
Am I A Woman Born Transsexual?: The Politics of Trans-Identities

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Abstract

The intersection of internet wars sometimes brings interesting observations to mind, and today one such intersection really spoke to me. Recently Jasper over at Jasper's wardrobe has made some pretty controversial things about gender and transwomen. From "just your average straight white guy with a cunt": "I do not recognize any claims to the truth [...]"

Article

The intersection of internet wars sometimes brings interesting observations to mind, and today one such intersection really spoke to me. Recently Jasper over at Jasper's wardrobe has made some pretty controversial things about gender and transwomen. From "just your average straight white guy with a cunt":

"I do not recognize any claims to the truth of a gender. All genders are constructed. From this standpoint I see hormones and SRS as body modifications. That is great. Tattoos piercings and hormones. You have control over your own body. But I consider someone who explores a gender outside the binary to have an equally 'true' gender as someone who uses medical technology to take on a 'classical' gender.

He is correct that gender is a social construct. Simply by looking at the accepted definition of gender, we know that.

gender - the behavioral, cultural, or psychological traits typically associated with one sex.

They are traits that are typically associated (by society), or implied by visual or auditory gender cues. When we see a baby and they are wearing pink, in this culture that is a cue that the baby is a girl. What Jasper is talking about above is gender identity, not gender itself.

gender identity - The degree to which a person identifies as male, female, or some combination. It is the internal framework, constructed over time, which enables an individual to organise a self-concept and to perform socially in regards to their perceived sex and gender."

Gender identity is an internal framework, but gender itself is an external one. As a friend of mine says, "gender should not be used as shorthand." Simply because you claim a the gender identity of a woman, doesn't mean you are gendered as one. I identified as a woman before I actually was perceived by the

world as one. If the world sees your gender/sexual orientation as male/heterosexual, your experience and privilege will be based on that.

transgender - of, relating to, or being a person (as a transsexual or transvestite) who identifies with or expresses a gender identity that differs from the one which corresponds to the person's sex at birth. transsexual - a person who strongly identifies with the opposite sex and may seek to live as a member of this sex especially by undergoing surgery and hormone therapy to obtain the necessary physical appearance (as by changing the external sex organs)

In the same way that gender and gender identity aren't synonymous, neither are transsexual and transgender. Transgender is an umbrella term, of which transsexuals fall under. But also under the umbrella are: cross-dresser, transvestite, androgynes, genderqueer, and drag kings & queens. Jasper claims to be a transgender woman. While I agree that Jasper may be "transgender" because of who he "identifies with", saying he is a woman isn't factually correct. Gendering is done through presentation. In his videos he neither appears to be transitioning away from a male gender or moving towards a female gender. This isn't a smear, it's an observation based on the meaning of the words.

Veronica over at Women In Love writes:

"My plea to the trans community has always been for coming together and to have understanding and solidarity as a goal for all LGBTQI2-S people. I hope that both camps in the trans community and all subgroups in the LGBTQI2-S fold, will eventually find a place to meet in respect for one another. This is the example we should be setting for the greater community and for future generations. It reminds me of this line from The Pretenders 'Waste Not, Want Not' - 'The life you take is your political voice.' I'm proud of who I am as a person, and I live with the choices I have made. If someone insults me, I just walk away. I don't want to engage in destructive trans-identity political arguments."

While I agree with Veronica that unity is needed, I think the discussion about what a "transgender woman" is, is important. People of color are offended when white people speak in their name. Women are offended when men speak for them. When someone that is appropriating my identity or speaking in my name, I'm offended.

cissexism - The belief that transsexual genders are less legitimate than, and mere imitations of, cissexual genders.

Speaking with authority on cissexism of trans-women while still living in a male gender, is offensive to me. It belittles the memory of all those that have died because of their gender presentation and the lives of those who are going through gender transition. While I accept Jasper's gender identity, I will not stand quietly while someone belittles those who pay a hefty price for being who they are.

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