

Trigger warning: contains violence, prison rape. 21

My chosen name is Lilly Anne, because I am incarcerated in Texas I cannot change my name, but that's what my family and friends call me, it isn't a nickname. I am a MtF Transsexual, a Transwoman if you will, and while prison can be a rough place I encounter unique difficulties in terms of harassment, violence, and access to medical care.

The condition I have is now called Gender Dysphoria and is basically the distress you experience when your sense of gender identity doesn't correspond to the sex assigned at birth. Unfortunately your gender identity is hardwired and for those of us who experience this strongly the statistics speak for themselves, without adequate treatment we have arguably the highest suicide rate in the world, between 41-45%. That is pretty serious. The prison experience adds distress on to that and the outcomes can be grim. Because this isn't common it isn't well litigated and often court prejudice plays a role in decisions, but slowly the right to adequate treatment is being carved out. Mind you I'm not talking about good treatment, prisoners don't have that right, but adequate treatment.

For me this is a life or death issue. In the world I was living part time as a woman, but living two lives was killing me and I was taking steps to transition, I hadn't yet received adequate treatment then and I turned to alcohol and drugs to cope. I had suicidal ideation and engaged in self harm, if I didn't transition then I was going

to be another statistic.

When I came to county jail I received no treatment, despondent over this and being locked up I attempted to take my own life. I tried numerous ways but as you can see none successful. When I came down to prison I was terrified and tried hiding myself, but everyone saw right through that. I became a toy for the men's amusement, and I had zero self esteem. I needed help. I spoke to mental health and was lucky enough to meet a kind man who helped me understand my issues. I decided to come out to my family and attempt to receive treatment.

I put in for hormones but my unit denied them because they didn't want to go through the process. I was yelled at by medical, cussed out and treated like shit. They reported it to the Safe Prisons person who further mocked me. I began to receive harassment from the guards. On March 12th, 2016 I was stopped by a guard who searched me for 15 minutes in front of approximately 100 people. She mocked my sculpted eyebrows and was giving me shit for being Trans. She said, "you ain't no woman, you got balls between your legs don't you!". She singled me out twice more that day about my eyebrows and other feminine things. That evening I cut my testicles off. The pain was excruciating but I remembered her and pushed through. Unfortunately I could not stop the bleeding and had to seek medical attention. I went to a hospital to get an emergency transfusion and then to another hospital to repair all the damage. At the second hospital I was met by nurses who were kind and respectful, they understood. When I had done my self surgery a part of one of them went inside my body. I told them that if they tried to save that they should get ready to do two surgeries.

When I awoke I confirmed that every last bit was gone. I cried as an emotional release and then laughed, I was so relieved. I was reborn. I spent the weekend and as I was leaving I saw a tree. I was moved by that, there are no trees in my world. I would have liked to be able to touch the tree, you miss nature and life. I held that in my heart.

They sent me to a psych hospital, understandably. It was three long months. They corrected what my unit had done and told me that I would get hormones. I waited and I waited, but it didn't happen.

When I got to the psych unit they had me naked and handcuffed on a gurney while the nurse made jokes about me being transgender and mocked my privates to the amusement of the guards. This went on for several minutes. While there I was isolated mostly, but people found ways to sexually harrassme. This is pretty normal in prison. Towards the end of my stay the Pulse nightclub shooting happened. I was shaken.

When I left the unit one of the guys who had been sexually harrassing me was on the bus, he was single cuffed. I was cuffed to his homeboy. The guy who had been harrassing me started talking shit about fags and I noticed him tucking his pants into his socks and I realize he was getting ready to fight. I said something and he was like mind your business. I knew what was coming but there wasn't anything I could do, so I relaxed my body and stared off into space. I didn't have to wait long. The attack was brutal and coordinated. I shielded my face and stood up, the pants they gave me were too big and they fell down so I couldn't use my legs. I grabbed one by the collar to choke him and the one I was cuffed to I used that arm to pull his across his body so he couldn't swing. The one I had been trying to choke had been trying to kick me in the balls (haha), and he quickly gave up the fight. I yelled to someone I knew from group for help, but no one came. I tried hitting the other one but I'm not really a fighter, but after I started hitting him he gave up too. The guards sped the bus up to the nearest unit and seperated us. I had over 35 cuts and bruises, handcuffs can slash. I spent the weekend at the Walls unit and then Monday I went back to Ellis.

At Ellis they decided to kick me off for being trans. Though medical had known and some of the guards the higher ups hadn't known. They refuse to house any Transgender inmates at Ellis. Ellis was my home, I loved the classes at church and had a good man. I had only been sexually assaulted one time since I got with him. I still miss him. They put me in Transient housing. Basically Seg.

So there I am, still not on hormones, recovering from getting jumped on the bus, and losing a man who kept me safe and whom I loved. I threw in the towel. I slit my throat on both sides. I literally was covered in blood from head to toe, the floor of the cell a puddle of blood, they found me a few minutes later as my vision was starting to go. They dragged me out threw me on a gurney and ran me to medical. With five IV's on me my blood pressure was 50/30. I was lifeflighted. I underwent emergency surgery and received multiple transfusions. I wish they would let me donate blood so I can pay them back. I feel bad about that. I wasn't planning on getting blood, I was planning on dying. After I was released out of the ICU I went to another psych hospital, this time they didn't decide to keep me. I went to the Walls and then Stiles.

Stiles started off in Transient overflow. Basically Seg. After a while they put me in population. The first night there I was raped. He left the next day and that was the only problem there. I started to recover and get stronger emotionally. I needed time. Well, after a few months I got put in overflow again, this time I was shipped to Telford.

Sexual harrassment happens, it can really set you off. I experienced a lot of that at Telford. I did finally get hormones, thankfully. Though I had to file many many grievances to get a bra once my breasts developed. I was the only girl on the building and it was very lonely. I did my best to find safe people to be around and to go with to

chow. Some people think that because you identify as a girl that you must be a tramp or something and they treat you like it. You are a piece of flesh, to be bought or taken. In prison if I date someone they would be referred to as my husband. For almost the entire time there I did not have a husband. I'm not really that sexual of a person and while some girls turn to a man for self esteem I didn't. Well, the harrassment grew worse and worse, then I was raped. On top of that someone saw the rape, I don't know how much they saw, but enough. The word spread like wildfire. Everyone knew. Worse because they got away with it others felt emboldened, the harrassment grew exponentially worse, and ultimately I was raped again. This one broke me. I was a shell, I couldn't function afterwards. The day after someone tried again. I reported to Safe Prisons, I did not tell them about the most recent rape because they had my family information and had threatened harm to them if I reported it. But I told them everything else. I begged them for SafeKeeping.

They reviewed the cameras catching one incident and decided to recommend SafeKeeping and Unit Transfer. Most of the Transwomen are in SafeKeeping, and it was time for me to go be with my sisters. Not every Transwoman needs safekeeping, some are vicious fighters ~~who~~ but I am not. I can't hit hard enough to faze anyone, that day on the bus could have been a lot worse if they kept going. I was bigger than both of them, when they put me in a cell I'm the same size. He has testosterone wheras me being castrated don't, there is a big difference in terms of muscle mass. The second rape at Telford I had once hit him as hard as I could and could do nothing. I didn't know if I was going to get out of that one alive. Time seemed to stop and for most of the rape I'm watching from outside my body when I try to remember it.

In the midst of all this I'm fighting for gender expression. Gender expression is rigidly enforced by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ). we are forced to groom like men and remove any feminine expressions. We are misgendered intentionally and harrassed. When the inmates see the guards doing it it reinforces to the inmates that they need not respect us either. What they are doing is a form of aversion therapy and it is extremely harmful. The very first treatment option listed in the WPATH Standards of Care (which is accepted by the American Medical Association, the American Psychiatric Association, and the American Psychological Association) is to live part time or full time in a gender role and expression corresponding to ones gender identity. This by the way would cost taxpayers nothing. This is denied and prevented. Instead they practice a form of aversion therapy which is considered unethical by the Standards of Care. This causes significant distress, causes a lot of problems which put our safety at risk. There are cases across the country changing this even the Federal Bureau of Prisons has changed its rules to stop the harm being done.

I went to another Unit. I'll not mention this one because I fear retaliation from the authorities. I have contacted outside agencies and various parties about this unit. When I got there I learned that I was not in Safekeeping. So I looked to find a man to protect me. I was careful in my selection. This was survival and the stakes are high. Well, I found a good man and for a while things were good. I was safe. I was sexually assaulted by a guard and reported it, they ignored it, but it wasn't rape, just sexual assault. The guy

was a creep. When I got my job the first day I was yelled at and told that I am a man at a mans facility and that I will be searched like a man. They did however allow me to be stripped seperately. (At Telford they didn't always do that and so I stopped going to rec as a result. One officer there called another officer over to see my genitals there.) Anyway, I reported it and got yelled at and told the cameras would back them up, they did not apparently pull the camera footage. The guard had told me he can grab whatever he wants. Other than that it was fine. My man escorted me everywhere or had someone else do it. I was never alone and I wasn't harrassed. I began to get better.

Then I went on medical chain. When I came back I was in another section. Immediately my cellie began asking to see my breasts and getting creepy. I went to rank over and over asking to be moved. They told me that there was no room so I found empty ~~bunks~~ with people the same size as me. I got others to try to help me. My man did everything he could. I told rank that I have been in this situation before and it ended with me being raped. No one did anything, except one said he would put in paperwork. Well, the inevitable happened. I had tried to keep the peace and under threat agreed to somoke with him. That is my fault, but what he did next is his fualt. When I was incapacitated he raped me. I told my man, and he walked me to rank to try once again to get me moved. When that didn't work he told me to burn it down, tell them everything. I did, I was mcked by the athourities; called a liar, a prostitute, and a pervert. They promised to give me cases for reporting this. In short they treated me like shit.

That night they took me to the hospital. In the parking lot were trees. I begged to touch one remembering the earlier wish. They said that if I behaved they would let me. The sexual assualt nurse examiner was kind. She treated me with respect even writing my chosen name on the hospital armband. I'll never forget her kindness. In that moment that is what I needed. I got medicine to protect me from STDs. I've been lucky in that I'm clean. I can't imagine the horror of also catching something when you are raped. I have friends that has happened to. When I left the hospital they let me touch a tree. I placed my handcuffed hands against the trunk and thanked God for allowing me to touch a tree. There are no trees in my world. I placed that in my heart to give me strength.

While locked up they had me sign statements about the staff assault which was odd timing. I wrote what they told me and signed it as instructed. A few days later I was released from seg. Even though semen was recovered they did not substantiate the rape. Their response was that they hadn't run the dna yet. Well, I don't have balls, it isn't mine. What is really going on is that they do not want to admit that it happened, it makes them look bad. Unless it is caught on camera it didn't happen despite physical evidence.

I was having sleeping problems, I'd scream in my sleep. My anxiety was through the rough. I had extreme startle responses. I had been begging for help for months and once again I begged for help.

My rapist was released and soon crossed the farm to threaten my man and me. They caught him and did nothing. At this point my life was in danger and I got on the phone and begged people to call in. TDCJ doesn't care about us, but they care about people on the outside. So if you need something to happen you have to get the word out. Eventually they locked me up and decided to ship me. I was hurting myself to cope and was considering suicide. This was a very very bad time in my life. The violence had happened everywhere, I couldn't

survive much longer. The flashbacks and the nightmares kept me on edge.

When I got to this unit I had been contemplating ending it. While sitting in a cage I listened to 2 inmates sexually harrass every female who walked by. That set me off. And then I thought that I am about to be locked in a cell with someone who could be just like that. I decided that I would do it that night. Well unbeknowst to me forces were at work to help me. When I had got off the bus I was asked to put my shoulders back which put my breasts on display, they noted something in a clipboard. When I went before committee they told me that they were putting me into safekeeping. I immediately began crying. When they asked me why I told them "you don't know what I've been through". That started this one lady crying and that rare act of compassion touched me and I began crying again. I handed her some tissue which she thanked me for. That moment will never be forgotten by me. Safekeeping was hope. Things had to change, I couldn't keep going through the same horror over and over.

In the months since I've healed. Poeeple don't understand why sometimes I'll cry so hard my body shakes. I try to do that privately. They don't understand flashbacks, how things trigger those and it is like you are back there and you go through the same emotions. Those have been less and less frequent. I would scream when startled by the guards, or when someone touched me innapropriately. That is less and less. I'm getting better. Some people don't understand why I am not better immediately, but it takes time.

To that effect talking has helped. I've been fortunate to get some pen pals as a kind of support network. They have allowed me room to talk and to heal, they have helped me tremendously. If you are reading this I would encourage you to look into getting a pen pal. My community has helped me. I haven't been explicit in what happened with one exception. I have sought out and found someone who could hear me on the inside, but what do you say? Usually it is to leave the past in the past. I am.

But while I'm healing I'm still fighting to live as a woman. I deal with harrassment from guards, forced haircuts, etc. I have tattoed on some of my makeup so they can't force me to take it off. Now I am begging the doctors to allow me some other form of treatment, the gender dysphoria is kiccking my butt and I'm considering throwing in the towel. The SOC has made it clear that what works for one won't necessarily work for another and any one treatment alone may not be sufficient. Despite this from the professionals there is little hope of me getting further treatment. I'm discouraged and don't know what to do. With hormones my body is going one way while TDCJ is shoving me back. At times I feel violated. I'm tired of being humiliated. I think back on the men who violated me and how ineffectively I was at protecting the sanctity of my own body and then I reflect on what I am letting them do to me and I am furious.

Once again I am in Transient Overflow. I've been back here over a month. Today I was supposed to get my B12 shot, I'm anemic and my body needs that in addition to the iron pills. I had a pass. It took five hours to get down to the nurse who didn't have my shot and rather than get it she sent me back promissing me she would call me out later. Later never came. I'll write them to tell them, then they will tell me I should have gotten it when it was scheduled, etc. I may or may not get it. These are the games we play. Just because you need something, may even be prescribed something you still might not get it. It doesn't matter, we aren't people to them.

Cellies used to be a problem. Every time I got a new cellie or

got moved there was fear for me. Would they be accepting, would I be safe. Sometimes I wasn't safe. Now that I am in Safekeeping that is partly behind me. You see violence in prison, it happens no matter where you are at. Though not so much in safekeeping. Last year in general population I remember seeing two seperate people get stomped on christmas day. Stomped liteally means they are on the ground getting stomped on. Violence happens. The problem with a cellie is that it can amount to a cage match with no ref and the fight doesn't end until both people decide it does. You can't open your door and run away. There is nowhere to go.

Even though I have breasts and a bra guards feel it is there right to see my breasts when searching me. Some are nice enough to let me hold the bra away showing nothing hidden but not make me show my breasts, but not all. I kind of feel like if you don't have this on your body you shouldn't see mine. I would prefer to be searched by women. I would feel safer. Unfortunately in this state that doesn't matter.

Did you know that while slavery was abolished there is an exception and that is prisoners. No, I'm not making this up. TDCJ pays us nothing. Not as in a little, but as in \$0.00 . They used to just do it, now they say that they give us good time and work time credits. That isn't accurate. I've seen plenty of people with served time, good time, and work time that exceeded their sentence. Work time is not factored into parole. It is a number that looks good but means nothing. In my case I don't have parole. I will be a slave here in TDCJ. I wish they would pay people something so they can buy deoderant and other basics. When you live in buildings that can meet or exceed 120 degrees in the summer, hotter than that air temperature outside, you need fans and deoderant.

The little things can make all the difference. My friends sustain me at times. I'm grateful for them. I don't want you to think prison is all bad. I've actually met some wonderful people down here. Many of us made stupid mistakes and have repented, and no matter how much we change or how hard we try we are stuck in this hellhole. Somehow we find moments of joy, moments of hope. And like me we hang on to these moments, just like I hold on to the memory of actually touching a tree. You hold on to these things and you hope for a better day to come.

Ms. Lilly Anne [REDACTED]
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After much deliberation:

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