



## “She’s a man!”

**T**anya’s hands were big. No, I mean BIG. Big enough to grip a basketball. You would have thought they were man’s hands except ... they were Tanya’s.

Tanya’s voice was low. Feminine, soft, but low. You might have thought it could almost be a man’s voice, except it was Tanya’s.

But Tanya was big. Tall. Big Boned. You might have thought she was a man. But she was Tanya.

Tanya was our upstairs neighbor. Georgia and I, just married, had taken a small, second floor rear apartment in an aged building that squatted on a tired block near some railroad tracks. Our side entrance opened to a stairway smelling of cats that passed our dingy apartment door and continued up to the third floor, which was partly unfinished and attic-like, but in one corner was a small apartment that was Tanya’s. She lived alone. We never heard anyone come or go with her. When we moved in, she brought us a plant and chatted a little bit. We were thrilled. We were meeting our neighbors, the people we had come to the north side of Chicago to reach.

“She’s a man!” my Greek mother-in-law screeched in her accented English. “What!?” Georgia and I looked at each other, mouths open. Tanya had just stopped by. My mother-in-law was visiting. “That’s a man,” Georgia’s mom repeated, throwing a hand toward the door that had just closed behind Tanya. The carefully coifed hair. The beautiful makeup. The meticulously manicured nails ... on those big hands, attached to that big body, with that low voice. The sense of

it dawned on me and Georgia in the same moment.

What did we know? We grew up on the south side. Our neighborhood was made up of husband, wife, and four or five kids completing the Catholic family. As we would discover, the north side was the destination to which homosexuals, transvestites, along with other variations of sexual confusion and perversion drifted. We cared about Tanya. We wanted “her” to come to know Christ. The fact that “she” was “he” really did not change the fact that Tanya, or Tony, had a soul headed for hell. Where did “she” come from? What

twisted, tortured journey led “her” into this lifestyle? Who cared for “her” soul? Who was praying for “her”? Who would come and find “her” and love “her” with the love of Christ? Who would invite “her” to the cross that transforms lives?

It turns out that current, concrete statistics are very difficult to come by, but 1,188,784 people identified themselves as same-sex partners in the 2000 census compared with about 145,130 in 1990. The 2000 Census counted same-sex couples in 99.3 percent of all U.S. counties, but the majority of same-sex couples live in 10 of the country’s largest cities and their surrounding suburbs.

Of all lesbians and gay men,

45.1 percent and 52.7 percent live in urban areas, respectively, while 33.1 percent and 31.7 percent live in the suburbs, respectively (according to the organization Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays). The Chicago Area Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce has more than 600 member businesses. Every major city now has its own Gay Pride parade.

Yes, for decades the cities have been the dream and destination for those wanting to pursue a homosexual lifestyle. In the bigness and anonymity of the urban centers they can pursue

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their perversion out of the view of family and former friends. Looking to be with others like themselves, they seek solace in the city.

We have found out that running from “them” doesn’t work. While homosexual communities have grown in urban centers, the political and social clout of these rising communities has followed “white flight” out of the city, up or down the interstate, to impact our lives.

If this is not our mission field, then whose is it — the Mormons? The Muslims? Are we a source of hope and help? If not, why not?