

# TOUR <sup>DE</sup> BATHHOUSE

Ever see those clever "Top 5 reasons to fuck a transguy" pamphlets? Niko Kowell made them! He also manages Eros, the hottest trans male inclusive sex club in the US. He gave OP a VERY thorough tour -- from the locker rooms, to the dark corner bedrooms and even into the showers. We've got the pictures to prove it.

Interview and Portraits by Amos Mac

**Amos:** So did you like the photos I sent you from our shoot? Any photo you liked the best in particular?

**Niko:** I sure did. I liked the ones of me drying off in the end.

**Me too!** They are super cuddly. Before we go too far, please introduce yourself and tell me what you do for work.

My name is Niko Kowell. I work as the Program Assistant for TRANS: THRIVE. I also am a manager at Eros.



**Were you involved in starting the TM4M (trans men for men) campaign? Can you tell me anything about that?**

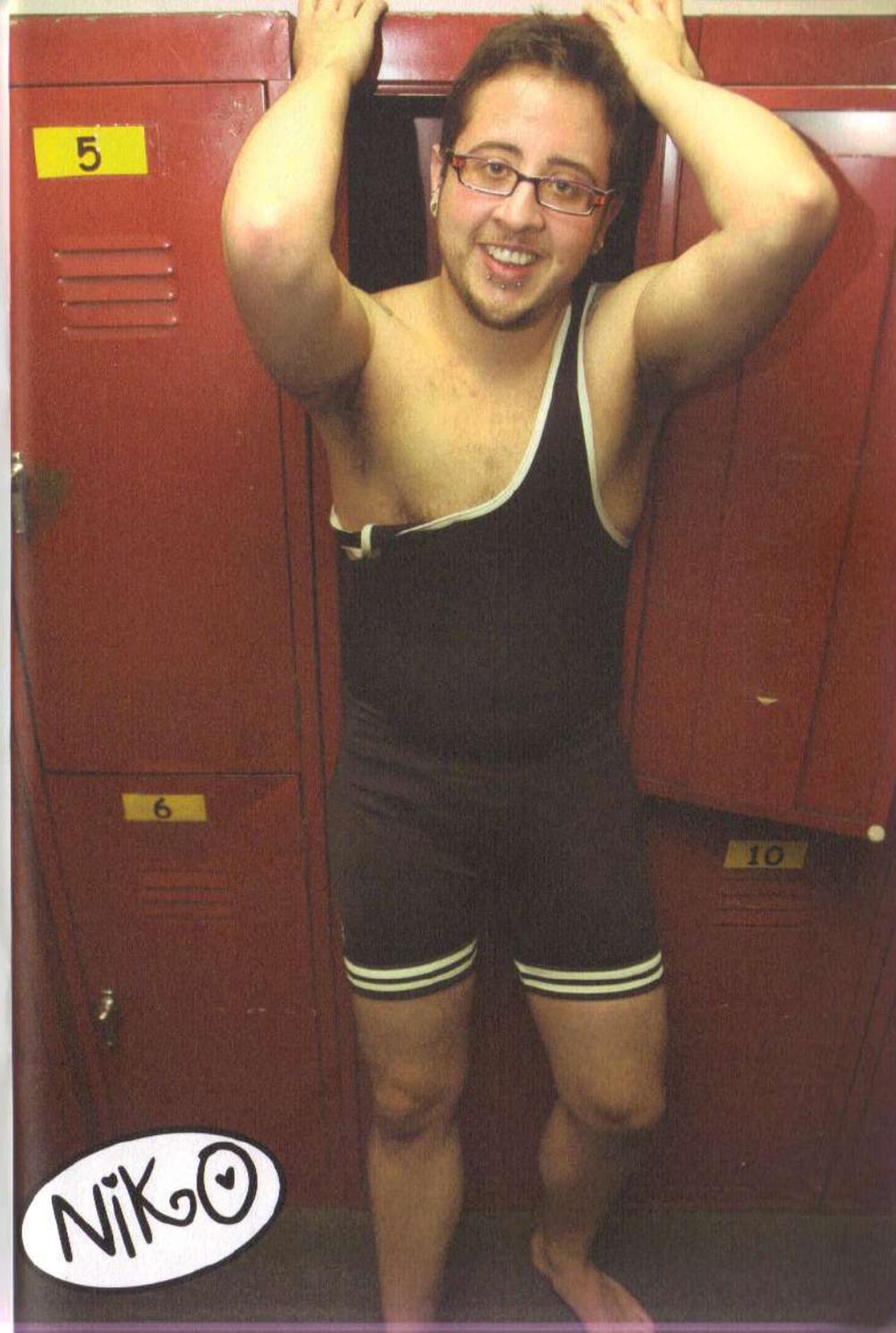
Sure. I was actually approached by TRANS: THRIVE (before I worked there) to be a consultant to start/create the TM4M program. I'm the project lead for it still. I had been involved in doing workshop/educational materials for Eros and Trannywood Pictures. I was a panelist in a "transguys and kin" workshop that TRANS: THRIVE, Stop AIDS, and Eros were having. After that Luke approached me about creating a program for TMSM (transmen who have sex with men).

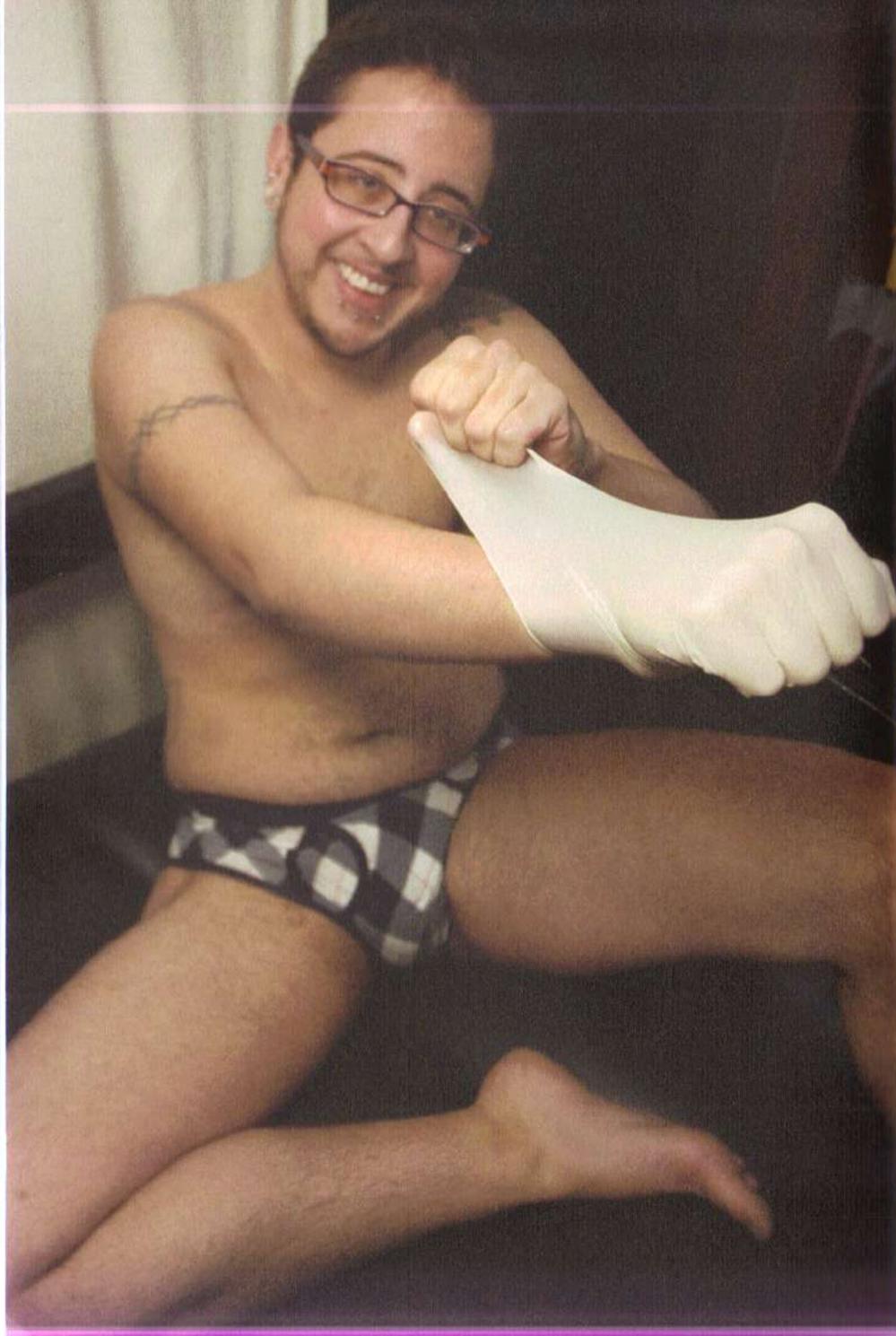
**Why do you think they chose you to start it?**

Working at Eros gave me a good insight to MSM (men who have sex with men), and TMSM communities here in San Francisco. So that paired with my interest in the topic made it seem like a good fit.

**It's a topic close to many of our hearts. I really appreciate the pamphlets you guys make and hand out at events, for cisgender men who want to sleep with trans men.**

I agree. I love any topics related to sex, gender or sexuality. I was so excited to do them and even more excited when people actually liked/okayed the "Top 5 reasons to fuck a transguy" pamphlet.





**You use perfect language to essentially guide these guys along so that they don't, like, completely offend us and turn us off in what could be a potentially hot situation.**

We really thought long and hard about it. As a transguy myself I really get the issue, but also wanted to claim my own and all transguys' sexualities in a positive tongue-in-cheek sort of way. That's also part of the reason there is a disclaimer on it. To be clear that not all transguys will agree or be 100% comfortable with what was put out there.

**Do you see a lot of trans guys come into Eros? And do you think Eros is a safer space for trans men who want to fuck men, compared to other sex clubs I mean?**

Absolutley. Eros, as an organization is 100% transmale friendly. The issue is we can't always vouch for the guys who come into the club. We will kick anyone out who acts in a transphobic way. It's not tolerated at all. Also, in my experience, people may not be interested in me when I tell them I'm trans but no one has ever been rude or nasty to me at Eros when I've been cruising. Actually I've been surprised that it's my safer sex practices (I play with gloves and barriers for oral sex) that get me turned down more than being trans.

**Are guys ever surprised or shocked when you disclose?**

Yes, people have been shocked that I "pass" so well in a towel.

**How do the guys react when they turn you down because you practice safer sex? Are they annoyed and like, "Never mind"?**

Usually. Or they attempt to tell me I can't get HIV from oral sex. I've also had people play the age card... like, "trust me I'm older and more educated. Blah blah blah."

**What do you think is the biggest health concern that we as trans men face?**

That's a tough one.

**Well, then what is something you personally worry about?**

Access to trans-friendly health care.

**For places outside of the San Francisco bubble, specifically?**

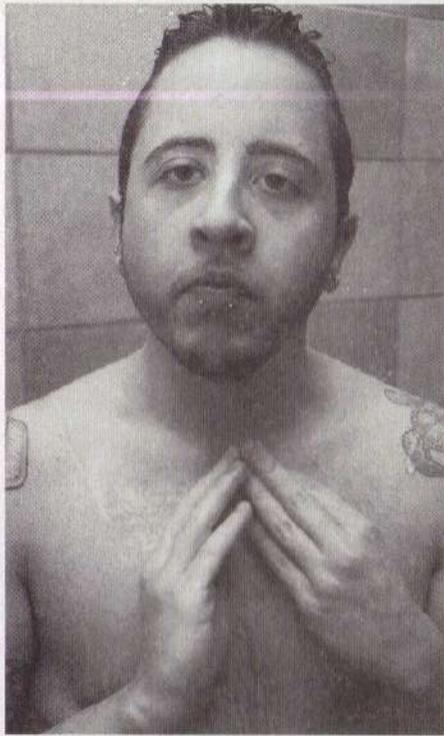
More specifically for TMSM. Many gay transguys want to go to a gay men's health center, but most of those places are not trans knowledgeable. I think it applies to San Francisco, maybe not as much. I also think we need to see more images of transmen and to talk more about our health issues. Have you seen the, *Men get paps too* campaign? I'd love to see some more things like that.

**Yes I have, the *Check it Out, Guys* campaign out of Canada? They actually have a full-page ad in this issue! Do you feel strongly about safer sex practices between trans men who have sex with women as well?**

Absolutely. To me it's about assessing risks and what you are comfortable with. I'm in a LTR, but we are open and play super safe (glove/oral barriers/etc). I take the same safe guards regardless of who I'm having sex with.

**That is so important because I know a lot of trans men who are in serious long-term relationships with women, and sleep with, or date men as well. And I feel like when you are in a relationship like that, whether you are open and honest with your partner about your side hook-ups or not, it's important that we realize we're not just taking care of our own health, but our partners' too, in a sense.**

I agree. If I was single I might make different decisions, but I need to protect my partner as well as myself, so I play extra safe to keep us both safe (and vice versa).



**What is the hottest safer sex encounter you've had lately?**

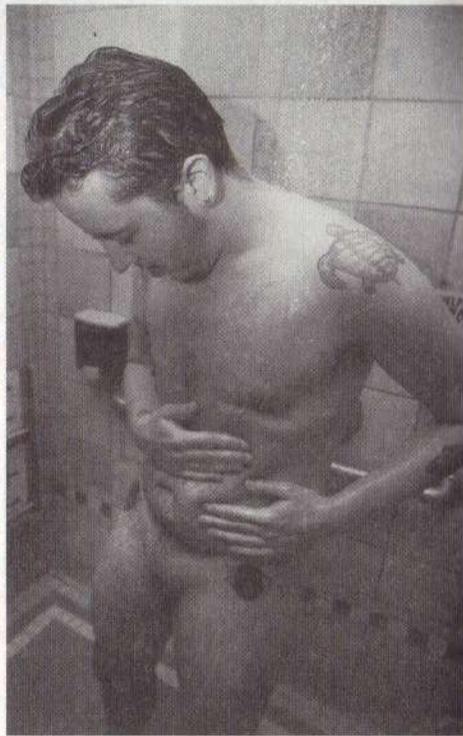
Well, a funny Eros story. I was fucking this hot transguy with my gloved hand. At some point I needed more gloves and we had run out of them in the bin on the bunk we were playing on. At this point we had quite an audience so I leaned over and asked some guy to go get me more gloves. He did and I went right back to fucking that boy senseless.

**You just needed a helping hand!**

True, and I figured they were getting a show so they could at least help out.

**Wow, did any of them comment on the hot action they were witnessing? Or did they just watch and enjoy?**

Just watched and enjoyed. I'm always surprised that guys can stand there with their cocks out jerking off but clam up if you try and talk to them.



**Cisgender gay men engage with each other in a very different way, I've noticed. Comparing what I've experienced relating to gay men pre-transition and now relating to them as a guy myself... it's a totally different world. It's almost complicated to learn the ropes.**

Yes, I've learned. It took me a while to figure out bathhouse/cruising culture.

**I love the singlet you were wearing earlier! What inspired you to get it? I feel like you may start a trend, guys everywhere will go singlet shopping.**

I was working at the Folsom Street Fair as their administrative assistant two years back and while I was running around the fair grounds like a mad man, I saw a booth full of them and just had to have one. I am all for more transguys in singlets. That sounds hot, maybe a calendar?

**Yes! All singlets! A trans male wrestling team calendar.**

OMG, I'm totally in.

