



## TRANS OCTOBER'S ECUADORIAN MANIFESTO

(or the "STOP TRANS PATHOLOGIZATION" ECUADORIAN MANIFESTO)

Atuntaqui, Ecuador, October 4, 2009

In Ecuador more and more people and groups are naming ourselves transgendered, transsexuals, transvestites, intersex, bigendered, androgines, trans in body, trans in gender, and especially 'trans in the head'[1].

Long before we started using these words, and in peripheral places like the rural coast or the street, we have also named ourselves, and continue naming ourselves machonas, pirobos, hombradas, karishinas, machis, and many other terms that—although dismissed by mainstream culture—describe our gendered bodies.

Perhaps in northern societies where the Stop Trans Pathologization 2012 campaign was born, transphobia assumes more institutionalized expressions than in our part of the world. But institutionalized or not, explicit or subtle, through action or omission of the State, disqualification and violence toward different bodies is a common denominator reported by all cities and countries that participate in this Trans October.

With these antecedents, gathered in Atuntaqui, a province of Imbabura, in the Northern mountains of Ecuador, trans and transfeminist people and collectives from Azuay, El Oro, Imbabura, Los Ríos, Manabí, Pichincha and Santo Domingo de los Tsáchilas,

#### WE AFFIRM:

That the disqualification of all of us who occupy "the feminine places" of society includes women, feminine and feminized people, including all sorts of "unmanly men"; the male-assigned who dared to emasculate themselves, the female-assigned who dared to masculinize themselves, female-bodied men, male-bodied women, people with intermediate bodies, or intermediate genders, or intermediate attitudes, and, in summary, people of any sex-generic condition who, with our more or less conscious transitions, ambiguities and transgressions, question the static, the univocal and the hierarchical in the patriarchal structure.

That pathologization is one of the historical ways of disqualifying feminine and trans existences, and of affirming—and recovering—the patriarchal order.

That pathologization articulates itself in informal and formal spaces, and therefore, is sometimes expressed in illegal practices and sometimes disguised as legality and scientific legitimacy. Ingrained in institutions but also, and perhaps more dangerously, in "common sense"[2], pathologization ends up reinforcing or justifying other transphobic practices, like violence and exclusion. Therefore,





#### WE REPORT:

That in the streets of Quito where we demonstrate this 17th of October; in the Michelena, in the Mariscal, in the Plaza del Teatro or in "La Y", transphobia is expressed in insults, hurled bottles, rubber bullets, eggs and hate crimes looking to "erase the trans," annihilating visible cultural communities such as the families of sex workers on the street.

That the historical deprivation of access to housing, employment, education and health care has confined us to a survival in sociocultural and economic ghettos and that this parallel existence or "coexisting back to back"[3] also erases the trans.

That discrimination regarding access to public space is one of the most violent practices toward aesthetically different bodies in the city, and that the police searches that clean the streets of specific groups that occupy them "without a plausible cause" [4] are part of this practice.

That, in Ecuador, we who are born biologically feminine suffer heavier workloads, a worse quality of life and worse nutrition in relation to biological males, and stricter control by our families of our lives and sexual decisions. In the deprivation of leisure, and therefore of the "place in which things are reinvented"[5], masculine trans people, like women, find ourselves deprived of the possibility of re-inventing our own bodies.

That in Manabí – a province with a higher prevalence of intersex births – we "indefinites" are forced to live as men. While in other places around the world, surgical criteria inclines toward feminization as an easier option to "normalize ambiguous genitals," here in Manabí, culture inclines in favour of "making a mistake" toward the masculine side rather than the other way around. And although dodging the scalpel is perhaps an "advantage of the disadvantage" of our reality, we are still far, everywhere, from escaping the tyranny of having to survive in a binary structure of gendered bodies into which we have never fit.

That in provinces like Guayas and Pichincha, private rehabilitation clinics exist which offer psychological treatments to "cure" lesbianism and transsexuality [6]; and that the existence of these clinics constitutes a form of crude and openly illegal pathologization that, nevertheless, meets the complicity of entire families and the negligence of the Ecuadorian state; when five years of reports have not been sufficient to definitively close these establishments or prevent them from easily reopening.

That, in our predominantly white-mestizo culture, heir of western law, "mental illness" has gone hand in hand with one of the founding legal institutions of civil life—"capacity"—that designates the ability of the subjects to represent their "own personal rights" or, alternatively, require the patronizing presence of third parties or of the State itself; and that, historically, we who occupy the feminine places in society have been in the mix of the so called "incapables."

That, thirty years after married women stopped needing marital sanction of their civil acts [7] and marital permission to exercise their freedom to travel, patriarchal guardianship of feminine and trans bodies remains basically unquestioned.





That patriarchal guardianship is expressed, at worst, in a criminal system that punishes acts of will on one's own body; and at best, in a negligent health care system that condemns people to intervene their bodies without any assistance and at their own cost and risk, dismissing identity practices as capricious aesthetic acts. Hence the common phenomenon of self-surgery, self-hormonization, and the use of dangerous substitutes for surgical silicone, such as the direct injection of airplane oil and other substances, claiming hundreds of trans lives every day.

That, in northern societies which, unlike ours, have approved specific legislations and health services to "benefit" the trans population, patriarchal custodianship also remains unquestioned—it is just expressed more sophisticatedly in the psychiatric diagnosis of "Gender Identity Disorder" or "Gender Disphoria" which re-publishes the old connection between mental illness and incapacity which has historically weighed on women and other feminine people.

That the psychiatric and medical apparatus which in these societies puts in practice a binary reassignment of gendered sexes also erases the trans, because it condemns trans people to exist only on two planes, that is to say: as unsuccessful yearnings of a "woman" or "man" as diagnosed disphorics, or, as post-transsexual "men" and "women" as treated disphorics.

That the binary reassignment of sex and gender, besides transphobic, is a racist and colonial practice that corrects, reassigns and constructs these post-transsexual men and women with a base in euro-centric masculinity and femininity.

In spite of all this, from the corporal resistance, the transfeminist consciousness, and the political intention to "subvert from within,

## WE CELEBRATE:

That adding us to this International Campaign to Stop Pathologization of Transsexuality involves us all in an intercultural dialogue that clarifies our respective understandings of the trans cause in the world, because it allows us to unmask forms of transphobia with which we have perhaps coexisted without realizing; as well as warns us about forms which could be introduced into our environment or even deliberately "imported".

That trans diversity exists in spite of the institutional attempts to erase it and in spite of the historical marginalizations of our experience; and that it is a diversity that overflows in a multiplicity of cultural expressions, common institutions, common languages, and collective identities that do not depend on the official civilizing canon, nor on the formal legal system, nor on official institutions to exist. Because of this, we have chosen first names, chosen last names, chosen families and real genders, beyond our legal first names, last names, families and sexes. And therefore, neither the androgine from the coast nor the cross-dresser from the mountains, nor the extended phenomenon of transmasculine motherhood in Ecuador subject ourselves to the scalpel, the technology, the aesthetic opinion or the psychiatric diagnosis of the dominant culture.





That, thanks to the transfeminist alliance that maintained an "uncomfortable presence" [8] in the Constituent National Assembly of Montecristi-2008, we have a Constitution that specifically enunciates nondiscrimination based on gender identity, aesthetic freedom, the right to identity, the recognition of family and cultural diversity, and an a system of safeguards that registers in the tendency of an avant-garde Latin-American neo-constitutionalism.

That, under that constitutional frame, in the fortunate absence of a pathologizing legislation, and thanks to alternative judicial activism, these are possible in Ecuador: an identity card with "discordant" combinations of photo and name, and name and sex, and since 2007, name changes. Even judicial sex changes have been possible without requiring psychiatric guardianship or any normalizing body treatments.

With this balance of adversities and opportunities, and in solidarity with realities that are similar and different from the rest of the world.

#### WE DEMAND:

The retirement of "Gender Disphoria" or "Gender Identity Disorder" from the mental disorders' manuals of the American Psychiatric Association and the World Health Organization (DSM-IV-R and ICD-10).

The suppression of legal sex on documents concerning civil life.

The correct legal categorization of biological sex, gender identity and body variations as factors not susceptible to discrimination.

The right to freely select one's photo and name without any prerequisites.

Respect for forms of alternative identification used by diverse cultural groups and their legal recognition, when necessary.

The suppression of psychiatric guardianship over acts of will on one's own body and as a prerequisite of citizenship.

The right to corporal intervention free of risks and the correct position of medical intervention, as guarantor of the right to life and to health, after informed consent.

An end to the practices of nonconsensual corporal normalization of intersex people, which include genital mutilation.

The conception of a health system that is part of what the current Ecuadorian Constitution defines as "alli kawsay" or "well-living". Such a system must provide services from which not only sick people, but also healthy people with specific needs, should benefit.

The implementation of anti-discrimination policies and policies of interculturalism that bring about day to day cooperation between those of us who have "lived back to back."





# STOP! Transsexuality is not an illness

# STOP! Identity is not diagnosed

STOP! No to forced choices between identity and health or identity and any right

STOP! No to the practices of intersex normalization

STOP! No to the practices that erase the trans

[1] citing Ana Almeida, from Project Transgender "Different Bodies, Same Rights". [2] citing Andrea Aguirre, from Mujeres de Frente/ Rosa's Feminist House. [3] citing Boaventura de Souza Santos. [4] citing article 612 of the Ecuadorian Criminal Code, still used to repress the presence of transgender sex workers and other "suspects" in public spaces. [5] citing Pablo Mogrovejo, from the Ecuadorian Coallition for Cultural Diversity. [6] As documented by Tatiana Cordero, from Taller de Comunicacion Mujer in collaboration with Fundacion Causana. [7] Citing the 1979 reform on Ecuadorian civil legislation. [8] This was the name given to the political alliance between Project Transgender, Ecuadorian Trans Confederation (CONFETRANS), the Coallition for the Legalization of Abortion, Mujeres de Frente/ Rosa's Feminist House, Causana and other feminist collectives during the Constituent Assembly.