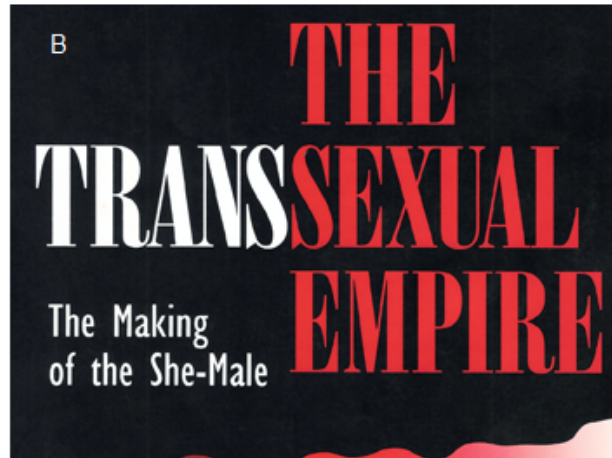


Anti-Trans Hatred in the Name of Feminism

by Max Kurzdorfer



Please leave a comment, but be aware that if it contains the words "cis", "intersecting", "sex-positive", "dialogue" or "constructive" it will be deleted automatically.

C



The Internet has allowed everyone with access to have a public space to make their voices heard. These include voices that may not seem legitimate or accepted by mainstream culture that would have difficulty finding a place in mainstream media or academia. These new opportunities help marginalized individuals who want to tell about their lives and experiences, but they also help groups spread hatred and vitriol against those marginalized.

While spending time on the Internet, I have come across groups of people identifying themselves as radical feminists who use their resources to spread hatred against trans people. This collage is a collection of words and images I have come across. I will explain each of these images, which I have lettered A-F, and their significance.

Discussion in this article will include some jargon specific to the radical feminist communities I have investigated. I will explain terms when they come up, but have not found specific origins for them. While it may seem at times that certain terms require a citation, to this sub-culture, this vocabulary is common knowledge.

Image A shows a woman's pelvic region wearing a pair of white cotton underwear. There is writing on the underwear, which reads “The Cotton Ceiling™ - Preventing males from “curing lesbians” since forever! ♀♀” This image was posted by user GallusMag on the blog “Gender Trender”, a radical feminist, anti-trans discussion group, on March 25, 2012. The cotton ceiling is a term put forth by pornography actress Drew Devreaux that refers to the pattern she has observed of queer cisgender women rejecting trans women sexually (Faucette, 2012). It derives from the familiar feminist term glass ceiling, the invisible barrier that keeps women on the lower levels of employment.

While trans women have been accepted in some lesbian spaces, they are not seen as

potential partners due to the radical feminist social expectation of maintaining exclusively female bodied partnerships. This social expectation is rooted in the belief that trans women remain men despite their gender identity. To this social group, committing to a relationship with a trans woman would be equivalent to adhering to the patriarchal standards of a nuclear family. Radical lesbian feminists are known to combat the patriarchal model by existing in lesbian relationships. Therefore, a radical lesbian feminist dating a trans woman would become ostracized by the social group and seen as a traitor and as someone who has been unable to fight the motives of the ruling male class.

“Curing” a lesbian, in mainstream culture, means to rape a lesbian in order to prove that she can be straightened out by a real man. This terminology insinuates that trans women are men fraudulently representing themselves as women to break into lesbian social circles for the purpose of raping them and turning them straight. Image A accuses trans women of acting as women for the purpose of forcing radical lesbian feminists to adhere to patriarchal standards.

Image B is the cover of Janis Raymond’s *The Transsexual Empire* (1994). This was found in its entirety on the blog “Rancom” on December 30, 2011. Although Raymond’s piece is often seen as currently irrelevant within academia, its presence on this blog and the many references to these ideas shows that it is still an influential piece to some crowds of people. Raymond’s entire piece was posted for the purpose of supporting the views, opinions, and mission of the “Rancom” blog. *The Transsexual Empire* is about Raymond's views of transsexualism, trans women, and the transsexual empire, which refers to the psychological establishment, the medical establishment, and the ways in which they make transsexualism possible. Raymond believes that trans women are and will always be men. She refers to trans

women either with masculine pronouns or with feminine pronouns in scare quotes, including Christine Jorgensen (p. 21) and Jan Morris (p. 88). She calls trans surgeries “a creation of men, initially developed for men” (p. 26) and refers to trans women as “constructed females” (p. 71). These ideas have come up again and again.

Image C is the caption on the comment section of the blog “Rancom”. It reads “Please leave a comment, but be aware that if it contains the words ‘cis’, ‘intersecting’, ‘sex-positive’, ‘dialogue’ or ‘constructive’, it will be deleted automatically” (Rancom!, 2012). The word cis refers to cisgender, meaning someone who is not transgender. To disallow this word would create the circumstance that this word is used to avoid. If a commenter cannot say cis, the options left are non-trans and normal. Both of these options situate trans people in a lower status than cis people.

Intersectionality is a feminist theory that describes ways that different oppressions work together in different ways and do not act independently of each other. By refusing to allow this word, the blog owner and readers are enforcing a climate in which they can comfortably ignore their own privileges, in particular, cisgender privilege, without hearing any critiques. Sex-positive is another branch of feminism that differs from the viewpoints on this blog, and the words “dialogue” and “constructive” are words used when people are trying to have a conversation with multiple sides. This comment box asks readers to please comment, but disallows them to comment if they do not agree with the prevailing opinions of the space.

This statement means that this group of radical feminists on the Internet, or those identified as such, are unwilling to accept the position of others as positions of subjective knowledge. Opposing viewpoints are unwanted. Ignoring the experiences of others and

invalidating and lessening these individuals leaves the subject area incomplete. If both sides of the argument are not heard, a balanced viewpoint will not be had. Considering these groups are all fighting for basic rights, very little activism can actually take place until the internal activists come to a middle ground. Without a common respect and understanding of human difference within the oppressed group, there will simply be no progress toward the greater goal.

Image D was titled “Privilege Denying M2F” from the Facebook page, “Telling Women to Smile Is Sexist” (Mantis, 2012). It is a picture of a smug looking man wearing garish, poorly applied makeup. Around the image are the words “Transphobe! Your spaces exclude me. Don't you know women have privilege?” This image in its original form is known as the meme “Privilege Denying Dude”. Privilege Denying Dude’s original purpose was to point out the many ways men deny their social privilege. This new version, with makeup crudely added with an image manipulation program, is meant to be a joke about trans women’s position in the gender privilege system. This image is meant to say that trans women are and always will be men, both in opinions and appearances. By making these claims, the author completely denies the femininity and gender identification of trans women and invalidates their expression and sense of self.

The words on this image deny cisgender privilege and imply that cisgender women do not have any kind of gender privilege because their oppression is the only true oppressed experience. This author does not believe that cisgender privilege exists, which ignores the very real discrimination and oppression that trans people face each day. Since I began this project, this image has been removed from Facebook.

Image E is a picture of assorted shrubbery with the words “piss somewhere else, i don't

care where” (FCM, 2011). The image was found on the blog “Scum-o-Rama”, a radical feminist blog with a title that plays on the term radscum. Radscum is a derogatory term for anti-trans radical feminists used by some groups of feminists with opposing viewpoints, including trans women. This blog’s main purpose is to address varied feminist topics along with trans debates using images and writings.

This image dismisses the basic human need all people have for a bathroom, saying that the poster is not concerned with where a trans woman goes to the bathroom, as long as it's not the ladies' room. The post accompanying this picture refers to trans women as “MAABs” and “M2Ts”, meaning Male Assigned At Birth and Male to Transsexual. This language says that trans women are not women and can never be women, reducing them to sex assigned at birth and saying they will always be men. If they are men, it therefore makes sense to tell them to go urinate on plants when they do not want to use the men’s bathroom. This post also reflects the trope that trans women are men that want to enter women's bathrooms to have access to women to rape. This is one of the most hateful misconceptions and seems to be completely hypothetical, as I have been unable to find a single instance of a cited incident of a trans woman sexually assaulting a cis woman in a bathroom. Bringing up this straw man argument allows the poster to ignore the issues of trans women simply because they do not want to share their bathroom. This image takes the real issue of violence against trans women and the danger they face in men’s bathrooms and turns the issue into a false accusation against trans women. This accusation completely dismisses the discrimination and daily struggle and hate trans women face. This post is also a strong reminder of the harsh exclusivity of radical lesbian feminist groups.

Image F is the headline for the blog “Mansplainin' and Transplainin'”. This blog uses

quotes from trans women to ridicule their positions. In this blog, trans women are referred to as M2T, for the same reasons as the previous blog. While it does not say trans women-splainin', trans men are not included in this blog. This blog exists for the sole purpose of forming hate speech and hurting others.

Mansplaining is a term originally used to coin a man explaining something from the position of power as a man, to a woman in a condescending manner. The “About” section of the blog states “M2T are men, ergo, transplainin’ is mansplainin’ — but don’t take our word for it, check out their very own splainin’ right here on this very blog!!” (Mansplainin’ and Transplainin’, 2012). Comparing mansplaining to a statement a trans individual makes denies the privilege cisgender people have over trans women. This includes both cis men and women. “Mansplainin’ and Transplainin’” is yet another blog designed to dismiss the gender identity of trans people, especially trans women, and to deny their experience as oppressed people.

Although this is a small, specific group of people on the Internet, hate in the name of feminism exists. Groups of people are using the feminist identity to hurt others and deny the validity of another’s experience. This level of disrespect and hate is detrimental to the feminist movement. It is important to keep in mind the role anonymity plays in Internet discussion groups. With the exception of a few prominent authors who post for the purpose of making a name for themselves, most people post anonymously or use a pseudonym in these forums. It is much easier to spread hate when a person cannot be called out individually as hateful. This is a major reason that hate on the Internet is so pervasive. These popular images highlight the attacks on the trans community.

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