

Debating Trans Inclusion in the Feminist Movement: A Trans-Positive Analysis

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SUMMARY. The debate over whether or not to allow, accept, and embrace transpeople as a segment of the feminist movement has been a tumultuous one that remains unresolved. Prominent authors have argued both sides of the dispute. This article analyzes the anti-inclusion feminist viewpoint and offers a trans-positive perspective for moving toward a potential resolution of the debate. [Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-HAWORTH. E-mail address: <docdelivery@haworthpress.com> Website: <<http://www.HaworthPress.com>> © 2006 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.]

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We as feminists owe it to ourselves . . . to deconstruct and oppose . . . trans politics. In a feminist analysis they are, to put it simply, on the wrong side. In opposition to feminism.

–Charlotte Cronson, “Sex, Lies and Feminism”

Nothing upsets the underpinnings of feminist fundamentalism more than the existence of transsexuals. A being with male chromosomes, a female appearance, a feminist consciousness, and a lesbian identity explodes all of their assumptions about the villainy of men. And someone with female chromosomes who lives as a man strikes at the heart of the notion that all women are sisters, potential feminists, natural allies against the aforementioned villainy.

–Patrick Califia, *Sex Changes: Transgender Politics*

As the quotes above illustrate, feminism has historically been and is currently still divided on the issue of whether or not to accept transpeople (particularly transwomen) and include relevant trans issues as a part of the feminist movement.¹ As trans identities have become more visible and prominent in society, the tensions between feminists and transpeople have also escalated. This article analyzes the underpinnings of ‘*anti-inclusion feminism*’ (the feminist politic of purposely and actively excluding transpeople and trans issues from feminist action, ideology and space) from a transfeminist perspective.² It maintains that the anti-inclusion feminism is primarily motivated by ignorance and misinformation about trans identities, transpeople and trans community/culture, as well as being further triggered by a fear that trans-inclusion could potentially undermine feminist theory and ideology.

I accomplish this by first briefly examining the historical moment in which this debate came to the forefront of the feminist movement, as well as offering an analysis of anti-inclusion feminist theory put forth at the time by Janice Raymond in *The Transsexual Empire: The Making of the She-Male*. Moving forward to present day, I show how Raymond’s problematic and transphobic anti-inclusion theories are still cornerstones of this conflict through an examination of the mission statement of QuestioningTransgender.org—a new Website dedicated to opposing “the hegemony of transgender politics among lesbian and feminist communities.”³ I scrutinize the arguments brought forth by Questioning

Transgender.org from a trans-positive perspective and contrast them with various trans narratives. I then offer the model of activism created and operated by the Gender Political Advocacy Coalition (GenderPAC) as an alternative to current anti-inclusion feminist politics. Finally, I seek to deconstruct the '*feminist identity of oppression*,' through an assessment of the ideologies on which feminism is based, with the hope of creating space for future discussion about the part that feminism plays in the oppression of transpeople.

THE HISTORICAL ROOTS OF SEPARATION

As feminist theory matured and became an integral part of the activist-based feminist movement of the seventies, it became heavily entrenched in a period of intense political correctness, based largely on the then recent focus of having a theoretical base to feminist action (Butler, 2004). This warranted a phase of extreme internal political change in the movement, which was manifested outwardly in part by the androgynous-feminist look of the day. Traditional feminine attire was seen, both literally and symbolically, as oppressive to women and was thus abandoned in favor of androgynous dress as a part of a greater political statement (Meyerowitz, 2002).

This was of particular challenge to feminine women (trans and cisgender) who enjoyed and embraced feminine self-expression as an integral part of their identity.⁴ The paradigm shift in "proper" feminist attire brought feminine transwomen to the visual forefront of the feminist movement. Feminine transwomen were singled out as traitors to the feminist movement for their perceived rejection of androgynous dress and the underlying feminist ideology (e.g., rejection of traditional or oppressive femininity).⁵ In the search for visible political distance from feminine transwomen and transwomen as whole, some non-trans feminists worked to create a fissure between the two types of "woman" by highlighting the perceived illegitimacy of labeling transwomen as "women," based on the assignment of male at birth. As this fissure was established, transwomen's feminist identities became suspect, diminishing the space for transwomen as a part of the feminist movement. This metaphoric attitude transitioned to the physical realm through the practice of actively prohibiting transwomen from feminist spaces.

While there were other significant factors that played a part in this ostracization, the shift in feminist ideology and dress served as a visible line of demarcation for the volatile beginning and led to the attempted

eradication of trans identities from the feminist movement. It served as a major incendiary component in the now more than quarter-century debate over the validity of trans identities, politics, and transpeople's rights to access feminist space.

RAYMOND'S PROBLEMATIC LEGACY

The desire to expunge trans identities from the feminist movement and feminist space is undoubtedly influenced by the infamous legacy of anti-inclusion transphobic-feminist Janice Raymond. In 1979, Raymond published *The Transsexual Empire; The Making of the She-Male*, bringing tangible voice to a decade of vocal dissent and opposition of trans inclusion. While in many circles the book is now considered to be a pseudo-academic piece due to its circular logic and questionable research methods, it nevertheless stands as a cornerstone of anti-inclusion feminist politics.⁶ When the book was published, it was the first prominent piece to offer a perspective on why gender-variant persons should be excluded from the feminist movement in a time where counter-arguments were not readily accessible and were often dismissed as the words of an unreliable "enemy" (Meyerowitz, 2004). Thus, *The Transsexual Empire* became the largely unchallenged leading voice of the feminist movement's ideology opposing trans-inclusion.

Despite being published over twenty-five years ago, the book is still highly relevant to the current discussion of trans-inclusion. Many of the ideas forwarded by Raymond in 1979, such as what defines "woman," the medicalization of gender and sex, the social and biological legitimacy of trans identities, the placement of biological influences in a social constructionist feminist movement, and the purpose and sanctity of feminist space, are still cornerstone questions of today's trans-inclusion debate.

One of the major faults of *The Transsexual Empire* rests in the research methods used to support the assertions in the book. The book is based in large part on medical publications presenting transsexuals as persons who are "born into the wrong body." At the time of *The Transsexual Empire's* publication, this represented the sole model of medically acceptable transsexuality, a framework that refused to accept that trans identities have a base in anything other than patriarchal motives of oppression. According to Raymond's perspective, any person seeking medical "treatment" for a gender-variant identity is enforcing the rigidity of the gender binary by seeking to become the opposite gender.

As Sandy Stone points out in her rebuttal to Raymond's work, *The "Empire" Strikes Back: A Post Transsexual Manifesto*, the creation of the archetypal transsexual was a direct result of the medical establishment itself. In order to meet the requirements of the highly prominent Harry Benjamin Standards of Care (HBSOC), the dominant set of guidelines used by clinicians for assessment and management of gender-variant clients, a patient must fulfill certain criteria of transsexuality in order to receive hormone therapy and/or surgery.⁷ HBSOC operates on a highly medicalized gateway model that gives clinicians complete power in deciding who can and will receive hormones and/or surgery. Under the HBSOC model transfolk have been refused services for a perceived inability to pass, having a non-heterosexual orientation, or in some instances, being married (Meyerowitz, 2002). Patients who can even afford to be seen by the select doctors who have an understanding of and willingness to work with gender variance have little voice in the process and little to no recourse if they are not seen as "appropriate." Due to the prominence of the HBSOC standards, many patients alter their personal narratives out of necessity in order to obtain surgical or hormonal services from medical practitioners. This creates a significant, and unaddressed, gap between Raymond's transphobic theories and the realities of trans existence and identity.

The self-selective nature of these medical biographies has essentially painted a picture that all gender-variant folk have a sense of "being born into the wrong body" and seek gender clarity by becoming an unambiguously recognized member of the "opposite sex." This description is one of a select portion of the trans community, and does not include the wide variety of persons with gender-variant identities who do not fit this archetype, such as those who identify as genderqueer, two-spirited, intergender, pangendered, and, in some instances, transgender.⁸ These people can and do seek medical services for different reasons than to "become the opposite sex." This wider perspective doesn't even account for gender diverse people who do not identify with any of these or other trans labels and do not seek any medical services related to identity-confirmation. This wide area of perspectives and identities is not included in the current predominant medical model and is not accounted for in Raymond's methods or text.

In the *Transsexual Empire*, Raymond asserts that transpeople, and transwomen in particular, lack a feminist consciousness of patriarchal gender roles and are suffering from a patriarchal, medically invented, psychological illness (Raymond, 1979). She blames the patriarchal medical community for the creation of gender-variant identities. How-

ever, the medicalization of gender is a relatively recent phenomenon and cannot account for the historical presence of gender-variant identities. Research indicates the existence of individuals that would meet the current standard for gender-variant or trans identities dating back as far as the Old Testament (Feinberg, 1996). These individuals existed in a time when the patriarchal value-system of modern medicine was not a factor, thus creating a serious flaw in Raymond's argument of causality.

In *The Empire*, Raymond blames transpeople for enforcing the gender binary by transitioning from one gender to another. In doing this, she does not consider that it is not necessarily the *choice* of gender-variant people to enforce a gender binary. Instead, it is the medical community that enforces the duality of gender through definitive sex assignment, intersex sexual assignment surgeries,⁹ and reliance on the Harry Benjamin Standards of Care to judge "true transsexuality." Gender-variant folks have nearly a complete lack of viable alternative options outside of submitting to the authority of the medical establishment. Through her reliance on the medical field for her perspective on gender variance, Raymond views transsexuals as merely buying into the inflexibility of gender and completely misses the reality of a gender-variant person's existence.

Another major factor to be considered is that Raymond built her book on the fallacy of denying the legitimacy of socially constructed transwomen's identities while at the same time affirming socially constructed non-trans women's identities. According to Raymond, biological women are the only people who get to define what 'woman' is, or is not:

We know who we are. We know that we are women born with female chromosomes [sic] and anatomy. . . . (Raymond, 114)

Here Raymond uses chromosomal sex and thus a medical assessment of gender to enforce her position that "woman" (and thus the right to be a woman) is an identity bestowed by biology and cannot legitimately be *chosen*. She fails to acknowledge or realize that her definition of woman is derived from the very same sex and gender binaries that she faults and are in large part enforced, if not created, by the same medical establishment which she criticizes for "creating" trans identities. It is therefore illogical to oppose the construction of trans identities, when according to her social constructionist views of gender, the identity of "woman" is created in the same way. She attempts to use medical legitimacy of 'woman' to draw a line in the sand to create an infallible reason for ex-

clusion of transpeople, specifically transwomen. However because of the contradictions in her logic, she is no more successful or accurate than patriarchal practices of oppression. Additionally, in the quoted text, Raymond inherently assumes that “woman-ness” is necessarily derived from being born female. While this assumption that gender is contingent on sex is hegemonically axiomatic, deeper analysis of this presumed link calls into question the idea that gender expression and identity is completely driven by biological sex. Judith Butler (2004) addresses this in *Undoing Gender*.

[T]he critique of male-to-female transsexuality has been centered on appropriation of femininity, as if it belongs properly to a given sex, as if sex is discretely given, as if gender identity could and should be derived unequivocally from presumed anatomy. (pg. 9)

Butler not only questions the base of gender, but also the way in which ‘sex’ is assigned and is used as validation for the eradication of trans identities from feminist space. At this point it is impossible to say what, if any, connections there are between biological sex and gender identity due to a lack of understanding of how gender and sex intertwine. Eliminating this assumption is a key step in gaining a complete and accurate understanding of how gender identities are developed.

While Raymond’s text focuses almost completely on the illegitimacy of transwomen, and is thus the central focus of analysis here, it is also important to note her reasons for doing so. In the introduction to the 1994 version of *The Empire* Raymond states:

Transsexualism remains, as in 1979, a largely male [read: transwomen] phenomenon. Female-to-constructed-males [sic] are relatively rare. For example of the transsexual surgeries that are performed at the University of Minnesota’s Program in Human Sexuality . . . 85% are male to female. More interesting are the reasons why. . . . Women [read: transmen] have had a political outlet, that is, feminism. (pg. xiii)

Raymond suggests transmen do not exist because there are not as many transmen accessing transsexual surgeries. This is interesting, given that she acknowledges that surgeries available to transmen are not as successful or accessible as those available to transwomen. However, the data she cites does not take into account transitioning surgeries (e.g., top or chest) and hormone treatments that may not occur as a part of a trans-

sexual medical care program. Since many transmen develop male secondary sexual characteristics under varying amounts of time on testosterone, the surgical statistics do not give a clear picture of the frequency of transmen's existence.

Raymond's hypothesis that feminist consciousness prevents or inhibits the existence of transmen is equally curious. She seems to allege that female-bodied feminists will not identify as transmen *because they are feminists*. The converse, that transmen cannot be feminists because they are trans, would also follow from this premise. However, Raymond's inference is problematic on several levels. Primary among these is that it places feminism in diametric opposition to trans existence, while ignoring the fact that feminist consciousness is defined by intellect and reason, not by biology. Her statement assumes that transmen who transition from female to a masculine-male gender expression are doing so without being informed of feminist consciousness. As Califia (2003) points out in his analysis of *The Empire*, Raymond maintains that transmen are transitioning as a means of escaping the oppression faced by women, which allegedly would be eradicated by access to feminism. Judith Butler comments on the fallaciousness of this escaped oppression theory.

The view that transsexuals seek to escape the social condition of femininity because that condition is considered debased or lacks privileges accorded to men assumes that female-to-male (FTM) transsexuality can be definitively explained through recourse to that one framework for understanding femininity and masculinity. It tends to forget the risks of discrimination, loss of employment, public harassment, and violence are heightened for those who live openly as transgendered persons. The view that the desire to become a man or transman or to live transgendered is motivated by a repudiation of femininity presumes that every person born with female anatomy is therefore in possession of a proper femininity (whether innate, symbolically assumed, or socially assigned), one that can either be owned or disowned, appropriated or expropriated. (Butler, 2004, pg. 9)

Butler illuminates the disparity between perceived and actual trans existence and expression in Raymond's work. A growing body of work documents individual struggles to reconcile this internalized feminist doctrine with person transitions from female-to-masculine gendered expressions.¹⁰ Jamison Green verbalizes the challenges of maintaining

such a precarious balance during his own transition in *Becoming a Visible Man*.

I had to understand my part in that system of inequity, whether I occupy a female place and a masculine role or a male place and a masculine role. I needed to understand what it would—really *mean*—to change places: what responsibility would I have for maintaining or deconstructing traditional gender roles once I transitioned? (2004, pg. 23)

Another example of this consciousness and conflict is voiced by a young transman and feminist in an article appearing in the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

Kaisaris, as a feminist, says the entry into the society of men makes him somewhat uncomfortable. Though he is now afforded certain male privileges, he finds himself in the quirky position of becoming a man-hating man. “It’s like being inducted in an underground society,” he says with due seriousness. “My responsibility is to become a decent man.” (Rafkin, 2003)

Kaisaris not only shows that it is possible to have a transmasculine identity while maintaining a feminist consciousness, but also emphasizes a responsibility to not become an oppressor of women. The two previous quotes are representative of several that contest Raymond’s assertion that it is not possible to be both trans and feminist, as well as document the challenges of existing in these multiple, and sometimes conflicting, identity spaces.

CONTINUING THE LEGACY

In her work, Raymond presents the idea that transwomen are deviant men on a mission to destroy or at least usurp the success of the feminist movement. Because of this clear anti-feminist mission, she calls on all feminists to eradicate any gender-variant presence in the movement as a means of protection (Raymond, 1979).¹¹ This is a very clear anti-inclusion sentiment that is currently being echoed by several other anti-inclusion feminists. One such example is the Website Questioning Transgender.org, which is dedicated to the anti-inclusion perspective. Their mission statement reads as follows.

We stand opposed to trans-politics [Read: politics of trans-inclusion] because:

- [These politics] include the insistence that transgender and transsexual individuals be served by organizations designed by and for women without regard for the concerns, desires, and interests of the women involved.
- [These politics] undermine our ability to understand that the gender classes of men and women are socially created.
- [These politics] deny or ignore the social, economic, and power differentials between these two classes that amount to the oppression and domination of one over the other.
- [These politics] fail to address the significant problems of male power and male violence across the world, including violence against women as well as violence against transgender people. (From: <http://questioningtransgender.org>)

The site's mission statement inaccurately presumes that there is only one trans-inclusion perspective, or trans-politic, to critique. To label all transpeople and their ideas under the assumption that there is only one "trans-politic" is vague, and suggests a lack of knowledge about the diversity of trans culture and politics. Further, the site offers neither research-based nor factual support for the premises in the mission statement, weakening all the arguments contained within the Website.

One of the overriding themes of the mission statement is the criticism that trans-activism is not operating under a complete and total feminist consciousness, or that trans-activists are not feminist enough. The latter criticism is ironic considering that these are the same people arguing against trans-inclusion in a feminist movement, an inclusion that would theoretically encourage or require such a consciousness. The idea that transpeople do not spend enough time evaluating issues against women is a recurring theme, one that does not take into account that anti-inclusion feminists spend more time dismissing rather than evaluating trans issues potentially related to the feminist movement. The third tenet of the mission statement reads: "[Politics of Trans-Inclusion] deny or ignore the social, economic, and power differentials between these two classes that amount to the oppression and domination of one over the other." This demand of engaging feminist analysis results in a continuing and inappropriate burden shifting onto transpeople. It places undue

expectations on transpeople to single handedly overcome massive barriers, so that they might be able to engage in feminist consciousness and analysis of their very existence.

QuestioningTransgender.org's statements suggest that minority groups facing the severest oppression should be responsible for analyzing (and eradicating) their own oppression, rather than placing the necessary analysis of oppression on those who engage in or enforce the oppression of others. That is not to say that minority groups, particularly transpeople, who face substantial oppression should not be cognizant of their part in the oppression of others and work to end said oppressions. However, it should not be the *one-sided* responsibility of transpeople to take on cisgendered women's oppression as the central core of its own work. This is especially true when a more privileged minority group (in this case anti-inclusion feminists) is actively engaged in the oppression via the exclusion of others—specifically transpeople.

The second point of QuestioningTransgender.org's mission statement reads: “[Politics of Trans-Inclusion and Transpeople] undermine our ability to understand that the gender classes of men and women are socially created.” This is a curious statement, as it literally blames transpeople for undermining the stability of socially constructed gender. One of the main arguments of the Website (and of Raymond) is that transpeople are problematic because their identities and gender expressions are *confirming* the rigidity of the gender binary. However, the QuestioningTransgender.org Website does a 180 degree turn-around and censures transpeople for blurring the lines of gender. Anti-inclusion feminists are creating a no-win situation by condemning transpeople for both confirming and blurring the gender binary.

This section of the mission statement inadvertently highlights a potential undercurrent of anti-inclusion feminist discomfort over trans identities. If science advances to uncover a biological contribution to gender variance, this could undermine the assertion that gender as a class is completely socially constructed. The demonstration of biological contributions could drive a movement to reevaluate feminist majority theory, which is based in large part on strong social-constructionist views of gender. Logically, this suggests that one of the main motivations behind anti-inclusion feminism is fear, especially a fear that by their mere existence, transpeople could and do call into question the very foundation of the feminist movement.

FEMINIST IDENTITY OF OPPRESSION

Like that of most activist movements, feminism is based on an *identity of oppression*. The movement cannot exist without the oppression it seeks to end. While in and of itself this identity is not a negative one, anti-inclusion feminists use an identity of oppression as a shield from trans inclusion and the aforementioned possible undermining of feminist foundations. *We are oppressed, we are the only oppressed gender because gender variance is not a valid gender expression, and our oppression takes precedence over all others.* Through this, anti-inclusion feminists also fall into the greater societal pattern of refusing to acknowledge one's own role in the oppression of others.

It is very easy for anti-inclusion feminists to acknowledge that transpeople are oppressed. However, this acknowledgement does not recognize that because women, feminists, and anti-inclusion feminists have more privilege than transpeople, that they are oppressors. That is not to say that on an individual level one cannot challenge and work against these systems of oppression, although as a part of a more privileged social class, it is impossible to leave that privilege completely behind. Nowhere on the Website QuestioningTransgender.org, or in any other anti-inclusion text reviewed for this article, was there an examination of the role that feminists, in particular anti-inclusion feminists, might play in the oppression of gender-variant people. This omission is one concrete example of how anti-inclusion feminists have adopted the identity of oppression to deflect constructive criticism and introspection regarding their relationship with and against gender-variant identities.

This has not always been the ethos of the feminist movement. An example is the shift in lesbian inclusion in the feminist movement over the course of the 1970s. In the early part of the decade, many feminists felt that including lesbian issues in the feminist movement would ultimately hinder its success. At the time, lesbians were considered to have distinct issues that would draw attention away from the issues of the heterosexual majority. Out lesbians who refused to congeal with the ideals and actions of the feminist movement were outcast for their differences (i.e., sexual orientation) rather than embraced for their similarities (i.e., gender).

In opposition, lesbian communities accused feminists of engaging in heterosexist and patriarchal lesbian baiting. Extreme persistence and consciousness-raising by lesbians resulted in a diametric reversal by the end of the decade. Lesbianism was seen as the ultimate feminist representation for its perceived complete abandonment of male presence and

dependency. This consciousness raising was so successful that it became en vogue for heterosexual women to forgo sexual contact with men and proclaim themselves “political lesbians,” in order to further the complete eradication of patriarchal oppression of women. Lesbian voices were heard and respected in no small part because the category of “lesbian” inherently included “woman.” While including lesbian concerns on a feminist platform may have originally been problematic, ultimately it did not complicate the movement’s centeredness around “woman” as the only oppressed gender.

Consciousness-raising about trans identities and inclusion within the feminist movement has been significantly more complicated. In addition to the fear that biologically based transgender identities challenge significant amounts of feminist theory, trans-inclusion would require acknowledgement that “woman” is not the only oppressed gender. It would force feminists to recognize gender-variant persons as *validly gendered*. Cisgendered women have the distinct privilege of being a part of a legitimate social class—woman. While the class of woman is certainly one of a patriarchally oppressed “other,” the legitimacy of its right to exist is not routinely under attack. This is a privilege that, as many documented cases of violence against transpeople have shown, can mean the literal difference between life and death.¹²

PROVING THE POSSIBLE: THE GenderPAC MODEL

The Transsexual Empire by Janice Raymond and Questioning Transgender.org’s mission statement highlight a related and recurring idea that trans-activism seeks to take over the feminist movement and replace its doctrine with gender-variant centric activism. However, those trans-activists that are even interested in pursuing feminist collaboration seek to work towards the eradication of *gender-based oppression*. This approach concentrates on the end of oppression to women *and* transpeople. It does not suggest that the entire focus of feminism become trans-centric; rather, it requires the dedicated analysis of where these movements might successfully intersect for the best interests of both parties. A necessary step to enabling this analysis is the willingness to examine potential oppression placed on transpeople by anti-inclusion feminists, and vice versa.

GenderPAC, a Washington, D.C.-based gender rights group, provides a model for ending gender-based oppression. Their mission statement reads:

The Gender Public Advocacy Coalition (GenderPAC) works to end discrimination and violence caused by gender stereotypes by changing public attitudes, educating elected officials and expanding human rights. GenderPAC also promotes understanding of the connection between discrimination based on gender stereotypes and sex, sexual orientation, age, race, class. (www.gpac.org)

GenderPAC combines various perspectives of feminist, class, racial, age and queer consciousnesses to work towards ending gender-based oppression. GenderPAC works hard to show that gender-based oppression affects all members of the human community. They accomplish this without appropriating the feminist movement or any other oppressed group, instead creating their own model for change.

However, GenderPAC's efforts are not without criticism. While feminist groups such as the National Organization for Women (NOW) have embraced and collaborated with GenderPAC, trans-activist groups have raised concerns about GenderPAC's practices and trans inclusion. According to GLBTQ Social Sciences, "In early 2001, several transgender activists drafted an open "letter of concern" to GenderPAC, expressing their consternation over the organization's perceived mainstreaming and disconnection from the trans community."¹³ This issue became particularly salient during the writing of this article when GenderPAC's Executive Director Riki Wilchins (who reviewed an earlier version of this article) requested that the description of GenderPAC as a "trans-activist group" be changed to "gender rights group." Wilchins stated that GenderPAC "does not want to be known as a transgender group and we are trying to get away from that association."¹⁴ Wilchins has responded to criticism about this intentional distance by arguing that GenderPAC serves all people who transgress gender norms, including transpeople, and that gender rights benefit everyone.

While the intentions are obviously positive and likely politically motivated, this presents another situation where transpeople are placed at a lower priority to benefit a larger group of people. In this case, GenderPAC uses transpeople to benefit a wider community without necessarily returning that benefit to the trans community. One might also question the correlation between GenderPAC's distance from trans-activism and embracement by feminist groups. GenderPAC is ob-

viously not without its faults, such as this distance from the trans community. It does however offer a foundational working model of how feminism and trans-activism can coexist towards a common goal of working towards ending gender-based oppression. This model could be particularly useful in the creation of future organizations and movements aimed at ending gender-based oppression.

CONCLUSIONS

Transwomen and other gender-variant people often find their legitimacy in feminist spaces challenged, in no small part because they are perceived as easy targets. By questioning someone's overall legitimacy in a space, they are proclaiming that this identity is alien to the movement and therefore perspectives represented by this person are extemporaneous. This is particularly effective in space that is defined entirely by gender politics, such as the feminist movement. There is not a simple solution to addressing trans-inclusion in the feminist movement, particularly given the threat of a potentially necessary paradigm shift in feminist theory and ideology. As it stands, feminism as a movement does stand to lose ground by including trans-identities and related issues as a part of its politics. It is much more likely that a movement based entirely on the oppression of 51% of the world's population stands a better chance at success than one that includes the interests of a significantly smaller, more marginalized, and socially unacceptable group of gender-variant people.

However, as the GenderPAC model demonstrates, there are inclusionary tactics available. Even with such working models available, there is no easy solution for feminism. Ultimately it comes down to the question of what is more important to the feminist movement as a whole—seeking the end of oppression of women at the cost of becoming oppressors to others, or taking a substantial risk to reevaluate theory, decentralize woman as the only oppressed gender, and as such ensure that feminism does not become a part of the negative force it is working against.

Sadly, the current politics seem to dictate that the protection of the feminist movement is more important than the oppression of transpeople by anti-inclusion feminism. As the best possible example of feminist consciousness, feminists need to actively work to deconstruct feminist oppression of transpeople. Both feminists *and* transpeople need to continue the dialogue of trans-inclusion and what this means for

the feminist movement and trans-activism. This type of work has been done by the feminist movement before, and it is all the stronger because of it. Surely, with the right motivations and dedication, only the same can happen again.

READING QUESTIONS

1. This article suggests that feminists who are against trans-inclusion are in large part motivated by fear. In particular, fears that if trans identities are proven to have biological roots, that this could lead to the dismantling of feminist theory and could potentially discredit the feminist movement. What preemptive steps could feminists take to ensure that such a discovery would not affect the feminist movement?
2. QuestioningTransgender.org states that gender expression will be eliminated when there is no longer sex-based oppression, and that celebrating gender expression means celebrating oppression. Are socially constructed sex roles and gender identities separate entities, and how do we know? Can socially constructed sex roles and gender identities exist separately?
3. What would be some of the pros and cons to feminism broadening its range to include trans identities as a part of its activism? What would be some of the hurdles in implementing such a paradigm shift? What might be some specific steps transpeople could take to assist in this shift? What might be some specific steps anti-inclusion feminists could take to assist in this shift?
4. How does an identity of oppression inhibit feminism's goals? What other communities might be affected by this practice? What would be some specific ways for feminists to move away from this oppressive philosophy?
5. *Essay assignment:* Michigan's Womyn's Music Festival is one of the most prominent and highly contested examples of anti-inclusion feminism. Review the contents of www.camptrans.org, www.michfest.org, <http://questioningtransgender.org/support.htm>, and <http://eminism.org/michigan/faq-intro.html>. What are the arguments brought forth by each side on why transwomen should or should not be allowed on the land? If you were a mediator be-

tween these two parties, with the goal of creating a livable compromise for both sides that valued each of their philosophies, what solutions would you suggest? How do you think that your solutions would be received?

NOTES

1. Notes on terminology: The term ‘trans’ in this text denotes a person whose gender identity is not congruent with their biological sex. This term is preferred to ‘transgender’ or ‘transsexual’ because it does not inherently assume surgical or hormonal status/desire. It is also a purposeful move to include people whose identities do not necessarily fit within the constraints of the more commonly used terms ‘transgender’ or ‘transsexual’ (or who do not feel comfortable with these particular labels). In this piece, the term ‘gender diverse’ also refers to people whose gender identity is not congruent with their biological sex. This term is purposely chosen, because it is not (currently) affiliated with the terminological border wars within the trans community, and does not necessitate a personal claiming of a trans-specific identity. ‘Transpeople’ is used to refer to all people who *claim* a trans identity, regardless of the direction of their transition. Further, the term ‘transwoman’ is used to respectfully refer to a person who was born biologically male and lives as a woman/feminine person, and the term ‘transman’ is used to respectfully refer to a person who was born biologically female and lives as a man/masculine person. The term ‘cisgendered’ is used [instead of the more popular ‘gender normative’] to refer to people who do not identify with a gender diverse experience, without enforcing existence of a “normative” gender expression. Also of importance to note is that the text views ‘gender’ and ‘sex’ as two distinct and separate terms. Herein, gender refers to a person’s felt sense of identity and expression, and sex refers to the biological assignment of male, female (and sometimes intersex) at birth based on anatomy (and/or chromosomal arrangements). For more information on these terms and other trans terminology, see: <www.trans-academics.org/LGBTQITerminology.pdf>.

2. The terms ‘feminist space’ and ‘women’s space’ are used as separate and distinct terms in this text. Feminist space is used to denote a space (physical or metaphorical) that *purposely* exists based on a presumption of feminist consciousness or activism. Women’s space refers to a space (physical or metaphorical) that does not center on feminist consciousness, rather *incidentally* centering on the existence of woman dominated or exclusive space.

3. Quoted from the homepage of QuestioningTransgender.org’s Website.

4. For example: “I went to women’s lib meetings for a while, one MTF stated in 1971, and was getting really into it until some woman wearing an army uniform walked up to me and said that I should take off my false eyelashes and not expose my breasts so much” (Meyerowitz, 259).

5. This was also true of femme lesbians, who were also viewed as traitors for embracing the feminine.

6. See referenced works by Butler, Califia-Rice, and Cromwell.

7. The specifics of the HBSOC are available online at: <<http://www.hbigda.org/soc.cfm>>.

8. For definitions of these terms, see Green and Peterson, 2004. LGBTQI Terminology Sheet. Available online at: <www.trans-academics.org/LGBTQITerminology.pdf>.

9. See the Intersex Society of North America (ISNA.org) for a thorough analysis and intersex perspective on sexual assignment surgeries for intersex “conditions.” For a more in depth analysis see Dreger AD (Ed.) (1999). *Intersex in the age of ethics*. Frederick, MD: University Press Group; and Kessler SA (1998). *Lessons from the Intersexed*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

10. A comprehensive listing is beyond the scope of this paper. However, for a sampling refer to Califia, Patrick (2003). *Sex Changes: The Politics of Transgenderism*, 2nd Ed. San Francisco, CA: Cleis Press; Cromwell, Jason (1999). *Transmen and FTMs: Identities, Bodies, Genders, and Sexualities*. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press; Diamond, Morty (2004). *From the Inside Out : Radical Gender Transformation, FTM and Beyond*. San Francisco, CA: Manic D Press; Green, Jamison (2004). *Becoming a Visible Man*. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press; Prosser, Jay (1998). *Second Skins*. New York: Columbia University Press; Queen, Carol and Schimmel, Lawrence, eds. (1997). *PoMoSexuals: Challenging Assumptions about Gender and Sexuality*. San Francisco, CA: Cleis Press.

11. Note that the internal contradictions of the first two statements are those of Janice Raymond, and not this author. As there are trans-positive authors such as Califia and others who engage directly with the text, textual analysis is not included here.

12. See Gender.org/remember for a complete listing of and details about the exceptionally violent deaths of transpeople who were targeted for gender diverse related hate crimes.

13. See: <http://www.glbtc.com/social-sciences/gender_public_advocacy.html>.

14. Personal verbal correspondence with author in December 2005.