It takes courage to look someone straight in the eye and say, “I am not what you think I am”. When I tell people that I am transgendered – that I identify as a man although I appear female and embrace feminine qualities – they are moved. Some are moved to curiosity, or reverence, and others to unrest, insecurity, or hate. To an open-minded few, my gender nonconformity is inspirational. These reactions move me just as well. I will never forget the classmate who responded, “I admire that because you are really searching for yourself and won’t stop until you find it.”

Self discovery is necessary for an artist to develop a personal voice. Likewise, living between genders involves challenging social expectations and deep self-reflection. These revelatory experiences inform my work on a regular basis. For instance, every portrait I paint is a self portrait. Meanwhile, I depict a wide variety of people in my illustrations – from strong women and sensitive men, to wise elders and innocent youths. By representing myself through an assortment of characters, I gain an understanding of my identity through the people I embody. As observe archetypes within myself, I find I can connect with all types of people.
In addition to an intuitive sense of gender, my search for identity is strongly affected by my estranged heritage. Although I am blessed with a supportive family, there is something missing. Where other families may have stories and traditions, my family history is lost due to frequent displacement. To fill the void, I make friends with different cultural backgrounds, and immerse myself in their stories. With a sketchbook in tow, I glorify the details of peoples’ lives that are often taken for granted. This way, I can transform a typical family outing into a celebration of togetherness, or turn a frivolous party into a meaningful discussion group. Often I am the guest at dinner who starts a thread running for a memorable night of storytelling. Those stories remain with me, and are eventually immortalized in my work.

Throughout my career as an illustrator and a creative entrepreneur, I will continue to address the imaginary boundaries that divide communities. As a member of a marginalized group in society, I will take on the plight of all “second class citizens”. I will promote social acceptance through power of communicative arts. I will raise the status of creators with the establishment of an environmentally conscious design firm. Ultimately, I will share all that I’ve learned to motivate other young creators toward self-actualization.

After I changed my name, I changed my ways. Now I am preparing to change the world.