

New Year, New Me!

By Jennifer Amelia Rose

Welcome to 2019! 🎉, Belated happy New Year! In deed, i know it's more than a month and a half late in coming, but so many things are happening in my life recently that i feel an urgent need to share them with the world!

So, what follows are life-changing personal developments and updates which i'm very excited to share with you, including a legal name and gender change, approval for sex-reassignment surgery (SRS) by prison doctors, and my decision to go vegetarian.

Legal Name & Gender Change

On September 1, 2018, a new California law took effect called S.B. 310- the Name & Dignity Act for Incarcerated People. While i certainly don't believe that authority nor government is necessary for anyone to exercise their natural law right to gender self-determination or change their name anytime they want, i've done so for many years, i was happy to work with the wonderful folks at TGI

Justice Project to help end criminalization and discrimination that many if not all transgender people experience in prisons. Now, we're "legit"!

Thanks to my attorney, Jennifer Orthwein, Ph.D., of Medina Orthwein LLP in Oakland, California, I was able to immediately file a Petition for Change of Name and Gender in October 2018 in the Superior Court of California, County of Monterey, while I was incarcerated at Salinas Valley State Prison — an institution notorious for brutality, racism, and homophobic/transphobic violence.

On December 18, 2018, the court granted my petition and ordered that my name John David Gann is changed to Jennifer Amelia Rose, and that my gender is changed to female! 😊

The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR), just last week updated its online records and issued a memorandum to all prison staff as an official notification of the legal name change. So now I'm able to be acknowledged and recognized by prison officials for the REAL me, for the woman I've been since my 2006 transition.

This "legal" recognition as i said is not and never has been necessary for me to be who i am. i've been "Jennifer" for nearly 13 years, living the life of a gender rebel in defiance of the law that still insisted i was "John David Gann" - or as the pigs and haters would throw in my face often as an insult "a man in a men's prison!" However, an oppressive soul-crushing weight has been lifted off of me, thus allowing me to breath a bit easier. i have to chuckle at the thought of my captors having to address me as "Ms. Rose"! LOL! 😊

Anyone wishing to correspond with me personally should now address mail to me using my new name, as follows:

Jennifer Rose, E23852
Mule Creek State Prison
P.O. BOX 409060
Ione, CA 95640.
U.S.A.

Sex Reassignment Surgery

i just found out some more shocking news! According to attorney Alison Hardy at the Prison Law Office in San Quentin, California, a tireless advocate for

prisoners right to adequate medical care, I was finally approved for SRS! The PLO attorneys represent all CDCR prisoners in the federal court class action known as the Plata case, in which the court many years ago ordered CDCR to improve basic medical care and appointed a federal Receiver who has overall authority over prison medical care.

As a "Jailhouse Lawyer" myself, I've been working with these attorneys at PLO, and other legal advocates such as the National Lawyers Guild and TGI Justice Project, for many years to seek basic transgender healthcare such as hormone replacement therapy and transition-related care. I've been seeking an evaluation for SRS for a whole decade!

In May 2015, California Correctional Health Care Services (CCHCS) updated its "Care Guide: Gender Dysphoria" as a result of a legal settlement in a federal lawsuit brought by Shiloh Quine, another incarcerated transwoman. A Supplement to the Care Guide titled "Guidelines for Review of Requests for Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS)" states in pertinent part "transgender patients meeting basic prerequisite

Criteria... will be referred by the institution to the Headquarters Utilization Management Committee (HQUMC) for evaluation and consideration for possible SRS...?

Prior to these new guidelines, CDCR had an outdated and discriminatory "blanket ban" policy against SRS, California Code of Regulations (CCR), Title 15, Section 3350.1(b) prohibited "Surgery not medically necessary..." citing as an example "Vaginoplasty (except for Cystocele or Rectocele)". In 2014, I filed a CDCR 602 Inmate Appeal challenging this policy and was successful in having it "granted" at the First and Second levels by medical doctors at Kern Valley State Prison.

I was evaluated by a staff psychiatrist and found to meet eligibility and readiness criteria, thus I was to be referred to a surgical team. This was also co-signed by the Chief Psychiatrist Dr. Sayd, only to later be "denied" by the big wigs in Sacramento. This all happened prior to the new SRS guidelines.

In 2015, I was again given multiple medical referrals for SRS, including from the endocrinology specialist, Pawan Kumar, M.D., at Colonial Medical

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Group, and my primary care provider at the time, A. Manasneh.

In April 2016, i was "not approved" by HQUMC after review by the SRS Review Committee.

In 2017, after one year passed, i reapplied and was again given multiple medical referrals by the endocrinology transgender specialists, Elliot Eisenbud and others, primary care provider, Dr. Steven Vinant. In 2018 did my physical examination and ordered a mammogram, white staff psychologist, J. Claybaugh, Ph.D., who is openly gay, gave me a favorable mental health evaluation at Salinas Valley State Prison.

Just this month, after i was transferred on November 29, 2018 to Mule Creek State Prison, and receiving my legal name and gender change in December, i received the news that i was approved for SRS! i filled out a ten-page patient intake application packet for Brownstein & Crane Surgical Services, and am anticipating a follow-up consultation with the surgeon to be scheduled very soon! i still can't believe it and am a bit dumbfounded by the sudden news, which i received from

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an attorney and was never officially notified by the doctors at my prison or by HQUMC.

I'm a bit nervous and apprehensive about going through with the surgery, but have long ago decided to do it. Of more concern is that I may face even worse transphobic violence and adversity in a women's facility, which I cannot even fathom! The reason for this well-founded safety concern is I've heard unconfirmed reports that Shiloh Quine was repeatedly attacked and stabbed upon her arrival in the women's facility! SMH!

I'm reaching out ~~to~~ the California Coalition for Women Prisoners in an effort to open a dialogue on these issues.

Going Vegetarian!

Today I'm making a conscious decision to switch to a vegetarian diet. This was due to being influenced by some of my anarchist comrades who are either vegetarian or vegan, such as Marivus Mason and Michael Kimble.

It will not be the first time I went vegetarian, as I previously did this for about a year while I was studying

and practicing bhakti yoga with the
Klare Krishnas.

Reading the Vegetarian Starter Guide,
published by Mercy For Animals, i can see
many good reasons to go vegetarian, such as
preventing animal cruelty and saving the
environment. Also, i want to eat healthy so
i can have more energy, live longer, and
lower my risk of chronic disease.

Chicken, dairy, and eggs are packed
with saturated fat that can lead to
heart disease. Eggs have also been shown
to increase the risk of diabetes and heart
attacks. Both chicken and fish have high levels
of cancer-causing chemicals like dioxin,
arsenic, and mercury.

"Quite simply, the more you substitute
plant foods for animal foods, the healthier
you are likely to be", says Dr. T. Colin
Campbell, nutrition expert at Cornell
University.

Studies now show people who are
vegetarian or vegan weigh up to 10% less
than people who eat meat, dairy, and eggs,
and have been found to significantly
reduce their risk of developing diabetes.
A recent study found that ditching meat
cuts your chances of being hospitalized

by or dying from heart disease by 32%!

Going vegetarian is also a powerful way to change the course of history and help halt climate change! By ditching meat, we can help prevent global warming, rainforest destruction, and pollution while saving water and other precious resources.

According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, animal agriculture now accounts for 18% of global greenhouse gas emissions, more than all of the cars, buses, ships and planes in the world combined!

Producing one pound of meat requires 15 times as much water as producing one pound of grains, beans, fruit or vegetables. Producing one pound of meat also uses 13 times as much fossil fuel as producing a pound of plant-based food, one of the many reasons animal agriculture is the leading cause of climate change.

Animal agriculture is the leading cause of deforestation around the world, with lush rainforests cleared to make room for farmed animals. In the Amazon, over 80% of the deforestation has been caused by animal agriculture.

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So, going vegetarian is actually a form of direct action resistance against capitalism and techno-industrial destruction of the Earth and animals.

So, new year, new me! New name, new birth certificate, new sexual identity, and new diet!