Opinion
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Last month I joined the St. Louis Catholic Worker publishing team for The Round Table, the journal that the Worker publishes three times a year. Since the opening of Karen House 41 years ago, I've written for The Round Table, but I've never before been an editor. It seemed time, and I jumped in with both feet, offering to edit the articles as they came in.

The only wrinkle was that the topic had already been selected, authors invited, and I knew nothing about being transgender. Indeed, I was telling a friend that first week, imagining how I would open my "Why this Issue" lead essay: We are all teeming cauldrons of sexual impulse, I would say. No, no, she said. Transgender is about identity, not sexuality. Oh, I answered.

We're publishing a page of definitions that are very helpful. I understand the continuum between male and female, but the definitions include "other." What is other? A mom writes in the issue how she tells her children, "Only you know who you are. Whoever you are, tell me and I will believe you." Excellent words in our ever-changing world.

Two of the authors describe their struggle to find community in the trans world. Trans culture disappeared, they say, with the rise of gay culture and the AIDS crisis. This hit home to me. Two of my brothers were gay and died of AIDS in the 1980s. Joe said the only thing I could do to help him was to say to all my friends that he was gay and had AIDS. I did speak up and I watched gladly as being gay became mainstream — but transgender people continue to live in the shadows. One author tells about reading the obituaries of black trans women to learn what life would hold because they didn't know anyone alive like them. (This author's pronouns are they, them and theirs, another steep learning curve for me.)

One article reports about Karen House learning to welcome trans persons; another is about the roller derby becoming more open; and a third interviews Jessica, a woman serving life in a men's prison. She successfully sued Missouri to take hormone therapy. Read the issue. It will be online in a couple of weeks. I'll let you know.

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