

TERFs are Attacked at Dyke Gathering!

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Abstract

Or not. A lot has been made over a Cathy Brennan - a TERF - being “attacked” at a dyke event by event organizers and some cis and trans folk. Here’s the video of what occurred: <http://vimeo.com/44796073> I watched the 20 min video and never saw the “assault” Brennan later claimed. She states in the video description that the encounter [...]

Article

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I watched the 20 min video and never saw the “assault” Brennan later claimed. She states in the video description that the encounter was videoed when folks started yelling; there’s no mention of violence prior to the video starting. It seems that she may have been taking poetic license about the “assault.”

On the video, I see a small group of about 5 folks yelling at each other. The only person I see getting into someone’s personal space was the TERF. The entire shouting match seemed to start because the TERF was loudly talking over/shouting down anyone who disagreed with her and so the other side began to get loud and repeatedly said that they were being loud because the TERF kept loudly talking over any attempt to challenge her fact assertions.



Figure 1. “U assaulted meh!!!!”

Organizer of the Dyke March, Ida Hammer approached Cathy Brennan after Brennan had been telling trans dykes that they didn’t belong at the event. Hammer tried to talk to Brennan, but Brennan kept talking over Hammer. That’s when other Dyke March participants confronted Brennan about her bigoted behavior. After Hammer left, she tweeted the above which Brennan responded to claiming that - yup, you got it - Hammer assaulted her too.

Here’s a video of the encounter that Brennan claims to have been assaulted. Here’s a verbatim transcription of the interaction between Hammer and Brennan:

Brennan: And that’s what this is about!

Hammer: Well okay. But...

Brennan: That is what this is about!

Hammer: I’ve... I’ve looked at your Twitter feed. (To third person:) I’ve looked at her Twitter feed.

Brennan: What’s your name again?

Hammer: (Laughs) I don’t want to be put on your hit list. I don’t...

Brennan: (simultaneously) because, like I...

Brennan: I don't have a hit list! Do you not know what these guys are doing?

Third person (to Brennan): I've seen your hit list!

(Simultaneously)

Hammer: I... Look, I'm trying to... I looked at your twitter feed and every twitter that you write is "Fuck you" "@ so and so, Fuck you" "@ so and so fuck you"

Brennan: Do you not know what these guys are doing? Do you not know what these people are doing to lesbians in the community? Are you fucking kidding me? Are you fucking kidding me? Alright.

Third person (to Hammer): Do you have to...? We don't need...

Brennan: No! No.

(Conversations split, Brennan and Hammer no longer talking to each other)

Third person (to Hammer): I have a question. (Hammer turns attention to this person). I have a question. I'm not trying to be anything, okay? Women.... (drowned out by fourth person yelling).

Fourth person (to Brennan): But how often do you like, actually let trans women have a voice? Because she... (drowned out by Brennan yelling).

Brennan (to fourth person): I have...!

Fourth person (to Brennan): No! Because she's trying to talk to you and...

Brennan (to fourth person): She's not trying to talk to me! She came up to me with her gang...

Fourth person (to Brennan): She is trying to talk to you! (Hammer turns attention to this conversation for a second, but returns it to the third person quickly and they walk out of scene).

(Incomprehensible talking between fourth person and Brennan).

Fourth person (to Brennan): As a cis-woman, as a fellow cis-woman, I'm very disappointed.

Brennan (to fourth person): I am not cis! I am not cis!

Fourth person (to Brennan): Then Why, why..?

(video ends).

Apparently, the Vimeo video picks up where this video leaves off. Neither of these videos shows anything like an "assault."

To be direct, I'm not so sure that any other bigot would have been treated differently. I didn't see anyone pushing/hitting the TERF (which was what I thought had happened by the way the incident has been hyped on the internet). I would also suggest that it's kinda lame of a bigot to claim victimhood when they pay the same exact social cost all bigots seem to pay in our society - they get confronted by angry people. To my eyes, the supposed "aggressors" seem to be acting like most people act when a

hell-fire street preacher shows up at Pride event or a Klan members show up in their sheets holding racist signs. Here's a video of me and a bunch of other pissed off bikers, atheists and queer folks yelling at Phelps bigots. There's nothing wrong with bigots having their say or normal people responding their bigotry. I'm sure that it's very vexing for TERFs to find themselves in the same boat as the Phelps folks and the Klan because they don't see themselves in that way... even though their events are treated throughout the world exactly like Klan rallies.

TERFs have caused actual harm to countless trans folk by successfully putting an end to trans healthcare for both govt and private health plans. This has resulted in the very real suffering and death of untold trans folk for decades now:

Paper Prepared for the National Center for Health Care
Technology on the Social and Ethical Aspects
of Transsexual Surgery
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June, 1980

The subject of transsexualism, whether raised in the public forum or in the academic or medical communities, has been viewed generally as a medical issue that requires hormonal and surgical intervention. Several assumptions accompany this profile of transsexualism.

1) That the transsexual is a person who is trapped in the body of the wrong sex. Thus we have the popular definition of a transsexual as a "female mind in a male body." [1] This results in the perception of transsexualism as a disease or as disease-like and thus a medical problem. In many cases, a "cure" can only be effected through radical intervention such as specialized hormonal treatments and sex conversion surgery.

2. That it is possible to transsex, i.e., to change one's sex through such medical intervention.

3. That it is a therapeutic necessity and a reasonable and humane treatment to perform surgery on those individuals who have undergone rigorous preoperative psychological evaluations and who can truly "pass" as members of the opposite sex. Furthermore, proof of the surgery's efficacy is that over 90% of those who have undergone transsexual operations report that their lives are healthier and happier.

The aim of this paper is to analyze these assumptions and, in so doing, to address the much-neglected social and ethical issues surrounding transsexual surgery. Transsexualism is an important medical ethical issue that raises questions that go far beyond the transsexual context -- questions of bodily mutilation and integrity, medical priorities, unnecessary surgery, the inevitable issue of the medical model in general, as well as definitions of maleness and femaleness, and the boundaries of such. Scholars will also find that transsexualism touches the parameters of many of the academic disciplines in such a way as to raise fundamental questions about the territorial imperatives of biology, psychology, medicine, and the law, to name but a few. Questions about the causes of transsexualism and the proper methods of treatment have been hitherto restricted to the domains of psychology and medicine. But as an ethicist, I would maintain that these issues of causation and treatment are often embedded with social values and philosophical beliefs -- values and beliefs about the so-called natures of women and men, for example.

Figure 2. The TERF brief used to end trans healthcare

These TERF created talking points are STILL used against trans folk. And even that's not good

enough for them; last year TERFs and their separatist lapdogs petitioned to UN to remove trans protections. The talking points from this TERF UN Letter was picked up by the IPS-Inter Press Service, which provides articles to news agencies in Europe, Africa, the Asia-Pacific and Latin America - places where anti-trans violence runs rampant. [UPDATE: The TERF UN Letter is now being used by the Tea Party]

When actual TERF inspired physical violence and bloodied the trans founder of queer liberation, did trans folk respond in kind? No, we didn't.

"In the beginning, we were the vanguard of the gay movement...We were very well respected for the first four years" - Sylvia Rivera

Women in the GLF were uncomfortable referring to Rivera--who insisted in using women's bathrooms, even in City hall--as "she." Pressure mounted. The year 1973 witnessed clash that would take Rivera out of the movement for the next two decades. Her lifelong friend and fellow Stonewall Veteran Bob Kohler recalled, "Sylvia left the movement because, after the first three or four years, she was denied a right to speak." It was during the Pride rally in Washington Square Park after the Christopher Street Liberation Day March.

To the dismay of Lesbian Feminist Liberation, drag queens were scheduled to perform. As they passed out flyers outlining their opposition to the "female impersonators," Rivera wrestled for the microphone held by emcee Vitto Russo, before getting hit with it herself. Rivera explained, "I had to battle my way up on stage, and literally get beaten up and punched around by people I thought were my comrades, to get to that microphone. I got to the microphone and I said my piece." Rivera complained that the middle-class crowd cared little to nothing about the continued harassment and arrests of street drag queens. Bleeding, Rivera sang, "You Gotta Have Friends," screamed "Revolution Now!" and led the crowd in a chant of "Give me a G, Give me an A, Give me a Y...What does it spell?" Barely audible, her voice breaking, "GAY POWER," she groaned.¹

When TERFs forced transwomen out of jobs they were good at just because they were trans, have we trans folk replied in kind? No, we've not. Do I really need to recount the ways in which TERFs targeted folks like Beth Elliott? Do I really need to recount how similar Robin Morgan's 1970s words mirror the recent words of Bev Jo? TERFs have stolen trans healthcare, they have bloodied us, they have marginalized us, silenced us and for decades and I ask, have trans folk EVER come close to causing the sort of suffering for TERFs they have visited upon the lives of trans folk?

Yah, I'm sure it sucks to be confronted at every turn for your decades of bad behavior, TERFs. The TERF place of privilege in the queer community has evaporated and I'm sure that's difficult for them understand why. But they should get used to being confronted at every turn by trans and cis folk who won't stand for their bad behavior any longer.

While I see no evidence that TERFs were treated in the way TERFs treated trans folk in these videos, I'm all for free speech. If a bigot wants to say bigoted things, then the bigot should be able to say whatever it is they have to say... but they should expect to face the same social stigma that any other bigot faces in society.

NOTES:

1. Benjamin Shepard, "Sylvia and Sylvia's Children: The Battle for a Queer Public Space," That's Revolting! (ed. Matt Bernstein Sycamore)

Suggested citation

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