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Don't Listen to Hartwell

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Letters to the Editor

• Don't listen to Hartwell

In Mike Hartwell's article, "A sex change won't do you good," [*The Maine Campus*, April 7] Hartwell attempts to establish some unjustified claims. Sexual Reassignment Surgery isn't intended to "alter one's mindset," but to align the appropriate body type with the existing mind. His portrayal of Claire's housing sit-

uation with Disney wasn't completely accurate. Perhaps he should consult the subject of his research before leaping into printed opinion.

Transgenderism, which refers simply to any cross-gendered behavior is not dependent on sexual orientation, and is as much a lifestyle or choice as Hartwell's apparent selection of the traditional male gender

role. Gender roles are preconceived social constructs and expectations placed upon a person at birth and taught throughout life. Transgendered individuals break free of these constraints and maintain their own unique existence, successfully adopting characteristics typical-

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ly associated with the other gender role in order to express their own individuality. In the rare event someone feels a significant enough conflict between their biological sex and their true gender, that person begins a nearly seamless transition between the sexes. This process includes establishing the identity, taking hormones to alter the body, living as the appropriate sex and acquiring adequate surgery that completes the transition. Hair removal is not surgery, but moreover a process that can, in fact, be completed gradually over time for a relatively small cost.

Why would someone undergo this painful reconstruction? Reassignment Surgery enables a person to replace all pre-existing instances of the "M" or "F" on documents, such as a driver's license or

birth certificate, with the more appropriate "F" or "M" respectively, thereby further establishing the person's identity. Very rarely does insurance cover any of the cost, adding further burden to the transition. It is also worth noting that transsexuals comprise a minute fraction of all transgendered individuals.

Transgenderism, similar to any other non-traditional genetic characteristic, is a treatable medical condition, not a confused state of mind. Perhaps "having feminine interests" may reinforce gender role segregation, but crossing over from one gender to another clearly does not. Hartwell's column, though slightly more informed than Mike Melochick's "Gender Bending" article [*The Maine Campus*, April 26, 2004] from a year ago, begs for the "validity" of his own uninformed "mistaken beliefs."

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