

# 10 frågor till.....

## I detta nummer möter Du Erica Anderson

Professor i psykologi

Erica Anderson, som pryder vår första sida.

### When are you born?

Although my birth record in Hennepin County Minnesota now reflects this name I was born Eric Edward Anderson at Swedish Hospital in Minneapolis, Minnesota on January 24, 1951. My mother likely had trouble getting pregnant and keeping the pregnancy. As he was throughout her life my Swedish Grandfather Oscar Julius Engstrand who was a surgeon at the hospital attended my mother and delivered his first male grandchild..

My parents are deceased but were each interesting people in their own right. My father served as a United States Marine during World War II. He several times declined an appointment to Officer Candidate School knowing as he did that the average lifespan of a first lieutenant in the Marine Corp was measured in minutes during WWII as later in Vietnam. Instead he became the assistant to the Marine Commandant in the Panama Canal Zone. The man serving in that role was the ranking General in the Canal Zone which at the height of WWII had 1,000,000 US service personnel in it and millions of tons of US war and cargo ships. My mother was considered a great beauty and in the opinion of my Godfather was always the smartest person in the room, the one everyone wanted to listen to.

I was the oldest child in my family growing up with two younger sisters. I grew up as a boy, was socialized as a boy and in contrast to some inaccurate reports in Swedish press was not at all a "mama's boy," though she was very fond of me. She always called me her "handsome son". I was athletic and good looking and an outstanding student. I was the president of my high school class which consisted of 806 graduates at a large and prominent public high school. I was also elected "most likely to succeed". I don't think anyone at the time expected that I would one day be known as a transsexual psychologist/professor, at least not as a transsexual.

I often say that when you have seen one transgender person you have seen one transgender person. This not a scientific paper but I would have a great deal to say about the vast individual differences among transgender and gender non conforming persons. I am writing and



teaching about these subjects and hope to continue my work in this area for a long time.

### Where do you live

I live in Berkeley, California (which is across the bay from San Francisco). Berkeley is known internationally as a very liberal and avant garde city and the home of the University of California. It is also a "nuclear free zone," reflecting the progressive/liberal politic for which it is known. I was born in Minneapolis and grew up in Minnesota, a progressive state in which many Swedish immigrants including my family settled after coming from Sweden. I love Minnesota very much and it will always be home for me. I became a psychologist, and father there along with having many other ties.. But over the years my career especially as an executive in the healthcare field took me to many places.

### Family

Just to complete some information about family I should report that I was married to a woman I still love very much. We were married 30 years before I transitioned. We raised two children together. Both my son and daughter are artists and now live in the Bay (San Francisco) Area. It was a rocky time once I confirmed with my wife that I intended to make a gender transition. She had always said that she didn't want to be married to a woman. We has a kind of "don't ask, don't tell" policy. But we managed to navigate the tumultuous period prior to, during, and just following my transition. She is a remarkable woman. I loved her when I first met her and to the present day have never stopped loving her. In the end for me it became like the movie Sophie's Choice: stay with the woman I love or be my authentic self. I could not have both. Neither of my children are married so I do not have grandchildren and truthfully feel much too young and fisky to consider myself even of the age when I could be a grandparent though many of my friends are grandparents.

### Work

I am currently involved in a number of activities which involve teaching and clinical work centered upon Sexuality, Gender, and Identity. I have three primary affiliations which include 1) recent appointment to the faculty and medical staff at the University of California San Francisco (behavioral

pediatrics). There I attend the Child and Adolescent Gender Clinic in Pediatric Endocrinology at UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital in San Francisco and a satellite clinic in San Mateo. I see transgender and gender nonconforming children, teenagers, and their families for consultations. I also provide supervision and consultation to health professional students. 2) I am Professor of Clinical Psychology at John F. Kennedy University where I teach future psychologists and psychotherapists. My areas of focus are sexuality and trauma. 3) I have a part time private practice where I provide psychological evaluations and psychotherapy to a variety of patients of all genders and sexualities, including some sex therapy work.

I have previously worked as an executive (President, COO, CEO etc) for a variety of healthcare companies some of them large and prominent (e.g. Merck/Medco and United Healthcare). At my previous University I served as Chair of Healthcare Management and Professor of Management. At JFKU I also served as the Chair of the Doctoral Program in Clinical Psychology and Dean of the Graduate School as well as Chair of the two other graduate programs in psychology. During several periods in my career I have been an active organizational consultant and executive coach.

#### **What are you doing when you don't work?**

When not working I love to spend time with friends, attend live musical events and theatre, ride my bicycle, travel, read and exercise. This has been a particularly busy year professionally so I know for one new year's resolution I want to bring the balance and fun back into my life. Being on the show *All for Sverige* has certainly changed me and was the high point of my year.

#### **Are you a believer?**

I have always been a believer in God and a Christian. Baptized Lutheran, my parents left the Lutheran Church and joined a Congregational Church in which I was raised. I am a spiritual person and during teenage years was quite pious including belonging to the youth group at Church. In addition to my Ph.D. in clinical psychology I earned a MA in theology at a Protestant Seminary and have been a diligent student of philosophy and religion. I was such a serious student that I was chosen as teaching assistant by the senior systematic theology professor. I also was chosen as a teaching assistant in clinical psychology by the Professor who also became the Dean of the Graduate School at that time. That man is Neil Clark Warren, Ph.D who in recent years in America is known as the founder of the internet dating site *E Harmony*. I married a Jewish woman and as indicated we have two children who were raised as Jews. In recent years I do not attend Church or Temple but feel very spiritual and believe in a Higher Power. I often refer to God by saying God She is good to me, implying that God is beyond the binary construction of gender under which the dominant culture operates. My reference also is a direct confrontation of the Chauvinism and misogyny found in too many religious traditions. Finally, since transitioning I have awakened what I think is a considerable and helpful intuition which allows me to utilize all of what I might know even that going beyond the obvious and scientific facts.

#### **What book is laying on your bedside table right now?**

I have two books. One is a prized possession which has been in my family for more than 200 years. *Utkast Til En Systematisk Afhandling I Theoretiska och Practiska Philosophien* by P. Kolmark, published in Stockholm in 1799. It is in Swedish of course and a source of great pride that my people would read such a book and bring it along with others from Sweden to America. I also have at my bedside *Fairyland* (a memoir) by Alysia Abbott. It is about growing up as the only child of a gay father who died of HIV/Aids when she was only 22.

#### **What makes you happy?**

Many things since despite great hardship I have had an amazing life. I am a dispositional optimist and have what most consider a great sense of humor. I see the humor in many situations each day and others are often surprised (I hope delighted) that I can make fun of myself and relate to so many different people and circumstances. I believe in random acts of kindness and often close my posts on Facebook with "peace and love Erica". My favorite songs in the last year have been Eva Cassidy singing "Over the Rainbow," and Sara Barellis singing her song "Brave." I take inspiration from both of these. Brave is kind of my personal anthem. The video is also a charming depiction of land hope for exclusive community.

#### **What movie/book/TV show are you quoting often?**

In movies I love romantic comedies both vintage and new and have in the past enjoyed many European films including of course Bergman. As a note for those who followed me on *Allt for Sverige*, I have read all of Henning Mankell's crime novels, Steig Larsson, and many other Scandinavian writers (translated into English of course). Perhaps one day I will read them again in Swedish. The competition I lost at *Ales Stennar* on the TV show would in all likelihood have been won by me save for circumstances in the 24 hours prior to the competition including the Swedish school lesson by the host Anders Lundin having to do with the Institute for the Biology of Race at Uppsala University.

#### **What are the biggest challenges for transsexuals in the coming years**

I have been a participant observer in the shift over my lifetime both in the scientific and professional communities and in general society. When I first began learning about gender differences the word transgender had not yet come into fashion. The word used most often was "transsexual" which was differentiated from "other" forms of transvestism by virtue of a presumed "deep seated psychiatric disorder." Over the years as homosexuality was de pathologized more information was available about those of us who have not conformed to the the dominant binary construction of gender which was assumed by all. For some years the term Gender Identity Disorder (GID) was utilized to characterize transgender persons in some respect to qualify us for medical interventions including surgeries. Now the term of art is Gender Dysphoria. However, still no provision is made for those like myself who are not Dysphoric or confused about our gender.

In America until this year positive strides had been made in the general culture in the acceptance of transgender persons. I have often observed that "trans has become trendy." In the past year however, dark and reactionary forces have emerged seeking to repress and even irradiate transgender persons by curtailing our rights and status and rejecting this notion that a trans gender identity is a legitimate and normal variation from the binary construction of gender.

I myself have been discriminated against in the USA insofar as housing, healthcare, employment and public accommodations. I moved to California in order to effect my full time transition. But even in California such reactionary forces are at work. I have frequently acknowledged my own privilege and that I have had a much easier time than many trans persons. Because I am educated, well spoken and somewhat attractive I am what is called "passable." As a result I am able to move in society with a minimum amount of difficulty. Many many transgender persons are not as well off and I work hard to change this. With others pro bono I am working to create a shelter and programs for homeless and recently incarcerated transgender persons in San Francisco. I will have more to say about this work in the future. In the USA it is very hard for most transgender persons to find the appropriate healthcare and psychological support they need. Many encounter serious conflicts within their families who often cannot understand what the transperson is going through and how to help them.

Because so many trans and their loved ones struggle in this way I have adopted a kind of mantra. It is that it is more important that family and friends accept the trans person for their authentic self than to understand how they got to be that way.

As the numbers of trans and gender nonconforming persons grow it is clear that most healthcare professionals are ill equipped to evaluate and treat them. I am doing my part and expect to continue. A nagging concern that I have is that trans persons have become a curiosity to others and some with limited understanding presume that they are competent to treat us. The historic gatekeeper model under which trans people must persuade non trans people of their trans identities is giving way to an informed consent model under which fewer barriers are exercised by healthcare professionals. Combined with my concern about the lack of training and competence to treat I am worried that mistakes will be made in both under evaluation and hasty decisions on the part of transpersons themselves. For those of us who transition from one gender to another (i.e. MtoF or FtoM) the complete transformation of one's self cannot be understood in any other paradigm.

Lastly, as a direct result of the US election, the rhetoric of Donald Trump, Mike Pence and others many trans gender people like other minority groups are afraid for their personal safety and future wellbeing. Incidents of violence against trans people have clearly increased. Because we are hard to understand those inclined toward prejudice and bigotry have seized upon efforts to marginalize and vilify us. Witness the proliferation of so called "bathroom bills," which are predicated upon ignorance and fear by some of trans people who are not as widely accepted in general society as gay and lesbian persons have been. This is my greatest concern that not only will American society not continue to progress in securing full civil rights for trans persons but that efforts to discriminate against us more completely will succeed and make it even worse than it was during the decades when I felt ashamed and fearful of simply being myself Erica a woman.

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Jason Blohm och Erica Anderson - Allt för Sverige 2016