

## Republican Perspective

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by John Littig

### The Tranimal

For my April 19 column, I thought I had uncovered the ultimate absurdity. “You Won’t Believe This One,” described the removal of a scale from a college gym so that one student would not be caused anxiety over her weight. Well of course I was wrong, as confessed in my May 31 offering “Trust Us, You Are Beautiful” concerning the covering of mirrors in order to shield some students from the presumably ugly truth.

Well, it turns out there’s always (and perhaps always will be) another winner of the sweepstakes of the absurd. The current leader in that contest is a visiting PhD student at the University of Arizona. Hang onto your hat.

This student is apparently a female who identifies as male. Thus she is a “transgender man.” Since biologically she is now and forever will be female, I would normally call her “her” or “she.” However, I must quote below from sources all of which use the politically correct but biologically wrong “him” or “he.” So I will do the same so as not to inject needless confusion into this story of an already confused person. OK so far?

On the University of Arizona’s web site, the Gender and Womens Studies Department and the Institute for LGBT Studies jointly welcomed their visiting scholar “...a French student who just started his PhD this year at Universite Paris 8. He works at the intersection of Trans Studies and Animal Studies, focusing on tranimal body modifications, practices and subjectivities. He is beyond excited to be in Tucson for the Spring semester, benefit from all the department’s and the Institute’s activities, conduct fieldwork in the US, and meet everyone!”

Apparently not satisfied with his gender transition, he has forged onward to now identify as a hippopotamus. His paper on this was published in “The Journal of Theoretical Humanities.” An abstract of this scholarly work says: “Confronting transgender with transpecies, the author claims that his hippopotamus identity allowed him to escape...several sets of categorization that govern human bodies.” And “The article then investigates the politics of equating transgender and transpecies, critically examining the question of the inclusion of xenogenders in the trans political movement.” That should be useful after graduation.

In his own words, "...being a hippo makes me feel cute, confident, sexy and safe. I discovered that another self was available for me; being a hippo means that I don't have to be a boy or a girl, a child or an adult, normal or strange." As if it's not strange for a woman to declare herself male and then transmogrify into a gender-free hippopotamus.

Writing further about his newfound freedom from classification, he says "Unlike the somewhat checkered, locked-down, and policed space of transgender, the space of transpecies remained open, as it is not scripted yet." And also, that self-identifying as a hippo is "a political form of resistance to the (trans)gender policing of my body."

As of this writing the welcoming statement remains on the UA website. However, thecollegefix.com reports that a UA spokesman has told them that "...despite some early contact with the department, he was not a researcher or an employee of any kind, and he had no student status with UA."

So perhaps the kumbaya moment so eagerly anticipated by the Gender and Womens Studies folks and their LGBT soulmates was never actually consummated. We can't be sure, because thecollegefix.com reports that the tranimal did not respond to their inquiries.

This is a great loss to the academic excellence of the University of Arizona, because their Gender and Womens Studies Department and their Institute for LGBT Studies might have benefited greatly from the wisdom and scholarly contributions of the visiting ungulate.