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## [FemmEssay](#)

### The words of Woman.

## [A Radfem On Transgendered Issues: Message Received](#)

On my latest casual stroll through the Femisphere, I noticed a post on the LiveJournal [Feminist Anti-Oppression Forum](#) called "[Are you listening?](#)" (also [blogged here](#)) linking to "[an open letter to cisfeminists](#)". I didn't even know what cisfeminist meant. But anything that begins with "Stop fucking up." has my attention.

Oy! Woman had to [go back](#) to [school](#) for this one. I'd never thought about the issue of trans\* people in the feminist movement, because I never had to. Privilege: I has it. I also read mAndrea's now-infamous post series about "[Deconstructing Transgenderism](#)". If you're a feminist, you should go read it and let it really percolate in your mind a bit; it's a good object lesson in understanding the fallibility of the human condition. Reading some of the comments along the way was even worse, because one realizes that other people agree with her on one level or another.

It's time for A Woman's Guide to Social Ideologies:

- If you find yourself writing a comment that begins with "I don't want to sound offensive, but I don't understand..." or "I'm not *blah*phobic, but..." then **you're doing it wrong**.
- If your ideology requires the manipulation of reality in order to make it fit, **then it's wrong**.
- If your sense of personal and social validity requires the disenfranchisement of a group of people, **then you're wrong**.

The anti-transgendered argument from this sect of radfeminists is fear-motivated. Here's the basic notion: Feminists argue that gender identity is a social construct that does not exist on a "real" or biological level, and this is the fundamental refutation of patriarchal oppression and discrimination based on gender. Trans people often talk about feeling that they were assigned wrong gender at birth, that they identify with another gender, and they may take actions to reconcile that ranging all the way to sexual reassignment surgery. Accepting that they are telling the truth about their feelings of gender means accepting the idea that gender is a real thing, thus causing the feminist argument to crumble and enabling the patriarchy to justify our oppression.

mAndrea goes on to posit that transgendered people are not telling the truth about their feelings, and even if they think they are, they're wrong, or confused, or something. Basically, they're just fetishists, male-to-female trans people are not "real women" and thus should not be accepted into the feminist movement. It gets more complicated than that, with some talk about men voluntarily giving up their privilege to engage in this fetish and so on, but we can just examine the first principle here.

There is no reason not to take transgendered individuals' description of their experiences on good faith,

which is what mAndrea spends a lot of time not doing. Ockham's Razor, sister. What is more likely? That all transpeople are manifesting the same delusion of body dissonance and are compelled to universally lie about it to justify a sexual fetish that they do not feel they have despite the extreme social punishment they endure for it, *or* that transpeople are telling the truth and may in fact have a real component to their gender identity conflict that they cannot control? Secondly, who the hell are you to define the reality of a transgendered person? Have you learned *nothing* from feminism?

Perhaps more importantly to cisfeminists, this ideology is based upon fear of the patriarchy, and that fear is what tends to sway cisfeminists to favor the mAndrea rhetoric. Feminists are asked to consider what the patriarchy might do if we allowed the admission of gender as a real concept, and our fear is meant to inform the rejection of the transgendered experience (a casualty of war, I suppose). We are encouraged to fear the lurking male-to-female trans person in our midst. We are told that gender isn't real, but that we are "real women", and "real women" have to fear and mistrust all men, even if they say they do not feel like they *are* men. And, thus the first principle breaks down.

Trans people are not a threat to feminism. Nothing about the transgendered experience — not even the most stereotypical reductionist image mAndrea-like feminists might have in their minds of the man in a dress — in any way changes the fundamental idea that all people are human beings with the rights to equal opportunity regardless of gender. Even *if* it turns out that trans people provide scientific proof that gender is something that exists as a real biological phenomenon rather than a strictly social construct, feminism remains intact. Sexism and the resulting oppression of women *is* a social construct, because it is founded on the idea that gender is a binary with proscribed behavioral expectations for either side. Transgenderism simply provides another dimension to the ideology of feminism: the fascinating idea that gender is far more complex than binaries. This does nothing but support feminism, because sexism becomes demonstrably wrong by simple observation of the existence of transgendered people as they describe themselves when you *really listen to them*.

The secondary issue of whether male-to-female transgendered people should be permitted in "women only" spaces is arguably more nuanced. Women do have reason to be wary of men among us, and that is the fundamental motivator for the rejection. The rationalizations — she does not have a uterus, she was not raised a girl, she walked away from the patriarchy voluntarily, she is not woman enough, etc. — are always ad hoc if a woman is honest with herself. It was the stab of fear of the patriarchy that hit you first, *then* you thought about the reasons why. There really isn't any good reason not to allow trans women into feminist women-only safe spaces if they identify as women, only fears that the patriarchy gives us, and we have *far* more reason to reject *that* than we do to deny the inclusion of trans people whose fundamental premise (again, when you really listen) is a rejection of the patriarchal definition of gender.

Transgendered people have more in common with feminists than not. In particular, male-to-female trans people experience the same basic oppressions from the patriarchy, with the added burden of [extra-special threat](#) for being trans. There are many intersections in the trans issue including [race, sex work, class and violence](#) that are extremely germane to the feminist. Feminists would do well to listen to transgendered people, recognize our similarities, acknowledge our differences, and engage in fighting the oppression rather than in letting our fear of the patriarchy compromise our morality and dictate the structure of our movement.

On that note: Read [this](#), [this](#), [this](#) and [this](#). Visit the [Tribute to Andrea Zapata](#) site and let that really sink in. I'll be blogging more on this as I learn more about it, and I've added some new links on trans issues to my blogroll that are great reading. For now, I have to go hunker down before Edouardo comes barreling through.

UPDATE: I've received some really beautiful messages from some folks both in my comments and via email, and I appreciate and embrace you, but please don't feel grateful; I do not deserve thanks for listening, nor if what I've written indicates that I understood another human experience. **Thank you** to

all the transgendered people who took the time to write about their lives so that I could remedy my ignorance born of privilege. The more I think about transgendered issues, the more ways I see relevance to feminism and opportunities for new understandings about gender and the cultural cues of the patriarchy, and that is a gift that I sincerely hope to be able to return in the future.

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- [Feminism](#)
- [Radicalism](#)
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on August 5, 2008 at 7:33 am [Comments \(26\)](#)

Tags: [bigotry](#), [gender](#), [gender roles](#), [glbt](#), [oppression](#), [patriarchy](#), [transgender](#)



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## 26 Comments [Leave a comment.](#)

1.  *On August 5, 2008 at 9:32 am [Lisa Harney](#) Said:*

Thank you for writing this!

The mental link so many anti-trans feminists are unable to make is that trans women are treated as women, experience sexism, experience sexual harassment, are treated by many men as being part of the sex class, treated as second-class people in the same way women are . . . in addition to being treated like second-class women (for not being “real” women), to being treated like our gender (as women) is invalid and wrong, to being assaulted and murdered because we don’t always have the “right” anatomy.

And this intersection is pretty frustrating to deal with – to get the sexism as well as the attitude that we’re trying to fool people and get away with something underhanded when we’re trying to live our lives.

And so much of the conversation about trans-related topics gets sucked into, “Okay, but I don’t understand why you would do this. Please justify your existence and choices to me *right now*” without ever acknowledging how privileged that attitude is – even while asserting that privilege. I can’t count how many times a cis feminist has demanded to know whether I bothered to let other cis women vote on my womanhood before saying I was a woman.

And at the same time, at the rate of approximately one a month, a trans woman is brutally murdered – annihilated – by a man who thinks it’s his right to kill a woman because she’s not a “real” woman. By a man exercising the same entitlement that makes him think all women exist just to have sex with him, that it’s okay for him to rape a woman, or just beat the hell out of her.

And the stupid justice system slaps them on the wrist so they can go free sooner [and kill again.](#)


Anyway, yeah, long rant there.

[Reply](#)

2.  *On August 5, 2008 at 11:35 am [Woman](#) Said:*

Rant on, sister. You're safe and welcome in this space.

[Reply](#)

3.  *On August 5, 2008 at 12:21 pm [queenemily](#) Said:*

Thank you for reading and \*really\* listening. That means a lot.

[Reply](#)

4. *On August 5, 2008 at 3:32 pm [Grace](#) Said:*

Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Thank you.

I may find more words later, but I'd feel remiss if I didn't thank you when I read this.

[Reply](#)

5. *On August 5, 2008 at 4:04 pm [jayinchicago](#) Said:*

Thank you very much for this post.

[Reply](#)

6. *On August 5, 2008 at 8:23 pm [drakyn](#) Said:*

Thank you.

[Reply](#)

7. *On August 6, 2008 at 3:47 pm [Trin](#) Said:*

“Even if it turns out that trans people provide scientific proof that gender is something that exists as a real biological phenomenon rather than a strictly social construct, feminism remains intact. Sexism and the resulting oppression of women is a social construct, because it is founded on the idea that gender is a binary with proscribed behavioral expectations for either side. Transgenderism simply provides another dimension to the ideology of feminism: the fascinating idea that gender is far more complex than binaries. This does nothing but support feminism, because sexism becomes demonstrably wrong by simple observation of the existence of transgendered people as they describe themselves when you really listen to them.”

YES. Brilliantly said. Brava.

[Reply](#)

8. *On August 6, 2008 at 3:51 pm [Trin](#) Said:*

And the other thing about gender-as-continuum is, well, as soon as you have a continuum, you

have people who happen to fall on either end. And that isn't a threat or a bad thing, because it doesn't imply anything about anyone else.

Sexism is, among other things, all about trying to squish people onto those ends who don't fit. Whether that's telling them how to act ("you're a woman, you should \_\_\_\_\_", "real men don't \_\_\_\_\_", etc.) or how to identify ("but you're male! stop saying you're a woman, you freak! you're crazy, go away!", "genderqueer? that must be that new thing those crazy college kids are doing for kicks!", etc.)

[Reply](#)



9. *On August 7, 2008 at 11:20 pm thebewilderness Said:*

"There really isn't any good reason not to allow trans women into feminist women-only safe spaces if they identify as women, only fears that the patriarchy gives us, and we have far more reason to reject that than we do to deny the inclusion of trans people whose fundamental premise (again, when you really listen) is a rejection of the patriarchal definition of gender."

I like the "we have nothing to fear but fear itself" argument as well as the next person, but given that violence against women is a humanitarian crisis unparalleled in human history I would posit that male violence is the problem rather than womens fear of it. You certainly could include anyone who identifies themselves as woman into a space, but it would no longer be a woman only safe space, would it?

Also, I don't think it is appropriate to demand that Transpersons be addressed with their labels of choice while applying the label cis to other peeps in such a bizarre fashion.

[Reply](#)

10. *On August 8, 2008 at 4:03 am [Trin](#) Said:*

Male violence is a problem. But we're NOT TALKING ABOUT MEN.

[Reply](#)



11. *On August 8, 2008 at 7:27 am [Woman](#) Said:*

Personally, I don't think women-only to the exclusion of transgendered people is productive, because (I believe) it is taking our cues from the patriarchal concepts of gender and sexism. Male violence is something I've personally lived through, so I know how bad it is from experience, but I do not think that this should mean that the patriarchy provides the basis of the structure of radical feminism. To me, radical feminism means that we throw out the patriarchy and build something else. It does not follow (to me) that we throw out anyone that does not have a uterus, because then we're saying that gender is A and B, when the evidence suggests that it's probably more like this: <http://upload.wikimedia.org/math/a/0/9/a093ff645ed481a57508e44795dd8ad0.png>

As to labels, well, I'm bad at knowing labels in general, so I tend to just go with whatever everyone else seems to like me to use for them. Cisfeminism... I'm still not sure what exactly that means other than feminist-who-is-not-transgendered, and I really have no idea if that truly applies to me. I never thought about it.

[Reply](#)



12. *On August 9, 2008 at 1:28 am [m Andrea](#) Said:*

This was the most thoughtful response and thank you very much for that. I'm pretty slow about responding as you can see and kinda wanting to get the second installment up tonight and would like to return and think more about what you've said.

But I would like to ask how would you feel if medical research discovered that the thing in the brain which cause Amputation Disorder is the exact same thing which causes transgenderism? Because the two seem almost identical in all respects if you talk to the people effected.

Oh, and it is true that I have very low expectations of men in general, which is why I believe they would use any excuse to increase sexism. I mean, if men really want women to be equal, then why do we have to continually use men's rules and men's tools to fight men for equality from men? If we have to fight them for equality, then there is no logical reason to assume they want us to be equal — at least, that's the reasoning I'm using. If there is something wrong with that reasoning, I really don't mind someone pointing it out. And I wish someone would, as it serves as the basis for some of my other ideas.

I suppose it could be something along the lines of they just don't understand, etc, but yet it's taken these turds 6000 years to figure out that women aren't cattle — so they appear kind of slow and stupid, at best.

Anyway, thanks again for your thoughtful response!

[Reply](#)



13. *On August 9, 2008 at 4:08 am [Woman](#) Said:*

Gah... now I regret not wording things more politely. Argh. I apologize that my post was snide in parts; what can I say? I'm flawed. But, I hope that we can continue a dialogue. I have some long views on the patriarchy that I've written a bit on since this article, and I have more to say on but haven't found the time to write down yet. The trans issue is just one area where I think the Patriarchy complicates our approach, but I believe very strongly that the best way for us to derive a real workable solution to the Patriarchy is to stop letting it define our world, stop allowing them to cow us, and start stepping beyond the artificial intellectual boundaries the Patriarchy has laid out. Just because I think you may be wrong on the trans issue does not mean that the overall direction of your ideology is wrong.

I really can't answer your question about the disorder you mentioned, because I don't know enough to speak intelligently about it. But, I'll take a look when I get some time and think on it. Thank you for your response.

[Reply](#)



14. *On August 9, 2008 at 5:34 pm [m Andrea](#) Said:*

Well I could tell that you were a nice person, that was obvious. And this issue seems to upset people and everybody gets snarky at one point or another.

I've tried responding to some of the other pingbacks, but regardless how polite I was, they always left my comment in moderation and so I've given up trying to actually discuss with people who aren't really interested even though they keep saying they are.

But your post was really very helpful. It made me realize part of the problem is that everyone is starting out with different premises. I'm assuming that there are lots of men who jump on any excuse to believe that women are only good for certain things and I'm also assuming that there are

lots of women who “go along to get along”. And I believe that sexism will always be with us as long as there are men and women.

I’m guessing that the trans supporters believe sexism will end someday and also that men really want women to be equal; and so there is no need for them to fear men finding yet another excuse to perpetuate sexism. **\*\*Except they have no proof for any of their assumptions and the psychologists tell us that past behavior is the best indicator of future behavior.\*\***

I should probably back up and talk more about those assumptions, see how helpful you are? :) Here’s a good article about how the amputees view themselves, which is exactly what the transgendered people say:

<http://www.newsweek.com/id/138932>

[Reply](#)

15. *On August 9, 2008 at 7:57 pm Sara Said:*

Thank you for writing this AND posting it on the other site. I had also posted on the other site, and was wondering if anyone was reading it anymore. When you take the time to inject a little bit of reason into failed logic(if one could call that logic), you kinda wonder if anyone got what you were saying. I would like to add that at this point in time, equating trans people with people who want to amputate themselves(im sorry im not up with the clinical name of this), is going to offend (trans)people. I will agree that people with this desire probably have a discongruity(I never could spell) with their neural body map, and that trans people exhibit signs of this as well. The difference is that, neurologically, trans people have other structural differences; that in the end, cause them not to accept the social behaviors they are expected to follow. The brain is still a “black box” to us. People who receive a lesion to the body map, reject their limbs. I remember reading somewhere (i think it was by oliver sacks but im not too sure), a person thought someone put a fake leg in their hospital bed, and in attempting to throw the leg out, tossed themselves out of bed (they were attached to it!). People with physical damage to their body map totally reject their limb, and have no connection, feedback(feeling) nor personal identification(that is not mine!), to said limb. The difference between transgendered and transsexual people might very well lie in the body map. I have heard people relating these two(amputee&transsexual) together before. I am not sure why, but I can guess that to normal people both involve a person altering their (normal and functioning) bodies. The reason this will offend people is that people of either order will say “im not like THAT freak”(don’t read too much into the freak comment). There are a lot of differences between the two. I believe (most) people are not well informed about trans people. I’m not going into that, but will suggest that a good place to start is what the term transgendered(a rather broad term) is, because there are people who identify as trans and do nothing to their bodies, chemically(hormones) or physically(surgery). Ok, im going there quickly, transgender is an umbrella term to identify all(DSM classified) disorders pertaining to cross-gender identification(i.e. cross-dressing, fetishes(transvestite), transsexuals, etc.). Back to the point; there are people who identify as part of the opposite gender, but have no need to alter their bodies. for example, “I am a woman with a male body, and I’m OK with that”, they accept that ones body has nothing to do with their gender and further that having a male body does not make them less of a woman. At this current point in time the trans movement is tentatively pursuing a removal of trans classifications in the DSM. It is tentative because there is an issue of medical access for transsexual people. Although, it is an issue at this point in time, even with DSM classification. Personally, and i mean this is my opinion on the matter with no facts to support it, I tend to think that equating the two of these(amputee&tans) is a (patriarchal) attempt to undermine this effort. Trans people are like these people, there must be something wrong with them, because we can agree that there is something wrong with them(amputees). Both are physically mutilating themselves to fit some sic

inner image of themselves, and it just snowballs from there. I would put this to the the patriarchal ideal that the best a person could be is a man, and that someone who rejects their male body and cuts off the thing that makes them a superior to others, becomes less of a person, and therefor posses less social value. Since, they did it to themselves, where a real woman cant help it. There are two connotations here, a person who is disabled is a burden on society, and that trans people ARE disabled. (I could go further into this, but i am going to leave it at that for now, and continue on why these are being presented to society together). To equate these two is to accept that sex reassignment surgery is a mutilation (i am not trying to personally imply that amputees are mutilators, but merely my opinion of why these are beginning to be presented together) of the body. To remove a functioning part of the body, and hinder themselves as a functioning social entity. In FTM it is the mastectomy(breast removal), and in MTF it is the sex surgery, that are referred to as the mutilation aspect. To do this removes your function within society. For a trans person these things are quite the opposite, removing a non-functioning(they have no need for them) part of them, to become a more functional part of society. Removal of something that distresses and stigmatizes them, and therefor makes them more functional in a personal and social aspect. I first saw this being done a few years ago on a Jerry Spring episode, the whole theme being “look at what these freaks do to themselves”, to say the least i was very upset. So, when i hear this i tend to think it isnt something they came up with themselves, but it was something presented to them, and at first glance seams logical. however, like much of the propaganda we are exposed to, it fails to hold up to scrutiny. I have the personal opinion that a persons body is their body, they are welcome to do whatever they want with it, whether i understand it or not, it is not my place to pass judgment. Im going to leave it at that, i apologize for the long post. I have a tendency to be long winded, and i could really write a book on the subject. There are things that i wish i had the time to expand on, but im going to spare everyone from that, but if there is something anyone would like a clearer explanation or discuss, i would be more than happy to reply to something specific. I’ll keep an eye on this blog JIC.

[Reply](#)

16.  On August 11, 2008 at 4:36 pm [m Andrea](#) Said:

First of all, if offending someone means that we can no longer have a discussion, then who gets to determine what is offensive? Who gets to determine whose offense is more worthy?

I’m really beginning to believe that the emotional developement of these folks is stunted. No matter how many times these one-way commands to shutup sitdown are pointed out, they continue.

*“This does nothing but support feminism, because sexism becomes demonstrably wrong by simple observation of the existence of transgendered people as they describe themselves when you really listen to them.”*

This was very helpful, thank you. Except they are not sitting happily in the middle of the continuum, they are sliding from one end to the other.

I think people are looking at the process of transitioning and go “oh look this process proves gender is fluid after all!” Except their actual goal is to reach one end, thus holding up the binary.

Process is not result.  
Cause is not effect.

A cake baking in the oven proves what? It proves you want a final product. But sometimes the half-baked dough can’t afford the energy required to complete the process or lacks the nerve to complete the process — and this too is supposedly “proof” that gender is fluid.

I have no doubt that gender is fluid; feminists have spent decades proving this by showing how female bodies are capable of male work, but the process of transitioning does not prove gender is fluid.

In logical arguments, it is possible to start out with a correct premise (ie “gender is fluid”) and still get an incorrect result. The conclusion must follow logically from the premise, not just tacked on because you like the answer.

[Reply](#)

17.  On August 11, 2008 at 4:59 pm [m Andrea](#) Said:

okay that smiley face shouldn't be there. lol

Processes do not prove premises. Only results do that. If we are going to say that processes prove our assertions, then results don't matter. We are saying that the process is more important than the result, which is just incredibly ignorant.

When does it become appropriate to focus on the process? AFTER it has been determined that the result follows logically from the premise, AND that there are multiple processes to choose from which will give the same result.

Transitiioning doesn't qualify.

[Reply](#)

18.  On August 11, 2008 at 5:09 pm [m Andrea](#) Said:

Hey, Woman, aren't you going to argue with me? \*pouts\*

[Reply](#)

19.  On August 11, 2008 at 5:15 pm [Woman](#) Said:

*“In logical arguments, it is possible to start out with a correct premise (ie “gender is fluid” ;) and still get an incorrect result. “*

True. And I admit that I have gleaned my ideas from largely anecdotal reports from transgendered people and a few doctors I spoke with who sat on the boards of approval for sex reassignment surgery. These are not sufficient data points from which to draw a definitive causative loop, and you're right to point that out. However, thus far there is no explanation that does not involve extrapolation from thin data that I know of, though I'd be very interested to see it, because I think it would be very relevant to women.

The transgendered blogs I read did not describe moving from an A to B binary, but to having always felt somewhere closer to the center (if linear terminology is even applicable here). The doctors I spoke to all said that they were convinced that this was not a fetish, and many of them believe that it has something to do with their karyotypes (one cited Jamie Lee Curtis as an example) that is not fully understood yet, because there isn't widely peer-reviewed research about that at this point.

I understand that you think I am being led by my emotions, that I'm being too soft and not objective enough, and I have to volunteer that may be the case. However, I do think that it is better to err on the side of a tolerant and inclusive approach when we're talking about other people,

unless we have some kind of definitive data that gives us a reason not to (i.e., giving autistic people a driver's license is not a good idea). I've not seen any data that leads me to agree with you. Do you believe that you have any? I won't moderate your comment if you think you do. It is important to examine these things and discuss them.

I just ask that you also think about the issue of emotional investment in these subjects, as well. You are a very charismatic writer and your rhetoric is very compelling, but I've not seen any actual data backing up your claims. I think it is important that you be responsible about your claims as well, and say when you can't prove something and this is just your idea, because people do listen to you.

I get the feeling that you and I are sitting on opposite sides of the keyboard thinking respectively, "Damn, she *almost* gets it."

[Reply](#)

20. *On August 11, 2008 at 8:59 pm Sara Said:*

Sorry for injecting my opinion. But, as for being offensive, half of my post was about WHY it could be offensive to people of the trans persuasion. I wasn't trying to stifle your opinion. My intention was to point out why it has been presented as it has, why it is a misrepresentation of neural mechanics in trans people, and the implications of this opinion becoming widespread. I know the post wasn't directed at me, but as someone who studies the brain and affected by your post, i felt qualified to respond. Im sorry for the "one way post", i sometimes forget myself. So, i'll leave you two to your discussion. Sorry again.

[Reply](#)

21.  *On August 11, 2008 at 9:24 pm [Woman](#) Said:*

Forget yourself? I approved your comment. You have nothing to apologize for. Why would you think you have to go away?

[Reply](#)

22. *On August 12, 2008 at 12:48 am Sara Said:*

I stopped back to say one more thing, and I saw your post Woman, and thank you. The reason I was "going away", is simply because im not here for a fight. mAndrea in her post proved my point as to where the equating amutees and trans people come from, to say that there is something wrong(and sick) with trans people. I thought when I saw it, it was out of ignorance, but(and this is what i came back to clarify and say thank you to mAndrea) it was intentional; and was an attempt to persuade you to agree with her about trans people. I didn't post here to have a fight, I did in an attempt to dispell ignorance, with its only medicine, facts and science. The response seemed like it had a huge "not welcome" sign on it. At this point in my life I've found that the only place this discussion can go is downhill; and that hate can only be quenched with blood or transferred to something else. I've given enough blood and tears for 5 lifetimes, I'm all dried up. Your doing a fine job anyway Woman, and thank you.

[Reply](#)


23.  *On August 12, 2008 at 3:11 pm [Woman](#) Said:*

Sara, I understand what you mean. I allow many differing views on my blog, because I think that

you can learn from them (if nothing else, how someone came to a bad conclusion), but it does make it very difficult for someone who is the subject of the discussion to bear reading. I have experienced that same feeling of rage and despair, because I could not “prove” the negative that I was being asked to prove in order to validate my personhood. Transgendered people cannot prove that they are *not* a threat — no one can — and the burden of proof ought to be on the positive claim that they are, which should derive from hard data that is peer-reviewed for integrity before it is accepted. Nor do I think that transgendered people should have to “pay” feminists, or anyone, some kind of social extortion fee of support in order to be considered non-threatening.

I am willing to entertain any possibility, but I am not willing to accept it unless it is proven positively, particularly because we are not talking about an abstract concept here, but real humans who will be directly affected.

[Reply](#)

24.  *On August 13, 2008 at 10:44 pm* [Lisa Harney](#) Said:

Thank you, Woman.

I do not believe that mAndrea engages the subject of transgender or transsexual issues with honesty or an open mind. The one comment she left on my blog (which was approved) was an assertion that trans people cannot prove that being trans is not a fetish or that it is a valid medical condition, which tells me that she’s ignored all the medical literature written about trans people from Harry Benjamin onwards.

Either that or she gets all of her talking points from [Paul McHugh](#).

Anyway, this is why I do not believe mAndrea engages trans people honestly: She makes an assertion (trans is a fetish). She demands that trans people prove her wrong, even though she’s making the assertion that flies in the face of modern medical wisdom. She rejects any information that doesn’t support her view that trans is a fetish, because there is a lot of information to that effect available, both from trans people and from the medical professionals who treat us. She’s either not doing her homework, or she’s saying that all of that information is invalid.

In other words, I feel she’s trying to bait trans people into a conversation where she feels entitled to constantly shift the goalposts, always demanding justification from trans people to prove our right to exist, but never offering justification for her own beliefs – her posts on transgender are really not much more than a list of assertions, and aren’t backed up by the kind of proof she wants from trans people to contradict her beliefs.

She also approaches the debate from a stigmatizing and polarizing position, since she immediately sets out to label trans women as “men” (and presumably trans men as “women”), which is a signal to me – a dog whistle, if you prefer – that she doesn’t want to debate anything about trans people (as if people’s lives should be appropriate for debate in the first place), but assert her privilege as a cissexual person and tell us that we’re all doing it wrong.

TheBewilderness,

Also, I don’t think it is appropriate to demand that Transpersons be addressed with their labels of choice while applying the label cis to other peeps in such a bizarre fashion.

The purpose of “cis”, “cissexual,” “cisgender” is to decenter cis people as the norm and trans people as the other. I have seen arguments that “cis” is othering and establishes “trans” as the

norm by trying to reverse the flow of privilege vs. oppression, by implying that trans people do this from a position of privilege relative to cis people. Of course, the whole world is made for cis people. This is the same as white people vs. people of color, straight people vs. gay, lesbian, or bisexual people, and men vs. women.

The idea that cis as a label *only used to distinguish cis people from trans people* is oppressive, is used for mockery, is intended to other cis people comes directly from cis privilege – from the belief that being cis is normal and trans is other, and that trans people asserting equal standing to cis people is out of line.

I have also seen arguments that “cis” erases gender and sex – that referring to a woman as cis means that she’s not actually a woman or female. What this tells me is that someone who would say that sees *trans* as erasing gender and sex.

And I think the need for such a term as “cis” will only disappear when cis people no longer assume they’re the norm, the default, the only valid expression for human beings, and accept that trans people are normal and valid as well.

But the fact is that among some radfems all trans discussion must absolutely be centered on cis concerns. This is why any attempt to decenter cis concerns is seen as offensive and disruptive – because trans people are simply not important to them, except as a metaphor, as a convenient target to stand in for men, as a scapegoat to blame for male violence and rape.

And getting back to mAndrea, I would say her posts about transgender and trans people are exactly that kind of scapegoating. It’s certainly much easier and less risky to attack an oppressed, disenfranchised minority and blame them for what a majority on a different axis of privilege and oppression does than it is to actually attack those responsible for male violence and rape.

Finally, just to make it clear the kind of tone that mAndrea’s posts take regarding trans people, I want to [quote an exchange from mAndrea’s comments](#). I want to point out the kind of triggering, *misogynist* language that mAndrea thinks is appropriate for discussions of trans women.

Basically, fetishist MtF collude with every other misogynist man and choose to participate in the dynamic in an alternate way. They spin it as a handicap when it’s really a male-entitled sexual fantasy that actively oppresses women just as any other pornsick man does. **It’s the rape and total control over a synthetic female body, giving him and any other man he includes full access to treating women the way they both love to fetishize treating women. They then strengthen the conditioned response to female parts with their misogynist sex. That’s why you see so many misogynists patronizing MtF prostitutes, and MtF prostitutes happy to do it. Sexist men look out for each other and will cooperate to control women’s bodies in any novel way they can think of.**

The majority of trans women who end up as sex workers do so because it is difficult to find other work, that employers either do not wish to hire trans women in the first place, or fire them when they are outed.

[This is exactly what happened to Chanelle Pickett, and led to her murder](#). The commenter “KA” quoted above is engaged in slut shaming and victim blaming, as often happens to sex workers, rape victims, and trans women who are murdered. She says explicitly that trans women seek to allow ourselves to be raped because men cooperate in the degradation of women’s bodies, and she’s framing trans women unambiguously as men.

[But before mAndrea protests that she didn’t say those things herself, they were simply posted on](#)

[her blog.](#)

K.A., that was a most brilliant analysis, and needs a wider audience than what is available here. Hopefully other readers will carry your idea to other blogs, because it was perfect.

It's not every day you see a woman so enthusiastically cheer on rape apologism, but there you go.

This is the level at which mAndrea seeks to engage trans people.

[Reply](#)

25. *On August 15, 2008 at 8:13 pm Sara Said:*

All, I can say is, WOW, and dream about what the world would be like if there were more people like you around.

I understand we old school feminist come from, but there is a reason first wave feminism is called that. Our ideas of what gender and sex are blurred, and the working theory of such is just that, a working theory that refines and redefines itself as our knowledge of the subject increases. I often find people marveling at the technological accomplishments achieved by our current society, and calling it "new". When, in reality it isn't, a good example of this would be electricity (i.e. Baghdad Batter, which is still controversial) is to know that the Greeks put electric eels in jars and applied primitive electrodes as a form of therapy. Anyone who has been seriously injured, knows that this is used today. I find a lot of ancient wisdom is still pertinent to these times. The concept of binary gender is actually quite new, evolving out of medieval times, the Talmud (its Jewish) recognizes 7 genders not two. But they also didn't believe in the Devil or Hell, so if one was to break the "rules" they would only not receive the rewards, eternal life; rather than an everlasting punishment. Prior experience has a great effect on our perception of things. Humans have a tendency to see something novel, not as it is, but in relation to things already known.

In the "beginning" of the feminist movement, the debate of nature vs. nurture was still being discussed. Old school feminism was based on the ideal that it was purely nurture. If young girls were allowed to be raised as boys, there would be little to no difference in behavior. In the end, an old school feminist has as much to lose as a neo-conservative, when it comes to the implications of trans people in society. When data is outside of a theory, one must refine the theory or redefine the data. So, that the theory encompasses the data, or the data is of a "different thing" than the theory. A person like me invalidates her theories on society, so to counteract that, she asserts the same approach a conservative would. Its two sides of the same coin. One side believes that sex makes one better than another. The other side believes that gender (the societal counterpart of sex) is a created concept, and further that this concept was created to impose superiority. Rather than excepting the coin for what it is.

Now I am going to confirm everything mAndrea has said about the topic of the implications of Trans people, am I agreeing with her??

I will say there are things I believe that the majority of men are better at than the majority of women, and vice versa (this is what she fears). Majority, for I also believe that a woman could be much better than a man in something that men, in majority, are supposed to do better (i.e. a woman could play football and be better than a man). I know that belief upsets a lot of people. I hold the same belief when it comes to race too though. I think there are things that make one particular race have an advantage over another at something. I believe in celebrating diversity, not perverting it or ignoring it. Diversity doesn't make us anything but different, the evil is trying to pass judgment on that difference. Let me clarify on the whole man/woman better thing...it is accepted (peer reviewed) that women have FAR greater thresholds of pain than men. Men can lift more single weight (burst strength), women can lift heavy weights more (endurance). That these

differences are results of evolution and nothing more. Further that our differences are not set in stone, in the sense that biology is if only half of the equation. Environment is the other half, and a woman raised the same as a man would have very similar attributes to men she could be as strong, quick, even desensitise herself to emotions (as men are trained to be); but there would still be differences between her and men. What these differences are, I have no clue, but I know they would be present, and may be apparent (besides the obvious) or not.

The brain does have a sex (trans people would incline to call it gender). What is needed, is the stripping the social constructs of gender (i.e. clothing, a woman's place is [insert here]), and accept gender for what it is, a biological (evolutionary) subset of an animal as a means of genetic diversity. We have been (attempting) to selectively breeding ourselves, as we do with other animals, by creating a value set of desirable traits in the sexes. The problem is that these value sets are arbitrary and unfounded. The patriarchy would like pets as opposed to individuals. Take for example, in Middle Eastern society, and Judao-Christian for that matter, it is a woman's fault they bring up animality (making up words again!) desires in men. As the idea that men encompass all that is logical, and right, and women are emotional, a.k.a. EVIL, they must be subdued to ensure that they don't bring up emotion (need to procreate) in men. It is because women can't help themselves. The truth is, it is because MEN can't control themselves. It is a patriarchal ideal, that anything that is not controllable, should be subdued (see environment) and brought under control. You can't subdue something without breaking it first. When it comes to men and women, the breakdown was applied by limiting what a woman COULD and SHOULD do. Thusly, eliminating what a woman IS. The counter to this (I see as the women's liberation movement) should be reasserting what a woman is.

This is the flaw in old school feminism, the belief that there are no differences between men and women. I am inclined to think that women behaving and acting like men (the basis, and believed to be the stance to be taken) loses something. This is why in the eyes of old school feminism, women who enjoy sex, and flaunt it, or women who are submissive to their husbands, are disgraces to woman kind. Since their acts perpetuate the ideals of sexism. "These women must be taught, and therefore made by, patriarchal society". Sound familiar?

It is my position that old school feminism is just as damaging as the patriarchy, in the sense that they lay out roles that people MUST follow. That deviants should be weeded out and eliminated. What I hold is that there are deviations in us (humans), and that these are there for a reason. It is up to us to embrace them or deny them (genetic perpetuation). That is the role of evolution, to pick out those things that work best in a specific environment. That's why we have different races. It is not our place to decide (arbitrarily) what qualities are best. We have biological mechanisms to pick mates. Rest assured mAndrea I'm not having anyone's babies, and no one's having mine! My genetic makeup is not making to the next generation, it wasn't anyway... I have found a place where I can live, that's enough for me, because it has to be.

Sex and gender are two different things, and there is a (quite natural) continuum of both. I would hope you would agree, mAndrea, that there are things that make you a woman besides what is between your legs. What if there was something there that wasn't either or, but an and? there are such people. What space should THOSE people allowed into?

[Reply](#)

26. *On September 8, 2008 at 2:47 am Kara Said:*

All transgendered are welcome in my feminism, because they, too, know the fear of rape. Rape is the biggest weapon in the patriarchy. Those who fear rape are the oppressed. All those oppressed are my people.

[Reply](#)

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