

TRANSADVOCATE

Trans medical care = mutilation?

By Cristan Williams

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Abstract

A reader writes: I was wondering if it would be possible to open a discussion seeking articulation explaining why and how surgical alteration is different from genital mutilation. I feel insufficiently equipped to defend the difference. Here's the deal: body autonomy. I - not some random person - get to decide what body modifications constitute [...]

Article

A reader writes:

I was wondering if it would be possible to open a discussion seeking articulation explaining why and how surgical alteration is different from genital mutilation. I feel insufficiently equipped to defend the difference.

Here's the deal: body autonomy. I - not some random person - get to decide what body modifications constitute "mutilation."

I don't want a pierced septum and if someone held me down and forcibly priced it, I would view it as "mutilation" regardless if the person doing the mutilation felt it looked lovely.

Remember, MANY anti-trans people argue by equivocating.

When most of us hear "mutilate" we understand it to be the dictionary definition: "to ruin the beauty of (something) : to severely damage or spoil (something)." For me, vaginoplasty was the exact opposite of this dictionary definition and because I hold agency over my body, I get to make that value judgement.

When anti-trans people use the term "mutilate" they use it as a colloquial value statement and an appeal to emotion. For them, vaginoplasty sacrifices a perfectly good penis. For them a transwoman's natal penis is revered and held to be more valuable than a functioning sensate vagina.

Some trolls like to burble on about how tattooing is mutilation. They'll even appeal to authority: religious ideology. Other trolls like to burble on about how trans medical care is mutilation. They'll even appeal to authority: TERF ideology. Consider how TERF opinion leader, author and speaker Sheila Jeffreys uses "mutilation" to discuss the experience of being trans and note that she - an out lesbian - is knowingly using the rhetoric of anti-gay activists like Norman Tebbitt:

Now one of the things I find puzzling about it is that, when I look at the House of Lords debate on this legislation, those I agree with most are the radical right. Particularly the person I find that I agree with most, in here, and I'm not sure he will be pleased to find this, is Norman Tebbit... Tebbit also says that the savage mutilation of transgenderism, we would say if it was taking place in other cultures apart from the culture of Britain, was a harmful cultural practice, and how come we're not recognising that in the British Isles. So he makes all of these arguments from the radical right, which is quite embarrassing to me, but I have to say, so called progressive and left people are not recognising the human rights violations of transgenderism or how crazy the legislation is. - Sheila Jeffreys

(BTW, you may find it telling that Jeffreys asserts that getting a tattoo is also mutilation: "Cutting one's own flesh, body piercing, tattooing, and cosmetic surgery are all forms of self-mutilation which should be opposed...")

The reality is that their opinion doesn't get to count and it pisses them off. Trans people are going mainstream. Not a week goes by without another city or company adding trans protections. Not a month goes by without a school or large company announcing that all trans medical care will be covered under their insurance plans. Their opinion is irrelevant and they hurl loaded terms at others because the only way they can have their opinion mean anything to anyone but their own in-group is to try and hurt you enough until you have to deal with the fact that they're banging their spoon on their highchair. This is why they use evocative terms like "mutilation" to describe (what was for me) one of the most liberating events of a lifetime: surgical intervention.

It's not their body, so fuck em'. I don't get to tell them what they can and cannot pierce or tattoo. I don't get to tell them what weight their body must be.

Whoever is telling you that medically addressing trans issues = mutilation, thank them. They've clearly erected a huge neon sign letting you know that you need never again invest another second in seriously entertaining anything they have to say about the trans experience.

What are your thoughts? Here's what some of you had to say about this topic over on the TransAdvocate FaceBook page:

I also believe that we should include coercion of a trans person into thinking that surgeries are necessary, our bodies our decisions and only we should have choice over ourselves! (OUR CHOICE) Some people really don't understand consent. Think of all the myriad activities people do like running a marathon, giving birth, rock climbing, going without sleep and organ donation that are normal activities when chosen but would be torture if someone was forcing you to do them. I was absolutely thrilled and overjoyed to have my 'corrective surgery' done by a competent surgeon that corrected my malformed body

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