

You might be a TERF if...

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Abstract

I've noticed that there seems to be some confusion about what a Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminist (TERF) is so, here's a quick guide to help you figure out if you're someone who pushes TERF ideology, which is to say, someone who's a TERF. Chances are that you're a TERF if you believe that you're a [...]

Article



I've noticed that there seems to be some confusion about what a Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminist (TERF) is so, here's a quick guide to help you figure out if you're someone who pushes TERF ideology, which is to say, someone who's a TERF. Chances are that you're a TERF if you believe that you're a feminist when you...

- 1.) Claim that trans women are cis men, that trans men are cis women and purposefully misgender trans people.
- 2.) Out trans people to employers.
- 3.) Tell trans women their surgery is about supporting rape culture.
- 4.) Assert that lesbian-identified trans women can't be lesbian.

- 5.) Claim that a world without trans people is preferable.¹
- 6.) Find that your anti-trans arguments and the anti-trans arguments of far right-wing groups match.²
- 7.) Assert cis privilege isn't real; that non-trans people aren't privileged in a society that's hostile to trans people.
- 8.) Assert that gender is abolished through the mandatory social institutionalization of a MAAB/FAAB binary.
- 9.) Claim that trans surgeries were pioneered by men in service of the patriarchy.³
- 10.) Lie about rape and death threats you've received from trans people.
- 11.) Fearmonger about the rape/violence threat trans women pose to cis women in the women's restroom.
- 12.) Assert that trans people transition to satisfy their sexual urges.
- 13.) Degrade and dehumanize the genitals of trans people.
- 14.) Work to overturn trans equality protections.
- 15.) Work to halt access to trans medical care.
- 16.) Appeal to the Klan Fallacy.
- 17.) Compare transition to a disgusting Frankenstein-like process.
- 18.) Claim that trans people transition due to political or social pressures.⁴
- 19.) Claim that when you work to halt the propagation of anti-feminist stereotypes it's empowerment, but when trans people work to halt the propagation of anti-trans stereotypes it's censorship .
- 20.) Assert that trans women transition because they're actually gay men and that trans men transition because they're lesbians wanting to escape the patriarchy.
- 21.) Threaten actual radical feminist organizations with killing its trans members, and then show up at the radfem event armed with guns.
- 22.) Beat actual radical feminists for protecting trans women from a TERF bashing.
- 23.) Mob Lesbian Avengers who have a trans kid with them and then threaten the kid with a knife.
- 24.) Menace a butch Lesbian radical feminist so much that the radfem decides to start their own inclusive Women's Music Festival.
- 25.) Threaten a group of trans women with bodily violence so that they have to start something called Camp Trans in protest.
- 26.) Promote so-called "bathroom bills" because you think it's "pro-Lesbian."
- 27.) Find that Tea Party Republicans start promoting your TERF rhetoric.

28.) Promote right-wing propaganda mill nonsense to substantiate your hate because they're the only ones who, in your estimation, are your ideological allies.

29.) Find that right-wing pundits and even hate groups like the Westboro Baptist Church defend TERF hate.

30.) Appeal to vaginal odors as being a sexed essence which demarcates an authentic sexed status, so that trans women aren't actual women because the vaginas of trans women are so smelly that it causes "serious smell issues" while, simultaneously being so non-smelly that a trans woman can never know (as actual women apparently do) what it's like to have a "big, hairy, smelly vagina."

Bonus: Pretend that the term "TERF" -popularized, in 2008 by a radical feminist-inclusive feminist community as a way of distinguishing between radical feminists from anti-trans bigots who label themselves "radical feminists"- was actually created by the trans community in order to slur feminism.

Would you like to read what TERFs, in their own words, say they believe?

Read about #TERFlogic here.

But, What Does Feminism Looks Like?

So now I want to be unequivocal in my words: I believe that transgender people, including those who have transitioned, are living out real, authentic lives. Those lives should be celebrated, not questioned.

Their health care decisions should be theirs and theirs alone to make. And what I wrote decades ago does not reflect what we know today as we move away from only the binary boxes of "masculine" or "feminine" and begin to live along the full human continuum of identity and expression.

- Gloria Steinem, feminist icon & activist

Work with transsexuals, and studies of formation of gender identity in children provide basic information which challenges the notion that there are two discrete biological sexes. That information threatens to transform the traditional biology of sex difference into the radical biology of sex similarity... Every transsexual is entitled to a sex-change operation, and it should be provided by the community as one of its functions.

- Andrea Dworkin, radical feminist pioneer & activist

Male dominant society has defined women as a discrete biological group forever. If this was going to produce liberation, we'd be free.... To me, women is a political group. I never had much occasion to say that, or work with it, until the last few years when there has been a lot of discussion about whether transwomen are women... I always thought I don't care how someone becomes a woman or a man; it does not matter to me. It is just part of their specificity, their uniqueness, like everyone else's. Anybody who identifies as a woman, wants to be a woman, is going around being a woman, as far as I'm concerned, is a woman.

- Catharine MacKinnon, radical feminist pioneer & activist

The notion that truly revolutionary radical feminism is trans-inclusive is a no brainer. I honestly do not understand how or why a strain of radical feminism has emerged that favors a

biology-based/sex-essentialist theory of ‘sex caste’ over the theory of ‘sex class’ as set forth in the work of Witting, Andrea, and MacKinnon. Can radical feminism be ‘reclaimed’ so that its trans-inclusivity--which is inherent--is made apparent? I hope so.

- John Stoltenberg, radical feminist & activist

<http://web.archive.org/web/20170515054717/https://twitter.com/transadvocate/status/749214423772868608>

The above is a statement from the iconic radical feminist journal, Lesbian Tide and was published as a direct response to a TERF effort to purge trans women from women’s groups.

Some Definitions

While all TERFs are SETs, not all SETs are TERFs.

TERF: Trans Exclusionary RadFem. A term used to identify those individuals who sympathize with and support a brand of “radical feminism” that is so rooted in sex essentialism and its resulting biologism, it actively campaigns against the existence, equality, and/or inclusion of trans people. The term appears to have been popularized in 2008 by a cisgender feminist on a blog called FinallyFeminism101. TERFs generally claim that gender identity is the same thing as gender role, that gender is the same thing as sexism, and that sexed ontologies are produced by nature, not culture.

SETs: Sex Essentialist Theorists. Groups ranging from right-wing religious movements to TERFs who use sex essentialism as their central organizing belief, view, moral and/or ethic. SETs will generally reject the notion that while bodies and reproduction are material realities, what we think about those realities is gender. Instead, SETs tend to assert that sexed ontologies are the creation of a God(s) or Nature.

Sex Essentialism: In short, sex essentialism is a tautology that seeks to construct ontology through reductivism. It is the belief that there is a specific essence, that if found to be present, causes an entire body to be either male or female. The appealed to essence can be asserted social habits learned through socialization, spirit energy or emotion, or phenotype or genotype attribute.

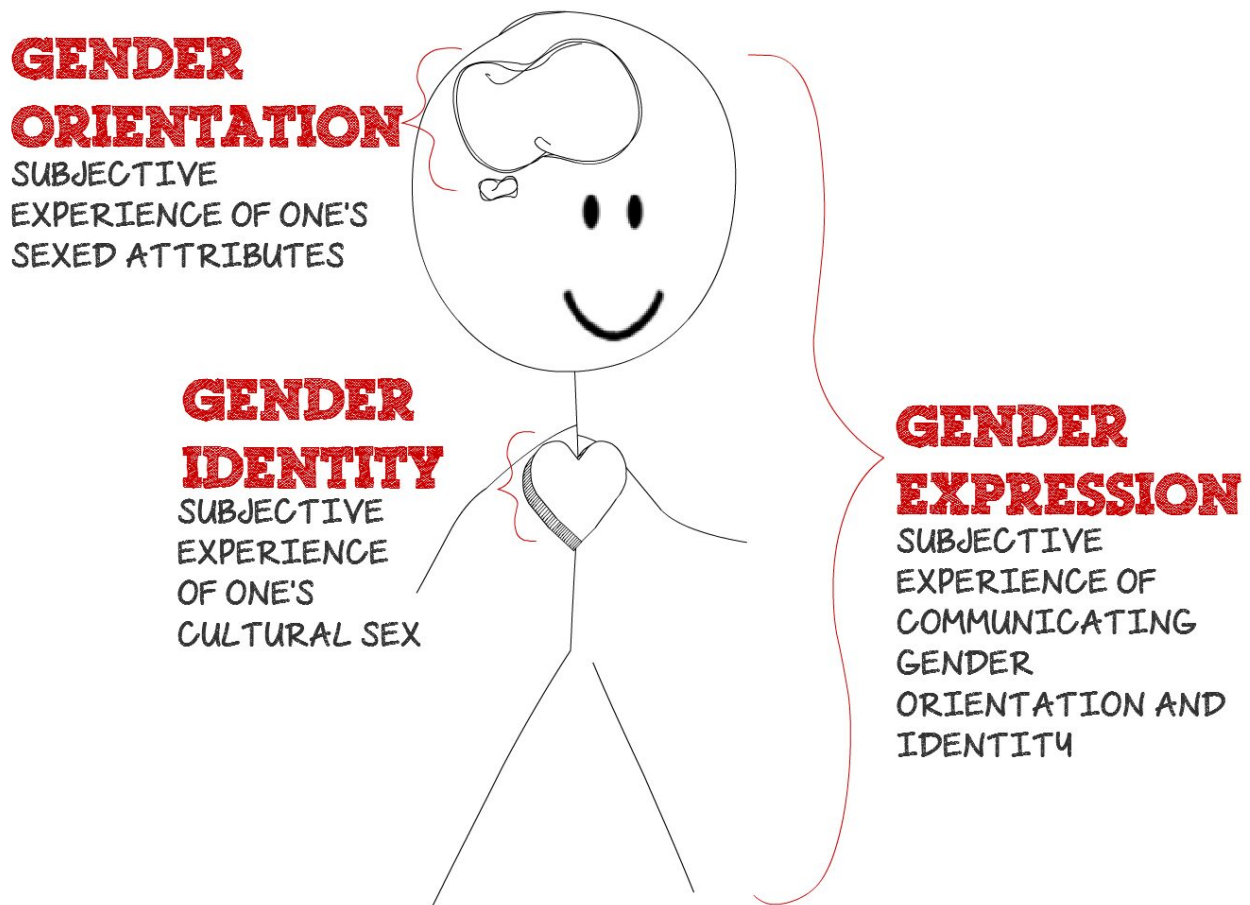
Radical Feminism (RadFem): closely tied to 2nd wave feminism, it represents the identity many (though certainly not all) sex essentialist activists utilize when engaging in anti-trans activism. Radical Feminism itself exists to do away with sexism through the abolition of gender roles, stereotypes and hierarchies.¹ Numerous Radical Feminist opinion leaders and organizations were staunchly trans-inclusive and faced threats of violence, physical beatings, and attempted murders by TERFs for their trans inclusion.

I assure them I am as a real and as radical a feminist as one can be... feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression. - bell hooks²

Sex: A social identifier assigned to babies at birth. It is taken to connote the genotypical aspects/attributes of human development as it relates to the ability to produce size-differentiated gametes. Additionally, sex is taken to connote the oftentimes stereotyped phenotypical aspects of sexed bodies such as primary and secondary sex characteristics.

Gender: is a generic term we use to refer to any/all aspects of: gender orientation, expression, and

identity (see image below); gender role, stereotype and hierarchy; and/or, any mental contextualization of the material reality of genotyped and phenotyped sex.



The Conversations Project, based on work by Cristan Williams

Source: radfem.transadvocate.com/glossary

Figure 1. Figure 2: model of gender orientation, identity and expression

Male: one whose genotype, phenotype, and/or legal persona is regarded by society as being typical of the political class “man”.

Man: A political class that is pressured by culture to subjugate women.

Female: One whose genotype, phenotype, and/or legal persona is regarded by society as being typical of the political class “woman”.

Woman: A political class that is pressured by culture to be subordinate to men.

Notes:



Figure 2. Progressives have noticed the similarity for some time: Self-identified "RadFem" TERF meets an ideological peer.

* Over the past year or so, much of the trans community has stopped referring to TERFs as RadFems. We've done this because there's a number of radical feminists/2nd wave feminists/lesbian feminists who find the above demonstrated behavior abhorrent to feminism. Out of respect for actual RadFems, the trans community has stopped supporting the appropriation of the radical feminist identity by what is essentially a hate group. Thus, we instead use the feminist term, Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminists or TERFs to distinguish this hate group from the radical feminism of trans-inclusive feminists like Andrea Dworkin and Catharine MacKinnon.

1.) They expect we'll be shocked to see statistics about them being killed, and don't realize, some of us wish they would ALL be dead.

- BevJo, TERF opinion leader, author and speaker

While there are many who feel that morality must be built into law, I believe that the elimination of transsexualism is not best achieved by legislation prohibiting transsexual treatment and surgery but rather by legislation that limits it and by other legislation that lessens the support given to sex-role stereotyping, which generated the problem to begin with. Any legislation should be aimed at the social conditions that initiate and promote the surgery as well as the growth of the medical-institutional complex that translates these stereotypes into flesh and blood.

- Janice Raymond (1980), *Technology on the Social and Ethical Aspects of Transsexual Surgery*, TERF opinion leader, author and speaker

2.) 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 recognizing 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 recognizing the human rights violations of transgenderism or how crazy the legislation is.

- Sheila Jeffreys

3.) [Transsexual surgery] could be likened to political psychiatry in the Soviet Union. I suggest that transsexualism should best be seen in this light, as directly political, medical abuse of human rights. The mutilation of healthy bodies and the subjection of such bodies to dangerous and life-threatening continuing treatment violates such people's rights to live with dignity in the body into which they were born, what Janice Raymond refers to as their "native" bodies. It represents an attack on the body to rectify a political condition, "gender" dissatisfaction in a male supremacist society based upon a false and politically constructed notion of gender difference... Recent literature on transsexualism in the lesbian community draws connections with the practices of sadomasochism.

- Sheila Jeffreys, TERF opinion leader, author and speaker

It should be noted that Jeffreys' own community - Australian Lesbians - pioneered both FTM and FTM transsexual surgery in Australia.

4.) My main conclusion is that transsexualism is basically a social problem whose cause cannot be explained except in relation to the sex role and identities that a patriarchal society generates. Through hormonal and surgical means, transsexuals reject their "native" bodies, especially their sexual organs, in favor of the body and the sexual organs of the opposite sex. They do this mainly because the body and the genitalia, especially, come to incarnate the essence of their rejected masculinity and desired femininity. Thus transsexualism is the result of socially prescribed definitions of masculinity and femininity, one of which the transsexual rejects in order to gravitate towards the other.

Thus I will argue, in Chapter III, that the First Cause of transsexualism is a gender-defined society whose norms of masculinity and femininity generate the desire to be transsexed.... I believe that the primary cause of transsexualism cannot be derived from intrapsychic attitudes and/or behaviors, or even from family conditioning processes. One must begin with the roles of a gender-defined society, as the

First Cause of transsexualism (that which, in the Aristotelian sense, sets all other causes in motion.)

- Janice Raymond (1979), *The Transsexual Empire*, page 16

A significant number of transmen are lesbians who report that they want to transition in an attempt to escape misogyny - their own internalized version as much as society's. A significant percentage of transwomen are homosexual males, pressured into transitioning by conservative society that hates gender non-conforming gay men.

- There is no T in Lesbian



Figure 3. Lesbian feminists have noticed TERF behavior for a while now.



This cartoon, created especially for Transgender Warriors, is by Alison Bechdel, who draws the *Figure 4. Lesbian Feminist DTWOF* author: Noticing trans lesbians as part of radical feminism while scoffing at the trans bathroom meme since 1995.

1. Anne Koedt. *Lesbianism and Feminism*. 1971
2. bell hooks, *Feminism is for Everybody*, p viii

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