

The Letter

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Published July 20, 2013 | Updated March 31, 2026

https://www.transadvocate.com/theletter_n_9773.htm

Abstract

When I learned Routledge Press was planning to publish a book about “transgenderism” by Australian academician Sheila Jeffreys, I was astonished. Why was I astonished? Because Jeffreys considers transsexual surgery a human rights violation, has called medical intervention with transgendered children eugenics and McCarthyism, and refuses to use appropriate pronouns when referring to us, cynically claiming she [...]

Article

When I learned Routledge Press was planning to publish a book about “transgenderism” by Australian academician Sheila Jeffreys, I was astonished.

Why was I astonished? Because Jeffreys considers transsexual surgery a human rights violation, has called medical intervention with transgendered children eugenics and McCarthyism, and refuses to use appropriate pronouns when referring to us, cynically claiming she is seeking “clarity.”

I identify FTMs and MTFs by the pronouns that demonstrate their sex class of origin for the sake of clarity.

-FTM Transsexualism and Grief

When transgender voices are raised in opposition to her written words, she calls it censorship and vilification:

Criticism of the practice of transgenderism is being censored as a result of a campaign of vilification by transgender activists of anyone who does not accept the new orthodoxy on this issue...The degree of vituperation and the energy expended by the activists may suggest that they fear the practice of transgenderism could justifiably be subjected to criticism, and might not stand up to rigorous research and debate, if critics were allowed to speak out.

-Let Us Be Free to Debate Transgenderism...

To be sure, transgender voices are raised against Jeffreys-- some immoderately--but she sees an organized conspiracy that wants her dead.

Jeffreys and fellow fringe feminists-- [(the late) Mary Daly, Janice Raymond, and assorted colleagues-in-arms]-- challenge our motivations, our identities, the medical procedures we use, and indeed, our very existence. They debase us in writing, and their writing stimulates others to hate and persecute us..

Standing arm-in-arm behind these academics is a (fortunately small) cadre of vicious, irrational, and sometimes batshit crazy radical separatist feminists who belligerently harass and ridicule transpeople, out them in their communities and on their jobs, engage in ad hominem attacks in print, and (not just in their imagination, but in fact) wish us dead.

These trans-hating women comprise the most extreme arm of the radical feminist movement, and even of lesbian separatist feminists. By way of contrast, think Audre Lorde and Maya Angelou.

Feminist Communities

Radical feminism is centered upon “patriarchy as a system of power that organizes society into a complex of relationships based on the assertion that male supremacy oppresses women.” Male sexuality and even male existence is considered the root of all oppression of women. Radical feminists broke from the larger and more sex-positive feminist community around issues of sex and sexuality.

Separatist feminism is a subset of radical feminists who believe patriarchy can best be defeated by an exclusive focus upon women (this mean to some adherents active avoidance and exclusion of men and boys, even infants). It was launched symbolically in 1967, when Valarie Solanas self-published her SCUM Manifesto (Solanas is best-known for her attempted murder of artist Andy Warhol just months later).

Although some separatist feminisms are heterosexual, almost by definition most are lesbian, and indeed, lesbianism is required in many circles.

We do think that all feminists can and should be lesbians. Our definition of a political lesbian is a woman-identified woman who does not fuck men. It does not mean compulsory sexual activity with women.

-Love Your Enemy (Sheila Jeffreys was one of the authors)

Lesbian separatist is certainly the most extreme form of feminism. Many lesbian separatists exclude all males from their lives and certainly males are unwelcome at their events.

“J’Accuse!”

By the mid-1970s (and probably before) lesbian separatists were focusing upon male-to-female transsexuals as tools of the patriarchy who symbolically invaded womens’ space with their bodies.

All transsexuals rape women’s bodies by reducing the real female form to an artifact, appropriating this body for themselves. However, the transsexually constructed lesbian feminist violates women’s sexuality and spirit, as well. Rape, although it is usually done by force, can also be accomplished by deception.

- Raymond, 1979, p. 134

By the late 1970s the letter columns of lesbian journals were filled with denunciations of transsexual women, who until then had found safe space in womens’ communities. Transsexual women suddenly found themselves excluded from womens’ spaces-- often with great hostility. Many transsexual women who had been active participants in such spaces for years were removed. Beth Elliott, for example, was Vice-President of the West Coast chapter of the early homophile organization Daughters of Bilitis:

Late in her term of office [Beth Elliott's] transgender status became a point of contention at the West Coast Lesbian Conference, where she was outed and vilified for being a MTF transsexual. The complaint was that Beth Elliott had insinuated herself into a position of power over as a patriarchal man, a propagandist ploy that was to become common when attacking other transgendered people. At the conference she was forced to stop her music concert due to the catcalls from the audience by women that knew nothing more about her than that she was transsexual. She was required to sit through a popular vote of the attendees to determine whether they would let her finish her set. In the weeks and months to follow she was further vilified and even betrayed by women who had once called her friend.

- The Gay, Lesbian, and Feminist Backlash Against Trans Folks

Enter Janice Raymond

Perhaps the most notable example of this exclusion was Janice Raymond's denunciation of engineer Sandy (Now Allucquere Rosanne) Stone, a transsexual woman who was part of the Olivia Women's Music Collective. Stone became Olivia's sound engineer in 1974.

Stone's departure from Olivia Records was spearheaded by Raymond, who, in 1976 sent Olivia a draft of the chapter of her forthcoming book *The Transsexual Empire: The Making of the She-Male*.

*In 1979, the lesbian feminist scholar Janice Raymond mounted an ad hominem attack on Stone in *The Transsexual Empire: The Making of the She-Male*. Raymond accused Stone by name of plotting to destroy the Olivia Records collective and womanhood in general with "male energy." In 1976, prior to publication, Raymond had sent a draft of the chapter attacking Stone to the Olivia collective "for comment," apparently in anticipation of outing Stone. Raymond appeared unaware that Stone had informed the collective of her transgender status before agreeing to join. The collective did return comments to Raymond, suggesting that her description of transgender and of Stone's place in and effect on the collective was at odds with the reality of the collective's interaction with Stone. Raymond responded by increasing the virulence of her attack on Stone in the published version of the manuscript.*

- Wikipedia: Sandy Stone

Fueled by Raymond's vendetta, Olivia came under attack in various lesbian journals. Eventually, and apparently by mutual consent, Stone left the Olivia Collective.

The Transsexual Empire

Raymond's book, which was published in 1979, was a vicious political attack on male-to-female transsexualism, the doctors who treated them, and transsexuals themselves. Its premise was ridiculous premise, its language pejorative language, and it was completely lacking in empirical evidence. Make no mistake: Raymond disguised her hatred of us in a thin veneer of scholarship. Nonetheless, *Empire* was well-received. Today, more than 30 years after its release, it remains in print and continues to fuel hate toward transsexuals, especially in lesbian separatist communities.

Raymond was a protégé of feminist Mary Daly, who, in her 1978 book *Gyn/Ecology*, called transsexuals "Frankensteinian" (see here for a discussion of Daly's transphobic writing) Daly was in fact Raymond's thesis adviser at Boston College.

The phenomenon of the drag queen dramatically demonstrates such boundary violation. Like whites playing “black face,” he incorporates the oppressed role without being incorporated in it. In the phenomenon of transsexualism, the incorporation/confusion is deeper. As ethicist Janice Raymond has pointed out, the majority of transsexuals are “male to female,” while transsexed females basically function as tokens, and are used by the rulers of the transsexual empire to hide the real nature of the game. In transsexualism, males put on “female” bodies (which are in fact pseudofemale). -Daly, 1978, pp. 67-68, cited in Sungold, 2010

Raymond’s Empire is not a work of science. In it she name-calls, misuses pronouns, engages in personal attacks on transsexual women, and reprints a quote from an obviously satirical letter by transsexual activist Angela Douglas as if it were serious. The Methods section of her doctoral dissertation (upon which the book is based) is almost entirely rhetoric; her description of her “interview subjects” (I don’t believe there actually were any) does not include demographic information, interview techniques or sample questions, or even the number and category of subjects. Raymond’s is the antithesis of a Methods section; it does nothing to help other scholars review, understand, and replicate her work.

Moreover, this “wonderful” (according to Sheila Jeffreys) work is filled with personal attacks on transsexual women like Stone and Renee Richards. For example, in my copy of Empire she writes of Richards, “.. it takes (castrated) balls to play womens’ tennis.”

Raymond supplemented her personal attacks on transsexual women with actions deliberately designed to make insurance coverage and medical technologies unavailable to them. For example, in 1980 she prepared a paper for the National Center for Health Care Technology; her conclusions were predictable.

In a 1995 interview in the journal TransSisters: The Journal of Transsexual Feminism, Sandy Stone revealed that prior to Raymond’s attacks on her, she (Raymond) had an unrequited crush on her (Stone). Here, perhaps, is the private motivation for Raymond’s viciousness toward transsexuals. Or perhaps not; perhaps her work is entirely ideologically based. In either case, Raymond has deliberately done great harm to transsexuals, whose only crime was their very existence.

Empire Redux?

Now another radical separatist lesbian feminist with a grudge against transgendered people (please re-read the first paragraphs) has a book in production. Sheila Jeffreys and Lorene Gottschalk’s Gender Hurts: A Feminist Analysis of the Politics of Transgenderism is scheduled for publication in 2013 by Routledge, an imprint of Taylor & Francis Publishers.

Since Jeffreys has a history of harsh criticism (some say hate speech) about transsexual people and those who work with them, since she is clearly nursing a grudge because of perceived attacks upon her by transgendered and transsexual activists, since Gottschalk is Jeffrey’s former graduate student, since transgender issues have been only peripheral in Jeffreys’ past work, I am gravely concerned her book will reprise the more hateful elements of Raymond’s Empire. I expect deliberate pronoun misidentification and disingenuous interpretations of us, the data about us, the medical professionals who treat us, and the motivation, identities, and history of a community that for decades has been struggling for acceptance.

In recent months the conflict between Jeffreys and transpeople has heated up. In June, Conway Hall, the venue for the scheduled RadFem 2012 conference, barred her on the basis of past hate speech. A week or so later, the conference itself was banned.

Jeffreys responded with an article in The Guardian, in which she wrote:

Criticism of the practice of transgenderism is being censored as a result of a campaign of vilification by transgender activists of anyone who does not accept the new orthodoxy on this issue... For several years there has been a concerted campaign via the internet and on the ground, to ensure that I, and any other persons who have criticised transgenderism, from any academic discipline, are not given opportunities to speak in public... Whatever the topic of my presentation, and whether in Australia, the UK or the US, transgender activists bombard the organising group and the venue with emails accusing me of transphobia, hate speech, and seek to have me banned. On blogs, Facebook and Twitter they accuse me of wanting to “eliminate” transgendered persons, and they wish me dead.

- Jeffreys, 2012

The Letter

Because of all this, I decided to send a letter to Routledge, with copies to Taylor & Francis and Informa, Taylor & Francis’ parent company, asking that Jeffreys’ & Gottschalk’s book be removed from their publication schedule. I wrote a draft and asked Dr. Jamison Green if he would be willing to co-sign it. He agreed, and I sent him the draft.

Jamison returned the draft after a couple of days, with revisions. I made the revisions, and then by mistake mailed the draft and not the final copy on June 7, 2012. Unfortunately, the draft had a typo of two and misspelled Dr. Jeffreys’ name as Jeffries. The draft didn’t include several sentences Jamison had added about our reluctance to attempt to suppress a book before we had actually read it.

Before the (draft) letter was mailed, Jamison and I had a conversation about censorship. We agreed that we were not censoring Jeffreys. She was free to write what she wanted. We were merely exercising our own freedom of speech in asking that it not be published. We agreed the potential harm of Jeffreys’ & Gottschalk’s book-in-progress warranted extreme action.

Both Jamison and I have affiliations within the transgender community, but we signed only our names and academic degrees. We wanted it understood this was our action, made by us alone, and without consultation by anyone in the transgender community.

For a copy of the draft letter, [click here](#).

On 5 July, we received a reply from Jeremy North, Managing Director of Books at Taylor & Francis. He assured us of Francis & Taylor’s high academic standards and rigorous vetting process and wrote:

At the top of our criteria in assessing suitability for publication is content that meets the highest standards of academic scholarship. Sheila Jeffreys is an established, albeit sometimes controversial, scholar. Her proposal was subjected to multiple peer review and we are confident on the basis of the scholarly feedback and the author’s track record that it should be published. The manuscript will be subject to a rigorous peer review process.

Once the book has been published and is in the public domain, there will be ample opportunity for it to be discussed, debated and criticised in the usual academic forums, but, in the meantime, we don't think it is appropriate to enter into any further discussion.

We thanked Dr. North for his letter, and that was the end of it.

Only it wasn't the end of it.

Probably because I sent the draft (I had not yet discovered my mistake) letter (with Jamison's permission) to the Transgendernews Yahoo list, several radical feminists picked up on it. They took great note of our misspelling of Jeffreys' name and the typos in the text and accused us of censorship, bookburning, and fascism--and they mistakenly claimed our letter was an effort of various trans organizations to discredit Jeffreys. Much was made of Jamison's President-Elect status at the World Professional Association for Transgender Health. (See [here](#)). For some reason, a longer blogpost by the same author has been taken down.)

Then it got personal.

One post attempted psychological histories of both Jamison and myself, based upon fragmentary data scrounged from the Internet. The author was, fortunately or unfortunately, not very smart. My history as an army brat was taken to mean not that I had a parent in the U.S. military, but that I myself had served--and in the Navy, at that!

"Dallas was raised as an army brat in bases all over the world. He started going out as a girl in his teens."

The military is an organisation of hyper-masculinisation, but rejecting hyper-masculinity does not make a male into a female. It is somewhat of a coincidence that several prominent transactivists - Autumn Sandeen and Monica Helms - are both ex-Navy also.

- DavinaSquirrel, 2012

Things went downhill after that.

Jamison's profiling was more rudimentary, doubtless because the author had found less information on his personal life.

The radical feminist trolls were, as might be expected, vicious and personal in their comments about us, but got distracted by a bright dangly toy. Most of the comments were devoted to deconstructing the WPATH logo, which they predictably found phallic and debasing to women.

Yes, the first thing that struck me with the logo was the arrow seeming to rape / impregnate the female part. You can really see it's all about men's cocks invading women.

Things seem to have died down for the moment, but I wouldn't be surprised if there were additional flareups. No matter. They can say what they want.

As for Jamison and myself, we did what we needed to do and we're glad we did it.

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All links were verified 7-18-2012

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Note :In her 1979 book *The Transsexual Empire*, Janice Raymond discounted female-to-male transsexuals as tokens. In the 1994 revision she acknowledged the increasing number of FTMs and attempted to include them into her shaky theoretical framework.

Today, transmen are squarely in the sights of radical separatist feminists.

Cross-posted from Chrysalis Quarterly (2012, 23 July. TG Forum.)

Suggested citation

dallasdenny. "The Letter." TransAdvocate, July 20, 2013. https://www.transadvocate.com/theletter_n_9773.htm