

Stop the Harassment and Threats Against Radical Feminists

As socialists and progressives we are committed to building a united movement of the left rich in our diversity capable of creating a just, democratic, and egalitarian society freed from all forms of oppression and discrimination. To build such a movement for fundamental change will require an atmosphere of mutual respect, and an ability to tolerate political differences among our movement sisters and brothers. It will also require a willingness to engage in open debate and discussion in order to find common ground and build solidarity among various oppressed groups with at times divergent interests.

Radical feminists have been an essential part of the broader progressive movement for social justice from the Second Wave of feminism in the 1960s through the present. Radical feminism puts front and center the question of female liberation, i.e., how to end female oppression and subordination by a patriarchal society, therefore raising important issues for the left.

We are therefore disturbed by recent demonization, intimidation, and threats of violence against radical and lesbian feminists by certain segments of the transgender community and their supporters who have attempted to silence feminist voices and have had a chilling effect on the ability to engage in open discussion and debate on complex issues of sex, gender, and sexuality, a debate that is sorely needed in order to build an effective and united movement.

These disturbing incidents include the following:

(1) Ann Menasche, a long time social justice activist, socialist, Green, and civil rights lawyer was cyberbullied on Facebook in March of 2017 by a group of trans-activists and their supporters. She was labeled a “TERF” (“Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminist”), “Nazi,” “rapist,” “racist,” and a supporter of “genocide” who, like other “TERFs” are hateful bigots that deserve to die. Several people contacted her employer in an unsuccessful attempt to get her fired from her job. Her “crime” was to respond to a post by writing that persons born female are oppressed on the basis of sex (a position taken by many leftists since the time of Karl Marx), and that it was unfortunate that many males fail to recognize this fact.

(2) Feminists involved in the Vancouver Women’s Library faced similar threats and epithets by a group calling itself “Trans Communist Cadre” during its opening night event in February of 2017. Though the library welcomed transwomen to participate in the event and to join the library, more than two dozen protesters showed up, blocking and assaulting female patrons, tearing a poster from the wall, pouring red wine on the bookshelves and books, and tripping the fire alarm. They labelled library supporters “TERFS” and “fascists,” demanded that the library take “TERF” books off the shelves (authors such as Adrienne Rich and Mary Daly) and made groundless accusations of violence against library founders.

(3) In March of 2017, Tasha-Rose Hodges, a mother of six with children in the St Paul, Minnesota, school district, announced her candidacy for Board of Education. The focus of her campaign was to improve the quality of education in St. Paul and address problems like lead in the drinking water. She had also taken a strong stand against bullying of any kind in the schools, including on the basis of gender identity. However,

because she had expressed gender-critical views, within 24 hours of announcing her candidacy, an on-line campaign began to bully her into dropping out of the race. They described Hodges as a “loathsome snake,” accusing her of spreading “venom” and “hate,” with one writer telling her crudely to essentially go home and masturbate. Another reminded readers “to punch your local TERF.” The harassment escalated to include death threats. Hodges ended up dropping out of the race because it was no longer possible for her to focus on the issues that had motivated her campaign to begin with.

(4) In January, 2017, the Working Class Movement Library in Salford England, a small volunteer-run library which archives stories of working class people's lives and activism, announced that it would be hosting feminist journalist Julie Bindel as a speaker. Julie is a founder of Justice for Women, a movement for women who live with domestic violence. She was to speak on her experiences growing up as a working class lesbian. In response, hundreds of people began a petition campaign demanding that the library rescind the invitation, claiming that her work and her views on gender constituted bigotry. Julie was accused of “violence,” and was called a “fascist” and “Nazi.” The protesters even went so far as to go after the library’s funding. However, many women around the world voiced their support for her right to speak. Ultimately, the library did not cave into the pressure to no-platform her, and on February 4, 2017, Julie gave her talk.

(5) In January, 2017, Carey Callahan, a person who has detransitioned from a transman back to female (not herself a radical feminist), posted on her blog a link to screen shots of responses a friend of hers, also a de-transitioner, had received to a post the friend made on twitter. Her friend had tweeted that she believed there was a need for female-only space. Two transwomen responded by providing a detailed description of how they would rape her, sending her pictures of their genitals. Casey, who describes herself as “invested in the well-being of anyone with gender dysphoria, whether trans-identified or not,” declared that she was done with taking seriously people who use the word “TERF” because of the harassment and threats that go along with the word.

Tragically, both radical feminists and transgender persons experience oppression and violence (overwhelmingly at the hands of heterosexual males) as a result of the strict gender norms, sexism, and homophobia of our society. Women as a group are subjected to systemic physical and sexual violence. Moreover, many radical feminists are lesbians who remain a marginalized and stigmatized group because of their sexuality. Most lesbians are also gender non-conforming in other ways and many have themselves experienced “gender dysphoria.” To the extent that conflicting ideologies and interests have developed between activists from two oppressed groups—transwomen and radical feminists—we are challenged to find ways to enhance communication and debate and to ensure that all voices are heard.

We, the undersigned, as supporters of feminism and progressive politics believe that regardless of one’s views on gender, the tactics of name-calling, no-platforming, and threats to individual feminists’ jobs, livelihoods, and personal safety must be wholeheartedly rejected by progressives. Such tactics have no place on the left.

Signers:

Mick Allan—Author, British Labor Party & union member: UK • **T. Grace Atkinson**—Radical feminist, author: New York • **Jessica Barr**—Lesbian feminist: North Carolina • **Tina Beacock**—Lesbian, socialist, Chicago Teacher’s Union member: Illinois • **Julia Beck**—Case manager, Dept. of Health; feminist activist: Maryland • **Steve Bloom**—New York City activist, poet, composer: New York • **Michael Brackney**—Green Party activist: California • **Sandi Brockway**—Founder, “Microcosm USA,” peace & justice activist: California • **Ras-Iras Charles**—Non-western progressive, writer on politics/economics: Dominica • **Beth Chopp**—Engineer, former union president: California • **Paul Cocksholt**—Socialist author, Scottish Republican activist, Member, Solidarity (Scotland): UK • **Kim Cortez**—Marxist feminist writer: Arizona • **Max Dashu**—Historian, educator & writer: California • **Peter Dolack**—Activist, author, writer of “Systemic Disorder” Blog: New York • **Martin DuFresne**—Translator, pro-feminist activist: Canada • **Theresa El Amin**—Founder & Regional Director, Southern Anti-Racism Network: Georgia • **Marisa Figueiredo**—Redstockings: Massachusetts • **Mariana Firestone**—20 something radical lesbian feminist &

activist: New York • **Laurie Fuchs**—Founder & director, Ladyslipper Music: North Carolina • **Rochelle Glickman**—Lesbian feminist & Green Party member: California • **Rick Greenblatt**—Independent socialist, Green Party activist: California • **Shani Handel**—Long-time activist: New Mexico • **Carol Hanisch**—Women’s Liberation; co-editor of Meeting Ground On-line: New York • **Kim Harmon**—Educator, feminist: Ohio • **Chris Hedges**—Author & social critic, “On Contact”: New Jersey • **Pete Healey**—Long-time activist: New York • **Andrea Houtman**—Long-time socialist & Green Party activist: California • **Rya NT Jones**—Trans YouTube: Wisconsin • **Morgan Laird**—Writer, student, radical feminist activist: Texas • **Traven Leyshon**—Dual member Solidarity/Democratic Socialists of America, socialist labor activist: Vermont • **Rachel (“Charlie Rae”) Lima**—Writer, “The Fifth Column”: North Carolina • **Merritt Linden**—Lesbian feminist activist: California • **Karla Lindquist**—Domestic violence counselor, reproductive rights and union activist: Oregon • **Fran Luck**—Host/Producer, “Joy of Resistance,” Multi-cultural feminist radio, WBAI: New York • **Sherry Lypsky**—Redstockings: Pennsylvania • **Matt Meyer**—Int’l Peace Research Association: New York • **Selene Michaels**—Visual artist & feminist activist: New York • **Blaine**

Mogel—College instructor, Sierra Club & Green Party: California • **Nichole Montoya**—Web developer, housing & Green Party activist: California • **David Morrison**—Green Party Activist: California • **Meghan Murphy**—Founder & editor, Feminist Current: Canada • **Lisa Neuman**—Translator, radical feminist: UK • **Damien Oheix**—Factory worker: France • **Sarah Palmer**—Marxist freelance writer: Massachusetts • **Marge Piercy**—Poet, novelist, memoirist: Massachusetts • **Lynne Sandoval**—Lesbian, feminist, & Green Party activist: California • **Kathie Sarachild**—Redstockings: New York • **Kathy Scarbrough**—Women’s Liberation; co-editor of Meeting Ground On-line: New Jersey • **Meg Starr**—Resistance in Brooklyn: New York • **Jean-Baptiste Studer**—Polemicist; former local secretary, Movement des Jeunes Communistes de France: France • **Linda Thompson**—Past co-chair, Green Party of Connecticut: Connecticut • **Emily Weir**—Trade unionist, communist: UK • **Parker Wolf**—Radical feminist, butch lesbian blogger: Illinois • **Miranda Yardley**—Transexual blogger; editor, “Terrorizer” music magazine: UK

All organizational affiliations for identification purposes only.