

Jess Rowland

Artist from New York

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As a kid, I thought I was the only one who felt the way I felt. While this came with all the insecurity and confusion you might expect, it was also amazing to think that I, myself alone, was blessed somehow to have in me a female soul who only I knew, almost like the secret sharer in Joseph Conrad's story.

Fast forward a few decades, and we find ourselves here. I am not alone after all.

There are marches, parades, even the president of the United States has spoken the word "transgender". If you had told me 30 years ago that this would be the future, I never would have believed you. It gives me hope and strength and never ceases to amaze me.

I came out in San Francisco in the 90s. I was part of the music and art world there at that special time, and by far not the most eccentric of my crowd. Not much of an eyebrow was raised. This is not to say it was ever easy.

The hardest part is being in the middle - in the middle of transition, in between any safe harbor. I don't have the kind of strength to stay in the middle like that for very long, but some of my friends have made their homes there. They are my heroes.

Figuring out who I am, and living my life with integrity has been the grand challenge of my lifetime. I see transition as an ongoing process. I realize I will never stop changing and never stop redefining myself, which all in all is not a bad way to be for an artist.