

Dear Olivia:

We are writing concerning your decision to employ Sandy Stone (formerly ██████████) as your recording engineer and sound technician. We feel that it was and is irresponsible of you to have presented this person as a woman to the women's community when in fact he is a post-operative transsexual. The decision to work with a transsexual is one issue in itself; but the omission of this information from the public of women who support you was an unwise choice.

We feel that it was deceptive not to share this process with the women's community. Many women give you their financial support precisely because they trust you to work with women exclusively, and you are not being accountable to these women.

As performers, sound technicians, radio women, producers, and managers -- women who put most of our energy and commitment into the field of women's culture -- we are particularly concerned because of the effect this has on us. We were told that Stone was going to be doing sound at an upcoming concert billed as a women-only event. This seemed an odd choice, since there are more than a few competent women sound technicians in the Bay Area. In this instance a transsexual was taking work away from women who have to struggle to gain access to these skills and whose opportunities are extremely limited.

Given the narrow options available to us, it is also likely that many of us would have to work with Stone. Some of us have already done so without the knowledge that this person was not a woman. When we did discover the truth about Stone and tried to discuss this with you, we were told that you considered him very much a woman, a lesbian, and that you trusted him more than middle class, heterosexual women. This was very painful to hear and indicated a great lack of respect and love for women and our struggle.

We do not believe that a man without a penis is a woman any more than we would accept a white woman with dyed skin as a Black woman. Sandy Stone grew up as a white male in this culture, with all the privileges and attitudes that that insures [sic]. It was his white male privilege that gave him access to the recording studio and the opportunity to gain engineering practice in the first place. He has never had to suffer the discrimination, self-hatred or fear that a woman must endure and survive in her life. And he cannot possess the special courage, brilliance, sensitivity and compassion that derives from that experience. How can we share feelings of sisterhood and solidarity with someone who has not had a woman's experience?

We are aware of the unfortunate necessity to call upon male knowledge or skills on occasion, because women have been so excluded from certain fields. But we would like to trust that it is only used as a last resort, when there are no women available to do the job, and that it is done honestly — not as a hushed-up secret.

It is not our intention to discredit or trash Olivia. We request that you publish a statement on this issue, and hope that you are open to further discussion so that we might reach agreement on this difficult problem.

In Sisterhood,

D.A. '011ie' Oliveira
Evan Paxton
Sally Piano
Gael Sapiro
Leni Schwendinger
Ruth Scovill
Pat Tinkler
Karla Tonella
Fran Tornabene
Lisa Vogel
Shehar Windstone

Martha Oeiman
JoAnne Barry
Bobbie Birleffi
Alix Dobkin
Susan Elisabeth
Maxine Feldman
Sue Hyde
Bonnie Lockhart
Margot McFederies
Joan Medlin
Copa Mountainmoon