

James Morton  
March 2009

# Evaluation Report for Transgender Creative Writing Course



# TRANSforming Arts

SCOTTISH TRANSGENDER ALLIANCE  
[www.scottishtrans.org](http://www.scottishtrans.org)  
EQUALITY NETWORK



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## Introduction:

In October 2008, the Equality Network's Scottish Transgender Alliance Project started running a transgender creative expression course called **TRANSforming Arts**. During the 2008/2009 financial year, fourteen intensive **TRANSforming Arts** workshops were run, mostly held in the Glasgow LGBT Centre. The funding for **TRANSforming Arts** was provided from the Scottish Government Equality Unit's block funding for the Equality Network's Scottish Transgender Alliance Project.

The **TRANSforming Arts** participants performed selections of their creative writing to mark Transgender Day of Remembrance on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2008 and to mark LGBT History Month in Glasgow on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2009 and in Edinburgh on 21<sup>st</sup> February 2009.

This report evaluates the outputs and outcomes of the **TRANSforming Arts** course and resulting storytelling performance events.



Two illustrated PDF scripts of the **TRANSforming Arts** storytelling performances for Transgender Day of Remembrance and LGBT History Month can be obtained by contacting the SCOTTISH TRANSGENDER ALLIANCE Project Coordinator:

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STA Project Coordinator  
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## Course Delivery Method:

The Equality Network Scottish Transgender Alliance Project's **TRANSforming Arts** course is the first ever transgender-specific creative writing course ever run in Scotland. Many transgender people experience high levels of transphobic harassment and discrimination in their local communities<sup>1</sup> and Scottish social attitudes are more negative towards transgender people than towards other minority groups<sup>2</sup>. Mainstream media representations of transgender people often mock their identities and perpetuate negative stereotypes and transphobic prejudice rather than challenge it.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, transgender people in Scotland are particularly nervous of attempts to publicly and creatively represent their lives and experiences to the Scottish public. To ensure that the **TRANSforming Arts** course was run in a safe and supportive manner for participants, it was determined by the Scottish Transgender Alliance Project that it was of great importance that the course be facilitated by a writer experienced in:

- using creative performance to explore transgender issues and experiences in an empowering manner;
- balancing issues of confidence, safety, self-esteem and visibility for minority groups;
- and constructively mentoring inexperienced writers to increase their skills.

The Equality Network's Director together with the Equality Network's Scottish Transgender Alliance Project Coordinator therefore selected Jo Clifford as the course facilitator because she is:

- a critically acclaimed playwright who has addressed transgender issues sensitively in her original plays and also in adaptations such as her recent production of Faust Parts One and Two at the Royal Lyceum in Edinburgh;
- actively engaged in voluntary transgender community peer support in Scotland;
- a former Professor of Theatre at Queen Margaret University with extensive experience of tutoring creative writing students.

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<sup>1</sup> Prof S. Whittle, Dr L. Turner, M. Al-Alami, (2007), Engendered Penalties: Transgender and Transsexual People's Experiences of Inequality and Discrimination, The Equalities Review.

<sup>2</sup> C. Bromley, J. Curtice and L. Given, (2007), 'Attitudes to Discrimination in Scotland 2006: Scottish Social Attitudes Survey - Research Findings', Scottish Government.

<sup>3</sup> See <http://tzone.freeforums.org/media-television-and-the-arts-f6.html> for many examples of recent media articles about transgender people

Jo Clifford was then contracted to run the fourteen TRANSforming Arts sessions, including ensuring the group participants successfully carried out public storytelling performances for the Transgender Day of Remembrance in November 2008 and LGBT History Month in February 2009. The TRANSforming Arts sessions dates were held as shown in Table 1 below:

<b>No.:</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>Location:</b>	<b>Session Type:</b>
1	16 Oct 2008	Glasgow LGBT Centre	Writing Workshop
2	23 Oct 2008	Glasgow LGBT Centre	Writing Workshop
3	30 Oct 2008	Glasgow LGBT Centre	Writing Workshop
4	6 Nov 2008	Glasgow LGBT Centre	Writing Workshop
5	13 Nov 2008	Glasgow LGBT Centre	Writing Workshop
6	20 Nov 2008	Glasgow LGBT Centre	Storytelling Performance
7	27 Nov 2008	Glasgow LGBT Centre	Writing Workshop
8	4 Dec 2008	Glasgow LGBT Centre	Writing Workshop
9	8 Jan 2009	Glasgow LGBT Centre	Writing Workshop
10	22 Jan 2009	Glasgow LGBT Centre	Writing Workshop
11	27 Jan 2009	Glasgow LGBT Centre	Writing Workshop
12	5 Feb 2009	Glasgow LGBT Centre	Storytelling Performance
13	21 Feb 2009	LGBT Health, Edinburgh	Storytelling Performance
14	5 Mar 2009	Glasgow LGBT Centre	Evaluation

Prior to the 14 session course, potential participants were offered the opportunity to meet Jo Clifford and find out more information about the course at two taster sessions in September. It turned out, though, that Jo Clifford's reputation among transgender people in Scotland was sufficiently high that most participants had already met her at transgender community events and were happy to sign up for the course without first attending a taster session. Therefore, only one taster session needed to be run prior to the course and the second one was cancelled as the course had already been successfully filled by that point. The taster session was held in the Forest Café in Edinburgh on the 11<sup>th</sup> September 2008.

Each of the Writing Workshop Sessions followed the format shown below in Table 2:

<b>Time:</b>	<b>Activity:</b>
7:30pm – 7:40pm	Welcome and icebreaker
7:40pm – 8:00pm	Each participant tells a brief impromptu story about an experience they have had that week
8:00pm – 9:20pm	Participants each take turns reading out their latest piece of creative writing and receiving constructive feedback from the facilitator and other participants. Approximately 10-15 minutes spent on each piece.
9:20pm – 9:30pm	Round up with suggestions of possible creative writing ideas to work on as homework during the week for the next writing workshop.

Each of the Storytelling Performance Event Sessions involved the course participants pre-selecting a piece of their writing and Jo Clifford creating a script of these pieces linked together by her in a suitable order. The course participants then stood as a group in front of a seated audience invited through the Equality Network email mailing list and took turns performing their creative writing pieces. A warm and intimate atmosphere was created through the use of candles at each storytelling performance event. Each of the three Storytelling Performance Event Sessions lasted approximately an hour and were then followed by optional refreshments and buffet to allow the course participants and audience to socialise together for up to a further hour.

Our Story Scotland video recorded for their LGBT Scottish Storytelling Archive the whole of the second ***TRANSforming Arts*** Storytelling Performance Event Session (which took place on the 5<sup>th</sup> February 2009).

## Participant Diversity:

There were a maximum of seven places available on the course. The restriction on numbers was necessary in order to ensure that sufficient attention would be able to be given to developing the writing skills and performance techniques of each participant during each two hour writing workshop session. The restriction in numbers was also necessary to ensure that the storytelling performance events did not have too many performers to be manageable - a maximum was set of eight performers (the seven course participants plus Jo Clifford, the facilitator).

Seven participants attended the course; however one participant discovered subsequently that they were unable to attend the majority of the sessions due to other commitments and therefore chose not to participate in the storytelling performances. The diversity data for the seven participants is detailed below. Due to the small number of participants, some of the data has deliberately not been broken down too far in order to maintain confidentiality:

### **Age Diversity:**

2 aged 20-29  
3 aged 30-39  
1 aged 40-49  
1 aged 50-59

### **Gender Identity Diversity:**

3 trans men  
2 trans women  
2 other non-binary transgender people

### **Sexual Orientation Diversity:**

4 lesbian, gay or bisexual  
2 heterosexual or straight people  
[1 not stated]

### **Ethnic Diversity:**

4 White Scottish  
3 Ethnic Minorities

### **Disability Diversity:**

2 Disabled  
5 Not Disabled

## Key Outputs & Outcomes:

<b>Table 3: Planned Outcomes Relevant to TRANSforming Arts course</b>	
<b>Scottish Government Equality Unit's LGBT Equality Policy Level Outcome:</b>	Greater visibility, participation and inclusion of LGBT people across all aspects of Scottish daily and public life.
<b>Equality Network's Scottish Transgender Alliance Project Level Outcome:</b>	An increase in accurate and positive public representation of transgender people's experiences in Scotland.

<b>Table 4: Planned Output and Extent Achieved</b>	
<b>Equality Network's Scottish Transgender Alliance Project Level Planned Outputs:</b>	Produce at least two supportive media articles or public storytelling events giving voice to different transgender experiences.
<b>Extent Achieved:</b>	<p>Fully achieved.</p> <p>The Equality Network's Scottish Transgender Alliance (STA) Project ran a fourteen session <b>TRANSforming Arts</b> transgender writing course in Glasgow which empowered course participants to perform in three public storytelling events giving voice to their different transgender experiences. The participants also created, designed and distributed two PDF documents of their writing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The first storytelling event took place in the Glasgow LGBT Centre for Transgender Day of Remembrance on 20th November 2008 for an audience of approximately 25 people.</li> <li>• The second storytelling event took place in the Glasgow LGBT Centre for LGBT History Month on 5th February 2009 for an audience of approximately 15 people.</li> <li>• The third storytelling event took place in the Edinburgh LGBT Centre for Health &amp; Wellbeing on 21st February 2009 for an audience of approximately 30 people.</li> </ul>

## Additional Outcomes Achieved:

In addition to the project outcome agreed with the Scottish Government of “an increase in accurate and positive public representation of transgender people’s experiences in Scotland”, the provision of the writing course also achieved an additional outcome of improving the mental wellbeing and coping skills of the participants:

“It was probably the one thing that not only kept me sane over the past few months, it is probably the one thing that has really challenged me to better my personal circumstances all round. I am now looking into every single way I possibly can to improve my current situation and circumstances, and currently, I am doing really quite a good job of that, this workshop, was what I feel was the thing that really set my new found determination in stone. So, can I sum-up Transforming Arts in a single word? Actually, yes I can – transforming!”

**Quote from one of the course participants**

“I joined the TRANSforming Arts Group shortly after my transition commenced last year. At that time I was very isolated. In my day to day life, I never met any trans people, I had no one who I could share my worries and concerns with, at least no one who actually understood what I meant without having to explain everything from the basics. The group, despite representing a very diverse range of transgender people, has for the first time in my life given me a sense of community.

Through the group I have not only become more confident in my writing skills, but I have also found ways of articulating and coming to terms with various issues from my past, such as my alcoholism and attempted suicide. A concrete example of the direct benefit of the group is that, only a couple of months ago I was driven to consider self-harm when I became overwhelmed by circumstances at that time, but instead of self-harming, I chose to capture the feelings in writing, by which time the urge had passed.”

**Quote from another of the course participants**

## Conclusions:

The Equality Network's Scottish Transgender Alliance Project has successfully increased accurate and positive public representation of transgender people's experiences in Scotland through running its TRANSforming Arts writing course. The confidence and skills development provided to the course participants enabled them to successfully perform their various pieces of original poetry, autobiographical short stories, and drama scenes as part of three public Storytelling Performances. The audience reactions were extremely positive and copies of the PDF scripts of the writing performed at these events have been enthusiastically requested from a range of LGBT groups and individuals. The course participants have gone on to participate in further volunteering opportunities with the Equality Network's Scottish Transgender Alliance and are keen to continue developing further transgender writing, artworks and performances in the future. Therefore, the model of weekly facilitated courses providing both peer support and structured skills development appears to be an effective one for engaging transgender people in Scotland.

## Appendix 1: Participant Recruitment Flyers

Front of A5 flyer:

# Transformance

## Creative Expression

**Everyone can be creative.  
Everyone has something worth saying;  
and everyone has the ability to express it.**

But it's not easy.  
Creativity demands a strong identity  
and sense of self-worth.  
That can be hard for us.  
We often have huge trouble to become our  
own selves; and often have huge difficulty  
really valuing the amazing people we are.

Developing our creativity as trans people  
can be a powerful way to overcome this.  
As a trans woman writer and performer,  
I know this to be true.

Jo Clifford, Course Facilitator  
[www.teatrodomundo.com](http://www.teatrodomundo.com)



Course organised by the  
**SCOTTISH TRANSGENDER ALLIANCE**  
[www.scottishtrans.org](http://www.scottishtrans.org)



*Back of A5 flyer:*

This **free creative writing course** will offer everyone who joins the opportunity to get in touch with and develop our creativity and so strengthen and deepen our pride.

Those taking part will have the opportunity to develop something that can form part of Trans Remembrance Day in November, and then LGBT History Month in February.

The course will demand some commitment; but it will be enjoyable, supportive, and hopefully not too demanding.

Two **free** taster workshops will be held to enable people to find out more about the course:

**Edinburgh:**

**7:30pm to 9:30pm on Thursday 11th September**

**Glasgow:**

**7:30pm to 9:30pm on Thursday 18th September**

The actual course will run every Thursday evening from **16th October to 4th December** inclusive.

It will take place in either Edinburgh or Glasgow depending on the locations of the participants who sign up. Travel expenses will be refunded.

For more information about the course and to sign up for one of the taster workshops: please phone the Project Coordinator of the Scottish Transgender Alliance James Morton, on **07840 570 202** or email **info@scottishtrans.org**

**[www.scottishtrans.org](http://www.scottishtrans.org)**

Article promoting course placed on Scottish Transgender Alliance website [www.scottishtrans.org](http://www.scottishtrans.org) throughout August and September 2008:



## **Transgression & Transformance - Creative Expression Course**

**Glasgow - Thursday 16 October 2008**

**Everyone can be creative.  
Everyone has something worth saying;  
and everyone has the ability to express it.**

But it's not easy. Creativity demands a strong identity and sense of self-worth. That can be hard for us.

The repression we have suffered as trans or gender variant people, means we often have huge trouble to become our own selves – and often have huge difficulty really valuing the amazing people we are. Developing our creativity as trans people can be a powerful way to overcome this. As a trans woman writer and performer, I know this to be true.

This **free creative expression writing course** (organised by the Scottish Transgender Alliance) will offer everyone who joins the opportunity to get in touch with and develop our creativity and so strengthen and deepen our pride. Those taking part will have the opportunity to develop something that can form part of Trans Remembrance Day in November, and then LGBT History Month next February.

The course will demand some commitment – but it will be enjoyable, supportive, and hopefully not too demanding!

**It will run every Thursday evening from 7:30pm to 9:30pm in Glasgow starting on 16th October and finishing on 4th December.**

There are still a couple of spaces available on the course.

To find out more information and sign up as a participant, please use the [Contact Us](#) form on this website to get in touch.

Jo Clifford, Course Facilitator

## Appendix 2: Storytelling Event Flyers

*Article promoting the Transgender Day of Remembrance Event placed on Scottish Transgender Alliance website [www.scottishtrans.org](http://www.scottishtrans.org) from the start of November 2008:*



### **Transgender Day of Remembrance**

**Glasgow LGBT Centre, 86 Bell Street, Glasgow  
Thursday 20 November 2008**

The Transgender Day of Remembrance was founded on 20th November 1999 to mark the death of Rita Hester, an American trans woman. Since then the day has developed into a global collection of vigils and events held annually to remember all those who have lost their lives due to transphobic hatred and prejudice. Each year the names of those known to have died are gathered and spoken as a symbol of our resistance to the continuation of transphobic hate crimes.

The Scottish Transgender Alliance is organising a Transgender Day of Remembrance event on Thursday 20th November at 7:30pm in the Glasgow LGBT Centre, 86 Bell Street, Glasgow.

Gather in the MED cafe-bar of the Glasgow LGBT Centre from 7:30pm, ready for the Transgender Day of Remembrance speeches to start promptly at 8pm. Following the short speeches, there will be an opportunity to socialise together as a resilient and supportive community.

Whatever your gender identity or sexual orientation, everyone is welcome to join us in showing that transgender people are valuable human beings and that transphobic hate crime is unacceptable.

Together, we can build a world of inclusion and equality.

*Email sent to Equality Network mailing list on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2008:*

### **Transgender Day of Remembrance in Scotland**

Thursday 20th November 2008 is the 10th international transgender day of remembrance, commemorating those who were killed due to anti-transgender hatred or prejudice. The event is held in November to honor Rita Hester, whose murder on November 28th, 1998 inspired the "Remembering Our Dead" web project and a candlelight vigil in San Francisco in 1999. This year in Scotland public remembrance day events will be held in the Glasgow LGBT Centre on 20th November and in MCC Edinburgh on 22nd November.

The International Transgender Day of Remembrance

[www.transgenderdor.org](http://www.transgenderdor.org)

**Glasgow:**

**Thursday 20th November 2008**

**7:30pm to 9:00pm**

**Glasgow LGBT Centre, 86 Bell Street, Glasgow, G1 1LQ.**

This Transgender Day of Remembrance event will be held in the MED cafe-bar in the Glasgow LGBT Centre on Thursday 20th November. All who wish to see a world free from transphobic violence are warmly invited to this event. Please arrive at Glasgow LGBT Centre from 7:30pm and be ready for the remembrance service to start promptly at 8pm. Members of the Scottish Transgender Alliance's Trans-formance Creative Expression Group will be leading the non-religious service. Once the short remembrance service has taken place, there will be some free nibbles provided and the opportunity to socialise and strengthen the resilience of our diverse community.

For more information about this Glasgow event, please contact Trans-formance facilitator, Jo Clifford ([jo.teatro@btinternet.com](mailto:jo.teatro@btinternet.com))

The same basic article text was used to promote both of the Storytelling Events run to celebrate LGBT History Month on the Scottish Transgender Alliance website [www.scottishtrans.org](http://www.scottishtrans.org) and in an email sent on 30 January 2009 to the Equality Network mailing list. The dates and locations of the events were simply changed to first advertise the 5<sup>th</sup> February 2009 Glasgow event during January 2009 and then after it had taken place to advertise the 21<sup>st</sup> February 2009 Edinburgh event:



TRANSforming  
Arts

**Trans Storytelling Event**  
**LGBT Centre for Health & Wellbeing, 9 Howe Street, Edinburgh**  
**Saturday 21 February 2009**

*TRANSFORMING ARTS*  
Warmly invite you to listen to their  
ORIGINAL POEMS AND STORIES THAT TELL OF  
HISTORIC TRANSGENDER STRUGGLES AND TRIUMPHS

On Saturday 21st February 2009

The performance starts at 4pm  
In the LGBT Centre for Health & Wellbeing, 9 Howe Street, Edinburgh  
Free to attend. Open to all ages.

For more information, email:  
[jo.teatro@btinternet.com](mailto:jo.teatro@btinternet.com)

GRITTY AND BOLD, BEAUTIFUL AND TRUE...

Organised by the SCOTTISH TRANSGENDER ALLIANCE, *TRANSFORMING ARTS* have been meeting since October 2008 to explore personal and collective histories of gender transformation and transgressing traditional gender boundaries.


To mark LGBT History Month, *TRANSFORMING ARTS* will perform their collection of new poems and stories full of laughter and tears.

Come and help make Scottish transgender history!

"It is high time we discovered our transgender voices and made them heard"  
Jo Clifford, playwright and facilitator of the group

## Appendix 3: Participant & Audience Feedback

**TRANSforming Arts** facilitator Jo Clifford writes:

 One of the real difficulties transgendered people face is that our self-expression is silenced. In our fear and our shame, we often leave behind the painful limitations of the gender into which we were born and then submerge ourselves in the gender which we know to be our true home.

But our experience of transformation is immensely valuable: and our voices deserve to be heard.


In October 2008, I began facilitating the Scottish Transgender Alliance *TRANSforming Arts* group in Glasgow, and it continued to March 2009 over 14 sessions.

The group consists of transgender people who all express their gender identity in different ways. What unites us is our determination to express and celebrate that difference through words; through publication and performance.

We have performed our writings in various public spaces, notably for Transgender Remembrance Day in November 2008, and for LGBT History Month in February 2009.

We have published the scripts of these events, so we can retain ownership of them while also making them available to other LGBT organisations who might find them helpful.

Individual members of the group are now participating in the social justice community art outreach programme at the Gallery of Modern Art in Glasgow. One of us has had her writing published by Scottish Women's Aid; another will shortly be performing in an alternative cabaret show in Edinburgh, and is involved in making his/her work into a film. Yet another is working on a sequence of short stories. My AN APPLE A DAY will be performed at Oran Mor and the Traverse in April and I will be performing my JESUS, QUEEN OF HEAVEN at Glasgay in November 2009.

Participation in this group has had a profoundly positive effect on all our lives. We are looking for further opportunities to develop and share the work we have been doing together. 

One of the participants writes:



How do I feel about *Transforming Arts*?

I first came to the second session of *Transforming Arts*, the week after the Outspoken Drama Workshops for people who stammer concluded. Also, earlier that same month, I had begun what will be a lifetime's worth of treatments for a blood condition I had just been diagnosed with, called genetic haemochromatosis. As a result, my confidence was in absolute flux, as I was still on an absolute high from the drama workshops, and on an absolute low from my diagnosis. A diagnosis that bluntly stated that if I didn't have these treatments, any hopes I had of a normal life-expectancy would be reduced by as much by ten to thirty years – I had just come face to face with my own mortality and the scared the living hell out of me. To say my head felt a little like mince at this time would be an enormous understatement.

At the start of the first session I attended, I can safely say that I was extremely nervous. I wasn't entirely sure I wanted to be there, did I want to focus my writing so much on transgender related issues – despite the fact I had very recently written and performed a short monologue about the similarities of cross dressing and stammering. Also, I must confess partly because of ego, I am myself a writer, I wasn't sure if this group would be a backwards step creatively for me. Mostly however, I was still reeling from my recent diagnosis – even though in the scheme of things, there are far, far worse conditions for a person to have.

By the end of that session, all my fears had been laid aside – even the haemochromatosis! It made me feel alive again. The writing of the rest of the group thoroughly impressed and stimulated me, I was being challenged, being dared to up my game. I am the sort of person who loves a challenge, and Jo is a very, very inspirational mentor to have, the kind of person who gently but very persistently goads you to do better. I realised I guess, on the bus journey home, that I was going to love coming to this group.

It was great to be with a group of people, who I didn't need to explain myself too – even though our pieces were on the whole explaining ourselves to each other – but oddly not in terms of our

gender identity or sexuality or such things, except only on the surface of our writing. We got to express our own thoughts, feelings, hopes, fears, and experiences and the 'gender-thing' that defines each member of the group, in many ways seemed a side issue. We were really addressing the things that non-gender variant people are much freer to express, because of the falsity that society deems that their thoughts, feelings, hopes, fears, and experiences are more valid than ours.

Certainly our gender identities coloured everything we produced for the workshops and the performances we have done because of the workshops, I felt no-more or no-less as much as anyone else's experiences of life – no-matter their personal circumstances – but that is exactly what made the project so valid. It shows to the world that we are really like everyone else in the world, everyone else who has ever lived, whether they have had their say, or not.

The performances that we did were a huge undertaking for us all I feel, not so much with the preparation and the writing involved, but more so with the courage it took us all to perform. However, I feel we all found the strength to do this came from one another.

I hope this project carries on at a future date, perhaps with other creative elements thrown in as well as the writing; anything from painting, theatre, video, music, whatever. It has been an incredibly fulfilling and worthwhile experience. I very much have a place deep in my heart for everyone involved in the project. Long may it continue.

It was probably the one thing that not only kept me sane over the past few months, it is probably the one thing that has really challenged me to better my personal circumstances all round. I am now looking into every single way I possibly can to improve my current situation and circumstances, and currently, I am doing really quite a good job of that, this workshop, was what I feel was the thing that really set my new found determination in stone.

So, can I sum-up Transforming Arts in a single word? Actually, yes I can – transforming! 

Another participant writes:

“ I joined the TRANSforming Arts Group shortly after my transition commenced last year. At that time I was very isolated. In my day to day life, I never met any trans people, I had no one who I could share my worries and concerns with, at least no one who actually understood what I meant without having to explain everything from the basics. The group, despite representing a very diverse range of transgender people, has for the first time in my life given me a sense of community.

Through the group I have not only become more confident in my writing skills, but I have also found ways of articulating and coming to terms with various issues from my past, such as my alcoholism and attempted suicide. A concrete example of the direct benefit of the group is that, only a couple of months ago I was driven to consider self-harm when I became overwhelmed by circumstances at that time, but instead of self-harming, I chose to capture the feelings in writing, by which time the urge had passed.

Since joining the group I have had some of my work published by Scottish Women's Aid as part of International Women's Day 2009. I have also had three articles published in staff newsletters. My hope is that these will help increase awareness of trans issues in the wider population.”

Another participant writes simply:

“ Thank you for being such a great tutor, Jo! Have much enjoyed being in the writing & expression group, and feel motivated to continue writing.”

Another participants writes:

“ The writing group has given me a real sense of purpose over the last few months. I have met new and interesting people, written poems and short stories, and even read them out in public at the Transgender remembrance and LGBT history month events. The boost in self esteem this has given me is incredible, and it has been a fantastic experience stretching myself to achieve these things.

I also had a wee 'episode' a couple of weeks ago. I even called the samaritans at one point. Things got on top of me and I crumbled. Gave in. I was in a place where in the past I would probably have done some damage that night. Either to myself or something else. Did I tell you I suffer from depression? Anyway, instead of bringing more ugliness and pain into the world, i wrote this:


In the middle of meltdown misery  
Brick walls, no way out  
Adrift in a sea of shite  
Helpless, helpless

Life has lost its solidity  
Fumbling, in a blackout  
All is wrong and nothing right  
Hopeless, hopeless

Just a blur of insanity  
Kick, scream, shout  
Grey with nothing black or white  
Friendless, endless

Pain and hurt and misery  
Through the heart, twist, and out  
Eternal dark, elusive light  
Senseless, defenceless

I didnt even bother naming it at the time. I was just going to leave it as 'untitled', but in a wee twist I 've decided to call it 'Apathy' as it works on so many levels.

Jo said it was good that I managed to give things 'shape and form', and I always feel better for her words and presence. Another thing the group has given me. 

The audiences of the three Storytelling performances were invited to fill out comments cards at the end of each performance.

Here are their comments:



I just wanted to thank you for this evening.  
I appreciated the courage that it took for them to write,  
and to tell their stories, and their ability to transcend their  
circumstances and find humor or curiosity in their situation,  
regardless of what befell them. Really good stuff.  
thank you, thank you, thank you.  
lots of love,  
Diane x

<http://www.dianetorr.com/>



Funny - sad - powerfull - thought provoking.  
REALLY ENJOYABLE!



A fantastic event. Very moving.



I thought I would just pop in and stay for 1/2hr but couldn't  
leave. It was excellent.



Touching and ponient, though I was disappointed that there  
was no puddle of pish!! (James ask Jo about that). Well done.  
Really enjoyed it and it touched me in so many ways.



Thanks so much for an amazing afternoon. Makes me want to  
write my own story. Real spiritual + artistic value for ALL  
queer or not.



Fantastic. Loved every minute of it. When is part two?



Inspirational!!!



SCOTTISH TRANSGENDER ALLIANCE

[www.scottishtrans.org](http://www.scottishtrans.org)

EQUALITY NETWORK



# TRANSforming Arts

