I never said to my mother what took place when she was not home. When I was in the 8th grade in 2001, a younger brother of my stepfather's came over drunk and stayed, sleeping with me in my bed in my room. In the middle of the night, he started touching and tried to insert his penis in my anus. I begged him to stop and he did, but he threatened me that unless I suck him off, he would tell my parents that I had touched him. I had to suck his genitals. Four times after that he came and raped me. This black stain of my childhood I had carried in pain, unable to share with anyone. Although I wanted to tell people, I had no one around to tell who would've understood me. I was a very effeminate kid and that must've drawn much attention. Even my relative kids were always trying to get the better of me. When I was in the 9th grade, my two cousins on my mother's side took off my trousers by overpowering me saying "He must have no genitals because he's so girly, let's check" and they just laughed looking at my genitals. Overpowered and humiliated, I just stood crying. From that moment I decided to live only believing in myself and to live pretending until I had the capacity to live as a woman. I tried to appear manly with my every step, mimicking men's gestures, even learning to smoke to make my voice lower. To be with men, I learned to drink vodka. Unfortunately as a result of this, emotionally I spent my every waking day as if in hell. To do everything that I hated doing, not being able to be who I am, to pretend to be who I am not because of others is altogether hell. When I went to university, I still had my dreams of being and living as a woman. And one day I walked out to the center of the city as Enkhriimaa, wearing a white fur coat and very high black shoes, full of braveness and all too aware of risks. I knew I could run into someone I knew, but I didn't care as I was at the long last able to be true to my heart's desire. I went out window shopping and then dancing in the evening. It is wonderful to be seen a woman that I am, to be respected as such and to feel myself a woman that I am. That was the true me, that was my life, and I understood that completely then. Since then I was ready to transform into a woman and to live as a woman and ready to do anything for that. But that was also when my true nature came to contact with people who did not understand and who jeered and that not only upset me, but was the biggest obstacle to living my dream. The night clubs we would go out to when we were down would immediately close their doors at our sight, or customers would complain and refuse to be in the same

space as us. I can't forget the time when a girl threw an ashtray and a beer bottle at me from her table when I was dancing in a bar trying to harm my beauty and health. The club manager blamed me for the incident and chased us out. I understood then all too well that human rights and freedoms in Mongolia were nothing. Since then whenever people saw me walking on the streets and knew that I was transgender, they threw their bottled urine, stones and abuses at me, and that was as common as everyday occurrence. Drunken people chased me saying "I will kill you, deviants! I will show you, deviants!" Although these incidents would oppress me emotionally, they did not overpower my desire to be myself as a woman. But one senseless incident with the police taught me that I had to fight for my rights. In December 2009 when I was walking in front of the State Department Store with my transgender friend Anujin, suddenly some policemen came up behind us and grabbed us and started dragging us off saying "You cunts, get in the car now! Look at these whores!" Because it was all so sudden, in shock I got into their van and they immediately brought us to one police station. There were many sex workers lined up and we were told to line up with them. We did as told. The policemen then started jeering and laughing at us "Aren't you men? Aren't you ashamed of wearing women's clothes and prostituting yourselves?"... They were shouting at us "Tell me your male name", "Where do study?" "Speak like a man"... Since I had thought myself as a woman, I was really pained at that time. Although I never prostituted myself, I was abused as one by them for being who I am and wearing what I wanted to wear, a right of every citizen, and that was shameful and painful. I felt really sorry that the very police who I always hoped would protect me from the ones that harmed me and threatened me had such attitudes. At the very last, after barrage of verbal abuse, when they took 20 thousand that Anujin and I had as a fine and let us go, I felt ashamed for them. It was unthinkable that the very police trampled the law they were supposed to uphold and that I had just been abused by people with such morals. That was when I understood that I had no business of hoping for help from police when I was hurt and violated.

From the second year in the university, I began working as a reporter for the Union daily newspaper while studying. That opened a door for me to voice through print media the sad reality of people like me whose rights were violated. I didn't turn down requests for interviews from newspapers as I saw them as an opportunity to educate the society. I always stressed about sexual orientation and gender identity being innate and something you are born with, and not something that someone was pretending out of lack of things to do. At the same time, I started a blog myself, with every one of my writings stressing that we were people just like any other, although we were sexuality minority. I do think that this voluntary work of mine had contributed somewhat to people's improved understanding about LGBT people. Everything has its other side as well, and with my writing in my blog, I started to receive threats that I must stop blabbing about LGBT people's rights or else I would be killed. Although I understood the direct threats issued against my life, I continued on. Unfortunately, someone had hacked into my blog on the evening of 20 July 2009 and had erased everything I had painstakingly written up to that point. I could do nothing but cry to see that my soap box from which I spoke from my heart, expressed my inner most feelings, my best friend, was no longer. I could not exercise my right to freedom of expression, freedom of print, that opposers would not let me exercise those rights. Still, I did not want to give up. Because I decided to do more for others like myself, I published my first poetry book called "Two spirited". When I carried copies of my book that expressed how the dark and uneducated society was harming and hurting people like me to various bookshops, a lot of shops refused to sell it. Some said "What kind of a printing house would publish a deviant's book like this one?", "Get it away, you will

bring bad luck to our shop". At last three shops accepted my book and that was the first book by a transgender Mongolian woman that came to the society. People were intrigued, but many simply hated.

THE NIGHT OF 29-30TH SEPTEMBER 2009

After work, I met and sat talking with my transgender friend Burmaa. Since it was late, we decided to meet Khulan and Khaliunaa and to spend the night talking at my place. So we came home, got dressed in our female attire, put on some makeup and left to find them. As they had no mobiles, we had to go out physically searching for them at places where they could be hanging out. So we went to the south of the State Department Store and suddenly two guys came out of nowhere and started chasing after us. We did our best to get away but we were wearing high heels that slowed us and we got caught. Although we screamed for help from the people nearby, there was not a single kind person who would help. Instead people were simply sitting comfortably with faces as if they were watching an adventure movie, and that memory always makes me cry. The guy who caught me kicked me in the face as soon as he got hold of me, and dazed I was unable to understand what was going on. Suddenly they had a car trunk open and were ordering us in "Get in fast, you cunts". When I looked into the trunk, Khulan was lying in it and I didn't know whether she was alive or dead. The guys said that they were from Dayar Mongol movement and repeated again and again that they would not let us live and were beating us all over our heads and faces at every small move. They were driving for a long time, god knew where, and then stopped and shouted at us to get out fast. When I got out, I understood that we were at the 70 stories' cemetery. There were nine of them in two cars. They took us to three locations and started beating us, taking turns at every one of us. The one that was beating Burmaa was beating me next, the one who was beating me was beating Khulan next, and the one beating Khulan was beating Burmaa next. They beat us in all different ways. My kidneys are not good. They were stomping all over my face and my body, dragging me between graves. Then they told me to suck on Khulan's genitals, or they would kill me. I did as told and they recorded it shining light on us. Then they beat me and told me to put my penis into Khulan's anus. I had to pretend that I was having sex with Khulan and they were still recording. Then they beat me and told me to draw up my skirt and take off my panties and expose my bottom. I did as told. They recorded it all. After they recorded it, one of them ordered me to suck on his penis. I was in shock from all the beating and everything that was taking place and I was just dazed, but then they beat me again saying that I didn't suck as I was told. After all this, they said to me "You are one bitch who blabs a lot, well, this is what you get. This is only a warning. Stop shouting gay rights, or we will hunt you and find you even if beneath the ground and will kill you". They also threatened "Don't even think of going to the police. They will never blame us. You will be the ones to be sorry." So around 3am they stopped their torture and left us 10 kms outside the city. With no wigs, faces impossible to recognize, clothes all torn we walked in great pain to my place. When we stood trying to catch a taxi, many cars passed us, and none stopped to help. Having not hurt anyone by being who we were, we were tortured and given a warning that we were walking our last. Till this day this is something I shudder to think.

Since I had started working for Irmuun publishing house not a week ago, in the morning I had no choice but go to work despite all the pain in my body. Although my body was aching so much that I couldn't move, I had to go. When I showed up at work, everyone was shocked and said that I should go to the police to report the violence I had been subjected to and go to the hospital. No one knew at that time about my gender identity. I knew that was pointless. I knew that the police would simply laugh me off. There will be no one among the police who would understand my gender identity, that I was a woman.

They simply think we are gay. Even when I tried to explain that I felt like a woman, they simply laughed me off saying that I had a penis, so I never went. On the other hand, I did not go to the hospital to leave any evidence of that blackest night, I wanted to memories, so didn't want the degree of hurt to be determined at the hospital. I had no psychological status to go to the hospital and to leave those trauma diagnoses in my health records. And at any rate, I was deeply shocked and traumatized to even understand what was going on. I was on huge doses of painkillers for a long time. I had no one to tell the whole thing to, I didn't know what to do, I simply went to bed every night and cried, and every day I saw images of everything that happened again and again, and started shaking every time someone raised their voice. At the same time I had the constant deep fear that my colleagues might find out about my transgenderism. When I was working for the Union newspaper, although I was the best, I had to quit because of discrimination I faced from colleagues about my gender identity. Because I had to live and eat, I needed money, so I had to hide my identity from people at Irmuun. Because I was made to be what I am not, because I had to act like a man, I thought oftentimes that I had only one way out – to kill myself.

Since I was beaten and tortured by Dayar Mongol movement people, for five months I had the ability to only do my work, and not express myself, and not fight for our rights. I was constantly shaking thinking they might find where I am working and come after me. Because I tried to give voice to us, for our rights, for doing nothing wrong, I was nearly killed.

After being quiet for a while, from February 2010 I restarted my blog because I understood that I could not live in fear forever. The legal recognition of the LGBT Centre gave me the strength. Because we had an organization that will protect us and that will fight with us, my fear decreased a little. I stopped suffering alone about the September incident, stopped trying to forget it because I had talked about what happened to me, a transgender woman, how we suffered at the hands of Dayar Mongol movement and the general discrimination and violence that we face in a documentary made by the LGBT Centre. Let people understand our realities, let people see that people who have done nothing wrong are victimized and violated in our society. This documentary screened on 8 March during the women's rights national conference and in the evening "B" TV showed the segment with my interview during its evening news, endangering again my life and the lives of girls like me. Dayar Mongol people saw that news and demanded from my transgender friend Anujin that I be found and brought to them, if not, to tell them where I worked, because I, "the whore, marred our reputation" nationwide and that the only way to get their honor back was to kill me. They told Anujin that they knew I was a journalist and that they would easily find and kill me. From that moment, my life was no longer mine, but borrowed. At the same time, I started having strange situations at work. When I went to work one morning, they had found out that I was the transgender Enkhriimaa and they had all exchanged my blog link by yahoo messenger. They were jeering at me, smirking at me, and the men just shunned from me when I went to the toilet. But I withstood everything as if nothing had happened for a week and just worked. But after a week, when we had our weekly creative team meeting on Monday, the editor of the publishing house had distributed all my columns to my colleagues without giving me any reasons. I no longer had the job. I heard later that she talked to my colleagues on a number of occasions before suspecting me to be gay, saying "Do you know how these animals have sex?! They have anal sex!" Couple of months ago, I was awarded with the "Best editorial" prize in December last year, an award given to the best journalist at the Irmuun publishing house and that had stirred talks as well. I knew that I was considered a promising journalist with bright future, and she might have been afraid of losing her

editor's position, because she tried to find fault with me at every small thing. So the fact that I am transgender was the easiest reason for her to get rid of me and she must've used it. Even this time, although I was best at what I did, I was left without a job to do just because of my identity. I could do nothing but be depressed. More importantly, I found out later from my colleagues at other newspapers that she had told many journalists at many newspapers about me. I decided then to leave Irmuun, and applied for a position with Today's Mongolia newspaper and Unuudur newspaper, but one of the interview questions at both newspapers was "Is it true that you are the Enkhriimaa?", which meant in a roundabout way that it was impossible for them to employ me if I was Enkhriimaa. I understood then that I had no work in the small journalism world because of my identity. It was terrifying to realize that although I did nothing wrong, I had not a single chance of working by my profession.

Shocked and bewildered, I had no choice but to ask for help from the LGBT Centre as I no longer had any sort of life or future. They promised to help me and suggested for my safety to go and live where no one would think to find me. So I went to my grandmother's in the countryside and stayed with her for over 10 days. While I was in the countryside, I heard that Ulaanbaatar Times daily newspaper published my transgender photo together with my biological male picture saying that I had fled the country for asylum as I was disgusted with everything. Because of that article in that newspaper, people I thought were my friends turned away from me saying that it was dangerous to be seen with me as I was identifiable as both as a woman and as a man. Suddenly I found myself an exile from my own community, unable to find a job, unable to be seen outside as my biological sex picture appeared in the newspaper, unable to even go out because of death threats issued by Dayar Mongol, hiding in a shelter, unable to count on the police for protection.

The true extent of my reality is not understood even by my mother who said that I was simply looking for reasons to continue to be involved with my gay friends. I can't even imagine my life in Mongolia because of everything that's happening right now. If I stay in Mongolia, I will be found and killed by Dayar Mongol guys who are looking for me all over, or I might stay alive, but crippled for the rest of my life unable to support myself. We live in this world despite our differences united by one concept – humanity. It will be truly unfortunate if I die without being able to leave Mongolia and live somewhere civilized where I will be accepted. I want to live, I want to fulfill my purpose in life, to fulfill the reason I was born a human being. I deeply hope you will be able to gift me LIFE.