



## Times of transition

At first *The Advocate* identified itself simply as "the national gay newsmagazine." Then we realized we'd underestimated ourselves

**“W**hat is transgender?” we asked on a cover featuring gay Olympian Greg Louganis and transgender actress-singer Alexandra Billings. On May 25, 1999, that question seemed to be on everyone’s lips, gay and straight alike. Some three decades after gays and lesbians had become visible, it was trans people’s turn.

With that in mind, we got the scoop from three people who’d know: Billings, award-winning photographer Loren Cameron, and educator-author Jamison “James” Green.

“It’s all about a third sex. It’s all about this other entity that we don’t understand and we can’t put a

label on,” said Billings. “That’s what I am. You can call me transgender, you can call me a lesbian, you can call me a woman, you can call me a man. I’m all of those things and none of them.”

That was 1999, the same year Hilary Swank played murdered 21-year-old trans man Brandon Teena in queer writer-director Kimberly Peirce’s *Boys Don’t Cry*. The performance would win Swank her first Academy Award. And in the eight years since, transgender awareness has skyrocketed. Television movies *Normal* and *Soldier’s Girl* combined for 35 award nominations; *Southern Comfort*, a documentary about the life of trans man Robert Eads, took the Grand Jury Prize at Sundance in 2001; and Felicity Huff-

man won a Golden Globe in 2006 for her portrayal of a trans woman discovering the son she never knew she had fathered in *Transamerica*.

Too many headlines during these years involved violence. We covered the murder of Gwen Araujo, an MTF teen from Newark, Calif., who was beaten to death at a party in 2002. Trans people continue to be targeted for more, and more vicious, hate crimes than are gays and lesbians.

But there have been victories too. In 2006, after her third arrest in Grand Central Terminal, 70-year-old trans woman Helena Stone led a successful fight for new Metropolitan Transportation Authority regulations allowing people to use bathrooms consistent with their gender expression. For her courage, we named her one of our People of the Year for 2006.

As medicine and mores have evolved, more and more trans people are opting for hormones and surgery. And their contributions are being recognized. In New Zealand’s parliament, Georgina Beyer distinguished herself while disarming her detractors. In academe, biology professor Joan Roughgarden used her own gender journey as the linchpin of a theory of evolution more advanced—and more inclusive—than Darwin’s. Lesbians have seen a seismic shift as some of their most prominent butch women have chosen to transition. Writers like Patrick Califia have enlightened us throughout their gender journey.

The old trope of the tragic transsexual has long since been put to rest. Gender expression is now legally protected in some states. And in the eyes of a new generation, gender itself has come to represent not a rigid two-sided coin but an opportunity for fluidity and self-creation.

*The Advocate* has covered it all, giving notice that whether we’re gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender, we’re here and we’re queer and the world is richer for it. ■



Bill Clinton is acquitted by the U.S. Senate in his impeachment trial, February 12



Columbine High School is the scene of a deadly shooting by two Colorado teens, April 20



Jenny Jones is found liable for the death of talk-show guest Scott Amedure, April 8



JFK Jr., his wife, Carolyn, and her sister, Lauren, are killed in a plane crash, July 16



Y2K bug worries amount to nothing as the new millennium dawns, December 31