

My Exchange with the Southern Poverty Law Center

By Cristan Williams

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https://www.transadvocate.com/my-exchange-with-the-southern-poverty-law-center_n_9403.htm

Abstract

The trans community has asked itself recently why the supposed watchdog of extremist hate-groups - The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) - has historically given Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminists (TERFs) a pass. I wondered too and I decided to ask them about it. Here's my the FaceBook email exchange: ME: April 23, 1:48 PM Why do you endorse hate group [...]

Article



Figure 1. FB messages between me and the SPLC

The trans community has asked itself recently why the supposed watchdog of extremist hate-groups - The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) - has historically given Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminists (TERFs) a pass. I wondered too and I decided to ask them about it. Here's my the FaceBook

email exchange:

ME: April 23, 1:48 PM

Why do you endorse hate group leaders on your site?

<https://www.transadvocate.com/radfem2013-lies-london-irish-centre-truth-a-preview-of-sheila-jeffreys-new-terf-book.htm>

The very person your site uses to hold up as the voice of reason is clearly seen as being a hate group leader by most. She's tried to organize TWO conferences to support her hate and BOTH time (2 years in a row, now) her conferences have been expelled from the venue once they learned that she represents a TERF hate group.

SPLC: April 25, 9:18 AM

Hi Cristan, I did some checking and as far as I can tell we do not support this or have any connection to it. Can you point me to what part of the site you were looking at?

ME: April 25, 9:57 AM

Certainly. Here is where you interview one of the organizers of RadFem2013 conference (which just got booted from its venue for being an anti-trans hate group), Cathy Brennan:

<http://www.splcenter.org/blog/2012/05/15/intelligence-report-article-provokes-outrage-among-mens-rights-activists/>

The context of this post is that Brennan is featured in your article as being the voice of reason against MRA hate. This was in 2012, the very year Brennan, using her status as a lawyer, petitioned the UN to remove its transgender equality protections from its books.

This intelligence report seems to give a pass to that Trans-Exclusive Radical Feminist (TERF) organizing site, RadFemHub. The site was infamous within the trans community, espousing falsehoods which even the Klan would not make (eg, all trans people rape cis women; the 1st link I sent you in the PM you responded to, Brennan - the person you feature as the voice of reason in your report - is making this very argument).

Lastly, you've at least made a report on MRAs, but not TERFs. Why is that?

They've been working to destroy trans people since the 1970s. Did not the TERF leader Janice Raymond assert that transness should be legislated out of existence? Was not her position paper submitted to 2 US administrations advocating for a national program of forced reparative therapy for trans folk? Did not TERF ideology play an arguably significant part in the death of Filisa Vistima? Do TERFs not have a well-documented history of hunting and outing trans people to their employers with the aim of ending careers (eg Sandy Stone)? Do not TERFs, in the face of all evidence to the contrary, continue to argue that there is no such thing as cisgender privilege? Do TERFs still not organize against trans equality efforts?

Are these actions against trans people, informed by an explicit anti-trans ideology, that's well documented and reveal a decades-long pattern of anti-trans hate?

Here are a few current TERF websites that Brennan is involved with running:

<http://pretendbians.com/>

<http://bugbrennan.com/2013/04/16/trans-activists-and-mras-same-women-hating-peoples/>

<http://genderidentitywatch.com/>

Why has the SPLC turned a seemingly blind eye to this? Why has the SPLC featured a leader in this anti-trans hate group as the voice of reason against hate in a SPLC intelligence report?

SPLC: April 25, 10:54 AM

Thank you for the information. I'd like to look into this further. One of our legal advocates was pretty clear that we do not have a relationship with her or support her (as the center) so reviewing this material and bringing it up to our staff in the hope of clarifying our position will be helpful.

ME: April 25, 12:00 PM

Please be clear about perception. How would it affect your anti-hate credibility if you interviewed the Klan to talk about the need to protect freedom of speech from those who hate freedom of speech? Would adding a line or two about how the Klan doesn't represent the opinions of the SPLC make it okay?

In this case, you've interviewed someone who is proudly anti-trans. You're giving airtime to a movement how has, for decades, made it clear that the world would be a better place if trans folk weren't in it:

... their arrogance and oppressiveness is amazing. It is funny though that they are so used to Feminists immediately bowing before them that they don't know how to deal with that we don't care what happens to them. They expect we'll be shocked to see statistics about them being killed, and don't realize, some of us wish they would ALL be dead.

- BevJo, early TERF leader, author and poet

Here's a post from Brennan from just yesterday:

<http://pretendbians.com/2013/04/24/lesbians-must-be-punished-for-noticing-men-pretend-to-be-lesbians/>

Note the way TERF leaders successfully worked to have access to trans health care removed from the trans community. Here's an early TERF leader setting up the plan:

While there are many who feel that morality must be built into the law, I believe that the elimination of transsexualism is not best achieved by legislation prohibiting transsexual treatment and surgery but rather by legislation that limits it and by other legislation that lessens the support given to sex-role stereotyping, which generated the problem to begin with. Any legislation should be aimed at the social conditions that initiate and promote the surgery as well as the growth of the medical-institutional complex that translates these stereotypes into flesh and blood. More generally, the education of children is one case in point here. Images of sex roles continue to be reinforced, at public expense, in school textbooks. Children learn to role play at an early age.

- Raymond (1980), Technology on the Social and Ethical Aspects of Transsexual Surgery; position paper submitted to the Carter and Reagan Administrations

Here's the plan being executed [google books link]:

<http://books.google.com/books?id=rxwFKLOSF5UC&lpg=PA81&ots=EfxKZlCFuM&dq=%22janice%20raymond%22%20me>

The TERF movement has been explicitly targeting the trans community for decades. Their rhetoric is such that their last two conferences were evicted from their meeting place due to their anti-trans hate speech.

I implore the SPLC to clearly state that they in no way support TERF ideology or, at the very least, produce a TERF intelligence report comparable to the MRA SPLC intelligence report.

ME: April 25, 1:00 PM

In other words, you have reports on misogyny, but not transmisogyny; you have “gay hate groups” listed but no “trans hate groups”. When the Vice President, while campaigning no less, asserted that transgender discrimination is “the civil rights issue of our time,” it seems that your failure to specifically deal with this issue is somewhat glaring.

For instance, it seems that the last time the SPLC issued a report explicitly dealing with anti-trans hate was a decade ago:

<http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/intelligence-report/browse-all-issues/2003/winter/disposable-people#.UXlr-7WG12A>

It seems that most of the time statements affecting the trans population are made within the context of commenting against an anti-gay effort by extremist groups. The trans population is mentioned in the larger context of “gay men, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender,” but it seems to be a rarity that the SPLC addressed explicit issues of anti-trans hate. I can’t find anything more current than 2003 in which the SPLC explicitly deals with anti-trans hate directly.

Consider the following press release by the American Psychiatric Association:

Gender variant and transgender individuals must cope with multiple unique challenges, including significant discrimination, prejudice, and the potential for victimization from violent hate crimes. They often experience discrimination when accessing health care and are denied numerous basic civil rights and protections... transgender and gender variant people are frequently denied medical, surgical, and psychiatric care related to gender transition. Access to medical care (both medical and surgical) positively impacts the mental health of transgender and gender variant individuals.

Being transgender or gender variant implies no impairment in judgment, stability, reliability, or general social or vocational capabilities; however, these individuals often experience discrimination due to a lack of civil rights protections for their gender identity or expression. Transgender and gender variant persons are frequently harassed and discriminated against when seeking housing or applying for jobs or schools, are often victims of violent hate crimes, and face challenges in marriage, adoption, and parenting rights.

Discrimination and lack of equal civil rights is damaging to the mental health of transgender and gender variant individuals. For example, gender-based discrimination and victimization were found to be independently associated with attempted suicide in a population of transgender individuals, 32% of whom had histories of trying to kill themselves, and in the largest survey to date of gender variant and transgender people 41% reported attempting suicide.*

The APA joins other organizations, including the American Medical Association and the American

Psychological Association, in endorsing strong policy statements deploring the discrimination experienced by gender variant and transgender individuals and calling for laws to protect their civil rights.

- The American Psychiatric Association, 8/16/12, Release No. 12-36

In light of the APA, AMA and the other APA noting the depth (and effect) of anti-trans discrimination, that the SPLC has remained largely silent seems to me (and to many within the trans community) problematic. It's been the topic of recent discussion on FaceBook, Reddit and numerous trans sites.

ME: May 14, 12:21 AM

Hello?

What, if anything, are we to make of the SPLC's (in)actions? The SPLC's site still features a TERF leader as being the voice of reason in their hate-group reports.

The SPLC maintains a list of hate groups defined as groups that "...have beliefs or practices that attack or malign an entire class of people, typically for their immutable characteristics." It says that hate group activities may include speeches, marches, rallies, meetings, publishing, leafleting, and criminal acts such as violence. It says not all groups so listed by the SPLC engage in criminal activity. The Southern Poverty Law Center is listed under the resources section of the Federal Bureau of Investigation web page on hate crimes. - WP

So, why the silence, SPLC? Do you look at the decades of anti-trans TERF "speeches, marches, rallies, meetings, publishing, etc" and like what you see? Is that why you seemly choose to ignore TERF actions against the trans community? What other conclusions are we to are we to draw from your silence?

The FBI is fairly clear about their methods for detecting anti-trans hate:

When crimes are committed against people based on sexual orientation or gender identity, epithets often reveal the motive for the attack. Typical gender identity-related epithets and terms include: "he-she," "she-male," "tranny," "it," and "transvestite." Also, the terms "cross dresser" and "drag queen" may be used in a hateful way, even though some individuals may self-identify with these terms. It is common for perpetrators of anti-transgender hate crimes to attack the victim after learning the victim is transgender. - FBI's Hate Crime Data Collection Guidelines and Training Manual, page 17

Yeah, you know... like:



Cathy Brennan @bugbrennan

7 May

Perhaps #girlslikeus should stop telling women to look at their dicks
privilegedenyingtranny.wordpress.com/2013/05/03/wom...

Figure 2. BC-tranny



Figure 3. CB-she-man

Trans people are a protected class under Title VII of the civil rights act. Under Title VII and it's a violation of an employee's civil rights to use incorrect pronouns, attempt to bar trans folk from the restroom, release personal info about trans people and... you know... all the general TERF behavior witnessed each and every day by the trans community. I only mention these hate metrics because they are the very methods the SPLC's federal partners uses in identifying hate.

Speaking of employment... Need I again mention the history TERFs have of putting trans people to their employer in hopes of ending their careers? I'm sure Sandy Stone would be happy to give you some first-hand experience with that TERF tactic.



Figure 4. More from the SPLC's voice of reason on MRA issues

So, SPLC... what's your excuse? Why the seemingly willful blind eye?



Figure 5. More from the SPLC's voice of reason on MRA issues



Figure 6. CB2

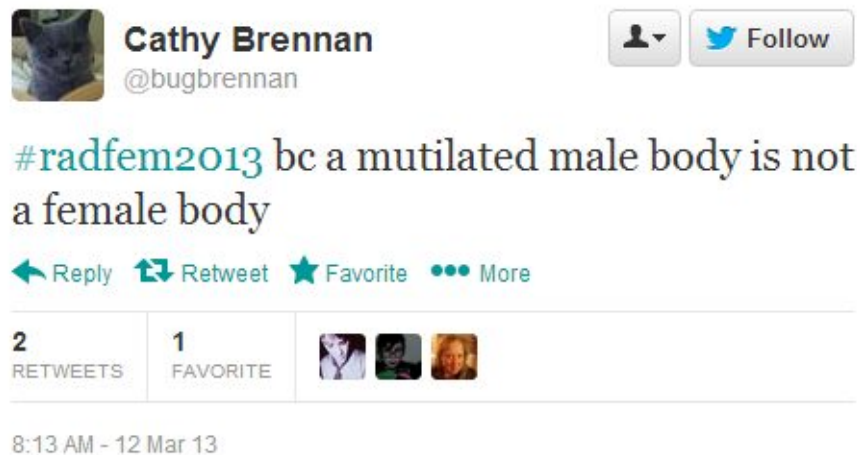


Figure 7. CB1

Why continue to feature anti-trans TERF leaders as being a reasonable voice on your website?

And, SPLC... just so you know, your voice of reason isn't saying anything that the TERF movement doesn't itself promote.

Cross-posted from Ehipassiko

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