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Tuesday, January 21, 2014

To: Matt Stroud, Editor
The Prison Complex
In These Times

From: Jennifer Gann
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Kern Valley State Prison
P.O. Box 5104
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Subject: Transwomen in Men's Prisons

Dear Mr. Stroud,

I'm writing in response to your follow-up letter and questions. I would be happy to give you an extended interview via ongoing correspondence.

To answer your first set of questions, concerning "what life's like for transwomen in a men's prison" — it's definitely not comfortable! Upon arrival at a maximum-security men's facility, a transwoman faces rude & inappropriate comments from

guards & prisoners. This ranges from sexual innuendo to lewd gestures to homophobic hate. The most immediate concerns are mandatory strip searches and forced double-cell housing with men — including homophobic/transphobic gangmembers and sex-offenders!

As you can imagine, this is very scary and threatening for a "girl", especially a sex-abuse survivor like myself! Yet, we are forced into these dangerous situations with complete disregard for our personal safety, thus we are coerced into seeking compatible sexual relationships with random men for our own security on the yard.

In spite of more progressive legislation, such as the Prison Rape Elimination Act of 2003 (PREA) it's recent "national standards" implementation, by the U.S. Department of Justice, this is still the most common experience for most transwomen in California.

Yes, I underwent full MTF gender transition while I've been incarcerated, though I was bi-sexual prior to incarceration. I have been on a regimen of estrogen hormone therapy for the past decade or so, and hope to eventually have sex-reassignment surgery (SRS).

If only this medical treatment was provided, I would then be "legally" defined as a woman & would be required to be re-housed in a women's facility where I belong.

For goodness sake! Please help people to understand, we are for all intents and purposes — WOMEN!

I will write more later...

Sincerely,

Jennifer Gann
Jennifer Gann
Black & Pink