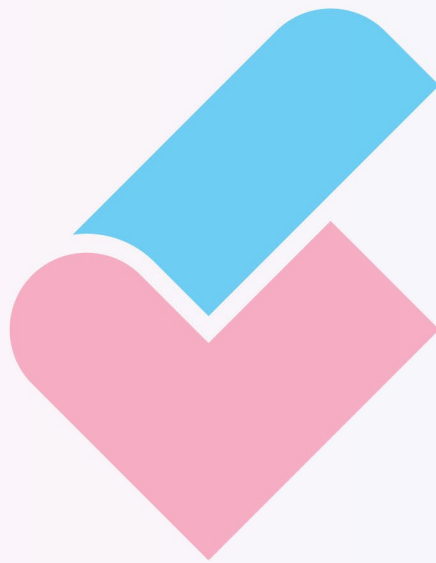




# HAPPY BEGINNING

33 stories of transgender and gender diverse people,  
their family, friends and allies





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# PREFACE

Throughout human history, stories have played a crucial role in documenting and disseminating the cultural and ideological values of different community groups. Each story contains a series of events, images, sounds, colors, and even the taste of life.

***The A4 Sheet - Happy Beginning*** is a series of true short stories about transgender individuals and gender diverse communities, narrated in narrative language. It is neither as long as a novel nor as short as a fable, and readers can still see clearly from the details. At the same time, there is enough space for in-depth thinking through characters and storylines. Through this approach, the diversity and consistency of character destiny and identity are highlighted.

“Art should not have been a deceptive moonlight, art should not be a deceptive moonlight. Art can only be the voice of pain, freed from the painful life”

The collection of 33 short stories in *The A4 Sheet - Happy Beginning* - the most authentic and blatant portrayal of events that occur in the lives of transgender individuals and diverse communities. This is a series of mistreated childhood misdeeds aimed at belittling human dignity, insults, and rejected love, but somewhere, a ray of happiness and hope emanates from the love of family and friends, brothers and sisters and sympathizers.

33 people's short stories are filled with a "normal" desire for happiness. Simply put, being called the name they want, being respected, being called the spouse of the person they love, and becoming the parent of their child.

In the context of May 2023, the "Gender Affirmation Law" has been included in the 2024 legal and regulatory development plan, and the National Assembly will hold a meeting in October 2024 and review and approve the road map at the May 2025 meeting. Clearly, understanding the needs of this community group is crucial. From then on, no one else, just the readers of this book, will help create a happy beginning for the transgender and gender diverse communities in Vietnam.

Kiều Hồng  
Ha Noi, 20th October 2023



# THE A4 SHEET - HAPPY BEGINNING

The UN Free & Equal Campaign is global United Nations public information campaign aimed at promoting equal rights and fair treatment of LGBTI people. In 2023, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in collaboration with other UN agencies and Implementation partners: IT'S T TIME and The Institute for Studies of Society, Economics and Environment (iSEE) spearhead the 2023 Campaign in Viet Nam. And this year's promotional campaign jointly carried out by IT'S T TIME shone with the idea and message:

## *“The A4 sheet - Happy Beginning”*

The A4 sheet is constructed based on the shape of a legal paper, which can bring greater happiness to transgender individuals, gender diverse individuals, or anyone who feels happy through this paper. It can be proof of a new name or proof of a transgender person, a marriage certificate, or an admission letter. Every form of happiness can be associated with the shape of this object, but it encompasses the struggles, efforts, and courage of transgender individuals.

***The A4 sheet - Happy Beginning*** records and conveys inspiring moments and stories of over 30 transgender people. Moreover, the movement also documented the typical shortcomings of transgender individuals, conveying their wishes to legislators to accelerate the process of higher quality and faster legislation.

In order to promote social awareness of the diversity of transgender communities, we have decided to collaborate with the United Nations in Vietnam to publish a collection of short stories harvested during the A4 Sheet campaign, including stories published onto the media and unpublished stories. In addition, provide activity recommendations to organizations and individuals in the work field and communities concerned with transgender and gender diversity in Vietnam. We hope that this publication will contribute to the development of a better and more tolerant society, and fully promote happiness.

At the same time, we would like to thank IT'S T TIME's partner organizations including non-profit organizations, community organizations, businesses, press and media agencies for supporting communication, reposting and spreading out about the events and stories of the A4 Sheet campaign.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

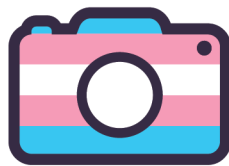
During the implementation of the **A4 Sheet - Happy Beginning** campaign, collecting stories, interviewing participants and communicating on social networks, IT'S T TIME received support and organizational coordination from the United Nations in Vietnam and The Institute for Studies of Society, Economics and Environment (iSEE).

We would like to express our gratitude to the experts and staff at the United Nations programs in Vietnam, and the staff at Institute for Social, Economic and Environmental Research (iSEE) for their dedicated support and advice to us during the campaign.

IT'S T TIME would like to express special gratitude to the 33 transgender and gender diverse community members and supporters who shared their personal stories to make the campaign a success.

Our thanks and appreciation also go to our colleagues at IT'S T TIME for always being enthusiastic, united and committed to completing the campaign in the best way.

Although many efforts have been made throughout the implementation process, there may still be limitations and shortcomings. We look forward to receiving feedback and guidance from colleagues and readers of the collection.







# Story #1: THE JOURNEY OF MINH TU



#Happybeginning

**Minh Tu**  
Transgender man

*"Once, I was assisting two young customers, then suddenly there was a customer who was over 40 approaching me and asking me very bluntly, "Are you a boy or a girl?". At that time, I hadn't taken testosterone yet, so I had no choice but to say I was a girl. She immediately grabbed my chest to confirm if what I said was true or not and then left, leaving me and the other two customers astonished. I was really shocked, but as an employee, I had to continue and try to get the job done."*





# THE JOURNEY OF MINH TU



*“Once, I was assisting two young customers, then suddenly there was a customer who was over 40 approaching me and asking me very bluntly, “Are you a boy or a girl?”. At that time, I hadn't taken testosterone yet, so I had no choice but to say I was a girl. She immediately grabbed my chest to confirm if what I said was true or not and then left, leaving me and the other two customers astonished. I was really shocked, but as an employee, I had to continue and try to get the job done.”*

---

Since I was a child, I have already had special affection for girls, but I didn't think I was different. I secretly liked girls but never confessed to them. When I was in 8th grade, there was a girl in my class who had a “masculine” personality like mine (although she still looked like a girl) and boldly showed her affection for another girl. Looking at her, I was motivated. I mustered up my courage to write a letter to the girl I liked. One time, she called me “anh” (a Vietnamese pronoun for men) , and that made me really happy.

I came out to my family when I was just a little kid. My mom and I only had each other. Whenever I had a crush on someone, I would come home and tell my mom about it. So maybe somehow my mom already realized that I liked girls. When I was in 7th grade, my mom asked me, “You like girls, don't you?”. At that moment, I was too stunned to answer. Then I said, “Yes”. My mom didn't scold me, she just said, “I'm afraid you'll suffer”. At that time, she thought I was a lesbian.

As I grew up, I did more research [to understand myself better]. To be able to live as my true self, five years ago, I started using hormones and then got chest surgery. I joined FTM Vietnam and Transguy support social groups to talk to and learn from other trans men who share similar experiences. [...] My hormone checks in Thailand went smoothly without any issues, but when I returned to Viet Nam, it was quite challenging to find someone to administer my hormone injections. Anyway, overall, it wasn't too daunting. For my chest surgery, there were no major problems since I chose surgeons who have had experience in doing transgender surgeries. Nevertheless, during my company's routine health check-ups, some healthcare staff would refer to me as “chi!” (Vietnamese pronoun for women) based on the gender in my identification document. This made my colleagues burst into



laughter. Then when I showed up and corrected them, they even yelled out, “Are you sure [that you are a man]?” several times, which made me feel very uncomfortable. Since then, I got very anxious whenever I had to go for a routine health check-up. I am quite reluctant to use public healthcare services because of that reason.

Throughout my journey of discovering myself and affirming my gender identity using medical interventions, I wish there were a professional psychological counselor to guide me. It would have been better than facing it all alone. Even though my mother and friends support me wholeheartedly, they cannot fully comprehend what a transgender person needs.

In the working environment, I have to face other people’s scrutiny. After graduating and entering the workforce, I decided to change my appearance by dressing in male clothing and cutting my hair short. But this made finding a job quite difficult. Once, a friend introduced me to a sales position at a mineral water company. After the interview, they informed me that their boss “didn’t accept someone like me”. When I worked as a tour guide at an amusement park, I hadn’t started taking testosterone yet, so my voice was still quite feminine in contrast to my appearance. Rather than paying attention to what I was saying, most customers were only curious about whether I was a man or a woman. It made me feel quite disheartened.

Once, I was assisting two young customers, then suddenly there was a customer who was over 40 approaching me and asking me very bluntly, “Are you a boy or a girl?”. At that time, I hadn’t taken testosterone yet, so I had no choice but to say I was a girl. She immediately grabbed my chest to confirm if what I said was true or not and then left, leaving me and the other two customers astonished. I was really shocked, but as an employee, I had to continue and try to get the job done.

Too many work-related complications arose just because my voice didn’t match my appearance. This led me to start taking testosterone, even though I knew it would have a significant impact on my health. After the first dose of testosterone, my voice became significantly deeper, and almost everyone started seeing me as a man, which made it easier for me to do my job. However, there were some male colleagues who knew about my transgender identity and continuously asked questions, made rude comments and teased me.

In addition, I also had challenges when carrying out administrative procedures or accessing public services. Afraid that the officials might be confused about my gender, I always inform them in advance that the

gender on my documents is female. They would often confirm my gender again and give me eye rolls. Once, when I was registering a business, my gender was mistakenly recorded as male, so I had to go to the business registration office to correct it, and had to explain myself to the staff. But it was genuinely frustrating because they said they only recognized what was on the outside and what was on the citizen ID card to issue documents.

I hope that the Gender Affirmation Law will soon be adopted so that transgender persons like me can have equal rights and face fewer difficulties when participating in society.





## Story #2:

# “RESPECTED AS WHAT WE FEEL”



#Happybeginning

**Long**  
**Bisexual transgender man**

*“Over time, I've become less rigid in my understanding of what it means to be a man or a woman, as the traits associated with one gender today may belong to another gender at different times. It is all set up. I just need to feel like a man, that's enough. I feel a sense of joy when others use my preferred pronouns and take the time to listen to my personal experiences related to my gender identity. I experience a genuine sense of respect for who I am, just as I feel”.*



## “RESPECTED AS WHAT WE FEEL”



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Ever since I was a kid, I've perceived that the image of a woman has consistently been characterized by those around me as being gentle, graceful, and feminine. I myself don't fit into that mold, so I rarely see myself as a woman. When I do, it tends to be more aligned with the concept of a "strong" woman. I admire strong and robust characters, whether female or male, as I consider them positive role models and benchmarks for masculinity. I've noticed that men often tend to be more outspoken and seem “more right” in various situations.

The older I get, the more I hate certain aspects of my female body, such as having breasts, experiencing periods, and being shorter than the boys in my class. I tried to act as masculine as possible back then. Now I find it funny because society often assumes that men should conform to certain behaviors, even though they are both sexist and contribute to toxic masculinity. During this period, I still identified as a girl, but I felt distinct from the women around me.

The first time I fell in love was in 10th grade. At that time, I fell in love with a girl. At first I thought I was a lesbian, until I found out on Facebook and met other friends who were also LGBTQ+ that I learned about the concept of transgender men. For the first time, I found a word that truly defined who I am and how I feel about myself. Lately, I've come to understand that I might also have attractions towards men, alongside my feelings for women. Over time, I've become less rigid in my understanding of what it means to be a man or a woman, as the traits associated with one gender today may belong to another gender at different





times. It is all set up. I just need to feel like a man, that's enough. I feel a sense of joy when others use my preferred pronouns and take the time to listen to my personal experiences related to my gender identity. I experience a genuine sense of respect for who I am, just as I feel.

Long's sharing about the draft of Gender Affirmation Law:

The revised 2015 Civil Code (effective from 2017) has mentioned transgender people for the first time, but after 8 years there is still no specific guidance on gender change, both in terms of medical intervention and legal procedures. Seeing many transgender people around me still struggling to change their gender on official documents fills me with impatience and sadness. I also worry that if I ever decide to make such a change in the future, there might not be any protective laws in place, leaving me uncertain about what steps to take.

I hesitate a lot. I truly wish for the law to be passed quickly to protect transgender individuals and promote their visibility in society. However, perhaps it's safest when people have a better understanding and a more sympathetic perspective toward us. What I'm most concerned about is if a bill is passed but there are too many opponents, will it endanger transgender people? I'm also wondering whether or not I should accept the current provisions, such as requiring intervention to be passed or not, because they do offer support to a portion of transgender people and are more likely to get approved. However, I'm concerned that changing the law will be a costly and lengthy process, demanding both financial resources and considerable effort.

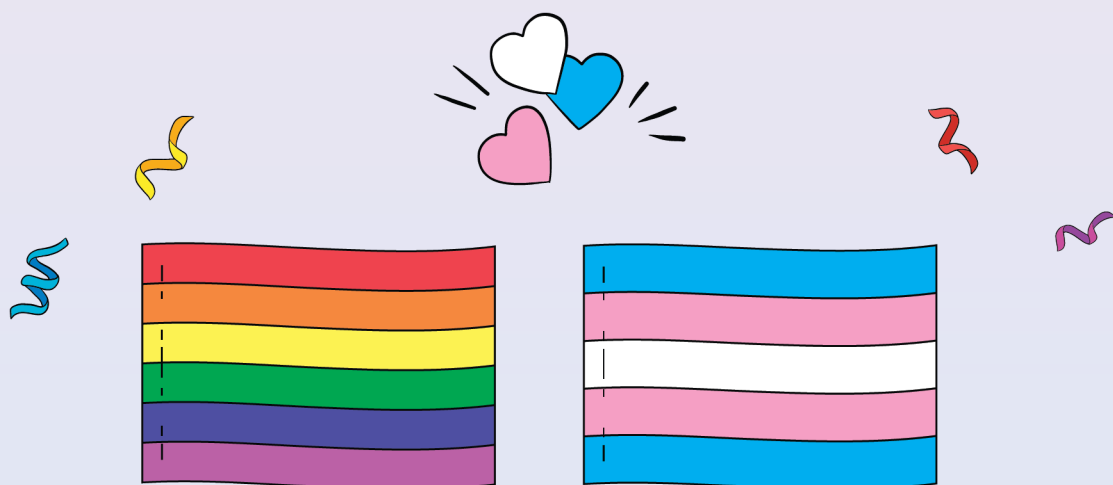
With the specific provisions of the draft law, I have the following wishes:

"- Regarding the mandatory medical intervention requirement: I propose removing this rule. Transgender individuals are those whose gender identity differs from their birth sex, and it's not necessary for them to undergo medical procedures. Keeping this requirement may perpetuate the misconception that transgender people need medical intervention, which could exclude those who lack the means or health conditions for such procedures. (In the case of forced intervention: absolutely no requirement for full intervention)."

- There should be a law that ensures individuals who have undergone interventions abroad are entitled to the same benefits as those who have had domestic interventions (recognition, name change, etc.).



- Continuing to recognize those who underwent gender-related procedures before the law was implemented.
- No mandatory cohabitation. If someone chooses to cohabit, is there any legal documentation (from an authorized agency, etc.) that guarantees their access to services and employment, while still being recognized and receiving any associated gender-related benefits?
- You do not need to be single to be recognized as transgender, however this would conflict with the current Law on Marriage & Family which does not recognize same-sex marriage. "I hope the law changes soon to better support transgender individuals."
- Quit the council. It's unnecessary for a council to deliberate for up to 6 months and take a vote to decide on an individual's right to change gender when that is their own feeling. No one knows you better than yourself. Such voting only makes citizens' self-determination subject to others' decisions. Moreover, establishing a council for every application will lead to insufficient human resources, especially in remote or challenging areas
- The appropriate age for hormonal use and gender affirmation surgery is 18."





### Story #3:

**"IS WANTING TO BE A BOY A HUGE SIN?"**



**Vecky**  
Transgender man

#Happybeginning

*"I once contemplated ending my own life because of my body."*



## "IS WANTING TO BE A BOY A HUGE SIN?"



*"I once contemplated ending my own life because of my body."*

---

The story began when I was very young, and I deeply sensed something very different about me, but I didn't know how to express it. All I knew was that I had always felt very lonely and guilty because all the girls around me, without exception, loved and cared for their bodies so much, whereas I despised mine terribly, yet I didn't know why.

It wasn't until I turned 16 that I first encountered the concept of "gender dysphoria," it was like my life entered a new chapter. I finally understood that all this time, I wasn't abnormal or sick; I was going through a stage that many people like me had gone through and were still going through. I recognized myself as a transgender man, so I always loathed my super-feminine body so much.

I began to have hope for the future, officially using the label "transgender man" and joining transgender communities in Vietnam. At the same time, I made plans for medical interventions to fulfill my dream of returning to my actual version. However, the deeper I delved into this, the more hopeful I became and the more disappointed I felt. I realized that we not only have to face gender dysphoria but also the challenge of overcoming it. Yes, I knew that I was suffering, and I learned how to overcome it, but can I overcome it when medical treatments and interventions for transgender individuals in Vietnam still have many limitations?

To alleviate some of the distress, we can only seek advice and gather information from our community members or endocrinologists, making it difficult to verify safety and accuracy. Furthermore, when seeking endocrinological advice, I often encountered many uncomfortable questions, which made me feel somewhat discriminated against, especially when I revealed that I had romantic feelings for men. Perhaps it's because endocrinologists in Vietnam still lack sufficient knowledge about gender, so to them, people like me, transgay, seem pretty peculiar.

I consider myself "fortunate" because my appearance and documents still appear feminine, so I haven't encountered many difficulties in administrative procedures or public services. Additionally, I have a wonderful partner who always dedicates time to me and doesn't hesitate to protect me from others. But sometimes, I still feel spleenful and worried about the contrast between my biological sex on identification documents and my masculine appearance, so I have some discriminating situations when using medical services and applying for jobs. Those things really mean a severe limitation for me and many others who are transgender..

Furthermore, the challenges in medical interventions for the transgender community in Vietnam are considerable, so wouldn't it be better if the proposed gender transition law didn't require it?

I genuinely hope the proposed gender transition law will be passed soon, supporting me and many others in the community to return to their true selves.

Thank you for listening to my sharing. I wish you all steadfastness on the journey you have chosen.







**Story #4:**  
**“MY NAME IS DUONG”**



**#Happybeginning**

**Duong**

**Transgender man**

*“The name is something that has haunted me for many years. In everyday life, people around me still use the name I prefer and respect it deeply, but that name does not actually exist on my documents”.*





## “MY NAME IS DUONG”



*“The name is something that has haunted me for many years. In everyday life, people around me still use the name I prefer and respect it deeply, but that name does not actually exist on my documents”.*

---

My name is Duong, this is a new name that appeared on my papers not long ago. My life doesn't have much turbulence, only this name took me years of effort and time to obtain.

Ever since I was a child, I always wanted a name different from the one my family gave me at birth, that's why I searched for many different names. It all began in middle school when, each year, I discovered a new name for myself. However, it wasn't until my early years of college in 2013 that I settled on the name Duong. Since then, the desire to change my name has grown stronger within me.

I have an amusing story about why I changed my name. Back when I was thinking about it, I posted a message on Facebook, visible only to my college friends. I asked them if my name suited me and if I should change it to better match how I looked. My friends were really supportive and happy about it. It's been almost 10 years now, but I still remember and appreciate their encouragement.

When I decided to change my legal name in college, I began searching for information about the process and reached out to people who could assist me in changing the name. It felt quite overwhelming at the time, and even five years later, when I finally submitted my first official application, the process remained challenging.

Before I officially submitted my documents to change my name, my mother helped me inquire with the local judicial officers in both the commune and district. Unfortunately, they all told me it couldn't be done. Despite their discouragement, in 2018, during my final year of university, I decided to apply for a name change. Like many in the community, my motivation was rooted in the



belief that my name could impact my honor and rights (1). Upon visiting the District People's Committee office, officials rejected my request, partly because my birth certificate lacked a valid registration number. They suggested I obtain a new birth certificate from the commune, along with a name change, since my existing certificate wasn't legally valid. However, when I approached the commune officials, they said they could only proceed if the district approved the name change. Realizing the slim chances, I reluctantly returned home. After the first time, I realized that I was lacking in preparing the documents for the name change.

In 2021, I attempted to change my name for the second time, this time with the assistance of a legal consultant, and my documents were much more carefully prepared. However, when I applied directly to the one-stop department, they consistently returned my documents, stating that they couldn't proceed. They were candid about the fact that, unless it was for the tradition of maintaining the same name for three generations, my name change wouldn't be possible. Furthermore, they explained that they couldn't accept the request without the presence of the main personnel from the civil status section.

Discouraged and depressed!

Nonetheless, my consultant provided encouragement, emphasizing the importance of submitting the documents to keep the process of changing my name moving forward. So, I took another day off to submit the application and meet in person with the head of the civil status section at the one-stop department (2). This time was just like last time, I just presented my request to change my name but they refused and told me to go home even though they hadn't even looked at my profile. As a shy person, it is difficult for me to express my desires concisely. The best I could muster was to request they examine my profile before making a decision about my name change. If they couldn't approve it, I asked for a written rejection. Despite their review, they maintained that my case lacked sufficient grounds for a name change but refused to provide written confirmation. Returning home again with failure, but this time I have determined that this name change process will take a long time and I must persevere day by day.

During that period, I not only submitted my application directly to the district's one-stop department, but also in two other forms: by post and through the public service portal. Applying through the portal seemed promising, given its convenience and suitability for my schedule when I

was away from work. However, I was left disheartened as no response came through, it felt like sending my request into a void. With the postal application, there was a hiccup when my mother forgot to register for delivery confirmation. Despite the post office confirming receipt, I endured a lengthy and fruitless wait. After failing to submit my application through all three methods, I was advised to initiate a petition and complaint process. This marked my official entry into a series of petitions and complaints to various authorities, all in pursuit of the same goal: asserting our legal rights to change our names.

In July 2022, I received my first call from the district's justice department. They informed me that they hadn't received my name change application until they saw my petition, realizing that I had a pending request. During that meeting, the district judicial officer assured me that they would send an official letter to request the department's opinion on my name change case. If it couldn't be approved, they would provide a written rejection. However, they didn't provide any information about the expected waiting time. Over the next six months, I filed numerous petitions and complaints with the help of a legal consultant, sending them to various authorities, but received no responses. Frustrated with the lack of progress, I had to take time off from work to meet with the district president in person. Throughout that process, I had been assured of receiving a written response since the department had replied to my previous document. However, despite waiting patiently for a considerable duration, no response came. In the end, I had to reach out to all the involved parties to inquire about the status of my case, and they finally agreed to let me change my name."

When I made the decision to change my name and middle name, I received a lot of advice cautioning me about the complexities and potential hassles of updating, verifying, and authenticating various documents. However, I believed that despite the challenges and the many documents that needed modification, it was worth it. The "old" name had been causing too many issues and had a significant impact on my life. Having a name that matches my appearance was truly essential to me.

Now, as I hold this A4 Sheet in my hand, I feel a deep sense of satisfaction after many hardships. When I was employed, I proposed using my desired name within the company, and fortunately, everyone supported this change. However, my shyness lingers, and I can't help but feel like a burden to my colleagues, as they have to remember my different name



for various tasks like bookkeeping or applying for benefits. This self-doubt often makes me think I'm causing trouble for others. I also denied many other benefits just because of my name, such as getting a passport, using health insurance services, etc. Compared to medical intervention, my name holds far greater significance for me. While physical attributes can be concealed, there's no way to hide one's name. "The name is something that has haunted me for many years. In everyday life, people around me still use the name I prefer and respect it deeply, but that name does not actually exist on my documents".

If there had been a Gender Affirmation Law when I changed my name, the process might not have been as challenging. My hope is that when the Gender Affirmation Law is enacted, it will include streamlined procedures to ensure convenience for people like me and others in the community who genuinely need it.







## Story #5: TU'S STORY



#Happybeginning

*"They forced me to wear dresses, grow my hair long, and act "femininely" without explaining why I had to do that. There was a period when I had been abused by my dad and starved by my mom."*



## THE STORY OF TU



***“They forced me to wear dresses, grow my hair long, and act “femininely” without explaining why I had to do that. There was a period when I had been abused by my dad and starved by my mom...”***

---

Hello everyone, I'm Tu from Gia Lai. Today, I am here to share my story and hear others' stories in the community.

The journey of discovering my gender identity can be said to start very early. Ever since I was young, I realized that I had many things different from other friends. When I was in 6th grade, I secretly liked a girl. But at that time, I was still too naive and didn't understand what love was. Bringing those feelings that had many questions, I immediately told my parents after school. From that moment, I started coming out and embarking on finding my authentic self. At first, maybe my parents thought she was just a very dear friend, but after I explained that it was love, not friendship, my mom started to get angry and overreact. Even though my parents had known and liked her before, after hearing that, they immediately forbade me from playing with her and told me not to love girls. From that event, my parents no longer let me freely choose how to dress like before. They forced me to wear dresses, grow my hair long, and act "femininely" without explaining why I had to do that. There was a period when I had been abused by my dad and starved by my mom. I was too young and needed to rely on my parents to survive, so I only knew to follow along but still protested in silence. After entering high school, although I was not openly discriminated against, I still encountered some difficulties. The school's rule was that female students must wear Ao dai, but I only wore it when I was at home, and when I went to school, I immediately changed into pants. The teacher often told my parents about my uniform violation, but I kept doing what I wanted.

I had still thought I had been a lesbian in high school until I came to Saigon so that I could get access to more knowledge. And from then on, I knew who I was. I have been a collaborator for ICS for two years. During that time, I learned, interacted, and absorbed many new things, and

then I recognized I was a transguy. Since about 7 or 8 years ago, my family has accepted me and called me "a guy." Whenever I have a girlfriend, I will take her to my home to introduce her to my parents, and they love her. I don't know how parents feel in their minds, but at least they respect and believe in my choice.

Even though my family, friends, colleagues, and people around me have gradually accepted who I am, and they are comfortable with it, I still encounter several obstacles to accessing medical - administrative - and public services. For example, when I go to the public toilet, I get confused about which side to go to. When I go to the women's side, the girls often scream in fear; in contrast, I feel unsafe on the male's side. Sometimes, when using public services, some people even openly discriminate against me; their attitude is terrible, and they even ask me if I am a boy or a girl in a very sarcastic way. They often ask about delicate issues such as if I am in a relationship with a girl, how I can have a baby, and so on, even though they are not close or acquainted. I feel uncomfortable with these kinds of situations. Fortunately, I get a lot of support from my family and acquaintances, while haters ignore them and live their lives.

In love, I still have many worries. Up to now, I have experienced many relationships with straight girls. Many times, I attended my ex-girlfriend's wedding. Saying it's not hurt is not honest; who doesn't feel sad after breaking up? I'm transgender, and all my ex-girlfriends are almost heterosexual. They will still love heterosexual men or another trans person. Transgender people will have many difficulties having sex, maintaining long-term committed relationships, letting their family accept this relationship, getting married, and being protected by law. I need a small family with a wife and children. I also hope that The Transgender Bill will soon be issued so that I and many other trans people can have their rights protected by the law.

Thank you for listening to my story.





## Story #6:

**“I AM A PARENT, A STEADFAST  
ALLY OF MY CHILD  
- A TRANSGENDER WOMAN”**



**Trang**

**Parent of a transgender woman**

**#Happybeginning**

*"Perhaps it was my openness that made my child's journey of self-discovery feel so natural, to the point where she once candidly said, 'Mom, don't expect grandchildren from me; I'll never marry a woman and have children; I'll marry a man.'"*



## **“I AM A PARENT, A STEADFAST ALLY OF MY CHILD, A TRANSGENDER WOMAN.”**



*"Perhaps it was my openness that made my child's journey of self-discovery feel so natural, to the point where she once candidly said, 'Mom, don't expect grandchildren from me; I'll never marry a woman and have children; I'll marry a man.'"*

Hello, everyone. My name is Trang. I'm not just a parent but a fierce advocate for my child - a courageous transgender woman. I've known that my child was different from other boys for a long time. From her close friendships with girls to her blushing awkwardness around boys she liked, she would confide in me, sharing her innermost feelings.

"Or is it because, when I was pregnant, I secretly wished for a daughter, and now my child is embracing this path?" That question would often haunt me as I watched my child grow. Although I never imposed any restrictions on her, I couldn't help but feel a sense of surprise. Possibly any parents in my shoes would comprehend this. When the child you once held in your arms, the child whose future you repeatedly imagined, challenges what you previously believed to be inevitable, it's not easy.

For a while, I held onto hope that, as my child entered adolescence, male hormones would assert themselves, and she would change. But when she turned 12, I realized that what I needed to do was to provide her with the freedom to explore her true self and stand by her side by understanding her needs and desires. Because of the nature of my profession, I also invested time in educating myself and participated in training programs related to gender. Perhaps it was my openness that made my child's journey of self-discovery feel so natural, to the point where she once candidly said, 'Mom, don't expect grandchildren from me; I'll never marry a woman and have children; I'll marry a man.'

Since I committed to being by my child's side, I've made it my mission to create a safe and accepting environment for her journey of self-discovery. I've engaged in conversations with her teachers, urging them to be vigilant about discrimination and bias within the school community. I've patiently explained to relatives that my child's gender expression is entirely normal, and





what matters most is her happiness. When my child reached the 7th grade, I allowed her to paint her nails, use perfume, or even wear my clothes. I had faith that this wouldn't distract her from her studies, for she's a remarkably intelligent and diligent young lady. Consequently, her Literature teacher, who was also the head of her class, wondered why I indulged her so. I shared my perspective: "I believe that when a child is encouraged to do things that bring them joy, foster confidence, and receive support from adults, they excel in their studies and accomplish more than what adults can imagine. By maximizing a child's energy in this way, we empower them to achieve their full potential." Following our conversation, the teacher became more open-minded and even promised my child that if she won a city-level competition, she would receive a gift of her choice. I understood that change wouldn't happen overnight, but in the end, my child gained acceptance from her family and the support and camaraderie of many classmates and teachers.

However, I know that there will be moments when my child has no one to lean on and must confront discrimination and bias alone. During a business trip far from home, I received a call from my child, her voice laden with distress. She had just been ridiculed and insulted by classmates while she was alone. She mentioned feeling sad and disheartened due to the teasing, but I sensed that she had been wounded deeply and felt utterly vulnerable as she confronted this prejudice alone. Normally, my child would demonstrate her strength by brushing off such comments, showing that they didn't affect her. But the absence of friends and timely maternal encouragement seemed to push her to her limits.

As I looked at my child lying on her bed all day, refusing to eat, my heart ached for her. At that moment, my sole wish was for my child to have a normal life like anyone else, because right now, she shouldn't have to worry about the basics of life such as food, clothing, and shelter. Instead, the primary concern should be how society perceives her. I hope that society's awareness will evolve towards greater acceptance so that individuals like my child aren't pitied but rather recognized for their capabilities. They should have equal access to all opportunities in healthcare, education, and employment and become valuable contributors to society, just like everyone else. Furthermore, I hope the Transgender Bill can be enacted and implemented promptly, with particular attention to ensuring equality by eliminating the requirement for medical intervention. Not every transgender person has the financial and health resources necessary for such procedures.





## Story #7:

"MY FAMILY IS WONDERFUL NOW"



#Happybeginning

**Kien**  
Transgender man

*"My mother told our relatives,  
'If someday he wants to get married, I will  
organize a proper wedding for him.'"*



## "MY FAMILY IS WONDERFUL NOW"



***"My mother told our relatives, 'If someday he wants to get married, I will organize a proper wedding for him.'"***

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That's what my mother said to me. Looking back on our path now, I feel luckier and more appreciative of the happiness that life has bestowed upon me.

I used to think I was a weird kid since I only liked playing with boys, and in whatever sport, I had to come out on top, never willing to lose to any boy. When I first saw the Thai film "YES OR NO," I assumed I was a lesbian. I didn't realize I was a transguy until later when the Internet became more widely available, and I could learn more. The yearning to be a man, to live freely as a man, blazed inside me from then on.

With that secret in my heart, I never officially came out to my family as "I am transgender" or confessed to my attraction to girls.

Then, one day, my elder sister unexpectedly called and said, "I heard you like girls. Even I, who have left society behind, can't accept it, so how can our parents accept you?"

Although I had already cut my hair short, my parents insisted on making me wear girls' clothes, buying dresses, and growing my hair long. Despite my complaints, my parents resisted my identification in the following years. Furthermore, my parents would moan at every family meal, leaving me unhappy and reluctant to return home for an extended period, even though I had been away from home since 8th grade.

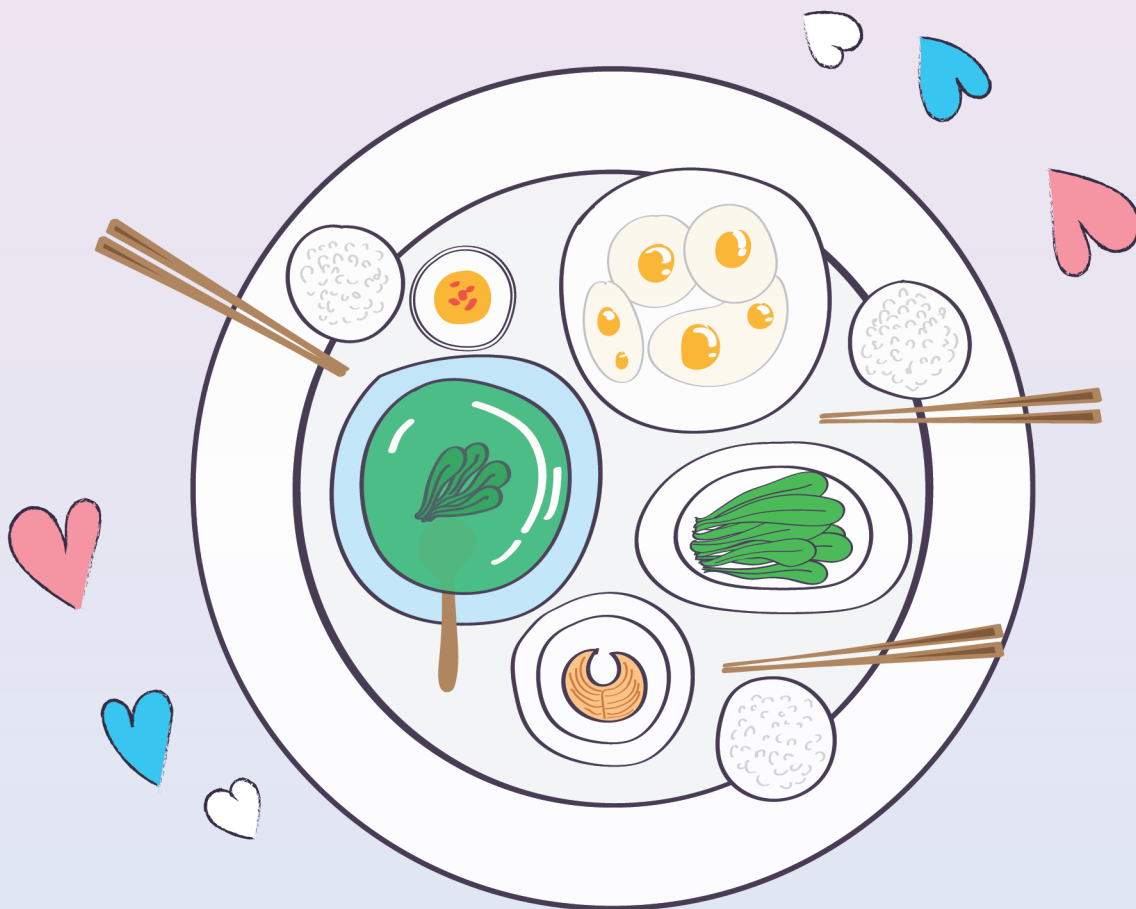
Once again, luck smiled upon me when my second sister became a close ally. I had no idea when or how she had found out. But one day, she told our parents, "In society, it's competitive and exhausting for him. There's only one family to take him in. You always say that."

Coincidentally, at my workplace, there was a lesbian colleague whose family forced her to marry a man. She eventually agreed to make her parents happy, but when she got to her husband's house, she caused

commotion and was sent back by her husband's family. After hearing my story, my mother tried to reassure me, saying, "If you ever turn out like that, just tell me." No matter who you are, you will always be my child." I remained silent, not saying anything. But after that incident, my family became more open-minded. My mother even told our relatives, "If he ever wants to marry a wife, I will organize a proper wedding for him."

Looking back on the journey and the challenges I've overcome, I only feel light-hearted and slowly sense a simple, overflowing happiness within me, quietly telling me,

**"MY FAMILY IS WONDERFUL NOW."**





## Story #8:

**“WE CONTINUE TO EMBRACE AND IMPROVE OURSELVES EVERY DAY, LIKE A BEAUTIFUL MOSAIC OF DIFFERENT COLORS.”**



**Linh Macha**  
**Pansexual Transgender**

**#Happybeginning**

*“I have experienced sexual harassment in the workplace. When we first met, I was thought to be a straight girl. But after hearing my voice, they started making advances, even crossing boundaries. I was lucky to have experienced professional management at my workplace, which resulted in a fair resolution of the issue.”*



**“WE CONTINUE TO EMBRACE AND IMPROVE OURSELVES EVERY DAY, LIKE A BEAUTIFUL MOSAIC OF DIFFERENT COLORS - AS LINH MACHA'S CURRENT VERSION.”**



*“I have experienced sexual harassment in the workplace. When we first met, I was thought to be a straight girl. But after hearing my voice, they started making advances, even crossing boundaries. I was lucky to have experienced professional management at my workplace, which resulted in a fair resolution of the issue.”*

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To reach where I am today, living as my true self, I've gone through a period of learning to accept myself. It's been a fascinating and happy journey! I have put in lots of effort to better myself and lead a more positive and mature life. I strongly believe that you'll always feel proud and righteous when you've demonstrated the determination and effort to better yourself, no matter the praise or criticism.

Participating in programs of the LGBT community in Nam Dinh, such as offline gatherings, Viet Pride, and many other activities, has helped me get acquainted with my true gender. Over time, I grew comfortable with others referring to me by my newfound name, which brought me great joy and pleasure. The process of revealing my true self to my family was relatively easy. Also, miscommunications and amusing anecdotes will inevitably occur when making new friends. All those puzzle pieces, starting with making friends and then accepting and improving myself day by day, have formed a multicolored mosaic, just like Linh Macha is now.

I don't know if it's because I'm inherently strong or because the city of Nam Dinh, where I live, isn't too hectic. However, I've never experienced bullying, discrimination, or severe prejudice. However, I have experienced sexual harassment in the workplace. When we first met, they thought I was a straight girl. But after hearing my voice, they started making advances, even crossing boundaries. Fortunately, the place I worked at had professional management, so the issue was resolved fairly.

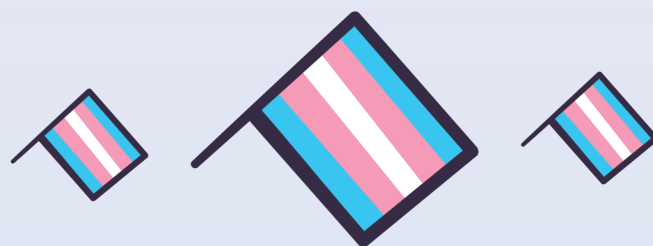


For our transgender community, perhaps medical intervention is one of the most emphasized and discussed topics. I haven't undergone any intervention or paid much attention to it. I have not faced any challenges regarding administrative procedures or public services, so everything has been smooth sailing.

Being someone who has come out and has researched medical interventions to some extent, I would feel great if there was someone to consult with and receive advice. However, at present, information within the community is mainly passed on through word of mouth or posted as queries in group forums for mutual reference. From this, I realized that a significant barrier in this matter is the lack of verified information and limited access to sources within the community. Furthermore, trustworthy counseling services for the transgender community have not been widely shared or officially established. Coming out and medical intervention are both significant milestones. Therefore, having a counselor would prevent us from feeling lost amid the information about medical interventions.

Honestly, confusion and self-doubt were also my feelings when I learned that transgender individuals in Vietnam are not allowed to change their gender on official documents. Therefore, enacting laws or expediting the Transgender Bill process to protect the transgender community is essential. Additionally, I hope that every province will have counseling and support organizations to help answer questions for our community. For example, helping the community understand gender better, how to come out to parents and family without causing too much shock, what medical interventions are safe for individuals with specific characteristics, and more. Every citizen has the right to seek happiness, so I hope our country can create conditions for people in our community to be happier in this very country.

Thank you, IT'S T TIME, and everyone for listening!





## Story #9:

**“THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY WILL DEVELOP AND CONTRIBUTE GREATLY AFTER THE LAW IS PROMOTED AND HAS A LEGAL CORRIDOR STRONG ENOUGH TO PROTECT THEIR DEVELOPMENT”**



**#Happybeginning**

**Han**

**Transgender woman**

*"From the day I realized my authentic self, I felt like I was given more energy. I'm happy to be myself...Even now I still use a male disguise when I'm out. However, whenever I'm at home, I usually wear women's clothes in my own room - the place where I can be most comfortable."*



**“THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY WILL DEVELOP AND  
CONTRIBUTE GREATLY AFTER THE LAW IS PROMOTED  
AND HAVE A LEGAL CORRIDOR STRONG ENOUGH TO  
PROTECT THEIR DEVELOPMENT”**



*"From the day I realized my authentic self, I felt like I was given more energy. I'm happy to be myself...Even now I still use a male disguise when I'm out. However, whenever I'm at home, I usually wear women's clothes in my own room - the place where I can be most comfortable."*

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I am M.N Ngoc Han. I was born and raised in a traditional family, living with my parents and grandparents in Ho Chi Minh City. Since childhood, I have been fascinated with stretchy fabrics and use them to wrap around my body instead of body-hugging dresses. There were a few times when my grandfather discovered me. He seemed to disagree with this action but not too harshly. That hobby gradually grew up with me. During my high school years, I only thought that my hobby was cross-dressing. Seeing girls in traditional ao dai made my dream burn more and more. In my first year of college, I bought myself an ao dai. At the beginning of my third year of college, I joined a chat group with transgender women, and they helped me realize my gender identity.

From the day I realized my authentic self, I felt like I was given more energy and happy to be myself. I started learning makeup and bought more dresses to wear with friends. Although, until now, I still use a male disguise when I'm out. However, whenever I'm at home, I usually wear women's clothes in my room - where I can be most comfortable.

Being a strong person and paying little attention to the slander and gossip of those around me, I always believe that only family is the most important, and other people, in addition to criticism, help nothing in my life. The current difficulties when living with a female gender identity are not too many because I have not decided to come out to my family and society fully. I want to come out entirely as a female when I am financially independent. I have only one goal: self-growth, learning, and equipping myself with professional knowledge, which is essential.

My primary major is pharmacy, so I realize that the guidelines for transgender hormone treatment for the trans community are not yet unified. In addition, students and even medical teachers lack knowledge about gender identity and sexual orientation, so their thinking about sexual diversity is still backward and not open—the above leads to countless difficulties for the transgender community and the LGBTI+ community when accessing medical examinations.

In my opinion, change needs to come from the top down. For example, the Ministry of Health should issue regulations guiding medical examination and treatment for the transgender community. The influence from the top is enough to change the conservative mindset that has existed for a long time from medical staff towards transgender people when they seek medical examination and treatment and to impose penalties if there is discrimination against the community. LGBTI+. In addition, there should be strict measures on prescribing and using hormone drugs, including them in the health insurance list to make it easier for disadvantaged people in the community to access them.

Allowing marriage registration for the LGBTI+ community will positively impact society. Couples will quickly register their children's birth, and only when the child has a birth registration will they receive social benefits. Recruitment exams for public employees and private sector companies and corporations should focus on protecting human rights and equal treatment between groups of people in society (cisgender and transgender, heterosexual and sexually diverse). Tighten sanctions and handle acts that insult or offend the LGBTI+ community. Besides, I think it would be better for the LGBTI+ community to adopt children, which is both humane and helps society reduce burdens and difficulties, assisting parents to reduce the substantial financial burden from birth. artificial insemination. At the same time, adopted children also develop comprehensively due to receiving love from their parents.

The LGBTI+ community is diverse and has much talent. When the ambiguity is removed, it is like a spring that has been compressed for a long time and springs up when its weight is removed; it will bounce very high. The same goes for the LGBTI+ community. They will develop and contribute immensely after the law is promulgated and a legal corridor is strong enough to protect their development.





**Story #10:  
"JOSEPH'S HAPPY BEGINNINGS"**



**Joseph**  
Transgender man

**#Happybeginning**

*"For me, marriage and holding a wedding is an everlasting commitment to our love story, a pride in being recognized just like everyone else, with a life like any other heterosexual couple."*





## JOSEPH'S HAPPY BEGINNINGS



***“For me, marriage and holding a wedding is an everlasting commitment to our love story, a pride in being recognized just like everyone else, with a life like any other heterosexual couple.”***

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In 2008, when the Internet was kinda new to me, I visited a website called Les King. After learning the definition, reading stories of predecessors and watching movies related to LGBTQIA+ topics on websites, I realized that I belong to the Trans Guy group.

Turning 16, I cut my hair and confided in my mother that I liked girls, but my parents strongly objected, verbally abused me, threatened me, and confiscated my phone. When I went to college, I came out again, but my family still did not approve. One month before the wedding, with the terrible refusal from my flesh and blood, I left home, determined to hold the wedding in Saigon. However, a happy beginning occurred to me as my family finally gradually accepted the fact that I am transgender and agreed to attend my wedding. My wife's family is the total opposite. Since she came out from her teenage, it was quite easy for her to accept me.

We have known each other for about 3 years, and have been married for more than 1 year. The moments I find most memorable in my life are probably these moments:

1- For the first time, a girl (heterosexual) accepted my feelings and completely sympathized with me being transgender, but both of us were not accepted by our families. We were both 20 at that time.

2- Finally, after 10 years of planning to have breast surgery, when I had enough money, on my 24th birthday, I ran away from home and took a week off from work to fulfil that wish in Hanoi.

3- All my family, relatives, friends, and colleagues supported and attended my wedding even though before that I was severely discriminated against by my own family. And that wedding was like an everlasting commitment to our love story, a pride in being recognized as normal people, with a normal life like any other heterosexual couple.

For me, marriage and wedding planning are a lasting commitment to our love story, a pride in being recognized just like everyone else, with a life like any other heterosexual couple. However, we cannot register our marriage yet because there is no law regulating this with details. Not being able to register our marriage means that we will have no other choice but to leave either mother/father's info blank if we have children (by intervention). Transgender man will not be recognized as the child's Father (because society only recognizes me as the Mother according to my biological sex). In addition, when we own property during our marriage, it is not protected by law under the Marriage Law.

Regarding property issues in marriage. If there is common property, I feel that both have the responsibility to preserve, preserve and take more care of family life, especially if there will be more connection in life. I have not experienced much in the process of registering joint property because most of them are not very valuable assets. We will agree to name the buyer as the payer, most of the time I will choose to put my wife's name because My birth name is too feminine.

I really want the Gender Change Law to be enacted. I think the right time to promulgate the law is between 2023 and 2030. When the Gender Change Law is passed, transgender people will be able to express their rights in many fields, from health, Education, public services and further social discrimination will be somewhat frozen.





## Story #11: KARSON'S STORY



#Happybeginning

**Karson**  
Transgender man

*"If you are not accepted by society, and your parents do not accept you, people don't accept you! Then, who are you in the world? We know that you're a good person and our family is not flagitious, don't be afraid of that much. No matter what people say, just live your life, as long as you live the happiest life. Do not do anything to hurt others and do not do anything bad to society."*



## THE STORY OF KARSON



***"If you are not accepted by society, and your parents do not accept you, people don't accept you! Then, who are you in the world? We know that you're a good person and our family is not flagitious, don't be afraid of that much. No matter what people say, just live your life, as long as you live the happiest life. Do not do anything to hurt others and do not do anything bad to society."***

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My most incredible luck on my journey to being myself is having a wonderful family. Since childhood, I liked wearing boy's clothes and often expressed my personality. I had a memorable milestone when I was a senior student. At that time, I officially decided to cut off my long hair, which had accompanied me for over 20 years. My parents were so sad when they knew I was cutting my hair. However, two months later, my father took the initiative to say: "If you are not accepted by society, and your parents do not accept you, people don't accept you! Then, who are you in the world? We know that you're a good person and our family is not flagitious, don't be afraid of that much. No matter what people say, just live your life, as long as you live the happiest life. Do not do anything to hurt others and do not do anything bad to society." I was extremely surprised by what my father said and understood how hard he faced it. Because he worked at government organizations, he was very strict. For them, keeping their appearance is the most significant priority. My father's love and my mother's warmth protected me from damaging slander. Gradually, my parents also ignored the negative words that were said by others. The teachings of Daddy are now profoundly engraved in my mind and have always been guiding principles in my life. I have become an optimistic person and look at everything in a positive way. Nowadays, the world is gradually becoming more civilized and modern. Hence, everything will change constantly. I decided to believe in myself and my kindness.



Currently, I work at a bank in Ho Chi Minh City, a professional working environment. Besides that, with colleagues who are incredibly open-minded to the LGBTI+ community. They care more about what you can do for the organization and how effective your work is. Wearing uniforms is rigidly followed.



Based on my biological sex in registration in the staff records, I was assigned a female suit. After that, I went directly to the Personnel department and asked for a modification into a male outfit. The personnel department lady realized this issue, apologized, and agreed with my male outfit request. From the story above, I want to say to everyone that the world is now flat - a world of openness and quick change; therefore, whatever you want or need, try to share and speak up about your needs to the firm or organization. People will listen and sympathize with us if we communicate clearly and with genuine intentions. If, after expressing your needs, you are still not heard and appreciated, the environment is not appropriate and suitable for development. Please attempt to be brave and actively find a new job that is a more optimal fit for you and respects you. There's a lot of work now, I'm just scared that I won't be able to do it well.

Whether you are cisgender or transgender, the most crucial aspect of a relationship is mutual respect and understanding. My partner and I have a lot of cultural and regional differences, but we don't give up. We frequently converse to analyze each other's comprehension and resolve relationship difficulties. Furthermore, I want to urge everyone not to be so focused on others in any relationship that we forget to love ourselves enough. I'm overjoyed since my present sexual life is going so well. We intended to come out with her parents and encouraged each other to work hard and create a common fortune by starting our own business. When we achieve some success, my girlfriend's family will trust me more.

My girlfriend's family lives in the countryside, so they still don't know about our relationship. However, her relatives in the city already knew; luckily, they were all quite open-minded and very supportive of our relationship. We also considered the scenario if her parents did not accept our love. But we are not too pessimistic. Everything will be resolved satisfactorily if the parties find the reason and devise a reasonable solution. We will not give up quickly because of our love for each other.

I have heard about the Transgender Bill. In my opinion, we should learn from Western countries about how to secure gender and citizen information. In addition, the gender section in the identification documents should be added as an "other" option. Furthermore, in the medical field, there should be specialized clinics to support the transgender community. Raising gender awareness is also a significant way of protecting the community. Protecting the LGBTI+ marriage is a big turning point for everyone in the community to be more confident, have the rights and obligations, and be more responsible in marriage. From there, it creates peace of mind for the district to work and develop.

My last concern is why programs and events in the LGBTI+ community have yet to be widely communicated and promoted to the cisgender-heterosexual community. We call for diversity in life, so community programs and events must also be expanded and clearly informed to cisgender-heterosexual people. All the programs in the LGBTI+ community are not only welcome by us but also open to everyone. From the above actions, when our community develops its connections, people will gradually understand us better and be more open and equal.





## Story #12: NGOC ANH'S STORY



**Ngoc Anh**  
Transgender man

#Happybeginning

*"The procedure for declaring my baby's birth certificate only has the mother's name or the process of entering household registration is also inadequate and cumbersome. We do not receive benefits, maternity insurance, nor personal income tax deductions even though we are both serious citizens."*



## NGOC ANH'S STORY



***"The procedure for declaring my baby's birth certificate only has the mother's name or the process of entering household registration is also inadequate and cumbersome. We do not receive benefits, maternity insurance, nor personal income tax deductions even though we are both serious citizens."***

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Hello, Tờ A4 readers! My name is Ngoc Anh, and I am a transgender man. I am married and currently living and working in Hanoi.

Born and raised in a rural area, the journey to understanding myself, my gender identity, and my sexual orientation was complex. Like other students, I was initially mistaken for being a lesbian because, in 7th grade, I realized I had unique feelings for other girls. Information about LGBT in rural areas in 2004-2005 was minimal, and there was a lot of distorted information. It wasn't until my college years, when I knew about 6+, so I learned and deepened the concepts of gender diversity and gender identity. That was also the time I realized I was a transgender man.

In 2021, my wife and I made the turning point decision to have a baby using IVF. Fortunately, my wife's parents immensely love and understand us. When I returned home to talk to my wife's family, my father said something that touched me and always reminded me, "I don't care what other people say; I only care about you." Later, I discovered more about hormones through the FTM VN site and started using medicine hormones recently.

The process of coming out to my family was challenging. I come from a rural background. My father passed away early, so my mother reluctantly fell into the "single mother" situation. The pressure to raise three sisters to be good human and grow up normally like other girls fell on my mother's back, putting me in a perplexed and lost state. I suffered discrimination from my homeroom teacher and the school during my school years. They know I am different, so they pay more attention to me. My conduct was downgraded to average just because I was absent from a field trip at school. But instead of giving a legitimate explanation, she said that such an assessment was to motivate me and help me improve more. At that time, I could only stay silent and accept. In high school, I felt comfortable and

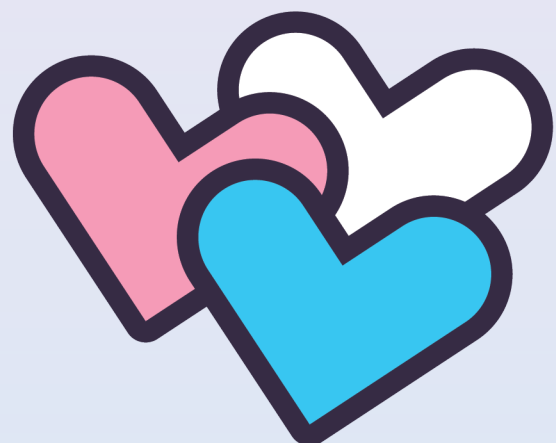


listened to when I was very close to a girl. The adults misunderstood and forbade us from playing together. All these things make me even more reluctant to express myself because I'm afraid my family will disapprove of me and my friends around me will be shunned. The peak was when I was 23 and came out to my mother and family, so it led to the cold war in my home. From daily activities to work and family matters such as getting married and having children, all are invisible pressures that have been placed on my shoulders for many years.

Later, when I went for an interview, I also had to endure evaluation and difficulties from the recruitment committee because of my appearance and personality. The same is true when carrying out administrative procedures. Although I did not receive judgmental or discriminatory looks, I encountered many obstacles. A typical example is the ID card registration process; I changed my name, had to go through many rejections, and presented many more documents to prove my procedure was accepted. The procedure for declaring my baby's birth certificate has the mother's name, and the process of entering household registration needs to be revised and more inconvenient. We do not receive benefits, maternity insurance, or personal income tax deductions even though we are both serious citizens.

As someone who has struggled a lot in learning and acquiring knowledge about sex education, sexual diversity, etc. I understand the importance of being open to receiving wisdom and improving self-awareness. Besides my own experiences, I also have experience working in CSAGA's network. Therefore, primary sex education suits 3rd graders, and learning about gender diversity is ideal for secondary students. This knowledge will soon be popularized and integrated into study programs, education, etc.

Thank you for listening!





## Story #13:

**THAT'S IT! THIS IS THE GENDER  
IDENTITY THAT I HAVE ALWAYS  
BEEN SEARCHING FOR!**



**Ro**  
**Non-binary**

**#Happybeginning**

***“As for me, my “name” is crucial because not only does it help me gain more confidence and pride in being myself, but it also aligns with my gender identity.”***



## **“THAT'S IT! THIS IS THE GENDER IDENTITY THAT I HAVE ALWAYS SEARCHED FOR!”**



***“As for me, my “name” is crucial because not only does it help me gain more confidence and pride in being myself, but it also aligns with my gender identity.”***

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Greetings to everyone who has been following IT'S T TIME fanpage, my name is Ryan, also known as Ro (pronounced as “R” in Vietnamese). I am the first generation of gen Z and currently studying abroad, majoring in Social Sciences in Australia. My story may contain special elements during the process of finding myself and my suitable environment that is suitable based on my gender identity. However, I hope to bring a diversified perspective about gender-diverse people and people with diverse sexual orientations.

As for me, my “name” is crucial because not only does it help me gain more confidence and pride in being myself, but it also aligns with my gender identity. My name has undergone tremendous changes over time to finally become suitable for my desire to express myself as well as the environment in which I live and work. About 1-2 years ago, after putting in a lot to generate a Vietnamese name that truly reflects my gender identity and spiritual beliefs, I came up with the name Nguyen Hong Phong. However, I encountered opposition from my family when I expressed my desire to change to that name because my mother always preferred the name on my birth certificate and thought that changing my name was not filial to my parents. Another challenge is that: after changing to that desired name on social networking platforms, my friends called me by my old names by habit and I didn't want to explain or talk too much about it.

I always felt dissatisfied with the name on my birth certificate and did not want to reveal my real name to anyone. Because the name on legal paper is so feminine that it contrasts with my gender identity as well as my personality. Moreover, changing the name on paper is not simple at all. The process in Australia is way easier. Yet, much as I want to change my name in Australia, I am not eligible since I have not been given permanent residence. So I have to reluctantly accept the name on the birth certificate and hope that when I am in the best conditions by all means, I can fully change my name.



Back in 2021, before “Hong Phong”, I was asked about a name I wanted to be called at an online event of IT'S T TIME. I couldn't really think of a name then so I decided to just go with one letter: “R”. And everyone started calling me Ro (samelly pronounced as “R” in Vietnamese), and I thought that it was pretty cool. Before that, I had a fairly "feminine" English name chosen for me by my cousin and it also started with the letter "R", so I guess it's fate .

Regarding gender identity, I have felt different inside myself since I was very little. During childhood, I had the same hobbies as other boys, playing superheroes, assembling and machines. I also like to wear boys' clothes and I feel like I'm not suitable for women's clothes. When I put on women's clothes, I feel "weird". That's what I'm talking about, I've never thought about any gender. Until I started having my first feelings for a girl and started wondering why I felt that way. Even after doing some online research, information about my exact gender identity was still unclear, because the resources were limited. What is even more cliché is that the information was hardly available in Vietnamese but in English. When I was in high school, my friend gave me an info table about diverse gender identities and I learned a lot about the definitions of gender identity included. Honestly, at first I felt surprised and surprised, doubting about the vast variety of gender identities that actually exist. But I still felt happy knowing that it has been researched and acknowledged. After reading it, I had some idea of my true gender identity, but I wasn't fully aware until 2 years later, in 2018, that I discovered the concept of "non-binary gender". Right now I'm very happy and think "That's it! This is the name of my gender identity that I have always been looking for!". When I can live true to my gender identity, I feel empowered and more confident. Since then, I have actively participated in activities in the LGBTIQ+ community, or regularly participate in courses, event organized by IT'S T TIME.

About the addressing, I am very comfortable with they/them. If it is a bit difficult to address in some cases, I would like to be called he/him because I am a Demi-boy (also a non-binary identity). I know that address is not popularly accepted or perhaps people are not familiar with it. When I go to work, some colleagues, even though they know my gender identity, still call me with she/her even though I have kindly explained my desired title, perhaps it's because people are used to it. Calling me "she/her" because of my appearance and voice is not really "manly"? Anyway, what consoles me is that people have certain awareness and call themselves by their desired name instead of replacing it with she/her or he/him. Even though I also want to be called by neutral or masculine names, sometimes I'm not



confident enough or empowered enough to speak up. However, I still let it go and I just need everyone to accept my true gender identity.

I think our gender identity is very diverse, not only male or female, but also has other gender identities. Therefore, sympathy and respect for diversity are very important. Thank you for listening to my story, hopefully it will help you realize that, in our gender identity, we not only have a male/female binary system but also a non-binary system and other gender diversity. Everyone deserves equality and a happy life, no matter who they are.





## Story #14:

**"BY BEING YOURSELF, YOU WILL  
BE HAPPY TO EXPRESS YOUR STRENGTHS"**



**#Happybeginning**

**Vincent**  
**Transgender man**

*"My biggest dream right now is to have a happy family, where I can love my children and make up for the time when I was not happy during my childhood."*



## "BEING YOURSELF, YOU WILL BE HAPPY TO EXPRESS YOUR STRENGTHS"



*"My biggest dream right now is to have a happy family, where I can love my children and make up for the time when I was not happy during my childhood."*

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Indeed, since childhood, all of us have had beautiful dreams. It could be becoming a doctor to help patients' parents taking us to Disneyland to dress up as famous characters, but my goal is to become a boy. I knew there was a difference between gender identity and biological sex from a very young age. Since I was little, I've loved wearing men's clothes because they look cool, but my mother often bought me dresses. That was why I usually filched my cousin's male clothes and got beaten up by him. One day, when I came home from school, my grandmother asked: "Do you know why Mom and Dad never take you to meet people? Do you understand why you are never allowed to be present at family meetings? As soon as she finished speaking, I shed a few tears. I ran up to meet my aunt. She soothed me and said: "Have you ever heard your parents talk about that in front of you? Otherwise, why rush to believe? It's just speculation from others; keep living; it doesn't matter what they think." Those words of encouragement have helped me become more robust and have more faith in myself.

Until now, I've had more success confronting my family to live as myself, owing to her encouragement. The luckiest has been formally coming out to my parents. It was a seemingly impossible task (for a Northern Chinese family); however, my parents were very open when I expressed my true identity. It's probably because my parents have seen how I have grown up, how I have lived, and what I've done, so they somehow understand my strenuous journey.

Life is an individual journey. Therefore, by doing what you want and being yourself, you will be happy and can develop strengths from your inner self. More than ten years ago, a lover's family did not accept or allow their children to be in a relationship with a transgender person. That was the main barrier that made it difficult for transgender people to be happy. However, society has changed a lot, and their thinking has become more open because many successful and famous role-models

people in the community have inspired them. Now, thanks to such changes, I am in a relationship with strong support from my girlfriend's family.

As far as I understand, The Transgender Bill already has the framework, so it should be approved soon. The most reasonable year is 2025. People in the LGBTI+ community have already fought a lot, and there is no need to waste more time on recognition. The first thing to do is to prioritize changing names and genders on identification documents. As for the title, I like my old name; Mi Mi or Vincent is fine. We should focus on equality between people, whether you are cisgender or cisgender; we are all human beings.

Next, we should focus on education about gender and sexual diversity. A teacher used to say, "They were too young to run away from home. It is preferable to be accepted to run away from home with a boyfriend rather than a pédé." This speech is unacceptable in terms of equality and an educator's ethics and ideology. Therefore, we need to educate citizens to raise awareness, even highly educated people, to have a broader and more accurate view of the diversity and equality of this society.

The last thing I want to share is my current dream. My main objective right now is to establish a happy family where I can love my children and make up for the miserable time I spent growing up.







## Story #15:

**“I HOPE FOR A BRIGHT FUTURE WHEN TRANSGENDER PEOPLE CAN CHANGE THE GENDER ON DOCUMENTS.”**



**Jess**

**Transgender woman**

**#Happybeginning**

*“My mother was very sad. After all, she feared that people would criticize me or just feel sorry for me because she saw that I had been dealt with more unfair treatment than my peers. Even though I have some acceptance, I still feel guilty toward my family, which drives me to work even harder each day to avoid disappointing anyone”.*



## **“I HOPE FOR A BRIGHT FUTURE WHEN TRANSGENDER PEOPLE CAN CHANGE THE GENDER ON DOCUMENTS”**



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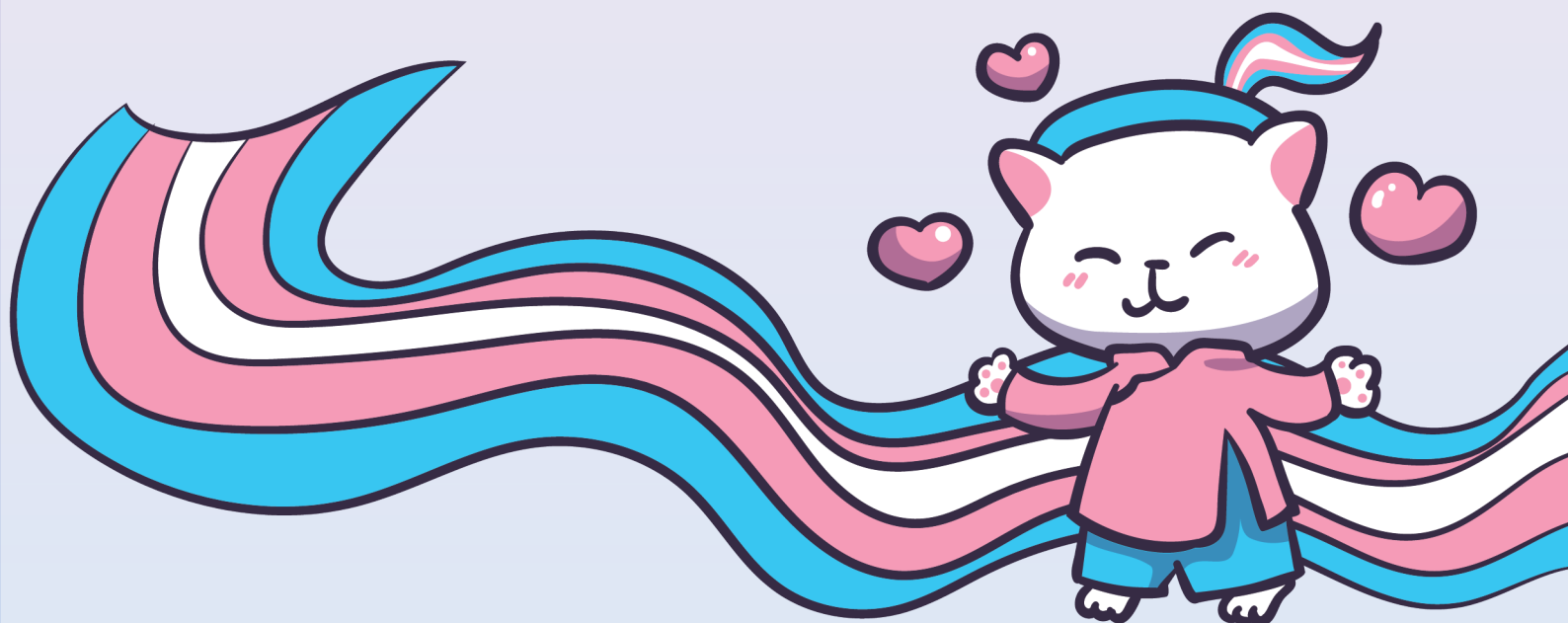
I know for sure one thing: “No one can pick their circumstances or gender from birth”. I was born and grew up in a traditional family from the North, where ideology is quite difficult so I was shy and unsure about how to talk about my gender identification. However, when I turned 18 years old, I had a conversation with my mom. I think my family may have known something previously due to my revelation. My mother was very sad. After all, she feared that people would criticize me or just feel sorry for me because she saw that I had been dealt with more unfair treatment than my peers. Even though I have some acceptance, I still feel guilty toward my family, which drives me to work even harder each day to avoid disappointing anyone.

For a long time to discover myself as well as to be able to undergo medical intervention, I think having a psychological counselor was highly beneficial not only but also for other members of the community. Young individuals frequently have psychological issues, and transgender people may experience a slightly different or even worse experience.

I can still clearly recall one particular day in my class when I decided to wear lipstick to school because I felt that everyone had the right to be beautiful and to choose their unique style. Like many other ladies, including myself, I choose to wear lipstick to school so that I may feel more confident and I truly like it, but I didn't expect when I express myself that way, I consequently faced harsh criticism from my teachers and my friends. I still remember the moment when I wore lipstick at school but my headteacher gave me negative feedback and other

students thought it was ridiculous, then they thought that I just attracted attention. Even worse, they also refer to the community negatively by using terms like “pede” and “a boy is not like boys, a girl is not like girls”. At that point, I felt very depressed, my heart seemed to stop beating, and I just wanted to cry out loud and blame my life for treating me so unfairly. I tried to hold back my tears because I eventually realized that the true value of life does not lie in the joys, anger, love, and hate out there, but within each of us, so that we can gradually become more accepting of ourselves. I just want to stay as far away from those topics as I can, only when I see everything is going too far then I give back my response.

The fact that transgender persons still cannot legally change their gender makes me feel very sorry for myself. And I sincerely hope that the legislation will soon allow transgender persons like me to live as they want. Additionally, about the Law on Gender Affirmation (LGA), I hope that will define someone as transgender as long as they have a gender identity different from their biological sex, even if they do not meet the criteria for medical treatment. I have overcome social barriers and biases, so I also hope that by sharing my story, I might encourage other young people - not just those who already know about or who are unfamiliar with our community, but also those who are afraid to stand up for themselves. Let's join hands together to help transgender people have a better future!





## Story #16:

# FACING LIFE STRONGLY, IT'S ALL NORMAL



#Happybeginning

*"I frequently visit public hospitals for medical check-ups, and upon arrival, they often question why a girl like me is there. I simply explain that I am transgender, and the hospital staff treat me with a normal and non-discriminatory attitude. It would be great if my legal documents could be changed to reflect my name and gender as female, as this would make everything easier."*





## **“FACING LIFE STRONGLY - IT'S ALL NORMAL”**



***“I frequently visit public hospitals for medical check-ups, and upon arrival, they often question why a girl like me is there. I simply explain that I am transgender, and the hospital staff treat me with a normal and non-discriminatory attitude. It would be great if my legal documents could be changed to reflect my name and gender as female, as this would make everything easier.”***

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I noticed a difference in my body during my time in 6th grade when I had a feeling for a boy of the same gender and didn't like girls. Despite my true gender identity, I continued to live as a man in middle and high school by dressing accordingly and having short hair. Sometimes, I privately dressed in women's clothes to take photos at home. Even though I lived as a man, I was pretty gentle like a girl. Therefore, I was often teased by my friends: they called me gay and used violence against me such as using the tip of a pen ball to stab me in the back. Due to fear and a lack of close friends, I kept my true self hidden and refrained from sharing my experiences with anyone.

I also didn't need to come out to my family, because my mannerisms, gestures, and personality were enough for my parents to understand that I wanted to become a girl. When I finished high school, I decided to move out to live independently and started working as a waitress at a restaurant or selling clothes. When working as a waitress, despite having short hair, customers would occasionally comment on my feminine appearance, which was not overly disrespectful or discriminatory. In general, I felt quite good and satisfied with my work at that time.

In 2017, I underwent breast surgery, which significantly boosted my confidence, especially when it came to wearing clothes. Additionally, I started learning about and using hormones. I searched for information on Facebook and through friends to find where to purchase them. Initially, I used hormone pills but later switched to injectable hormones. At the time, a pair of hormones cost 150,000 Vietnamese Dong. The price felt reasonable and affordable to me. At first, I self-injected the hormones, but eventually, I became too scared and sought help from a pharmacy, which charged me 20,000 Vietnamese Dong per injection.

Despite my feminine appearance and voice, my name and gender on official documents still identify me as male. Therefore, I encountered a situation while traveling by plane when the customs agents inspected my ID card. They conducted additional checks to verify my identity by asking someone else to see if the photo on the ID card was mine. However, I was able to pass through without any issues. Additionally, I frequently visit public hospitals for medical check-ups, and upon arrival, they often question why a girl like me is there. I simply explain that I am transgender, and the hospital staff treat me with a normal and non-discriminatory attitude. It would be great if my legal documents could be changed to reflect my name and gender, as this would make everything easier.

I've also heard about the Draft Law on Gender Affirmation, but I don't fully understand it. I was abused a few times, but as someone who is introverted and used to being alone, I didn't share it with anyone. Therefore, I hope that the Law on Gender Affirmation recognizes several things to improve the lives of transgender individuals. I hope that the regulations related to abuse and discrimination against transgender people are established to ensure the protection and security of the transgender community.

Besides, I desire to change my name and my gender on paper. If possible, I hope that the regulations will not require transgender people to undergo lower body surgery to change their gender on paper. Not every transgender person is qualified for surgery, and some, like myself, simply do not desire it.





## Story #17:

# "I AM MAC, A TRANSGENDER MAN"



**Mac**  
**Transgender man**

#Happybeginning

*"Marriage is an important turning point in a relationship, the beginning of a lasting love. Luckily for me, my parents and families on both sides were present at my wedding. That day, my wife and I were truly happy to the point of tears"*



## I AM MAC, A TRANSGUY



*“One of the most memorable moments of my life is probably the wedding. For me, marriage is an important turning point in a relationship, the beginning of a lasting love. Luckily for me, my parents and families on both sides were present at my wedding. That day, my wife and I were truly happy to the point of tears. That day, I clearly saw what happiness looks like.”*

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The first time I fell in love was when I was in 10th grade, and I knew what it was like to have a racing heart and I realized I was attracted to girls. When I was 19 years old, I fell in love with a friend and this made me very confused and I didn't know what I should do and how to do it. At that time, each month I spent about 150 thousand Vietnam Dong on living, but I spent more than 1 and a half million to call Linh Tam emotional counseling center to ask for advice. Even though they only reassured me and didn't give any clear advice, at that time I considered them the only people on my side. It was a confusing and difficult period to see whether I should live with myself or not.

I also went through a few relationships, long enough for my family to realize I was in love with a girl. Realizing it is one thing, but getting my mother to accept it is a bit more difficult. When my mother told me about it, she did not accept it because she did not want me to enter a difficult life.

My current wife is the fourth person I have learned about. Because we met each other when we were mature and experienced enough, our debut plan was also gentle and smooth. An important part is that I have a supportive family and my girlfriend's family is affectionate and loves their children.

We have known each other for 5 years now through the introduction of friends. The first time we met, I didn't have any impression, I even thought that there probably wouldn't be any further progress. But that night, the two had no place to sleep and had to find a place to sleep together. Even though we sleep together, we still each have 1 bed. Only later did I realize that she appreciated my serious attitude at that time.



I proposed to my wife when she received her early-stage cancer screening results. At that time, I didn't think much, I just wanted to accompany her in this unfair life. And my marriage proposal was finally answered after my wife was successfully cured.

One of the most memorable moments of my life is probably the wedding. For me, marriage is an important turning point in a relationship, the beginning of a lasting love. Luckily for me, my parents and families on both sides were present at my wedding. That day, my wife and I were truly happy to the point of tears. That day, I clearly saw what happiness looks like.

My wife and I are also learning about having children. I think children are the joy and happiness of every family, so we also want to be able to have one. We did IVF but it was not successful. The biggest obstacle is probably the economy and time.

Even though we had a wedding, we couldn't register our marriage yet. That's why we don't have the same rights and obligations in marriage as other heterosexual couples who have entered a marriage. Everything in our relationship is outside of social norms. Many times I feel as if my marriage doesn't exist even though it really does. All personal, legal, property, and children issues are not recognized and enforced.

I hope that the draft Law on Gender Affirmation will have regulations to protect the rights and interests of transgender people, especially regulations on marriage and family. I hope transgender people can soon register their marriage, and their marriage will be recognized and protected by law. Because no matter what, all love is love and deserves to be respected.





## Story #18: THE STORY OF BANG LINH



#Happybeginning

**Bang Linh**  
Transgender man

*"Even though I have answered the question of who I am, sometimes I still get "lost". At times like that, I lift my spirits by looking back at the long journey of coming out, the difficulties I've gone through, and proving that I'm on the right path. I'm happy with those things."*



# THE STORY OF BANG LINH



***“Even though I have answered the question of who I am, sometimes I still get “lost”. At times like that, I lift my spirits by looking back at the long journey of coming out, the difficulties I've gone through, and proving that I'm on the right path. I'm happy with those things. I accept myself, believe in myself and live more comfortably. Come out to me, it's a journey to find yourself.”***

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Hi everybody. My name is Bang Linh, a transgender man and currently living in Hanoi.

Right from my childhood days, I realized my gender identity and also felt fond of girls. When I was in 3rd grade, I joined the basketball team and met a few people like me. I went home and told my mother about my crush on girls. But maybe my mother thought I was a child talking nonsense, so she just kept quiet and let it go. By the 4th and 5th grade, I had determined myself and my son and liked the feeling of being a boy. I like protecting others more than being protected. When I was in 9th grade, I officially came out to everyone. At that time, I had some psychological changes combined with an incident that caused me and my family to have many conflicts. But thanks to that, I have more time to understand myself better. That incident lasted for the next 4 to 5 years, at which time I also researched and received hormone injections. During that time, I realized why I am like this, I was born like this and did not suddenly change. And then I learned more about gender science, psychology, and spirituality so I could understand myself better.

There was a period when I fell into depression and didn't like contact with everyone. Other people look at me and say I'm autistic, but only I know what I need, I just like to play and figure it out for myself. During that period of self-discovery, I became more aware of who I was, why I took that path, if I encountered any problems, how I would behave and what I needed to prepare for the future.

I was born and raised in a development environment, which always pushes people forward. My father is a doctor of ethnology. He still has the old ideology that people are born like that. And that a daughter

must be a daughter and that her father's arrangements for her are also for a daughter. That's why after knowing about my father and I, we had a lot of conflicts. As for my mother, she is the complete opposite of my father. She gave birth to a child, no matter what he is like, as long as he is happy. After that, my uncle showed me the way to orient myself personally. I know who I am so I just keep moving forward. Through constantly moving forward, I encounter many environments and people, some that discriminate, some that respect, and some that welcome. So regarding gender identity, I feel happy because I can live true to myself.

Coming out was completely voluntary. First, I came out to my parents first. My parents also had some reactions so I left home for a few days to create pressure. After my uncle brought me home, my mother and I began to share more with each other. To be honest, when I came out, my family was very busy so I was quite lacking in love. From then until 2021, my paternal family began to accept me for who I am. My luck is that my maternal family always supports me no matter what happens. On my paternal side, many people work in the Italian industry, so after learning about hormones, they gradually supported me. There were times when everyone in my father's family was a little uncomfortable because of outside gossip, but I was lucky to have my mother and other relatives as my guide. They are my fulcrum. Every time I encounter a problem, I know who to turn to to confide in so I don't go wrong.

But everyone has to grow up, I feel like I need to focus on taking care of my career and myself. Even though I have answered the question of who I am, sometimes I still get "lost". At times like that, I lift my spirits by looking back at the long journey of coming out, the difficulties I've gone through, and proving that I'm on the right path. I'm happy with those things. I accept myself, believe in myself and live more comfortably. Come out to me, it's a journey to find yourself.

The fact that I entered a period of "depression" had nothing to do with me discovering my gender identity. The stage when I discovered it was quite fun. My mother also supported me and also took me to get a haircut. My mother also told me, my child, if you are like that, if you like girls, then whatever you were born as, don't live for your parents, let them live their lives and you live your own life. of children. When I was upset, I was the most stubborn, and in the eyes of others I was playing around, my mother was still by my side so I wasn't affected by that process. I was affected because I felt like society outside did not accept



me. It's not about not accepting gender, it's about not accepting the state of existence in that area, that environment. At that time, I didn't really prove that I was male or female because I was still young. Later, when I grow up, how I like to dress and how I like to live, my father won't be as forbidding as before.

I don't remember the specific time I used hormones, I only remember that at the end of 11th grade I took injections. However, when taking hormone injections, it also affects your health quite a lot. I have determined that injections will always have negative side effects for the body. Thanks to my family members working in the medical field, I didn't feel too shy about going to the hospital for a checkup. People say my kidneys are very weak and I have symptoms of nocturia. I stay up late a lot, lose sleep, my liver function declines, and my memory is also worse. After the examination, I decided to improve my health, but before, I just ignored it.

I don't have much trouble going to the hospital because my family members work in the medical field. But when I go to get a citizen ID card or notarize documents, people ask me a lot about why I'm female but I look male. I also answered normally that I had injected hormones to change from female to male. As for the people who show their attitude when I say that, I ignore them because they're already making things difficult. Luckily, my childhood taught me many things so that I am now calmer in times like these. When carrying out civil transactions, I was quite lucky that when I got my ID card, my face was quite male and I also had a short haircut. After that, when I started making citizen identification cards, my mother taught me to have fun. I asked her to speak first so I never had difficulty doing it.

I think the entire community does, but for me, it's not difficult to not be able to change my gender on paper because I don't let it affect me personally. I'm lucky because I have a support system so it's easier for me to get through it, but I know there are many people who aren't as lucky. That's why I often do community support activities here and there so that I can at least somewhat impact those issues. Society also recognizes that when there are good things in the community, people will open their hearts to them. Sometimes on paper it's just paper, but how people treat each other is important.

I haven't changed the information on the documents because I don't see it as having many obstacles. I find joy in other people's somewhat

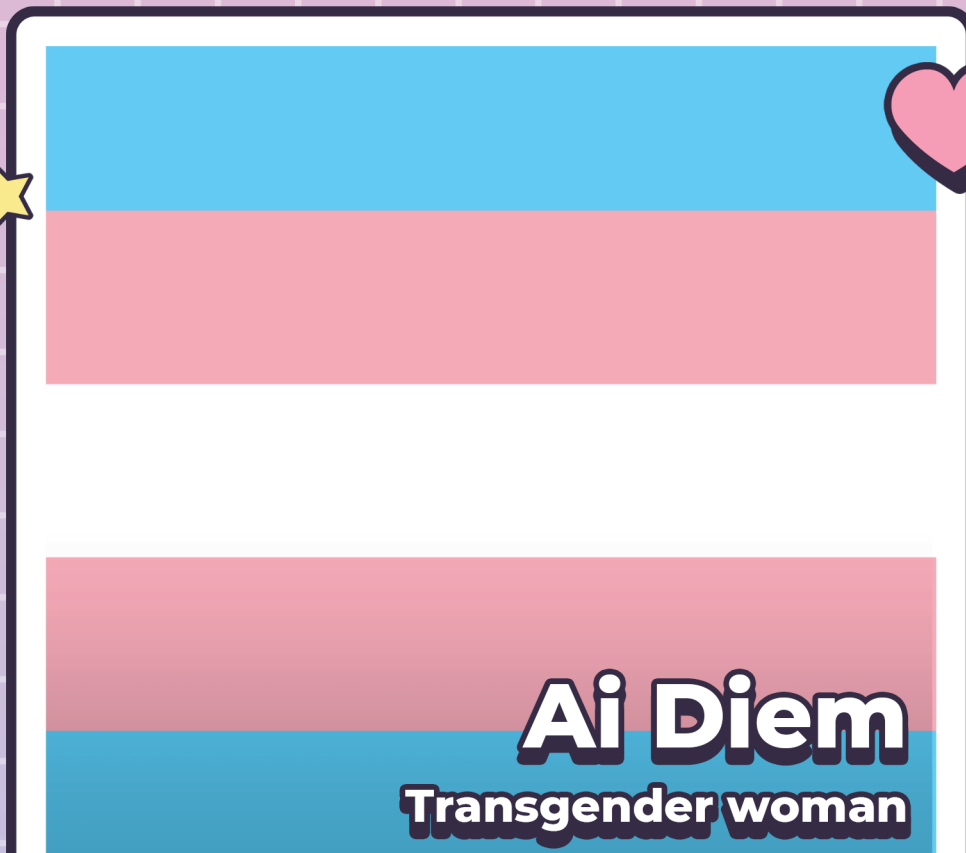
uncomfortable questions about this issue. Sometimes when I go to the airport, I get detained, but if I calmly explain, he happily lets me go. They are very nice, sometimes even apologize to me. I do not see the need to change documents.

I don't want to discuss the content, but I really hope the gender change law can be enacted soon. Because it will help our community be more confident because there is legal protection.





# Story #19: THE STORY OF AI DIEM



#Happybeginning

*"Regarding the Law, to be honest, I don't want anything more, I just hope that the queer couples living together can have a marriage certificate."*



## THE STORY OF AI DIEM



***“Regarding the Law, to be honest, I don't want anything more, I just hope that the queer couples living together can have a marriage certificate.”***

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My name is Ai Diem and I am currently the leader of the Hoang Anh Loto team. Previously, I used to have another lotto group, but because my business failed, I had to shut it down. Later, I reopened it and named the group after my son's name; Hoang Anh Duy - he is my niece, he calls me aunt. I raised him since he was a little baby, now he is very tall and is 28 years old this year.

Since childhood, I have been graceful like a girl. However, the old grandparents also did not have a mule. In 8th grade, I quit school. At that time, I decided to leave home and go to the fair. I saw some women performing at fairs who were also transgender; I look at the way they dress and do their makeup, I really like it! I want to be beautiful and dress femininely like that. All day long I followed the fair to the point where my uncles came to pick me up and beat me. My parents don't say anything, only my uncles find it difficult. You guys didn't let me go to see it! I kept going and was caught again and again; One time, some boys forced me to cut my hair so I wouldn't look like a girl anymore. If it's banned, it's banned, but then how can you ban it forever? Then it's normal. Up to now, I often bring my husband to visit my parents. I met my husband because he was a stall seller at the fair - the two of us have been together ever since. As far as I can see, many people say that no one truly loves transgender people - this statement is wrong! Among the people I know, many transgender couples are happily living with heterosexual people until now. If we truly love each other, we will live together. We are honest. We confide in each other when we are happy and when we are sad, then slowly it becomes the meaning of love! Among the people I know, many transgender couples are happily living with heterosexual people until now. If we truly love each other, we will live together. We are honest. We confide in each other when we are happy and when we are sad, then slowly it becomes the meaning of





love! Among the people I know, many transgender couples are happily living with heterosexual people until now. If we truly love each other, we will live together. We are honest. We confide in each other when we are happy, sad, then slowly it becomes the meaning of love!

There were many difficulties, like in the past, the police wouldn't let me have long hair for identification, so they forced me to cut it all short. Now I see a lot more innovation than before, especially when it comes to paperwork. Many times when I went to the doctor, the doctor examined me and asked if I was a boy or a girl. After the examination, I accidentally heard them laughing and teasing me behind my back.

Regarding the Law, to be honest, I don't want anything more, I just hope that the queer couples living together can have a marriage certificate. That piece of paper is important - it makes our living together legal; assets, land, houses, etc. If a couple has lived together for decades, they still have a guarantee paper. I've grown up and have gone through many difficulties when LGBTIQ+ people were strongly discriminated against, so I feel happy when activities like A4 Newspaper appear more and more.

Therefore, I also hope that all transgender people live happily and happily. Wishing everyone good health. Thank you A4 sheet and everyone.





**Story #20:**  
**THE STORY OF VIET THANH**



**#Happybeginning**

*"Finally, after watching a video on YouTube about how to cut men's hair, I waited for summer with a will to change - I've been cutting like this all the time."*



# THE STORY OF VIET THANH



***“Finally, after watching a video on YouTube about how to cut men's hair, I waited for summer with a will to change - I've been cutting like this all the time.”***

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Right from elementary school, I saw that my gender identity was different from my biological sex. I wanted to become a boy and play sports like volleyball, soccer, basketball, and archery. work, read action-oriented comics like 'Dragon Ball', 'Naruto'. At the end of middle school, I decided to cut my long hair, which I often wore in braids, and started liking a girl sitting at the same table. At the same time, I want to protect her from people in class who don't like me. The first time I officially announced to everyone that I was transgender was in the second semester of my 11th grade year. However, at that time my hair was still short female style so people didn't believe me. Finally, after watching a video on YouTube about how to cut men's hair, I waited for summer with a will to change - I've been cutting like this all the time.

I officially came out in June 2022 to my family. At that time, they were angry and even wanted to make things difficult for me in order that I have to return to live according to my biological sex. Even now, my family still believes that it is sick and deviant due to learning and imitating trends on the Internet! I was discriminated against and teased in my senior year - when I completely adopted a male hairstyle. A group of 6 people sat behind me, they discriminated against me just because I didn't throw the ball hard enough (basketball). They criticized me for being weak through a group chat on Messenger consisting of only me and them. Even forced me to go to the girls' line to practice with the girls; Although, I asked the teacher for permission to stand in the men's row. However, I still maintain my stance and intentions without being shaken by criticism, their objections. Some time later, I voluntarily left that group on Messenger and didn't pay attention to them anymore.

When transgender people cannot change their gender on paper, they are still legally required to comply with the regulations for their birth gender on their documents even though their gender identity is

different from that gender. This makes it even more difficult for them in many things, such as participating in sports, military service, marriage, registering for dormitories in schools, jobs, degrees and all transactions in life, etc. In addition, in my opinion, regarding the Military Service regulations, it is recommended to implement mandatory military service for both male and female citizens of the same gender as well as transgender men and transgender women when have reached age (from 18 to 25 years old if not studying at University or College and from 18 to 27 years old if studying at University or College). There should absolutely be no discrimination between genders in the military environment. The best time for the Gender Change Law to be promulgated is in 2025 or 2030. At this time, there will be a full legal basis as well as regulations to amend some laws (eg, Military Service Law). so that people can carry out and exercise their rights based on established laws. In addition, I and many other transgender people also hope that the government will create the best conditions for the community to have access to medical examination and treatment and have clear instructions on hormone use.

Thank you for your interest in my story!







## Story #21:

**REMOVE ALL THE OBSTACLES IN FRONT OF YOU FOR TURNING TOWARDS A HAPPY BEGINNING**



**#Happybeginning**

*"After all I realized, In essence, we always love each other, it's just that sometimes our vision is obscured by stereotypes and prejudices. That is when we will have to put aside all the obstacles in front of us to move towards a Happy Beginning."*



## REMOVE ALL THE OBSTACLES IN FRONT OF YOU FOR TURNING TOWARDS A HAPPY BEGINNING



***“After all I realized, in essence, we always love each other, it's just that sometimes our vision is obscured by stereotypes and prejudices. That is when we will have to put aside all the obstacles in front of us to move towards a Happy Beginning.”***

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My name is Hong Phi, a child from Long Xuyen who was born in a male body but decided to become a woman.

I myself have not yet reached the age of thirty, but I have always cherished the mission of supporting the LGBTIQ+ community. Perhaps with that urge for a long time, I decided to establish a Social Enterprise to serve the community in Long Xuyen and other surrounding areas.

Unlike the experiences of many other transgender people, gender confusion happened to me relatively slowly. It wasn't until recently that I found myself uncomfortable with the characteristics of my birth gender. Thanks to the sharing of my predecessors as well as the information compiled by organizations working for LGBTIQ+ rights, I have also used psychological therapy to reduce stress and discover myself. Along with this process, I also had hormone intervention and saw my symptoms gradually improve.

However, the delay in recognizing myself has made me feel more clearly the thoughts of favoring men and degrading women. In the first days of knowing that I intended to change gender, my family was extremely disappointed and I also had the same feeling when I had to go through that difficult time of gender dysphoria myself. I don't know how many conflicts happened between my small family that made the two sides unable to understand each other, but most of the reasons came from the generation gap. However, my family had the opportunity to sit down and discuss in more detail. Thanks to that fateful exchange, I better understood the concerns of parents. My mother, who loved me so much, was afraid that if I changed gender, I would die, and my father nodded in agreement, even taking me to his

relatives and introducing me as his daughter. After all I realized, in essence, we always love each other, it's just that sometimes our vision is obscured by stereotypes and prejudices. That is when we will have to put aside all the obstacles in front of us to move towards a Happy Beginning.

I hope that the law can be passed at the 9th session of the National Assembly and that there will soon be psychological support programs and services for transgender people in Vietnam.





**Story #22:**  
**OUT OF SIGHT,  
BUT NEVER OUR OF MIND**



**#Happybeginning**

*"Until now, I still want to inform my relatives that the man next to me is a very good person who wants to be blessed by everyone instead of living together but is not accepted as truly loving each other and is abused. disagreement as at present."*





## OUT OF SIGHT BUT NEVER OUT OF MIND



***“Until now, I still want to inform my relatives that the man next to me is a very good person who wants to be blessed by everyone instead of living together but is not accepted as truly loving each other and is abused. disagreement as at present.”***

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Hello, you can call me Jully. I prefer to be called by my name instead of a male or female title and have never felt like I truly belong to either gender's standards. Today I bring you a love story of a couple who, although geographically far apart, are always close in mind.

We met when we both studied abroad in Taiwan. I went in the first semester before him. I still vividly remember the time we first met 5 years ago, that day the school held a scouting event for new students. The first time I saw my brother, I just felt that he had something very special, very attractive and like he had a halo. I fell in love!

He and I started getting acquainted when friends invited each other to drink at the 7-11 restaurant. Through chatting, I found out that he also liked me. After 1 year of getting to know and dating, we started to get to know each other. During the time we knew each other, even though we didn't live together, I always prepared meals for him. He had a hard time coming home from work late at night. I just thought about how I could accompany him and share that hardship with him. Instead of letting me come over and deliver the food, every night he took the time to stop by my house to pick it up after work. The two of us spend more time together on weekends, I cook, he buys some beer and we drink to relieve stress and whisper about the present and the future. Talking about plans and having children, both he and I want to have a happy family with the sounds of children playing, and want to have one or two children to make the family happier.

Our time together was interrupted when he graduated and returned to Thailand and I returned to Vietnam. The separation took a year, but the two still connected through the phone screen every day to maintain the fire of love.

Fast forward and we've been together for nearly half a decade.

I once told my family that I liked him, he was a tomboy. When I heard the news, my parents didn't like it and scolded me and gave me a lot of advice. They also said, "Don't let your parents lose face when others look at you and say your daughter is different."

I'm very sad even though I know this will be a long and thorny road. Until now, I still want to inform my relatives that the man next to me is a very good person who wants to be blessed by everyone instead of living together but is not accepted as truly loving each other and is abused. disagreement as at present.

My husband and I really want the law to be enacted soon because transgender people who are not recognized as their new gender have difficulty accessing jobs and living true to themselves. We just hope that our law will be a progressive and leading law in the region on the issue of ensuring the personal rights of transgender people.





## Story #23:

**"I ABSOLUTELY DON'T WANT OTHERS TO SEE MY IDENTITY CARD, I DON'T WANT ANYONE TO KNOW MY GENDER IS FEMALE"**



*"Always having to explain who and what you are is very time-consuming."*



## **“I ABSOLUTELY DON'T WANT OTHERS TO SEE MY IDENTITY CARD, I DON'T WANT ANYONE TO KNOW MY GENDER IS FEMALE”**



*“Always having to explain who and what you are is very time-consuming.”*

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When I realized my gender identity, my childhood was not difficult. I have known my gender identity since I was young. When I was at school, I found it difficult to make friends with my classmates. I don't think they want to talk to me, even if they haven't acted too far. That is to say, if I don't share that I am a transgender, they will talk to me in a happy mood and see me as a man. But when they noticed that my name was very feminine compared to my appearance, they asked me. I really know that I am a transgender person. Then their attitude rotated 180 degrees' towards me. My classmates didn't want to talk to me at first, even though I worked hard to communicate with them. Later, when I started working, my experience was similar to when I was in school. Communicating with others really gives me a headache.

Regarding medical intervention, I had breast surgery and used hormones. I had surgery and hormone injections in Thailand. It was 2019, and I started looking into breast surgery after researching and seeing that the service in Thailand was very good, so I decided to go to Thailand to take a step forward to change myself. But going for a follow-up examination was very difficult for me because Thailand is very far away and travel costs are not cheap at all.

After surgical intervention, comes the story of changing names and documents. For me, changing my name on documents was like a torture and really haunting. When I changed my name, I was using hormones at that time, so my face had a beard and my voice was deep like a man's. At first, when I first entered the office, the person doing the procedures was friendly and asked why a boy's name had the letter "thi" in it, but after I explained and they saw the female gender on my birth certificate, they had a negative attitude. another degree. They told me: "For a girl, that name is too beautiful. You have a problem with your mind, so that's why it doesn't seem appropriate!". At that time I felt sad and decided to leave without knowing what to say. The story of going to do paperwork at the bank or



even registering to use telecommunications services is even more "funny" when they see my name with a gender that doesn't match my appearance and voice and they tell me that "Go back and ask the person whose name is on the Citizen Identification Card to come out and do the procedure, don't let him do it for you!" So I had to spend a lot of time sitting there explaining it to them. Always having to explain who and what you are is very time-consuming.

Now, to be honest, when I go to places where I need to export Citizenship Card, it's really a torture. I don't know if people are confident when giving their Citizenship Cards. Personally, I absolutely do not want to show my Citizenship Card to others, I don't want anyone to know my gender is female " So I had to spend a lot of time sitting there explaining it to them. Always having to explain who and what you are is very time-consuming. Now, to be honest, when I go to places where I need to export Citizenship Card, it's really a torture. I don't know if people are confident when giving their Citizenship Cards. Personally, I absolutely do not want to show my Citizenship Card to others, I don't want anyone to know my gender is female " So I had to spend a lot of time sitting there explaining it to them. Always having to explain who and what you are is very time-consuming. Now, to be honest, when I go to places where I need to export Citizenship Card, it's really a torture. I don't know if people are confident when giving their Citizenship Cards. Personally, I absolutely do not want to show my Citizenship Card to others, I don't want anyone to know my gender is female.

There's also the matter of applying for a job. The gender on the documents and the different gender expressions make me feel like I don't know if I should apply for a job as a man or a woman. Even if I apply for a job with a CV as a Male, it won't work because the documents are still Female, and applying for a job as a CV as a Female won't work either. okay because its appearance is too masculine. So changing gender on documents has a huge impact on our community. I hope the law comes into being as soon as possible, but I've been waiting and hoping forever. The law will help the transgender and gender diverse community have more confidence and courage to be themselves.

Thank you for listening to my story, hopefully the above story will also contribute one of the voices to help the draft law speed up the process.





## Story #24:

**"WHEN I WAS 4 YEARS OLD, I TOLD MY MOM: "MOM, I WANT TO BE A BOY!""**



**#Happybeginning**

*"Now that I think back, I knew I was a boy from a very early age."*



## WHEN I WAS 4 YEARS OLD, I TOLD MY MOTHER, "MOM, I WANT TO BE A BOY!"



*“Now that I think back, I knew I was a boy from a very early age.”*

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On my journey to finding myself, the period that I always remember is when I was a child. Now that I think back, I knew I was a boy from a very early age. When I was 4 years old, I always thought all the girls around me hated being girls like me. And at that time, I told my mother, "Mom, I want to be a boy." At that time, I thought I would tell her whatever I felt, but I was laughed at and teased by the adults in the house. At that time, I started to feel like things weren't okay. I like wearing my brother's old clothes the most, not the dresses my mother bought, so my mother is very sad and angry with me. I couldn't explain to my mother why it was like that and felt very guilty.

As for my family, there is a truth that I have never directly told the whole family, but the family members all understand and accept me. Although it takes a lot of time, I think it's each family's own way of communicating. I also hope to have the opportunity to talk and explain more clearly to everyone in the house.

When I was 13 years old (eighth grade), I begged my mother to let me have my hair cut. I thought, at that time, having a haircut is my greatest wish. I want to change my appearance. I thought I was a lesbian because I liked my female classmate. That was 2012, and I learned about what LGBT is on Facebook. Although the first definition was vague, it also helped me gradually understand that there are people like me outside. But I am too young to understand and find a community.

The milestone I consider the biggest for myself is 2022, when it will be a time of social distancing due to the impact of the COVID-19 epidemic. That was the time when I searched for who I really was and I knew the term lesbian was not me. Thanks to Tiktok, I see a lot of the presence of transgender men out there and understand that transgender men are not necessarily people who have surgery or medical intervention. During that time, I truly understood that I was a transgender person, and moreover, I was proud of it. Although at first accepting a new label was a bit difficult and embarrassing, I was able to get used to it.

My current lover and I met each other when social distancing ended at the end of 2021. Currently, we have moved in together since February 2023. Everyone's most memorable memories are probably when we first participated in the Pride walk at Hanoi Pride 2022. At that time, I had just had my first testosterone injection and it was also the first time we went on a plane. We have experienced many firsts together, and my current lover was the first person I loved after I found out I was a transgender man. That makes my relationship with her very different from previous times. However, I have not met my lover's family directly because I still have many concerns because both of our finances are not stable and my lover has not graduated from college.

My lover always wants to have children and raise them with me. We still have big obstacles such as finances and information about pregnancy methods such as IUI and IVF, so we are still in the process of learning and preparing. Maybe it will be 5-6 years before we plan to get married and have children. For me, holding a wedding is like officially recognizing the relationship between two people by many people around. Having family, friends and society confirm that we are together.

Currently, I have been using testosterone for 7 months. Finding information is quite difficult for me. At that time, I didn't know anyone else who was a transgender man, so I was quite lonely and had many difficulties finding information. Currently, because there is no law, these interventions are not made public, so I have to go to closed community groups to receive advice and sharing from experienced people. I went for a general check-up after the injection. Luckily, when I told the doctor that I was transgender and using hormones, the doctor also asked questions and gave gentle advice.

Regarding psychological support in addition to medical support, I think if there was someone to provide psychological support, I think it would help me a lot in the stages before intervention. I had a long time to make the decision to inject hormones due to fears about my health and appearance changing, possibly changing the appearance of the people around me.

Even though I have undergone medical intervention, I hope that a law will be introduced that will not require medical intervention to be recognized as transgender. Furthermore, we want married transgender people to not need a divorce to change their documents. For cohabitation, I hope this step is not needed and I hope the law is promulgated as soon as possible.





## Story #25: THE STORY OF LEO



#Happybeginning

**Leo**  
Transgender man

*"I had gotten used to hearing it, but it wasn't something my parents would appreciate, and they would ask why I was trying to appear as a boy. Every time that happened, I felt it brought great sadness to my parents as if their daughter being called "bê dê" was a huge pain for them."*



## LEO'S STORY



***“The nickname followed me for 3 years in middle school, and I didn't want to carry it with me into high school. I had gotten used to hearing it, but it wasn't something my parents would appreciate, and they would ask why I was trying to appear as a boy. Every time that happened, I felt it brought great sadness to my parents as if their daughter being called “bê đê” was a huge pain for them.”***

---

I am Leo, that's the name most people call me, except when I'm at home, where my parents call me Huyen. It's because I haven't officially come out to my parents, so they don't know that people outside call me Leo. I feel comfortable when my parents call me by my real name because it's the name they gave me.

Ever since I attended kindergarten, I've enjoyed the girls' attention more, and I would pay more attention to girls. I had first time a crush on someone when I was in kindergarten. I once went to her house to play, and because my parents used to let me have short hair, her neighbors thought I was a boy. They would often tease her, saying she had brought her boyfriend home, and it made me happy, but I kept my feelings to myself.

Then, my first real shock came when I was in 7th grade. I had liked a classmate since 4th grade, but she had transferred and only returned in 7th grade. We became close friends. One day, I can't remember why, but she defended me in some way, and it allowed me to express my feelings a bit more than just being friends so I gave her a box of chocolates and wrote a letter. I arranged to meet her in a hallway with no one around and handed her the letter and the chocolates. Then, when I returned to the classroom, the whole class teased me. From that moment on, I had a nickname that everyone in my class called me, “Huyền bê đê” (a derogatory term in Vietnamese like “faggot”). I felt sad because she didn't react to anything and just treated me as a friend and nothing more. That incident led to me being isolated and bullied. Back in school, if someone made mistakes, they would get punished, and I was always the one with the most mistakes and got punished. When I made too many mistakes, the teacher would call my parents to talk about me, and during those times, I would be scolded for not acting

like a proper girl. That story left a deep scar on me, and since then, I have been afraid to express my feelings toward anyone because I was scared and didn't want to be labeled and isolated again.

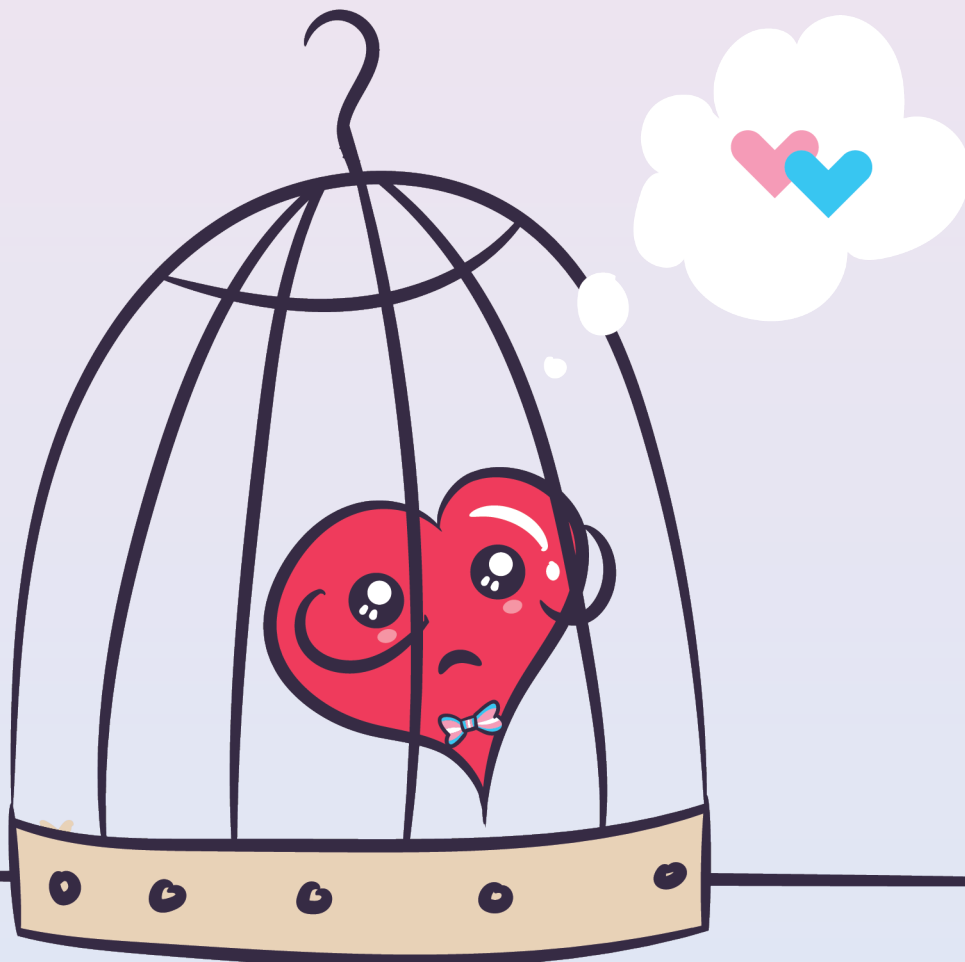
The story didn't end there. In 9th grade, the girl abruptly cut off all connections with me. I inquired from people around, and I heard that her mother didn't allow her to be friends with me because she couldn't tell if I was a boy or a girl. I didn't dare to approach her because I was afraid she might feel bothered and resent me even more. During that time, I only had one true friend by my side.

In high school, I had a profound affection. She was in the same school as me. Coincidentally, she was a close friend of my best friend. We ended up forming a group of three friends. I had known her since the end of 10th grade, but we only shared superficial stories. Besides, I knew she already had a boyfriend, so I treated her like my friend. However, I also knew her boyfriend didn't treat her well because there was a time she called me for more than half an hour to talk about her relationship, and during that time, all I could hear was her crying. After that, I developed a complicated feeling; I liked her, but I was afraid to confess because of my past experiences. I was afraid she might have to deal with harsh words because of me, and I was hesitant to express my feelings. If my confession succeeded, it would be great, but if it failed, I might end up in a situation like in middle school. The nickname "Huyền bê đê" followed me for three years in middle school, and I didn't want to carry it with me into high school. I had gotten used to hearing it, but it wasn't something my parents would appreciate, and they would ask why I was trying to appear as a boy. Every time that happened, I felt it brought great sadness to my parents as if their daughter being called "bê đê" was a huge pain for them. So, I just remained friends with her, fearing that if I confessed, our friendship might be ruined. During our interactions, I felt like she also had some feelings for me because sometimes, our behavior was more than just friendship, it was like we were in a relationship. But I worried that if I were the only one who felt that way, it might not end well.

If I could go back and make a decision again, I don't think I would do things differently because I was so afraid of losing my friendship with her. Even though I still have feelings for her to this day, I haven't had any contact with her. That's why I haven't made any advances toward anyone, even though I am much more confident now compared to before. I feel that doing so would be unfair to those who come after me, as I still have strong memories of her.

Speaking of being more confident, I am much more confident now than I used to be. I have started requesting that people call me by my preferred name and pronouns, and I am delighted that almost everyone has agreed to my request. I have also kept my hair short since entering university, even though my parents objected and wanted me to grow it long. Although I haven't started hormone therapy yet, I am working on lowering my voice to make it sound deeper and more masculine. I am also considering hormone therapy, but I am still a bit hesitant and unsure how my family would react, so I haven't taken that step.

I hope that gender transition laws are enacted to change societal perceptions so that people have a more open-minded view of the transgender community. I also hope that these laws will include provisions for changing names and genders on official documents, as well as clear regulations regarding marriage.







## Story #26: THE STORY OF SAM



#Happybeginning

**Sam**

**Transgender - Pansexual**

*"I really want the law to be promulgated and there's only one question I want to ask, especially for people who don't have as much gender dysphoria as me: Do transgender people have to use hormones to be recognized as transgender?"*



## SAM'S STORY



It's me, Sam. Hi everyone, I am a pansexual trans man.

When I was in high school, my school required girls to wear ao dai. If they didn't wear it, it would affect their class competition scores. Of course, my homeroom teacher warned me 3 times because I didn't wear it and I was determined not to wear it. Among the misfortunes, there was a blessing that the school didn't think I was a girl, maybe because of my tomboyish appearance, thanks to that I didn't feel pressure from the school so the homeroom also ignored this problem.

In 11th grade, I met another transgender man in the same club and I realized that I not only had feelings for girls, but also had a desire to become a boy. At that time, I began to learn about the transgender community and related knowledge. I learned about the types of male hormones currently on the market as well as learned about the examination process before hormone injections. I find the biggest barrier in finding information is that there is not yet an official website synthesizing the knowledge that transgender men need to learn when starting medical intervention.

Not only that, I think having psychological counseling will be very useful for transgender men who are still having difficulty understanding themselves and examining issues. Because, currently, there are many transgender men who still suffer from psychological problems that they cannot share with their families or other close relationships.

Maybe because there isn't much gender confusion and my gender expression isn't too passing, I haven't experienced discrimination as a transgender person in the working environment until now. Only when I first meet colleagues or partners do I not introduce myself as a transgender man, so people still call me by female names. Although it's not too uncomfortable, to be more comfortable, I also shared with my colleagues that I wanted to be called by the name Sam.

I really want the law to be promulgated and there's only one question I want to ask, especially for people who don't have as much gender dysphoria as me: Do transgender people have to use hormones to be recognized as transgender?



# Story #27: THE STORY OF VUONG ANH



#Happybeginning

*"I take hormones to become more masculine, hoping it helps my parents see me as a real man. My intention is for them to understand me better, so those hurtful comparisons can finally stop"*



## THE STORY OF VUONG ANH



***“I take hormones to become more masculine, hoping it helps my parents see me as a real man. My intention is for them to understand me better, so those hurtful comparisons can finally stop.”***

---

Hello everyone! I'm Vuong Anh, 25 years old. I am a transgender man who makes a living supporting surgeons for transgender people. If you'd told me half a decade ago, I wouldn't have imagined that I would meet so many people like me.

I've come across situations where people wanted surgery but faced financial constraints. They approached me, asking if they could pay in installments. Sadly, I only accept credit card payments for installments, which many of them don't have. It saddens me when they express their desire for the surgery but don't have enough money.

I've embraced my gender identity for around 5 years, starting back in middle school. Initially, I just knew I didn't have feelings for boys; I was attracted to girls. Initially, my understanding of LGBT was limited to people of the same sex in love. It was only later, with more exposure to transgender individuals, that I grasped the concepts of transgender male or becoming a transgender woman. Through these experiences, I gained a better understanding of my own gender identity.

I faced a lot of criticism when I was young. I always had short hair, and as I grew older, people told me to grow it out, insisting that girls should be feminine. I resisted because I didn't like it; deep down, I already identified as a boy. My parents scolded and even punished me, comparing me to other girls my age who embraced traditional femininity. The pressure mounted, but the more they pushed, the more determined I became to prove myself. Even now, my parents haven't fully accepted it, but their love for me has silenced their objections.

I take hormones to become more masculine, hoping it helps my parents see me as a real man. My intention is for them to understand me better, so those hurtful comparisons can finally stop





Now I am more confident with myself.

Before I started hormone therapy, my voice was feminine, and my face was slim. I used to fear going home because I worried people wouldn't see me as masculine. When neighbors, friends, or relatives visited, they might think poorly of me. But now, when people I know don't comment, and strangers don't recognize me, I feel much more confident.

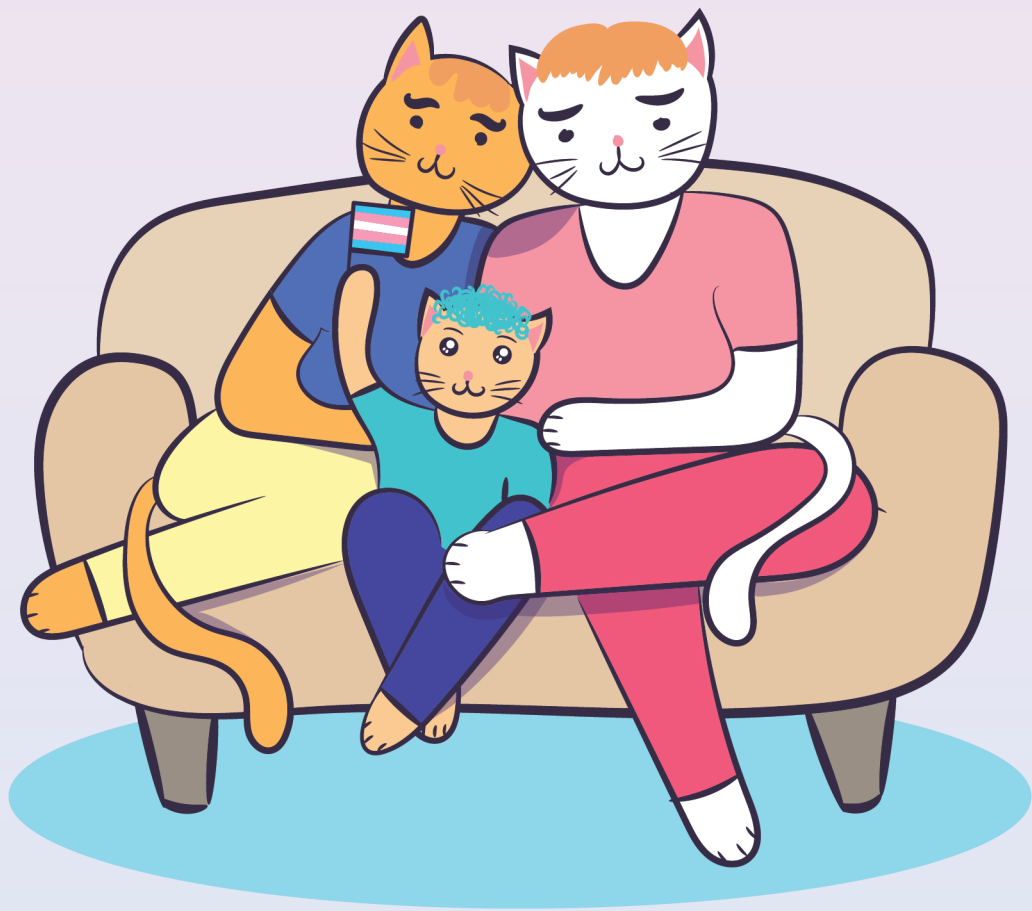
Yet, my changed appearance led to various challenges. Once, when I tried to get a bank card, they rejected my application because my current look didn't match the photo on my original ID card.

But it's different when it comes to love.

I used to be very reserved about my gender identity, hesitant to share it with others. I quietly befriended people, never expressing my true feelings, and that pattern continues even now. I never confessed my feelings to her. Later, I met someone else, and in that relationship, I came to terms with my identity. We talked to each other a lot, but she didn't know I was a transgender. When I decided to be honest and told her, everything changed. She expressed a desire to marry and settle down, citing her responsibilities towards her parents. After that, she sought a same-sex relationship to explore further. We stopped talking at that point. I think they are also very delicate, and do not refuse when they want to stabilize. When they sought stability, I realized I needed to change my core beliefs and improve my financial situation."

I have faith that once the Law is enacted, I can change my gender. If she still has feelings for me, I believe I can convince her family to accept our love. If the family's concern is about not having a conventional wedding for their child, we can explain that I has changed my gender. Furthermore, in today's advanced society, there are various methods available for having children when we are ready.

I also hope that the Congress can pass the Gender Affirmation Law to give me the opportunity to live authentically without the current hurdles. With this legislation, not only myself but also my friends and other transgender individuals can lead their lives confidently and with ease. I think at that point, my parents will eventually accept my identity.



# Story #28: ELIO'S STORY



#Happybeginning

**Elio**  
Gay Non-binary

*"So my family consists of four people and three of us have come out."*



## ELIO'S STORY



***“So my family consists of four people and three of us have come out.”***

---

I'm Elio (17 years old), and my gender identity is gender diverse/non-binary, gay. I am still on the journey of self-discovery. Here I would like to share the story of my journey to find myself.

My parents divorced when I was quite young. My younger brother and I both lived with our mother and since then, the three of us have always relied on each other to survive. My mother also later experienced new relationships. At first, it was with a man but it ended quickly. Perhaps because she had lost faith in men twice, in her next relationship, my mother chose to marry a girl who was 11 years younger than her. So my family consists of four people and three of us have come out.

It's been almost a year now that the two of them have known each other. After going through that turbulent time, I was very happy when my mother finally found her own happiness. I thought I would receive sympathy and understanding from my diverse family, but who knew that I would be under the extremely suffocating control of my two mothers? They came together out of sincere love, so not knowing what gender or sexual orientation they and their daughter were unintentionally made me feel heartbroken and lost.

From childhood to adulthood, I have always been a sensitive, introverted person and like to spend time for myself, so I don't have many friends. My body is also weak, carrying a water bottle seems simple but difficult. Furthermore, because I accidentally liked a girl who had a boyfriend, I was beaten up by that friend's boyfriend in a very scary way. From then on, I became even more closed.

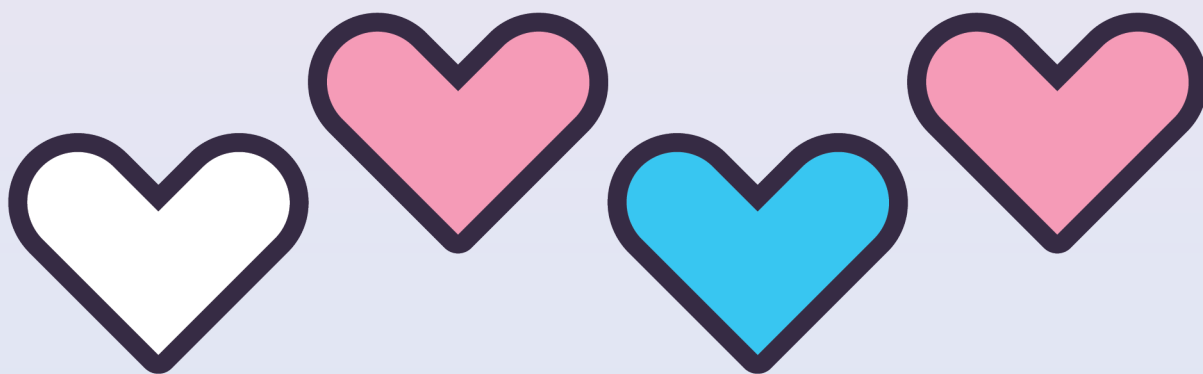
The time when my mother met that man was also the time when I had my own bedroom, so I had the time and space to learn more about myself. In that private world, I only had a laptop with an internet connection as my friend. The laptop and the internet were my life sources at that time. Thanks to this virtual friend, for the first time in my life, I feel listened to and talked to people who share the same interests and passions. I have truly found my community.



Then whatever happened, I secretly fell in love with a sister I met online. Not long after being delighted in love, she discovered my feelings and broke up with me immediately. That was also the time when I gradually discovered my gender. Not stopping there, I accidentally typed loudly one evening, waking up my mom in the next room. As a result, my mother confiscated my laptop and read everything, from the messages from the sister I secretly loved in the past to the other girls I was talking to. And that is my reluctant coming out story.

Honestly, the fact that transgender people cannot change their gender on paper is a big disadvantage. Therefore, I hope the provisions of the Draft Gender Affirmation Law will be passed as soon as possible, making the journey of those out there who are dreaming of becoming someone they want to become easier. Hopefully, in the future, Vietnam will pass a same-sex marriage law to show other countries that we have been living happily with love regardless of gender.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to my story!





## Story #29:

**IN "PHUONG" THERE IS ALWAYS HUONG,  
MAYBE IT'S DESTINY"**



## **GAU SOC HOME**

**The family of a transgender man**



**#Happybeginning**

*"In Phuong, there is always Huong, maybe it's destiny", we often tease each other like that"*



## "IN PHUONG, THERE IS ALWAYS HUONG, MAYBE IT'S DESTINY"



*"In Phuong, there is always Huong, maybe it's destiny", we often tease each other like that."*

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Hello everyone, we are Phuong - Huong, everyone knows us as Gau Soc Home (Squirrel Bear Family). We have the same last name, same year of birth, and study in the same class. Our feelings were gradually built from friendship to love. We both feel very lucky to witness and participate in each other's growth journey.

12 years of knowing and accompanying together is not too long, but not short either. When we started, we never thought we would go further together. Perhaps everyone has difficulties and challenges, and everyone has to overcome them on their own. We tell each other that we must ignore everything to try, and to be as "normal" as possible. We once told each other that we did not want to "fight for gender equality", wondering why people discriminate against each other, conversely in the beginning of the Declaration of Independence, President Ho Chi Minh wrote: "All men are created equal. They are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights; among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness." Why have to fight for something that you already have - does it sound too painful?

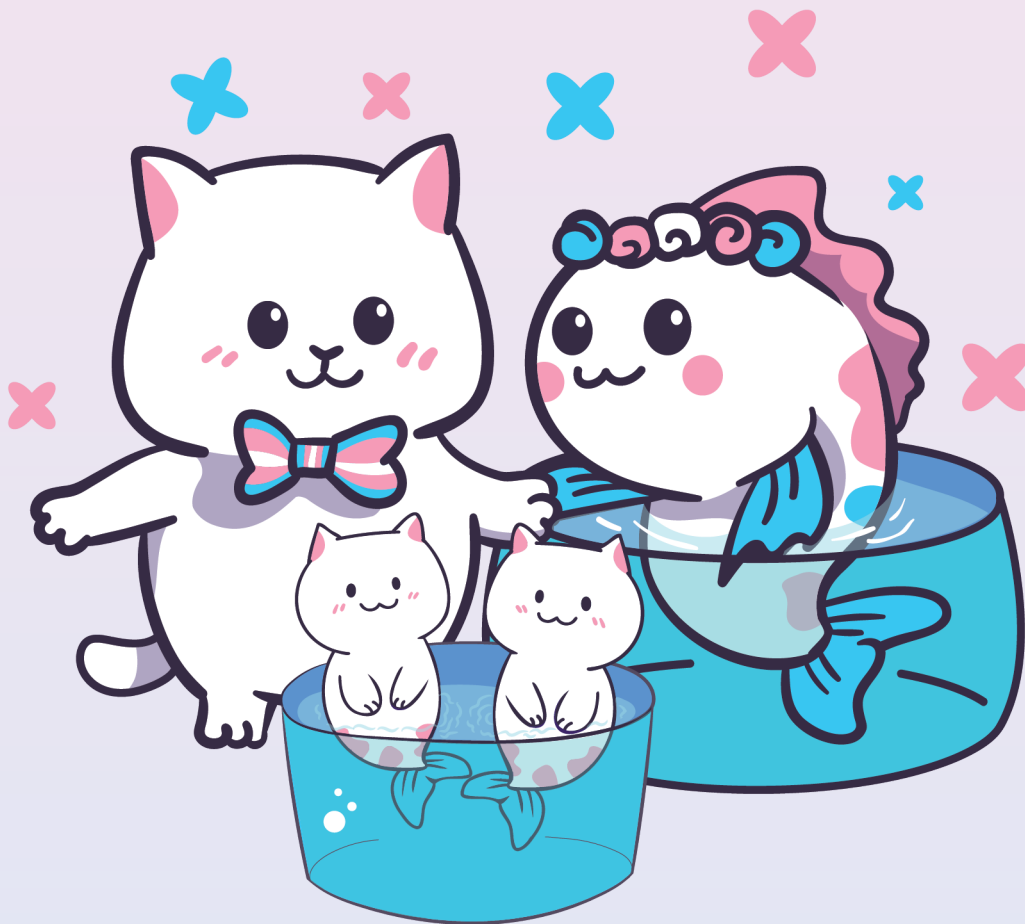
But something happened that made us wonder about the "freedom" right, and that was the day Squirrel Bear was born. That day, I was unable to sign the surgery commitment form when my wife needed emergency surgery. That was probably the most helpless feeling I've ever had. That day, fortunately, my father-in-law arrived on time.

Disappointed and even worse when we went to get Squirrel Bear's birth certificate and had to leave the Father's full name blank.

I used to think there was no need to change my name, nor did I need to change my gender. I don't need a marriage certificate. I'm still okay. But until now, I NEED, AND REALLY NEED that.

Perhaps anyone who has been in the role of being a parent and gone through such a situation, will understand this feeling.

Therefore, only until gender is recognized can I protect my two little children to the fullest. So I'm here. And our thoughts and hopes are also sent here, A4 SHEETS"







## Story #30:

# A MESSAGE FROM NHAT MY, AN ALLY



#Happybeginning

**Nhat My**  
An ally

*"So I hope that with what I have, I will gradually make films not only for LGBT+ people in general but also for transgender people in particular."*



## SHARING FROM NHAT MY, AN ALLY



***“For me, film is a means of connecting the masses, conveying information and knowledge very effectively, but currently very few people are doing the right thing about transgender people, providing knowledge about transgender people and gay people. still ambiguous and unclear. So I hope that with what I have, I will gradually make films not only for LGBT+ people in general but also for transgender people in particular.”***

---

I'm Nhat My, I'm an ally and my lover is also a transgender man. Currently, I am preparing for my graduation film project in film directing. The process of learning about LGBT+ is not too long but not short either (about 5-6 years). My Tiktok channel currently also contributes a small part to the community and I see the change in people's awareness over time, not only LGBT+ people but also people around me and that makes me happy. I feel very happy.

I especially care for transgender people not only because my boyfriend is transgender but also the fact that I see what the transgender community has gone through to get the recognition they have today.

For me, film is a very effective means of connecting the communities, conveying information and knowledge, but currently very few people do the right thing about transgender people, and there is still a shortage of knowledge about transgender people and gay people. So I hope that with what I have, I will gradually make films not only for LGBT+ people in general but also for transgender people particularly.

Together with the A4 Sheet project this time is truly fate for me. Because at this stage I am preparing for my graduation film, my film has images of transgender women. There were times when I was confused about whether I should continue working or not because my friends and teachers all said this topic was difficult to create sympathy and support, especially for a graduation report . I thought a lot and then one day I received an email from the A4 Sheet, which seemed to come at the right time and gave me more motivation to continue with my choice. So I want to spread positive messages with the A4 Sheets project to everyone!



## Story #31: THE STORY OF TRUNG



#Happybeginning

*"I have a dream that when I grow up, I'll become a literature teacher like my literature teacher. She has been a great source of inspiration for me. When I was feeling down due to discrimination, she told me that being a transgender person is normal, and there are many people like me out there, so I shouldn't feel ashamed or distressed."*



## TRUNG'S STORY



***"I have a dream that when I grow up, I'll become a literature teacher like my literature teacher. She has been a great source of inspiration for me. When I was feeling down due to discrimination, she told me that being a transgender person is normal, and there are many people like me out there, so I shouldn't feel ashamed or distressed. She said as long as I'm comfortable with who I am, it doesn't matter what others think."***

---

My name is Trung. I identify as a trans girl.

From a young age, I felt different from my peers. As I grew older, I began to explore and interact with people in the community, and through conversations, I realized that I am a girl, not a boy. My subconscious actions, like gasping when startled, or my interest in wearing dresses, and make-up, and a passion for skincare, all pointed to this truth, making me even more certain. I also had significant gender dysphoria related to my body. I was extremely self-conscious about my body hair, and its excessive growth made me uncomfortable wearing short clothes. I didn't want facial hair at all, and I dreamt of having a female chest. However, I didn't have many concerns about my name. If I could change it, that would be fine, but if not, I was okay with it because it was a name given to me by my parents, and I respected that.

In middle school, I faced discrimination for expressing my femininity. One day, I was chosen to give a speech about my dreams to the entire school. When I started speaking, a whole class began mimicking my voice, thinking it sounded "effeminate." I didn't see any issue with my voice; it didn't affect anyone, it was just gentle. The discrimination from that class didn't stop there. Every time they saw me passing by, the entire class would burst into laughter as if they had seen something strange. Once, I had to carry a bag for my literature teacher to that class, and they made me think I would never set foot in theirs again. Inside that class, there was someone from the LGBTQ+ community as well, and I'm not sure about their sexual orientation and gender identity. However, when I carried the bag for my teacher, they started shouting and pushing that person toward me, yelling, "They're a couple, they're a



couple." I felt that what they were doing was normalizing and undermining our community and was offensive to both me and that person. I am lucky I had friends by my side during such times to support and comfort me, which made things better.

My romantic life has been quite turbulent as well. The first time I had feelings for someone else was in 8th grade. I had liked him for a year, so when I was about to change schools, I mustered the courage to tell him that I liked him. He was quite shocked, and it took him a while to respond, but he eventually said that he couldn't reciprocate my feelings. Afterward, I changed schools and had my first relationship. We were together for about 3-4 months before breaking up. While we were dating, our actions were not too intimate. We would go out together, wander around, have some drinks, and maybe hug each other. Since neither of us had come out to anyone, outsiders thought we were just close friends, not in a romantic relationship. I valued this relationship with him a lot. However, during our relationship, he didn't see me as a girl but as a boy. Perhaps I was the only one who saw myself as a girl in that relationship. He even said things that made me feel insulted, like "boys should act like boys, and girls should act like girls." These problems, along with other issues, eventually led us to break up.

Regarding coming out to my family, I don't know how to describe it. I had come out, but it felt uneventful; nothing changed. I wrote a letter to my parents to come out, clearly stating that I am a transgender girl. The response I received from my parents was just an "okay," and afterward, they didn't react differently. I felt quite disappointed with their reaction because I had hoped that coming out would lead to a change in how they treated me. Before coming out, my dad would often scold me, saying I acted effeminate like a girl. He wanted me to be a strong boy and would even say things like, "If you don't act like a boy or a girl, what are you?" That's why I had hoped that coming out would help my parents understand me better.

Because of all these experiences, I had to undergo psychological treatment for sleep disorders and depression. Fortunately, my mental health professionals did not exhibit any signs of discrimination. One of the doctors even gave me a pin with the colors of the LGBTQ+ community flag, which made me very happy.

Regarding gender-affirming surgeries, I want to have them, but I'm waiting for clearer laws and medical guidance. Finding information

about gender-affirming surgeries is challenging and can be dangerous, so I'm quite worried. I hope that when the law is enacted, there will be clear provisions for medical support and guidance for transgender people undergoing these procedures.

I have a dream that when I grow up, I'll become a literature teacher like my literature teacher. She has been a great source of inspiration for me. When I was feeling down due to discrimination, she told me that being a transgender person is normal, and there are many people like me out there, so I shouldn't feel ashamed or distressed. She said as long as I'm comfortable with who I am, it doesn't matter what others think. Her words were very encouraging. I hope that in the future, I can confidently live as my true self and pursue my dream of becoming a teacher.





**Story #32:**  
**THE STORY OF PHUONG ANH**



**#Happybeginning**

**Phuong Anh**  
**Transgender woman**

*"I'm also very self-conscious every time I look at girls. She has a lover and then gets married and has children. I also want to be like that, but I can't be like that, so I feel sorry for myself many times."*



## PHUONG ANH'S STORY



***"I'm also very self-conscious every time I look at girls. She has a lover and then gets married and has children. I also want to be like that, but I can't be like that, so I feel sorry for myself many times."***

---

My name is Phuong Anh, a transwoman who lives in the capital city.

When I was in kindergarten, I really loved doing makeup and wearing girl dresses. In general, my hobbies weren't different from what other girls like. At that time, I only knew that I loved boys and I wanted to dress like a princess. Not until I started puberty during 8th grade did I realize my gender expression was more likely feminine than my last thought that I liked other boys but I was gay.

I still remember every time Vietnamese Women's Day or International Women's Day like October 20 or March 8 came, when girls received flowers and gifts from the boys, I really had a strong desire inside. I want to be a girl, to receive gifts from the boys. This ambition has gradually become my dream. If I were asked to have medical intervention, I would definitely do it, I can do it. Maybe even if my whole family doesn't accept it, I will still do it. Because this is my biggest desire, and no matter what, I will be determined to achieve it.

On the way to discovering my gender identity, the biggest difficulty for me is my family. Actually, my family is quite traditional, so it is very difficult to live truly myself with my desired identity. Even though I had previously admitted to my parents that I was a transwoman. But in that situation, it was not a normal conversation but because the family was tense about another issue and then I was forced to speak up. But when I finished speaking, my whole family cursed at each other, then my father cursed and he was so angry that he would beat me to release his anger.

In my family, no one stood up to protect me. Her younger sister also followed her father's opinion, that I need to cut my hair and she forced me to be a boy: "You're a boy, so why can you have a girl's hairstyle?" Even relatives are the same. In general, there is no one by my side, accepting my opinion and defending me. But most of the time, I feel



like I'm the only one on the front line, and that requires me to always be tough, to maintain my stance with my own point of view, otherwise, if I'm not tough, I won't be able to do it and won't be able to go to school with the desired appearance like I have now.

My uncle always told me that you are a boy now, and you are also the eldest grandson. Then you have to be tough, tough, you have to let your younger sisters follow you, he says it in front of my father. My dad also agreed and said I had to be strong now, because it's not okay for a boy to be weak. A few years ago, the first time I got home from getting a piercing, my dad told me, my uncle said, are you going to take the piercing out now? I said no, then my uncle tried to take off my piercing completely. so that the piercing can no longer be seen. What makes me sad is that even though my mother was here, she stood in front of me, but she didn't say anything, just let my uncle do it.

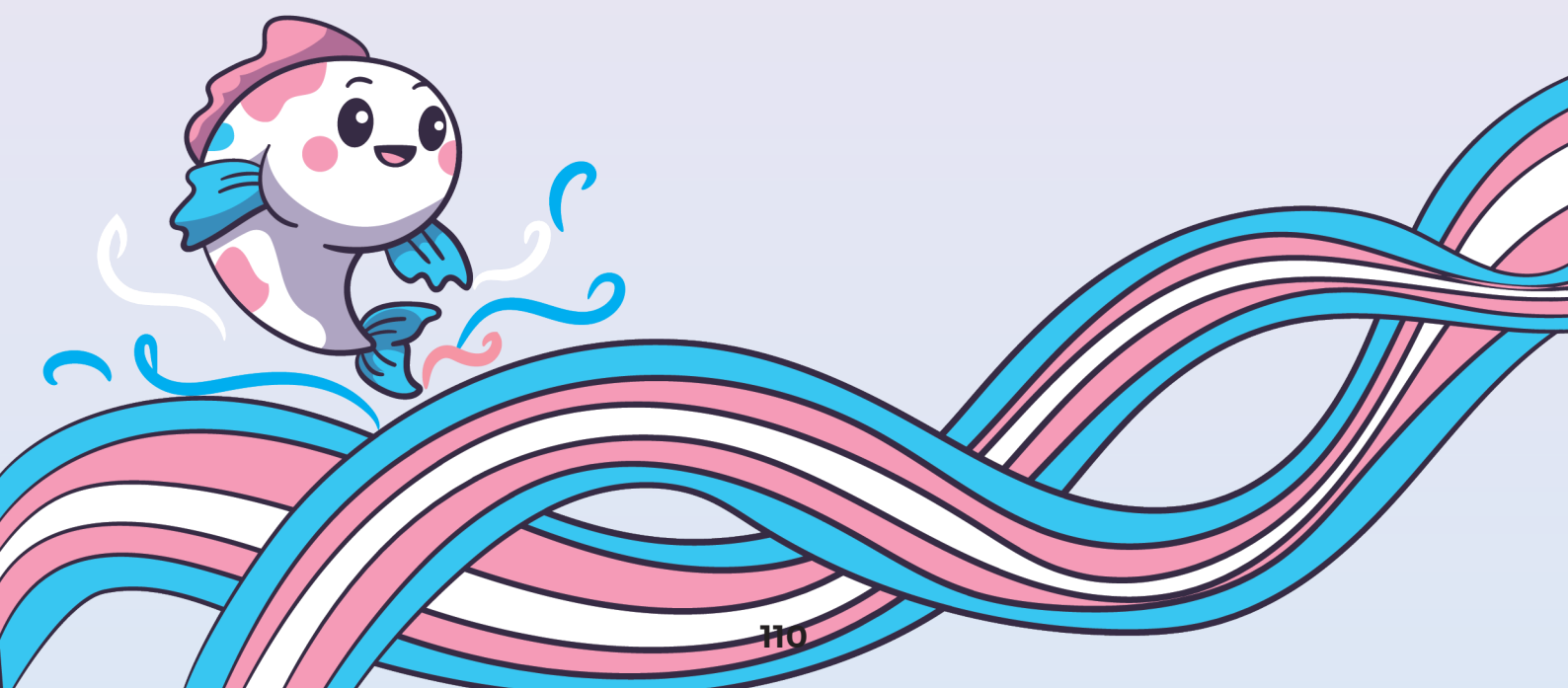
Currently, I am still connected to my family, but mainly because I am still financially dependent on my parents. I'm still working and going to school, so sometimes when I run out of money, I'll call my family. And no matter in the story when I ask for money or talk about a problem, my parents will tell me to cut my hair, you are a boy and you have to cut your hair immediately. I also insisted that I would not cut my hair. Now that I cut my hair, when I come back for Tet, I will cut my hair. Otherwise, if my parents don't accept it, I won't come back anymore. So it's always like that, after arguing, if not arguing then it's just arguing about an issue.

On the contrary, my friends are quite open-minded and especially now that I am going to university, my friends and teachers at school are also nice to me . I feel quite lucky that I have a very feminine appearance, so when I'm on hormones, it will be more easily accepted by everyone. However, many times even my close friends, when I quarrel with them, will never call me Phuong Anh again. People were so angry that they would say my birth name was Duc Anh. Revealing people's anger towards you. See, even at school, many people say they don't like me but don't dare say it out loud, so they just call me Duc Anh. And if friends like me , they already know and they still love me , they just call you Phuong Anh, which corresponds to my wishes. I actually felt both sad and uncomfortable, but basically I couldn't do anything about it because the name was on my ID card.

Personal feelings for me are a tough one. Unless you are very lucky and meet the right person, then it's okay, but for most people like me, it's difficult for you to have a relationship with other people, because your appearance doesn't have any softness at all. When I met a lot of friends, most of them were gay, and when people met me in real life, they also said that now they don't like me because I look like a woman, and they don't want to love transgender people. And when I met some straight friends, they asked me why am I transgender and have sinewy arms and legs? Don't have any soft features or do they not know if you are "really" a girl? I'm Really very shy.

In general, I haven't thought about it before and I don't dare to think about love because my sister is transgender, so having love and having a family like normal people is quite difficult. I'm also very self-conscious every time I look at girls. She has a lover and then gets married and has children. I also want to be like that, but I can't be like that, so I feel sorry for myself many times.

I hope that the law will specifically regulate identity recognition for transgender people. What I want most is to have identification documents that match my wanted name and gender. In addition, how to make medical or social security facilities more open and friendly to transgender people.





## Story #33:

**“BE A SUN FLOWER THAT RISES AND SHINES UNDER THE BLUE SKY”**



**#Happybeginning**

***“Be a sun flower that rises and shines under the blue sky.”***



## **“BE A SUN FLOWER THAT RISES AND SHINES UNDER THE BLUE SKY”**



***“Every person has the right to stand up for what they believe in. Myself and others in the LGBTQ+ community are fighting for the dream of equality, hoping our dreams will inspire even more people.”***

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"Hi, everyone! I'm Huy. I was born in Long An and grew up in Ho Chi Minh City. As a child, I loved playing games like "princess and prince," "cooking," and "fashion show." I realized my true gender at a young age, although I couldn't openly express it then. But my family, especially my older siblings, knew me well. Being the youngest in the family made me feel more comfortable, and they affectionately called me “út”"

But when I was in 5th grade, things got worse. I experienced school violence just because I played with girls, and that I am different from other boys. They attacked me through social networks and told me that I was a "faggot". At that time, I texted back to defend myself, but perhaps I had become a source of entertainment for them. I still remember that morning they called me out again and gave me a pat on the head, they warned me about my “difference”. My friends and teachers put me under pressure and made me depressed. Having spent months tormented by thoughts, worries and disparaging words. "When I adopted a more positive mindset, I was fortunate not to be abandoned by my family. They supported and encouraged me, helping me greatly in overcoming school violence."

When I entered middle school, I made close friends who felt like sisters. In 6th grade, inspired by beauty contests, I started practicing catwalks and even created my own evening dress from my mother's fabric. This led to online competitions where I enjoyed competing. With the support of my friends, I participated in various competitions and earned several titles, including crowns and sashes. I'm delighted not only to fulfill my dream of becoming a beauty queen but also to improve my social skills along the way.

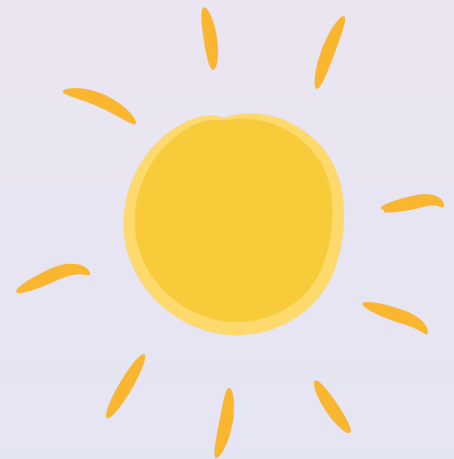


Throughout my journey of participation, I became actively involved in numerous volunteer activities. It all began when my close friends started inviting me to shop for various items, including a pair of high heels and a makeup set to practice with. As I embraced this newfound expression, my mother eventually discovered and accepted me for who I truly am.

One memorable day, I signed up for an online exam just like any other day. I clicked to share my profile, but to my surprise, I accidentally made it public. That morning, my entire class erupted in laughter upon seeing my photo, and by the end of the school day, the whole school was aware of my LGBTQ+ identity. It happened in the blink of an eye.

Despite this unexpected turn of events, I continued to participate in numerous competitions while pursuing my dream of attending a public school of my choice. I eventually made the difficult decision to stop signing up for competitions, firmly believing that my worth remained intact, no matter what path I chose. I hope that passionate and dedicated young individuals like myself will always keep the flame of enthusiasm burning as they pursue their dreams.

“Be a sun flower that rises and shines under the blue sky.”





# RECOMMENDATIONS

## IN COMMUNICATION AND BEHAVIOR



- 1 Practice the use of preferred pronouns and inquire about the preferred pronouns that the person you're interacting with would like to be called by**

*Pronouns are terms used to identify a specific person or object. When discussing pronouns for people, there are masculine, feminine, and gender-neutral pronouns. Specifically, masculine pronouns include "ông/chú/anh/..." (e.g., he/his), feminine pronouns include "bà/cô/chị/..." (e.g., she/her), and gender-neutral pronouns include "họ/bạn..." (e.g., they/them).*

*For example, a person transitioning from female to male but still has few masculine characteristics may be misgendered if we don't practice asking for their preferred pronouns.*

**For transgender individuals, misgendering can make them feel self-conscious and uncomfortable, especially in a society where discriminatory actions and legal gender changes are unresolved.**

**Introducing pronouns, names, and asking similar questions about the person you're interacting with helps us learn about the pronouns they identify with, rather than making assumptions, and it's also a way to show respect to both parties.**

- 2 Respect for diversity of gender identity, gender role, gender characteristics, and sexual orientation**

**If you want to know more about a person's gender identity, gender characteristics, or sexual orientation, it's necessary to ask whether they are willing to share. If they are, choose your questions carefully and make sure you are polite and respectful. However, it's essential not to be intrusive as it can create an uncomfortable atmosphere. Instead, engage in natural conversation.**

Diversity exists everywhere, and your children, siblings, colleagues, or friends could be part of the LGBTQIA+ community. In family, company, or organizational settings, improving your knowledge about gender and sexual diversity is crucial to fostering shared understanding and a culture of respect. Understanding these terms helps us avoid confusion and unintentional use of derogatory language, such as "he can't be a man," "she's not a real woman," and so on.

### 3 The process of disclosing one's gender identity, sexual orientation, gender expression, or gender characteristics

*If you are someone who wants to come out*, prepare well by sharing information about your gender, diversity, or related knowledge. You can consider various forms of disclosure, such as personal sharing, media stories, TV programs, and radio broadcasts. Because the process of coming out is personal, you can plan your disclosure carefully in addition to seeking advice from those who have done it before. This plan may include different stages and psychological, knowledge, and other preparations to ensure that the process is effective and safe.

*If you are the one who received this disclosure* from a child, friend, colleague, or partner, remain calm, sit down, and discuss their thoughts, experiences, and desires. Keep in mind that the person sharing with you has likely put a lot of thought and effort into this.

You can refer to the following documents on gender identity, sexual orientation, gender role, or gender characteristics:



<https://thuvien.lgbt/documents/noi-ve-minh>



**4**

## Taking action when witnessing violence, physical or psychological harm

If you see someone being harmed or experiencing violence, it's important to step in and help them right away. This is true whether you're acting on your own or as part of an organization. Remember, you can make a difference. Some methods include drawing attention from others or creating a reason for them to leave the situation.

Remember that active intervention from not just the helper but also the person being harmed is crucial and has a significant impact.

**Regarding domestic violence, Article 19.1 of the 2022 Prevention and Combat Against Domestic Violence Law specifies the address for reporting or accusing domestic violence:**

- ▶ The People's Committees of communes where domestic violence acts occur;
- ▶ Public Security Agencies and Border Guard Stations close to areas where domestic violence acts occur;
- ▶ Village Heads, Heads of Sub-Quarters, Heads of Vietnamese Fatherland Front Departments in residential areas where domestic violence acts occur;
- ▶ Heads of socio-political organizations of communes where domestic violence acts occur;



**National hotline for domestic violence prevention and control: 1800.1768**



**The Center for the Study and Application of Gender, Family, Women, and Adolescents' Sciences (CSAGA) also provides psychological support through direct counseling or the domestic violence prevention hotline for women at 04 3775.9339.**



**For children, the National Hotline for Child Protection (a service established according to the provisions of the Child Protection Law 2016) has a hotline number of 111.**

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## IN COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES



### **1 Community awareness, connection, and implementation**

Activities designed for the transgender and gender-diverse community, or the LGBTQ community in general, should involve community members in program design to ensure more comprehensive content. This includes content, methods of access, delivery, and community engagement. This process should be initiated from the design phase to ensure effective participation and prioritize community building.

### **2 Expand the scope of activities**

There should be more integrated activities for the community in various locations, combined with local community groups to collect a more diverse range of experiences and demographics. Additionally, activities previously focused on healthcare should explore support in legal, livelihood, and other social areas to ensure comprehensive access to transgender and gender-diverse people issues. Furthermore, these activities could also be designed to incorporate cultural elements from the region to garner local interest.

### **3 Diversity in target audiences and communication activities**

In determining the target audience for activities, diversity should be considered. Although all individuals have the potential to identify as transgender or gender-diverse, differing sexual orientations and gender identities exist. Therefore, acknowledging and embracing this diversity can promote greater inclusivity. Additionally, it is essential to view transgender and gender-diverse individuals within their broader social relationships, such as family, partners, friends, and coworkers.

This allows for diverse stories based on different social environments like family, schools, work, etc., providing a more comprehensive view of the community and exploring new issue groups.

To ensure effective participation and encourage participants to express their opinions in their language and context, communication activities should involve a high degree of interaction. This creates favorable conditions for communication and fosters a more engaging and productive dialogue. This approach will encourage more community engagement. Some methods include sharing videos, podcasts, talk shows, stories, games, challenges, Q&A sessions, etc.

In addition, diverse ways of conveying and sharing stories are essential. In the digital age, media publications should be customized according to user preferences, with content that resonates with viewers to maintain a strong connection and convey messages effectively. Some potential options are video sharing, podcasts, talk shows, stories, etc. Each method has strengths, so a combination should be considered depending on available resources.

#### **4 For community consultation activities**

There should be changes in program design and time allocation to create more space for community sharing. Most community consultations and seminars only allocate around 10-15 minutes for community sharing, and this is usually placed at the end of the program. Instead, activities should consider placing community voices at the beginning and designing group discussions focused on the issues the community has shared. Expert opinions should also complement the practicalities of their field regarding the community to make information more feasible and reduce barriers between "experts" and the community.

***For more information about  
LGBTIQA+ community in Vietnam,  
please join LGBT Library at:***

