

TRANSADVOCATE

(Re)Introducing inclusive Radical Feminism

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Abstract

The TransAdvocate is pleased to announce the launch of a new program aimed at making a decades-old intersectional trans, intersex and genderqueer inclusive radical feminism more accessible. The TransAdvocate, in partnership with the Transgender Archive, launched The Conversations Project on New Year's Day 2016. The Project seeks to inspire discourse through its community group, a [...]

Article



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The Project seeks to inspire discourse through its community group, a journal, interviews and the publication of a book-length collection of collaborative essays from radical feminist John Stoltenberg and I, a trans feminist. The heart of the Project is a group of students, professors, community members and numerous trans, intersex, genderqueer and radical feminist activists, authors and speakers who discuss sex and gender issues through a critical lens. Moreover, group members are

encouraged to contribute to the Project's quarterly journal, *Intersections: a Journal of Trans and Radical Feminism*.

The Project's group provides -as an inter-generational meeting ground for feminists of different waves and eras- a space to undo stereotypes while exploring differences in perspectives and how they have evolved for each of us. It is an encounter between 'old school' Second Wave feminists of all birth assignments who are not adverse to learning something new, and Third Wave and Fourth Wave feminists who have grown in their activism as the trans, intersex and non-binary communities and movements have become more visible and vibrant over the last two decades.

[Figure] P1-8

When I asked Stoltenberg why he agreed to collaborate on this Project, he said, "Andrea Dworkin, my life partner of 31 years, repudiated sex essentialism, meaning she did not believe there are innate characteristics that define us. Instead, she believed, we are a 'multisexed species.' Since Andrea's death in 2005, I have become increasingly concerned that the radical feminism I first learned from her was being misappropriated in the name of 'real womanhood' in ways that not only shun and derogate trans women but also betray the fundamental radical feminist insight that male supremacy is premised on the lethal fiction of 'real manhood.'"

As a trans historian, it's distressing that it is now common for anti-trans narratives to be presented in the media as representing radical feminism. Radical feminist institutions like Olivia Records and the West Coast Lesbian Conference were staunchly trans-inclusive, and it's unfortunate that this radical feminist tradition is given so little attention while a few anti-trans individuals are given relatively massive amounts of press that works to link radical feminism itself with anti-trans animus.

Pioneering lesbian activist Robin Tyler, who was beaten by sex essentialists for protecting a trans woman from their public bashing told me, "It has saddened me to witness what I know to be an inclusive and intersectional framework for liberation become tarnished by narratives focused on a minority of anti-trans people whose ideas have been represented in the media as being radical feminism. As a radical feminist and women's festival producer, I support the intention of The Conversations Project, and hope that it brings attention to the radical feminism I've known and loved for more than 45 years."

The Conversations Project offers a unique opportunity for classroom instructors to incorporate access to a number of trans and radical feminist activists, authors and opinion leaders who can offer a wealth of knowledge and experience that can be difficult to access via textbooks and lectures alone. Sandy Stone, author of the gender studies classic *The Empire Strikes Back*--a response to Janice Raymond's anti-trans book *The Transsexual Empire*--told me, "The Conversations Project engages a wider audience in discussion and critical discourse on a most urgent topic. I look forward eagerly to the fruits of this effort."

To this point, intersex educator Dr. Cary Gabriel Costello, author of the popular blog *The Intersex Roadshow*, told me, "For many contemporary advocates, the term 'radical feminist' has become synonymous with 'transmisogynist binary sex essentialism,' and that's a sad state of affairs. To prevent the collapse of radical feminism into reactionary feminism, we need a conversation that centers intersex and trans feminist voices in evaluating and extending a rich history of radical, feminist thought."

The Conversations Project's supportive partners include TransAdvocate.com, Rice for Reproductive Justice, the Transgender Foundation of America, Rice University's Queer Resource Center, Equality Texas, the Digital Transgender Archive, the Houston Transgender Archive, The Houston Intersex Society, the Transgender Education Network of Texas, the Houston Transgender Unity Committee, Rice Queers and Allies and the Texas chapter of the National Organization for Women.

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