

Dyssonance Presents:

Ramble: September 2012

Written on 09-21-2012 for the weblog
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by tonidorsay - Friday, September 21, 2012

<http://www.dyssonance.com/sept2012ramble/>

So the Month of July came along this year, and as it started, I was neck deep in internet stuff, with even some coding, which I loathe.

I used to be a fairly decent geek. I was primarily hardware, but I was familiar with the bulk of software available out there for the subset of work I was doing. I had a pretty decent little set up going. At the time I started my transition, I was working for myself with a company that I started and I had three systems and all the bells and whistles that one could need at the time, even though I was committed to a platform that was widely used but not very popular.

I've custom built boards in the past, designed high end "modded" systems like the one that I put into an antique breadbox, or my still all time favorite computer I ever built, which was a large picture frame. I was never a programmer, and calling me an engineer of this sort would be insulting to actual engineers. But I did do a lot of stuff, mostly because no one ever took the time to tell me it couldn't be done, and by the time people started to tell me, I'd already gone and done it.

But I stopped doing any of the higher end stuff I used to do. I dropped away from the circles I used to hang in, I intentionally stopped looking into gadgets and cool new stuff. I looked away from that world, and I still had to go back occasionally, but I shifted to a position of let the people who know shit better than I do work their magic and I'll just focus on other things.

And instead I turned towards the stuff I loved before I fell into that world — because I did indeed fall into it. I learned computer stuff because I had a business that was shifting over to desktop publishing in the days when if you wanted to make a meme graphic you started out with hand drawn lettering and a photocopier. Typically 3 man hours went into the creating of something that simple. These days, it takes someone about 3 minutes, and that includes waiting for the stuff to load and upload. If you don't do it on a website where it can take even less time because all the parts are already there.

The computers, back then, were expensive. Repairing them was even more expensive, so I learned to do it myself to save money. I'm like that. It is something that guides me

constantly.

So does the idea of letting people do the jobs they are asked to do — preferably without to much interference. Micromanaging is one of those things I am readily and easily given to, so for me to not do so requires effort and intent, and sometimes I go too far in the opposite direction, out of concern that my tendency to desire control in a life that often seems outside such will cause too many problems.

I have a reputation among many people and groups as a loose canon. I act based on my own decisions, based on my own desires, and I'm rarely even willing to entertain the notion that perhaps what I am about to do, regardless of whatever it is, might cause them discomfort because when I do something for the most part, it is based on my desire to see a larger goal reached.

I am arrogant. I am aware of this. I don't shy away from it — and being a woman that means that I am not seen as a good kind of woman, and when you add being trans into it, it means that I am not doing woman right.

Yet as a woman, I don't particularly think that I owe it to anyone to be the right kind of woman, and as a trans woman, I'm not putting anything on. I have the benefit of being a woman who was not raised to keep her damn mouth shut in a room of men. I was taught that my ideas have just as much an importance in things as any man's — and when people fault me for speaking up and out and noting, without much worry for the consequences of such, that I will not be quiet just to make them comfortable, I give them a sidelong glance and a little smile and use some of those standard tactics that are commented so often of late in studies relating to women. Self deprecation (which I am quite good at), apology, consensus building.

Just because I am a loose cannon and was not raised to do those things as the default doesn't mean I am not capable of those things — indeed, my being a bit of a gadfly and a loose canon means that I generally have a much broader focus and one that looks at more than just the simple stuff.

For example, it would be easy to characterize my personal support of Obama and my deep dislike for the politics of Mitt Romney and the current in power heart of the republican party as being rather one sided — yet to do so would be a mistake. I can say that support depends on the basis of the trans support shown by the president, but to do so would be a mistake.

I look at things with a considerably wider net than that. This is why I find the Michele Kosilek comments so damned annoying — my argument has nothing to do with her victim because the point being argued over has nothing to do with her victim. IT has, in fact, nothing to do with her crime. Want to talk about her victim? I can do that. This is a woman who was killed, stuffed into the trunk of a car, and let rot. In a really public place.

The crime? Michelle Kosilek belongs in prison. She is, as I understand it, there until she dies. She will never not be in prison, according to the terms of her sentence, and given the cruel and casual indifference she showed to the victim — a woman she married, for christ's sake — the decisions seems reasonable to me.

I'm also not wholly against the death penalty, which shocks many people to learn about me. People who forget, perhaps, my past. Something I don't have the luxury of. So I wouldn't mind if this person was subject to the death penalty, even if my particular feelings about the nature of such a punishment would reserve it for certain other actions.

I also wouldn't have a problem with the courts deciding that Kosilek should be kneecapped as part of her sentence. It isn't part of her sentence, however, so that isn't going to happen.

For the crime of murdering her wife, she will spend the rest of her life in the care of the American People. In the prison system paid for by those taxes we pay in many ways.

While in that prison system, she needs to be treated in a humane and just manner — just as all people should be treated. It says so, right in the Constitution, and it has said that since the document was written.

IF she has a heart attack, she will get treatment. Unless she dies. In which case she will be dead and it won't matter. If she is attacked by another inmate, she will be treated.

Treatment is always the bare minimum necessary. It is not going to be cruel and unusual. And those are important words to keep in mind here. Cruel. Unusual. That means that we are not going to be cruel or mean to people in prisons. It means that we are not going to punish them for something other than what it was that we put them in there for in the first place. It is going to be done at bargain basement prices, as well, because we put a whole lot of people in those prisons, and each of them costs a bit of money to keep locked up in a tiny room, guarded so that they don't deny us the justice we have enacted by putting them there in the first place.

We don't let them commit suicide — we do what we can to stop that because suicide is the

way that one escapes being punished for the crime, depriving them of liberty and penalizing them for having done something we don't allow.

Something horrible gets a longer sentence. Something not as horrible gets a shorter one.

That's how we do it. You can get into all the arguments you want about if that is a good thing or a bad thing, but that doesn't change the fact that right now, that's what we do.

We take the people who break the laws and we fine them or we throw them in jail or both.

For the crimes they committed. Not for the rest of the stuff they have to deal with.

And so we have. And in doing that, we have taken on a responsibility for them — because even in Prison, they are still citizens of the United States, and they still have rights, and if you take them away from one person or a few people, but not all of them, then you are doing something unusual.

Now, if a judge ordered a person who was a rapist to undergo a sex change as punishment for their crimes, I would have a huge fucking cow over that. Because as a punishment, it is extreme and it will create a sense of pain and harm that goes well beyond what is normal and usual for such a person. I'd rather see them confine the person to isolation for a period of 15 years. Rendering them sterile is something I have a problem with, as well — we shouldn't be in that business.

But we do have an obligation to take care of them. To provide basic medical care.

And that is what is being done in the case of Kosilek.

Minimum basic medical care.

And we know this because this is a fight that has been going on for over a decade. She's had to prove this over and over and over again. In courts of law where the standard for that proof is really fucking high. Where the ability to get around the law isn't as present as it might be in real estate and financial law. Against a system that says, point blank, we aren't going to do one whit more than is absolutely necessary, and you had damn well better prove that it is beyond a shadow of a doubt.

So when I see people bitch about the decision of a judge who has been fighting with her on this for at least 9 years, I have to seriously question just how much of a fucking asshole are they?

Because I'm a loose canon who says what she thinks, and doesn't really give a fucking shit if you think she's a little rude about it — hell, the reason I use that language is because I want to make you pause and the best way to do that is to be rude.

It is, simply put, unthinking idiocy. Anyone not directly connected to the case who says the judge made the wrong call is an idiot. ANYONE. I don't care who it is. About the only people who will have any say in the matter that might count are those to whom the decision is appealed — if that happens.

I will note that the fight, itself, has cost the people about a hundred times more than it would have cost them to just do the surgery in the first place. Which isn't really all that big a point — this decision will have an impact on a lot of prisoners, because, oddly enough, there are people who are in prison for being trans people, even though the charge might be something other than that. Perhaps it is prostitution. Or drug running.

Which they did in order to find a way to survive in a country where people are trying to defend a decision to deny medical treatment to another person and doing so because that person is a trans person.

That's oppression, by the way. It seems like it shouldn't be because oppression is wrong and this doesn't seem wrong. But it is wrong, and it is oppression and they need to fucking get themselves into a place where they see that.

So what we are talking about when we talk about that case, really, isn't supposed to be the trans aspect, THE discourse is supposed to be over should we give prisoner's medical care.

But it isn't about that. It is about should we give this prisoner the medical care they need, that they had to fight to prove they need, and that, in the end, they were told they could have.

This prisoner. And prisoner's like her.

ANd the answer is yes. TO do anything else is literally unamerican.

I repeat. Literally unAmerican.

Because it is sayign that we should treat these second class citizens as second class citizens. ANd we think that because we see trans people as second class citizens.

And that really pisses me off, personally, and not because I am trans.

But because I was also raised to not ever fucking do that,

In no small part because I have really awesome brothers and sisters and I was supposed to be watching out for them, making sure that people didn't treat them like crap.

I did a poor job of that.

I was young, and inexperienced, and these days I'm just older and wiser.

And it is a wrongness that really irks the fuck out of me because people should know better. Note that reason.

Because people should know better.

The reason they don't, is because they have an emotional connection to the idea idea that trans people are less than. That there is something wrong with them, something that the system doesn't fix.

So we shouldn't try as hard for them as we do for others.

Because that's what all of this is about.

Nobody really gives a shit about some murderer getting medical care. They give a shit about a trans person getting treated for being trans in a way that they are supposed to be treated, because people don't think that is the right way to treat them.

That leads into something else that is going on a lot, and that I keep seeing, over and over again.

Trans people don't like being treated that way.

I don't blame them. Hell, I can't think of any group with minority status that likes to be treated like shit all the time.

Women don't like it. Multi-ethnic people like me don't like it. Pick a group.

I just cannot deal with the fact that most of the time if I tell that things change.
Suddenly I am a different person.

I read that not too long ago.

It was said by a trans person. I've heard the same thing in every community I've ever been a part of — and it is the current refrain of those who say that being a white man with money in this country isn't all that great.

It is the reason that people make “passing” to be important. Not news to long term readers, but anyone who puts a shitload of importance on passing is a fucking asswipe.

Because passing is just another way that cis folk seek to control us — it is a symptom of discrimination, and a way that we think will make it less important, will make our lives less filled with discrimination.

Stealth is another way of doing that. Woodworking — whatever you want to call it, the problem is that all of it is built on the idea of appeasing those who are in control, of making us invisible, unseen, unremarkable.

Of disappearing, which is exactly what they want us to do. Just like they want Kosilek to be buried in some dark hole.

And the reason that we want those things is because we are told that being trans is wrong.

That transness is a bad thing.

And personally, I get really upset when people do that. There is a lot of stuff I do when I am faced with that. From a trans person, I usually try to be patient and to explain things and to help them to see how that all works in many many words and so forth.

But even I have my limits.

That desire for it to stop, for things not to change when people know you are trans, is often overwhelming. We all fight it, every day. I get told all the time how pretty I am or how I could gain a few pounds of whatever — all this constant policing of my appearance, and while to a feminist it might seem like it has something to do with my being a woman, it doesn't.

It has to do with my being trans. And I hate that. There is always an unstated “for a trans person” addendum there. I hear it, I see it, and that's why it pisses me off so much.

Because who the fuck do they think they are to tell me how I am supposed to look or act?

Really, In what way do they have some personal capability to determine that my behavior is right or wrong for me.

And that's the same question I wonder about when I think on things like the Kosilek case.

Because it is about far more than just some trans person getting the surgery.

This is also why marriage is such a big deal to the LGBT community. No, it isn't the most important thing to them. Hell, a shitload of them don't even want to get married.

But there is more involved than just two people getting married.

a lot more, More than most people can stand to think about, especially on the hateful side.

And all of it ties together. ALL of it matters, all of it counts.

All of it is important.

That change — that moment that things get different when it is a trans person, and perhaps most especially when it comes to things like surgeries which are widely associated with trans people — that is the very heart of what it is that I am trying to figure out ways to get around. Ways to make that change less important, less likely to happen.

That moment is what activism is all about, in the end.

That moment is what all the arguments and the fights and the rest are all about.

That moment.

And what I say, in response, is that when there is one of those moments, and they come in all shapes, all colors, all sizes, is that we need to stand up and say to that person for whom things have just changed and say

hey, mother fucker, what the fuck? Five god damn seconds ago everything was cool and now it isn't? What sort of miserable excuse for a shitty person are you?

Although, in fairness, I also suggest not using that exact language.

But the gist of it, the idea of it, is what stops people. It is what backs them up.

It is what I do. It is what I am really good at doing — so good that for a loose canon, I surely get asked to do it a lot.

And the only reason I am good at it is because I see that moment. And so many of my sisters and brothers see it as well. But instead of standing up and saying “hey, why is this really silly and stupid thing more important than I am” they put their heads down and they step into the shadows and they run away from it.

Yes, it is easier.

You know why it is easier? Because they like it that way — and they, in this case, is not some secret group of people sitting around a table in a smoke filled room plotting some evil vice on the world.

It is the institutions, the culture, the systems, the language, the tools that we have available to us in the world. They are built by, for, and about people who are Cis.

And that’s the They I mean. It means we are operating in a world and a system that is ciscentric, in the same way that the world around us is white centric, and man centric and wealthy centric and education centric.

We must stand up and speak out.

And when I talk about these things in depth with people, with trans people and with statisticians and with business owners and with activists and even just people who foolishly say “so, what exactly do you do?” like creditors calling me, one thing I hear about a lot of the time, is that trans people have no heroes.

We have no role models. No symbols of how fucking awesome we are and how we challenge the way people see the world.

We have no fiction. No “real” fiction, that is — something that is accessible to the wider public. That is, fiction that isn’t about the transition itself, because while people want to know about that, they don’t really want to know about it. That’s messy and ugly and dangerous, and it deals with things that people deal with every day and don’t want to talk about.

No, they want to see trans people as everyday things. People for whom being trans is just, well, about as big a deal and treated as about as big a deal as the fact they have blue eyes and dark hair.

I'm a writer of sorts, I suppose. But that's not where my passions and skills lead me, no matter what I would like.

However, when I say this stuff to people, they don't get it. They need kick starters. They need ideas, something to let them see how this would work.

So I have the following three examples.

Story One

Story opens with a woman being beaten by tough guys, typical goons. They want to know where something is. She's not talking. She's telling them go fuck off. They bring out her child, and threaten the kid.

Cut to a woman coming home from grocery shopping. She's greeted by neighborhood kids who ask when her child is going to feel better, having been sick of late. She's happy, the usual mom kind of stuff. Gets home and wonders why there are black SUV's out front of her place.

She enters, and sees her wife screaming. Her arrival has startled the goons, who had thought their target had a husband. They accidentally kill the woman they were beating, knock out the woman who has arrived, kidnap the child.

They made a mistake. The grocery shopping woman awakens as the cops arrive. They treat her like shit, suspect her of doing this, don't care because she's "not the father of the child" and all the rest. They are not going to be any help. They don't care about the kidnapped child.

She's on her own. The bad guys want something, and they say that they will trade the kid for it. Our heroine has to break into a top secret place, get the goods, and then turn them over, so she does that. Except instead of releasing the kid, the bad guys kill the child.

Now she's not going to be nice anymore — she's got the feds looking for her for stealing the something, and she's just had her family taken from her. And this isn't good, either — she's an ex-green beret, and while she might not have the size anymore, she's till far more

dangerous and you know have an action story where her being trans is important, but not something that is talked about a lot of the time.

Of course she basically kills her way across the country and exposes a major terrorist plot and brings it all down. Because she's damn good, and she does it all in style, because she's a woman.

Story Two

At a rally in a large city — we'll say New York — a prominent LGBT activist is assassinated by a sniper. This is a detective mystery. Procedural. The lead investigator is a trans woman who is an activist herself, with a trans man partner. And both of them have a long history of animosity towards the slain leader because she was an outspoken transphobe.

They begin to piece together clues as they work the case, with buddy cop style banter, the trans guy being the tough guy, the trans woman being the sensitive sort. A little bit of tension is involved, but never comes to the surface — these are partners in the old cop sense. Their personal lives are trashed, the usual bullshit story — they guy has child support payments, the woman has to worry about the fact she supported her guy through law school and now he's made amid grade in a firm he's trading her in for a newer model.

The evidence starts to show that a hostile group of trans people are behind the assassination, one person in particular. As they work the case, they find evidence that doesn't fit, but every time they start to follow up on it, they come close to being killed or something happens and they are blocked by the superiors, who didn't like this dead activist themselves because she'd tried to get several higher ups fired, and was dating the daughter of the police commissioner.

As they arrest the suspected assassin, they are attacked. The assassin and her alibi are killed in a drive by (hard to solve). The trans woman is hurt, put in the hospital. The trans guy gets a lead and follows it, finds out that it might be a group of anti-lgbt people behind it instead, overhearing a discussion between the leader of a major group and one of the gunmen.

The leader of the major group is the brother of the police commissioner, meaning that would lead to scandal if this gets out.

As the trans woman recovers, the trans man is in hiding, and he passes the info on to her. He gets accused of corruption and that means the rat squad is after her, too. Now they are being set up as having arranged the hit on their victim themselves.

With the clock running, they have to uncover the links to the anti-gay group and the thugs who did the drive by, and they have to clear their own names.

This they do, of course. As a team, and using the underground trans community as their resource, in a sting and set up that exposes the villains. Who use their connections to hush things up and get plea deals, but at the very end, the disgraced but honorable cops release the whole deal to the newspapers.

Story Three

A romantic comedy. Bisexual person that's totally hot ends up caught between two trans people. They have to compete to win the affections of the bisexual person, but both of them are partners in a successful business. Can they get past the competition over the paramour, and save their business which is under attack by a rival business that happens to be owned, secretly, by the bisexual person, or will they see that all along they should have been going out with their faithful subordinates who love them already?

Not my field. I'm an action adventure junky, but you probably get the idea here. Things to avoid, however, are the usual trans stuff. I'd write it with one guy and one gal, myself, as an example, but it works any which way. wouldn't want to get into the uncomfortable stuff around sex — that's the "what comes next" part, but of course the bi person, in the end, would turn out to not really be a bad person themselves, just a pawn in the game of their parents or something like that who want to drive the trans folk out of business.

happy endings all around, though, because it is a romantic comedy.

Note that I use genre conventions to lay out the stories. You could do the same thing with Horror conventions (monster attacks town, takes the trans person to understand the monster is really being pursued by a different monster, and to empathize so that the real bad guy dies and the victim monster stops killing townies) or pretty much any other kind of setting.

The key is that the leads are trans people. That being trans isn't hard, isn't a challenge, and actually serves them by letting them do things.

You could even have a spy thriller where both the good guy and the bad guy are trans people, and use the security nightmare of the world by having the bad guy get through security by coming through as a woman and getting away as a guy. Or the good guy doing it.

It allows you to tackle more complex stuff but still write a story that meets the expectations of cis people, using their own conventions to turn their world upside down while entertaining them.

This is the kind of stuff that I see too little of, hear too little of — real stories that entertain, that aren't meant to be diatribes on the rightfulness of this treatment of trans people or that focus on the ins and outs of transition.

All the people above are outside transition. The bad stuff that they encounter has nothing to do with their being trans people, but rather being trans people who just happen to fall into these situations.

And they are just examples of what I mean when I say we need heroes, we need stories, not just for us, but for those who don't know and don't care about us.

Hell, you could rewrite Die Hard and make the hero a trans guy for all it matters. The point is, that the only reason the character is trans is that they are the lead, in the end.

Then, after you take those outlines above and turn them into blockbuster novels, when you sell the movie rights you could insist that a trans person be used to play the lead. And maybe send me a couple bucks for the story outlines.

The idea is to use the very things that are used against us to change them, to create cool stuff not only for trans people but for anyone to read, and maybe, just maybe, in the process, give them insight into the fact that there is more to being a trans person than transition and surgery, because that's what everyone focuses on.

Everyone.

yes, it makes a great story. Pathos attracts. But is it the best story to tell, over and over again?

I don't think so.

If the above stories were written well, I'd pay for them.

That's the kind of thing we need more of.

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Thanks for reading!