



Adults' Micromachismo Reeducation

2020-01-HU01-KA204-078666

Testimony of a transgender person from Hungary

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I was born in August 1975 in a small town in southern Hungary. At that time, sexual orientation different from any traditional pattern in society was considered a serious shame there, which is why no one openly confessed it. The phenomenon itself, that a man was attracted to men, for example, appeared only in profanity, as a curse. There was no question of gender identity, no difference between biological and spiritual gender at this time. This phenomenon was not known at the time. Such was the environment in the broadest sense when I was born. Although my parents were educated, sensitive people, I think it also defined the narrower family environment.

I have a memory from the age of 13-14. I went to school in the morning, but before I left our flat I had gone to say goodbye to my mom. My mother was still in bed, I think she was depressed at the time. I was used to her depressed state. That morning she told me a story from my preschool period. I was about 5 years old when she asked the usual question every parent asks their child: “what I wanted to be when I grow up”. Then, at the age of five, I replied that I wanted to be a little girl. This story made me very overwhelmed then. I remember standing there at my mother’s bed as one who has been shot. I went to school with a heavy heart. In general, I didn’t know what my parents knew about me. Sometimes I thought they knew everything about me but didn’t talk about it, other times I thought they knew nothing. I generally thought the latter was more likely. I was hiding my deepest desire, which I was ashamed of, and apart from this early attempt, I dared not to tell anyone about it.

My experience is that it's not good to be alone with my secrets. I feel like it has made me sick, or at least hindered my personal development. My other big experience was that, as much as I wanted to at first, I couldn't change the fact that I was transgender. I would like to share my experiences of this in the following. But to do that I need to go back to my younger years.

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I was just starting second grade in high school when I was taken up by an old friend of mine who told me to go out and have a few drinks with them. No need to be lonely he said. Even though I was a little afraid that the drinks would make me talk about myself more than I should, I went out with them because I was really lonely by that time. It soon became clear that I could keep my secrets when I was drunk, otherwise the drink really liberated me. From that point on, I was no longer alone, and hanging out with my friends made me believe that I could change and could be like them. Plus, I felt like I belonged somewhere to someone. In their presence, I forgot my troubles for a while, we laughed a lot, and at first, we only drank occasionally. It's true that it was always about getting drunk, and that's how it ended.

But I could never forget myself for long. In the beginning, there might be a few days when I didn't want to be a woman, but I never felt at peace for longer than that. This double life inside me seemed unresolvable. I didn't know what to do with it. Like a shadow, it was always with me.

Then, when I was 15, what was only a matter of time before it happened, it did happen. My mum and dad found my secret hiding place in my room full of women's things. There was no explanation. I was taken to a child psychiatric clinic where I had to take boring psychological tests. I hated going there. I didn't like myself, I didn't like the psychiatrist, and I don't think he liked me very much either. As I remember I was told that I was homosexual and that I shouldn't try to change it because I couldn't. I couldn't accept any of it. I don't remember when and how my treatment ended there. I only remember that my parents finally calmed down and I did what I could. Just more carefully.



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Then, when I was 18, a pretty girl came up to me in a nightclub. She said she wanted to go out with me. My whole body was trembling, and a pleasant tingling sensation came over me. She was a very nice girl. Of course, I said yes, I felt I could change with her help. But I also thought of doing it secretly. “She doesn't need to know about this. Besides, I might even be changed by her from the start, so why bother her with it.” I explained this dishonesty to myself, moreover I kept silent about it almost until the end of our relationship. All this time I tried to change, but I could not, and I was even worse in bed. Finally, she broke up with me, the relationship ended after about a year and a half. I was terribly broken. On the one hand because I had failed to change, and on the other hand it hurt that I had lost her. And of course, I found myself confronted with my old fear: loneliness.

To ease my pain, I increased my alcohol consumption, which was tolerated by my environment at the time. I was 20 years old then, but I still couldn't admit to myself that there was no way out of this, as I had planned, but I was beginning to believe in it less and less. I did have a few more 'affairs' with women, but they were only a feeble attempt to change the unchangeable. The failures made me lose my will to live. I wasn't brave enough to kill myself, so I decided to drink until I can. At least it didn't hurt until then. My friends slowly realised that there was something very wrong with me, but being basically well-meaning people, they didn't hurt me. They were looking on helplessly at my depression.

At the age of 28 I was really broken. It was a Saturday morning in January. I sat down on the stone in the entrance hall and I was crying a lot. By that time, thanks to God and the family inheritance, I had my own apartment. That morning something happened to me. There and then I decided to find an answer to that question. I gave myself one year to do it. That determination and the realistic deadline I had set at that dawn brought me peace of mind.

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It's hard for me to remember how this year went. I know that for a few months everything went on as before. By that time, I was aware that transgender people existed, who were then called transsexual. But I still didn't know or wasn't sure if I was it or not. At the same time, I became more open to pretty much everything. In the spring of that year, for example, a friend and I enrolled in a Reiki course. Then in the summer - after a festival that I barely remember - I made up my mind. I decided to take a stand for myself, that is, if I consider myself a woman, then I should be one. It was enough of this double life. I knew that I was embarking on a path that I could not keep secret, because sooner or later, it would become obvious to those around me who I really was. But that didn't bother me anymore. I remember even smiling to myself that this was going to be a fuss. And I continued scrubbing the carpet, cleaning the flat, which I had started a few days before. Yes, I hardly left the flat that week until Friday. I didn't even smoke, I didn't drink at all. I also thought that if I reached my goal in a few years' time, I would stop drinking because women don't drink. All my problems will be solved at once. When I left home after a week and met my friends, they asked me why I was so happy. They hadn't seen me so cheerful in a long time. I didn't tell them. Not then.

The next four years were about change. I started down this path: I went for hair removal treatments, which didn't require a doctor's permission, and I also started the psychiatric evaluation to change my name. At the time, the psychologist and I went through all the possibilities for a sex change operation. At one point, I also wondered whether I would not undergo such an irreversible procedure. When I had to give up the drugs, I dismissed that possibility, but more on that later. In fact, I never wanted to be a boy! Not even a little bit.



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Slowly, I started to open up to those around me: to talk about myself to people I knew I could trust. Of course, I always had a fear of being rejected, but my resolve was firm by that time. The reception was often positive in ways I hadn't expected. One friend said, "Is that all? And I thought you had a brain tumour! Let's drink to that!" And he brought me a shot and a beer. Another friend, a little later, when I was about to have the operation, said, "Juli, are you sure this is the solution?" His words were a genuine concern. I can tell you that I was surrounded by many good people and still am to this day. My most difficult task was to overcome myself.

I had a lot of difficulties at that time. The first time my request to change my name was rejected. I was completely broken at that time. I soon pulled myself together and decided not to give up and to keep going. A year later I resubmitted my application to the ministry of home affairs and it was accepted. I was happy. I was finally a woman on paper! It is very important that in Hungary at this time my birth name was also transcribed. Unfortunately, this is no longer the case. I deeply feel the pain of my fellow countrymen who are going through this in Hungary today.

So I changed my name and I changed a lot of my appearance. I started seeing an endocrinologist, where I always had a long wait. I sat patiently through those long hours in Budapest, waiting for the medication to help me along the way. Unfortunately, that did not happen. The medication sometimes caused me to have sudden and unexpected diarrhoea, and I often found myself in humiliating situations. Maybe I didn't go to the right doctor, maybe my body couldn't cope, maybe it was the effect of the alcohol I continued to drink in large quantities, but the point is that I had to stop taking the hormone preparations. With that said, I started looking for doctors. The first one I found here in Hungary seemed to be a serious man. He lived in Budapest and had a very nice home. After several months of preparation and medical tests, he finally backed out without a word, even though I did everything he asked me to do.

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At that moment, I remember feeling completely helpless. I was on the floor, not knowing what to do next. I did everything I could. Or maybe not? At that time, I had the Internet and I read on a site about this famous Serbian doctor, whom I had not dared to look up. I was convinced that I would certainly not be able to get in touch with him, or if I did, he would ask for a lot of money, which I did not have. But in this situation, I had nothing to lose, so I looked him up on the Internet. I wrote him a letter.

The doctor (Dr Sava Perovic) replied to my letter shortly after. From then on, events accelerated. I travelled by train to Belgrade, where he examined me. He was assisted by a girl of Hungarian nationality (Csilla), who interpreted for me, as I did not speak English. The doctor asked me if I was taking any hormones. I said unfortunately not, because I had to stop. He said that was good because if I had been on them, he wouldn't have been able to operate. When I asked how much it would cost, and it turned out I had the money, my heart was in my throat. When he asked when I wanted to come, I said next week. He smiled and said two weeks! I was reborn on 16 April 2007.

I am indescribably grateful to the doctor, to Csilla, to the staff of Clinica Perfecta in Belgrade, for allowing me to experience this miracle! And, of course, to all those who helped me to achieve this outcome: my psychologist, my friends, my father who was by my side all the time. I have probably never been so happy in my life as I was the year I had this operation.



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I now see my transgenderism as an integral part of me. I do not compare myself to other women who are biologically born female. For me, this is important because surgery does not override everything. For example, my voice is still deep and my bone structure is different from a "born female", but that's fine if I accept myself for who I am. The operation has opened the way to a full life. I love going to the beach, swimming in the nearby fishing lake, Lake Balaton. Dressing for the season. Sometimes casual, sometimes dressier, sometimes more casual, depending on my mood. I can finally be myself.

It is also important to say that by the time I reached the finish line, my alcoholism had long outgrown me. It was hard to admit, but in 2010 I finally did, and since then I've spent every day sober.

With thanks:
Julia