

# ZEKE

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# GENDER / NEUTRALITY

**Photographs by Mariette Pathy Allen,  
Miguel Candela, Nima Taradji**

Transgender people have played critical though disenfranchised roles in culture and society since antiquity. Although revered in religious ceremonies, *hijra* — India's transgender community — are often condemned to lives of poverty and prostitution, documented here in photographs by Miguel Candela. The *hijra* have made political gains — the Indian government now officially recognizes this “third gender”—but achieving equality within the eyes of the law is only among the first steps in effacing decades of insulting stereotypes and intolerance. Over the course of four trips, photographer Mariette Pathy Allen documented the lives of Cuban transgender women who, despite their country's progressive legislative stand on transgender rights, remain in many ways marginalized. In these images, we see that no matter how developed the country or liberal the culture, the transition process is unimaginably difficult. Nima Taradji's work heightens our understanding of this journey as we get to know David Murray K., who at the age of 54 began transitioning to life as Delia Marie, and, in doing so, chose to live life authentically and honestly no matter the repercussions.

In India, *hijra* like Kanak Harshita, pictured here, are often manipulated by pimps. “I offer them protection and in return, they pay me part of what they earn,” says Sanjana who controls Kanak's profits. “I think it is just.” It is unclear how many *hijra* turn to prostitution but in India's 2014 census, the first to include the third gender, nearly half a million Indians identified as trans. Activists claim the real number is six to seven times higher.

**Photograph by Miguel Candela**

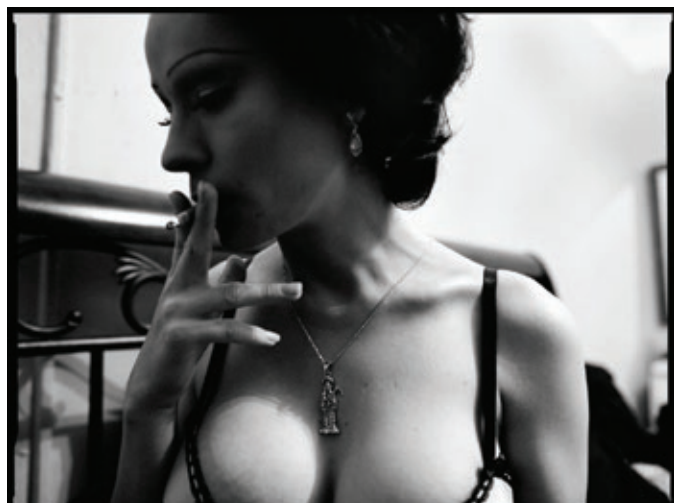




Laura at home in Havana. In 2008 the Cuban parliament approved measures providing transgender people with reassignment surgery, hormone replacement therapy, and new identification documents free of charge. Despite such generous and progressive policies, public antipathy toward trans individuals remains rampant.

**Photograph by Mariette Pathy Allen**





**Photo by Rich Nahmias.** From *Golden States of Grace: Prayers of the Disinherited*, SDN. "All of humanity is afraid of death—100% of us. This is a preparation for death. More than anything, it's about not being afraid to know there will be something after my spiritual release." Yajahira, a transsexual sex worker, began both praying to Santisima Muerte and prostituting herself at the age of twelve.

for people whose gender identity and expression does not conform to the norms and expectations traditionally associated with the sex assigned to them at birth." The definition employs two terms, "sex" and "gender," often and incorrectly used interchangeably.

Traditionally the biological and anatomical characteristics someone exhibits at birth determine sex. Only in the last fifty years have researchers begun to define and study *gender*—behaviors, roles, expectations, and activities associated with masculinity and femininity. While a person's sex does not change across the world, what it means to be a woman or a man varies from culture to culture.

comfortable lives.

It's important to note that transgender issues are independent of matters of sexual orientation, although there is overlap between and a historical alliance with the lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) community.

"These communities sort of clung together throughout their history," says Alison Gill, senior legislative council at the Human Rights Campaign (HRC). "People viewed them as outsiders. They were criticized together and because of the overlap in community and issues, it's mutually beneficial for them to be aligned."

However, because of their overlapping history, people often conflate their definitions as well. Asked what the

**55 percent of trans responders lost a job due to bias, another 51 percent suffered harassment or bullying at school, and over half were victims of physical or sexual assault.**

—National Center for Transgender Equality

sexual orientation is who you are attracted to. This can be simplified as sexual orientation is who I want to go to bed with, while gender identity is who I want to go to bed as."

Differences exist not only in the two groups' definitions, but in their status in the world today. While the LGB community has made vast gains in acceptance both politically and in the public eye, the transgender population continues to be misunderstood and marginalized at disproportionately high rates. Although data about transgender people isn't entirely comprehensive—challenges include a small population size in addition to stigma and discrimination—the available statistics are striking. A nationwide survey found that violence against trans people accounted for 20 percent of all murders and 40 percent of police-initiated violence in the United States between 1985 and 1998. This alarming trend is true to this day. In another survey,

conducted by the National Center for Transgender Equality, 55 percent of trans responders lost a job due to bias, another 51 percent suffered harassment or bullying at school, and over half were victims of physical or sexual assault.

"Hate-motivated violence against LGBT people is widespread and brutal, but transgender people shoulder much of the burden" says Gill. "It all comes from a place of misunderstanding and fear which results in structural and systematic inequalities."

In countries across the globe, personal choices as seemingly inconsequential as the clothes they wear condemn transgender people to lives of discrimination. Some countries criminalize cross-dressing, a practice encroaching on freedom of expression, while others refuse amendments matching gender expression to identity documents—a threat to voting rights.

Deprivation from such basic human rights—not to mention the respect and understanding everyone deserves—sentences transgender people to a multitude of vulnerabilities. Often, trans women and men must enter sex work, with low pay and no legal protection, as their only attainable source of income, increasing their exposure to violence and disease. Transgender people

report among the highest rates of substance use, sexual abuse, assault, depression, and suicide.

Such continued attacks fuel advocacy groups' continued efforts to secure equality for all, regardless of



**Photo by Gemma Taylor.** From *I am Rachel*, SDN. "I don't know what happiness is. But I am happy." Rachel.

gender expression. Their progress is undeniable. Nepal, in 2007, ended the barring of *teshro linki* (third gender) individuals from access to basic citizenship rights and decriminalized cross-dressing. Several countries have followed suit also establishing official "third gender" status. In the last four years, another 14 countries have instilled or bolstered hate crime laws.

**We're parents, we have friends and jobs. People need to see that we're just human.**

—Alison Gill,  
Senior legislative council at the  
Human Rights Campaign

Activists agree exposure is key to securing equal rights. While nine out of ten Americans personally know someone lesbian, gay, or bisexual, in 2015 only 22 percent personally knew someone who identifies as transgender and those who do are much more likely to support equality legislation.

"The vast majority of Americans, everything they know about transgender people, they are learning from the media," says Adams. As

transgender celebrities like Caitlyn Jenner and Laverne Cox publicize their stories, they build awareness around transgender issues, educating and encouraging acceptance within the public.

"As trans people use media to tell their own stories, in their own words, even people who think they don't personally know someone who's transgender will hopefully begin to see that we need to make the world a safer place for trans people to be their authentic selves," Adams continued.

"We're parents, we have friends and jobs," says Gill. "People need to see that we're just human."

# GENDER NEUTRALITY

TRANSGENER ISSUES ARE INDEPENDENT OF MATTERS OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION

**Sexual orientation is who I want to go to bed with, while gender identity is who I want to go to bed as.**

—Nick Adams,  
Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against  
Defamation

In a scene re-enacted over 350,000 times each day, parents cradle chubby-cheeked newborns swaddled in powdery pink or robin's egg blue blankets. Such color-identification is standard in most hospitals—crocheted beanies or ruffled socks distinguishing the arrival of a baby boy or girl. But fast forward a couple of years and the hospital's characterization will be wrong two to five percent of the time due to the estimated number of individuals who identify as transgender today.

The World Health Organization defines transgender as an "umbrella term

While most people conform their gender with their sex (a state referred to as cisgender), transgender—or trans—people deviate from the traditional gender binary in varying ways. Some undergo gender reassignment surgery and hormone replacement therapy, but the desire, or lack thereof, to receive such treatments does not necessarily determine whether someone is transgender. Others cross-dress and go by a different name. No matter the degree to which a person strays from society's expected norms, they do so in a highly personal effort to live genuine, authentic, and

biggest misconception about transgender people is, several advocates, including those cited in this article, replied that most people think that someone who is transgender is just "really, really gay."

"People still do not understand that being transgender is about your gender identity not matching the body you're born with. Your gender identity is your internal sense of yourself as a man or a woman—or perhaps something other than those two choices," says Nick Adams, director of programs for transgender media at the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation. "Your



**Photo by Keiko Hiroki.** From *Drag Queen*, SDN. Mizery, a drag queen at the backstage of Jacques Cabaret in Boston, Mass.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

**National Center for Transgender Equality:**  
[www.transequality.org](http://www.transequality.org)

**Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Discrimination:**  
[www.glaad.org](http://www.glaad.org)

**Human Rights Campaign:**  
[www.hrc.org](http://www.hrc.org)

**Human Rights Watch, LGBT Rights:** [www.hrw.org/topic/lgbt-rights](http://www.hrw.org/topic/lgbt-rights)



# SYRIA UNHINGED

Photographs by Maryam Ashrafi,  
Nish Nalbandian, Yusuke Suzuki

Daily, Syria finds its place in the headlines: a higher death count, a new rebel group, the continual destruction of national treasures and the use of chemical weapons. A civil war is threatening to erase one of the world's oldest civilizations. As informed citizens of the world, it's our challenge and responsibility to find empathy and connection within the carnage. The featured photographers in this issue of ZEKE helps us do exactly that.

Editorial photographer Nish Nalbandian has documented the Syrian war since its beginning.

As the conflict unwaveringly escalates, his photographs tell a story of the war on a human, rather than political level. Yusuke Suzuki, a freelancer based in New York, transports viewers to the war's frontline with photographs offering a glimpse at the chaos and shortages of food and medicine in Aleppo witnessed through a humanizing lens. Maryam Ashrafi's powerful photographs of Kurdish women fighters honor their courage while left to bury the fighters and pick up the pieces of the war-torn country.

At a cemetery in Kobané, Syria, members of the Women's Protection Units (YPJ) mourn at a ceremony for Ageri, a fellow fighter slain during clashes with the Islamic State. Started in 2012, the YPJ is the female brigade of the Kurdish YPG forces. Most recent estimates suggest over 10,000 volunteer fighters make up the group.

Photograph by Maryam Ashrafi





**Photo by Maryam Ashrafi.** From *Mourning Kobané*. SDN. At a cemetery in Kobané, Syria, on April 2, 2015, Kurdish people sit by the grave as they mourn their loved one, a YPG fighter (Kurdish People's Protection Unit), who was killed during clashes with the Islamic State in one of the front lines of Kobané, Syria.

lance. You couldn't even buy spray paint without an ID in Daraa. And while most would consider the act itself nothing more than a case of teenage rebellion, with the backdrop of the Arab Spring, the Syrian state interpreted it as an anti-government demonstration and responded accordingly. The boys were arrested and tortured.

Parents inquired to authorities about their sons. "Forget your children," one official reportedly said. "If you really want your children, you should make more children. If you don't know how to make more children, we'll show you how to do it," CNN reported.

Outraged and offended, Daraa's residents took to

al-Assad who has held his post since 2000, following his father's 30-year rule. That same month the Free Syrian Army, formal fighting units begun by a handful of defected soldiers, was formed. Now, four years later, Syria burns.

What began as a rural and provincial-driven uprising, tapped into the deep-seated political and economic issues that have plagued the country for much of its history. The cradle of Middle East agriculture and cattle breeding, Syria was once the battleground for empires — the Hittites, Egyptians, Babylonians, and Phoenicians each had at one point called it theirs—before decades of colonization, political unrest, and brutal dictator-

**The level of violence faced by Syrians has been surprising even to those used to working in these situations.**

—Michel Gabaudan, President of Refugees International

evolved out of al-Qaeda, has employed brutal tactics to command territories across Syria and neighboring Iraq. The group considers itself a "caliphate," meaning it is governed in accordance with Islamic law, and has demanded the sworn allegiance of Muslims throughout the world.

Islamist and jihadist groups such as ISIL now outnumber secular forces in the conflict, their involvement turning the Syrian Civil War into a "war within a war." Not only are rebel groups, deeply divided themselves by political allegiances, fighting President Assad's government forces but they are fighting jihadist ones as well.

"You have so many conflicting interests and players struggling for dominance," says Jean-Marie Guehenno, director of the Center for International Conflict Resolution at Columbia University and former United Nations Under Secretary General for

Peacekeeping Operations, "and the groups are becoming increasingly fragmented and radicalized...The great fear is of the conflict spilling over to other countries, starting regional wars and redrawing the map. It would be a catastrophic event with killing on an even bigger scale."

It's difficult to imagine violence of even greater proportions. The United Nations has repeatedly investigated alleged human rights violations concluding that war crimes — mass murders, torture, rape, public executions, and disappearances — are being conspicuously committed by all sides. No incident demonstrates the war's savagery more clearly than that of August 2013 when rockets filled with sarin, a nerve agent and certified weapon of mass destruction, descended on several largely civilian districts around Damascus. The Western world, outraged, demanded the destruction of the country's chemical munitions arsenal. It has since been dismantled but use of toxic chemicals, like chlorine and ammonia, has been documented since.

Such horrific conditions have unsurprisingly resulted in the largest refugee exodus



**Photo by Nish Nalbandian.** From *The Syrian's War*. SDN. April 5, 2014, Idlib, Syria: Abu Taha, 45, talks with his daughter. Abu fights part time with the Free Syrian Army. His son defected from the Syrian Army and also fights with the FSA.

since World War II. Over 11 million people, or half the country's pre-war population, has been forced to leave their homes. An estimated 4 million have fled Syria entirely to neighboring countries like Turkey and Lebanon which, without adequate international support, struggle to provide refugees with even basic resources.

"I hate to make com-

**The great fear is of the conflict spilling over to other countries, starting regional wars and redrawing the map.**

—Jean-Marie Guehenno, Director of the Center for International Conflict Resolution at Columbia University

parisons about who's suffered more," says Michel Gabaudan, president of Refugees International, "but the level of violence faced by Syrians has been surprising even to those used to working in these situations."

According to a report by the United Nations, total economic loss to the region since the start of the conflict equals over \$200 billion. Syria's education, health, and welfare systems are now nonexistent. And an end to the fighting is

nowhere in sight, threatening to destroy one the oldest civilizations on Earth.

"A whole generation of Syrians has been killed or robbed of productive futures," says Andrew Gardner, Amnesty International's researcher for Turkey. "Even if a settlement was reached, most refugees don't show a willingness to return and it would take a tremendous amount of time for conditions of the settlement to translate into conditions for return."

Yusuke Suzuki, a ZEKE featured photographer, quotes in his artist's statement that the fighters say, "We only have time to think how we can win the battle." But as the country they bleed and die for crumbles in eruptions of violence, do they ever think: will there be a future for Syria left to fight for?

# SYRIA UNHINGED

## RAVAGES OF WAR IN SYRIA LEAD TO LARGEST REFUGEE EXODUS SINCE WORLD WAR II

**What began as a rural and provincial-driven uprising, quickly tapped into the deep-seated political and economic issues that have plagued the country for much of its history.**

The Syrian Civil War — a four-year conflict that has, to date, claimed over 200,000 lives and displaced over 11 million — was started by a couple of pranksters, kids aged 13 to 15 years old. In the southern city of Daraa they snuck out one cold night. "The people want to topple the regime," they scrawled on the walls of their school. "No teaching, no school, until the end of Bashar's rule," another wrote.

Such antics were common in a country silenced for decades by threats of violence and ubiquitous surveil-

the streets. "What they did in Daraa was unheard of, protesting day after day. It sparked a revolution," said Mohamed Masalmeh, a Syrian activist.

Their unprecedented displays of solidarity weren't without a price. Security forces opened fire on demonstrators, killing several and igniting further furor. As outcries grew in strength, the regime's response grew in brutality.

In July 2011, only a few months after the boys snuck out that cold night, hundred of thousands were protesting nationwide, calling for the resignation of President Bashar

al-Assad. It wasn't surprising that, following similar examples of revolution in the Arab Spring, Daraa's cries of rebellion were soon echoed by the entire country and Syria descended into a merciless civil war.

At its inception, the conflict was between those for or against President Assad. The story today is much more complicated having evolved to include the interests of neighboring countries, the influence of world powers, and, perhaps most alarmingly, the rise of jihadist groups like The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

ISIL, an extremist group



**Photo by Yusuke Suzuki.** From *City of Chaos*, Aleppo, Syria. SDN. A soldier of the Free Syrian Army who has had military service teaches a young soldier how to assemble an AK-47 in Aleppo, Syria.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

**Center for International Conflict Resolution:**  
www.cicr-columbia.org

**Refugees International:**  
refugeesinternational.org

**Syrian American Medical Society:**  
www.sams-usa.net

**Syrian Observatory for Human Rights:**  
www.syriaohr.com



# WHAT'S NEW!

## TRENDING PHOTOGRAPHERS ON SDN

Of the hundreds of exhibits submitted to SDN each year, these four stand out as exemplary and deserving further attention.



**Luis Barreto:** *Farming Seaweed from Sun to Sun* (Indonesia). This essay is about seaweed farming on the Island of Lembongan, southeast of Bali. Seaweed is usually planted every 35 days. After the harvest, farmers dry the seaweed under the sun for two to three days. During the rainy season, drying can take a week. The farmers have recently been negatively affected by the tourist boom. The younger generations prefer to work in the tourist industry where they can earn more money.



**Saud A. Faisal:** *The Nandi Brothers* (Bangladesh). Clockmakers are losing their skills because of digital technology and the majority of clocks today are made in factories. Instead they now mostly repair clocks or watches. This story by Saud A. Faisal is about the Nandi brothers in Bangladesh who are one of the last generations in their family still carrying on with this profession.



**Alvaro Laiz:** *Wonderland: The strange inhabitants of the Orinoco Delta* (Venezuela). For 8,000 years one of the last native South American people, the Warao, have taken shelter inside mangrove forests. The existence of ancient animistic rites and the acceptance of transgenders could be the last remains of pre-Columbian traditions and never photographed before. But there is a fundamental fact that is strongly complicating their survival: a few independent investigations indicate that 40% – 80% of the Warao tribe are infected with HIV.



**Liza Van der Stock:** *Sex Workers in Tanzania*. Liza Van der Stock is interested in studying gender issues, disadvantaged groups, and social taboos at the intersection of sociology and photography. When she had to pick a subject for her Sociology Master thesis research, she chose to focus on the issue of sex work in Tanzania where she investigated the social strategies adopted by male and female sex workers to deal with violence in their daily lives.



## Interview

WITH ALICE GABRINER  
International Photo Editor,  
*TIME* Magazine

by Paula Sokolska

*TIME* Magazine, as the largest circulated weekly in the world, shapes international conversation, engaging millions of readers in current affairs. A key composer of the publication's voice is Alice Gabriner who in September 2014 became its international photo editor.

She's a familiar face at the publication. Gabriner had spent 10 years there as a photo editor, first of the magazine's National section and then International until 2009, before accepting positions as the White House Deputy Director of photography and senior photo editor at *National Geographic*. In her career, she has managed coverage of the Iraq War, expanded President Barack Obama's historical archive, and worked with countless talented photographers. Again an International Photo Editor at *TIME*, Alice Gabriner illustrates stories for the print magazine, is involved with online coverage at *time.com*, and develops the publication's LightBox photo blog.

We spoke with Gabriner to discuss photography's evolving landscape, lessons learned as a photo editor, and the importance of challenging yourself in photography.

**Paula Sokolska:** You've been back at *TIME* for just about a year now. How are things different since you last worked there?

**Alice Gabriner:** It's been a really interesting, fascinating year in terms of changes in the industry. In many ways the job's completely different. The media landscape, as we all know, has completely changed but so has the number of new photographers that are out there and how they operate. I tended to rely a lot on agencies and that system seems to have all but disappeared. More photographers are reaching out to me and my colleagues — representing themselves. People are cycling in and cycling out much faster than they used to.

**PS:** With those new photographers reaching out to you, what do you look for?

**AG:** We're always looking for great stories and for a strong aesthetic. People who have both, their work stands out. In terms of new photographers, we see a lot who can create good imagery but not necessarily know how to tell a story.

What is concerning, however, is that we need to be really careful about how people are getting the access that they get and whether they understand what really good journalistic ethics are. It can be challenging to ensure this with photographers that we don't necessarily know or have not met. We don't have the kind of long-term relationships we used to have so we need to be really vigilant and careful about that.

We want to be extra careful that they can produce work with the rigor that *TIME* Magazine expects.

**PS:** You mention that some photographers struggle to tell a good story. Do you have any advice for them?

**AG:** I think when you're going to a place you need to really educate yourself about what's happening. A news story reacts to what has happened, but if you're creating a feature, you really need to educate yourself as much as possible and to understand local customs, local ways. That's how you can get good access.

But also you need to understand, if you're not getting the access, in what ways can you still tell the story? What other kinds of details are relevant? I find that sometimes people create scenes that aren't necessarily related to the story so when you're really looking at the work and reading the captions it all falls apart. The scenes that they're creating don't help tell the story.

**PS:** Would you say there's an advantage in gaining access and having that understanding when a photographer covers their own culture or community? Or is there added value in having an outside perspective?

**AG:** I don't think we can say one way or the other. I see both. Sometimes people working within their own culture don't see what's interesting, and it instead takes somebody coming in from outside to look at details in a new way. That was true with my experience at the White House where I was a new eye in that world as opposed to somebody that's been covering politics for years and years and years. But then there are examples of photographers covering their own stories, their own places, with incredible understanding.

**PS:** What sort of lessons have helped you grow as an editor?

**AG:** I remember Christopher Morris, the famous war photographer, saying that on the first day of his workshop he teaches the rules and on the second day we break them. I very much follow that same type of mindset. It's very important to know the rules but also important to think beyond the knee-jerk reaction of what is interesting. We need to constantly challenge ourselves to think differently and in a new way, to break the rules. I'm still learning. I'm learning every single day. You don't ever stop learning. You constantly need to question and challenge yourself.

**PS:** Can you speak a bit more personally about that?

**AG:** When I was at *TIME* before, I felt very confident about doing my job as a photo editor. I knew this stuff. If something's happening in Beirut, I knew who to call. It felt very easy to do the job. Then I left *TIME* to go to the White House and from the White House to go to *National Geographic*. Each of those experiences actually made me feel insecure in my abilities in some ways. I had to learn new skills and learn to see in a new way.

That was especially true at *National Geographic* where you're editing with the photographer. The photo editor looks at every frame, the photographer looks at every frame, and you sit together and talk. To be able to do that is an incredible privilege. In that process I would learn, almost on every story, how wrong I was. The photographer would pull out pictures that

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