

# Dominick



*“My livelihood and my life are two separate things. This is my employment. This is what I do for a living. Because for all intents and purposes I am a male, I just shifted from being a ‘drag king’ to being a ‘male illusionist.’”*



I'm 32. I'm a cancer. I actually used to live right across the street from the University, and I went to Cajon High. Growing up, I always knew something was different about me. I thought I was a lesbian. It was through interactions with people representing different letters of LGBT that I learned, oh wait, girls can be boys? Okay, cool. Let's figure this out.

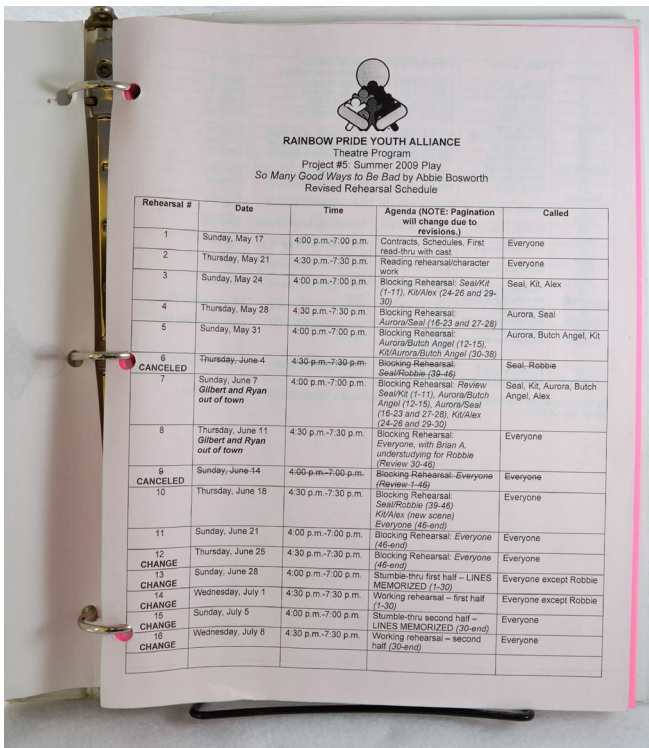
Being transsexual is kind of like being on an organ donor list, like you need a new kidney, and every single day until you get it you know that there's something wrong with your body. I just had this yearning, like if I didn't do something to change I was gonna die. Now, are you gonna tell me that it's wrong for your sister who needs a new kidney to receive one, because it's changing her body? It's the same sort of thing.

Transitioning did save my life once. I was in a car accident, and my four-door became a two-door. If it wasn't for my binder – the compression shirt that I use to give

my chest a more masculine appearance – I would have bled out before they got me to the hospital. So, I guess I'm heading in the right direction, because I'm still alive.

I do pass as male 100 percent of the time. But there is a stigma about being transsexual that I still think about. Every time I go to the bathroom I wonder if someone is gonna know. There are others who don't pass as easily, and I feed off of their anxiety. And then there's airport security. Oh, that sucks. Every single time I get patted down, due to the “extra skin” that shows up in my body x-rays.

Since I went from being an African-American female to an African-American male, I've also become public enemy number one. If I'm wearing long sleeves I make sure that they're pulled up in stores. I always make sure my hands are visible, just so that they know I'm not doing something illegal. And with the police, it used to be that I was sexually harassed when I was pulled over. Now I'm pulled out, the car is searched, and once I was locked up.



Dominick's binder containing documents pertaining to his time with the Rainbow Pride Youth Alliance (RPYA)



"We had a theatre group at RPYA. I love to be on stage, I thrived in that. And when I aged out of that my friend brought me up on stage at a drag show ... I liked it, and I kept doing it. And now I'm doing it fulltime, actually."

I am a male illusionist for a living, or a "drag king." It's an art form, just like drag queens - except the kings change our appearance to make ourselves hyper-masculine instead of hyper-feminine. The queens are making more money doing it, though. It's like, even when we're the ones dressed as males, misogyny still exists. Maybe it's because they're more visible. Because they're, I don't know, twelve feet tall, with heels and everything. Well, from my perspective, because I'm five foot four and you're making my neck hurt.

Drag performers lip sync to other people's songs. There's make-up and wigs. I will tell you right now, there are no good costumes in size extra small, so many of us have to make our own costumes, or fit little kids' clothes. Not saying that I do that ... Okay, yes, I do. I'm a boy's large. It's okay; my clothes are half price.

With drag, I really found my calling. I was always into drama, I like production, I'm the center of attention, and I'm making people happy. Drag also helps me to work through things that I'm going through emotionally. There are times where I'll put together a mix and at the end of it I realize like, ooh, I was angry. Okay, we're okay now? Then because I connect with the music on stage, the audience is thoroughly entertained.

My stage name is Miles Long. It comes from my childhood - ever since I can remember I wanted to be

a jack-of-all-trades, or a mathematician. Then I found out that you don't make any money doing either one of those. But I still wanted to be able to know and to do a little bit of everything. I don't want to be pigeon holed, because my talent goes miles long, my energy goes miles long. And obviously also, you know...

Sometimes I feel like transitioning is one of the most selfish things I've ever done. And then I have to remind myself that the reason why I did it is because I was at a point that if I didn't do it I wouldn't be here anymore. And not being here would actually be even more selfish.

If you want to be supportive of someone who is transitioning, be supportive. If you don't, just let it be. Don't say anything negative! Because the other side is them not being here, because they've taken their own life because living in the wrong body was so unbearable. Think about that next time you're feeling negative and closed-minded about someone altering their body.