

March 14, 2008

Empress 1 Jose, Founder of the Imperial Court System
Empress Nicole the Great, Executive Director and International Spokesperson
Empress Panzi, President of the International Court Council
Officers and Members of the Council of the Imperial Court System

Dear Leaders of the Imperial Court System:

It is with a heavy heart that I write you today, with news of events that threaten to leave a long-term stain on the good name of the ICS.

Last month stories appeared in Denver media about a Boulder family who are supporting their young child's gender transition – stories such as the following, which I urge you to read:

"Second Nature - The Story of a Local Family Raising a Little Girl Born in the Wrong Body", by Maximillian Potter, in *5280 - Denver's Magazine*, March 2008:
<http://www.5280.com/issues/2008/0803/feature.php?pageID=1017>



http://www.5280.com/issues/2008/0803/spread_large.php?title=5280&file=spread_second_nature_l.jpg

In response to those stories, Benjamin Paige, a Member of the Board of Directors of the Imperial Court of the Rocky Mountain Empire, wrote a column in March's *GayZette Denver*.

Paige's column attacks and mocks both the young child and her family, using truly shocking language and the vilest of imagery. His transphobic screed is one of the worst our community has ever seen. I've attached a copy for you to read and study. It's also posted at this page:

<http://ai.eecs.umich.edu/people/conway/TS/News/US/Benjamin%20Paige/Columnist%20Benjamin%20Paige%20hideously%20defames%20trans%20child.pdf>

I was alerted to this outrage by members of Trans Youth Family Allies (<http://www.imatyfa.org>) who are in contact with the family, and by many other folks in the Denver-area trans community. I maintain a widely read trans-information website, and am documenting responses to Paige's column in an investigative report:

<http://ai.eecs.umich.edu/people/conway/TS/News/US/Gayzette%20defames%20trans%20child.html>

In response to these events, ICRME's Board of Directors will hold an emergency meeting this Sunday, to consider calls for Paige's removal from the BOD. However, insiders report that Paige's transphobic views are shared by many, and that the Board is likely to stand by him.

In the meantime, several transitioned women (past members) have written open letters about the anti-transgender climate within the ICRME, and its reality is now hard to deny:

<http://ai.eecs.umich.edu/people/conway/TS/News/US/Benjamin%20Paige/Dana%20Yost%20letter.html>

<http://ai.eecs.umich.edu/people/conway/TS/News/US/Benjamin%20Paige/Jazmine%20James%20letter.html>

The ICS has a wonderful history of service to the gay community, and its website proudly reports:

"In addition to some of the other positive aspects of the Court System, perhaps the best is that our organization is open to everyone. Our membership is made up of every aspect of society - lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and heterosexual. A person's gender, lifestyle or mode of dress has no bearing on being a member of the court "family.""

Unfortunately, Paige's column and its aftermath have revealed a dirty little secret – namely that the ICS is apparently rife with anti-transgender sentiment throughout its ranks.

Although this may involve only a small minority of members, their feelings are so intense as to contaminate overall ICS culture – and encourage transphobic outbursts such as Paige's column.

As the trans community becomes more widely aware of this reality, concern will escalate regarding the recruitment of young trans girls into the ICS and then their later emotional abuse and social ostracism if and when they transition.

Hopefully, the events in Denver will be a wake-up call to the ICS leadership. Times are changing. Transitioned women and men are on the move, and are demanding our rightful place in the sun. There is also an inexorable trend towards earlier gender transitions, and increasing support of trans youth by parents and families.

The internal climate of the ICS will increasingly come into conflict with this new reality, unless something is done to change that climate. We'll be watching and will report on what happens, in the Paige case and beyond.

Sincerely,

Lynn Conway

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