

Brennan Answers Critics

Veteran Lesbian Activist Answers Criticism Over United Nations Letter

Baltimore OutLoud
Rev. Mother Meredith Moise, SPSA
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Cathy Brennan is a seasoned lesbian activist who has lived through some controversy. She is currently embroiled in a debate involving a letter she penned to the United Nations (UN) with another lawyer regarding the use of gender identity inadvertently causing harm to females born female. She has been the target of death threats as trans activists pounced on the letter as transphobic and racist. In the following interview, Brennan offers her view on the letter and her outlook on transphobia and feminist idealism.

Rev. Meredith Moise: What is your position on anti-discrimination legislation in general and gender identity legislation in particular?

Cathy Brennan: I support rational anti-discrimination protections for people of transgender and transsexual experience. As you know, I actively supported HB 235 in Maryland last spring, which would have banned discrimination in housing, employment and credit.

MM: Why did you and Elizabeth Hungerford write to the United Nations about gender identity legislation in the US?

CB: All anti-discrimination laws have an exception built in them to permit discrimination based on sex in certain public accommodations - this is why we have sex-segregated bathrooms, showers, locker rooms, and the like. The definition of gender identity that the LGBT organizations keep putting forth is overbroad, and allows males who are not transgender or transsexual access into female only space. This is bad for women.

MM: Some have titled your vocal opposition to the gender id legislation radical feminist and racist. What is driving your passion for this issue?

CB: In 2011 it is incredible to me that people who oppose what we are saying as "radical feminist" - as if that is a bad thing! As if, God forbid that someone dares to advocate for a female perspective. Yes, we are advocating a radical feminist position.

With regard to racism, we understand that advocating for a definition of gender identity that requires some proof of medical intervention is causing some concern among poor people; that include people of color. The way medical care and treatment is financed in our society - a patriarchal society that favors white males - disproportionately disfavors women and people of color. Racism in the way health care is provided to people in this country, and in the priorities that are established and in the way health care is distributed, is real, and we abhor it.

Feminist legal arguments advocating for female reproductive safety in sex-segregated spaces do not CAUSE systemic racism. And please also remember that women of color are women. Women make up 50% of the world's population. The LGBT movement's insistence on eviscerating sex-based protections for women is also racist - and SEXIST!

MM: How can the law balance the need for sex-based protections along with gender-based protections for transgender people?

CB: We fully support anti-discrimination protections for transgender and transsexual people that do not run roughshod over laws that protect females. We support the following definition of "gender identity - a person's identification with the sex opposite her or his physiology or assigned sex at birth, which can be shown by providing evidence including, but not limited to, medical history, care or treatment of a transsexual medical condition, or related condition, as deemed medically necessary by the American Medical Association." Such a definition would protect the classification of sex, while simultaneously providing a cause of action for discriminatory practices on the basis of a persistent and documented "gender identity." We welcome people who fit into this definition into space segregated by sex in recognition of their perceived need for access and in the fervent hope that we can achieve such protection for identifiably transgender or transsexual people without harming females.

MM: What particular concern does your letter raise?

CB: The LGBT organizations are pushing this definition of "gender identity," with some variation:

"Gender identity" means an individual's actual or perceived gender identity, or gender-related characteristics intrinsically related to an individual's gender or gender-identity, regardless of the individual's assigned sex at birth.

We are concerned with two basic things - that this overbroad definition of "gender identity" completely overrides rational sex-based protections and that it codifies sex stereotypes about men and women into law and elevates those stereotypes to the level of an actual identity.

We encourage people to actually read the letter. It is [here](#).

MM: Are there any documented incidents of crimes against females born female committed by men dressed as women?

CB: Why yes! They are legion. There are many reported incidents of men videotaping women in restrooms. There are also numerous incidents of men dressing in drag to peep in women's restrooms. This has very little to do with the trans* community. It really is a male vs. female issue.

MM: Ultimately, many folks view you as an adversary to the trans community. How do you answer these critics?

CB: I appreciate and respect that women of transgender and transsexual experience struggle to be accepted and recognized as women. I personally accept women of transgender and transsexual experience as women. Meanwhile, females in 2011 continue to struggle to be accepted as human. I would encourage women of transgender and transsexual experience to help us in our struggle as well.

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